

She's dedicated, gutsy and on a roll. **Preechachan Wiriyapappong** profiles an athlete who has piled up a number of awards including Best International Female Weightlifter

If there is one female athlete who puts Thailand on the world map, whose dedication and exceptional performances in the past three years have won the hearts of the Thai people and who is riding a wave of success, it must be the plucky weightlifter Pawina Thongsuk.

Forget how many times Thai boxing legend Khaosai Galaxy defended his WBA junior bantamweight title, and forget what laurels tennis star Paradorn Srichaphan has earned so far for the motherland. Pawina has won them all.

The 27-year-old weightlifter from Surin burst into prominence in the 2002 World Championships in Poland to capture the crown in the 69kg event.

Pawina repeated the feat a year later as she swept three gold medals in the same weight category in the World University Games hosted in Italy.

However, she suffered an elbow injury in the World Championships in the same year in Vancouver, Canada, resulting in a disappointing fourth-place finish in all three events – snatch, clean and jerk and total.

"A weightlifter must harness all of his or her strength and energy. Consequently, deep concentration and confidence are very crucial," said Pawina, who, in her second Olympics, stunned many in Athens and Thailand alike to win the gold in the 75kg division with a new Games record of 150kg in the clean and jerk.

"Concentration is very crucial for weightlifters. We visited monks to learn methods of maintaining our concentration, which will be an enormous asset for us to succeed in tournaments no matter how tough it is."

The diminutive Pawina, who stands 156cm tall, amazed everyone by shedding 12kg in one year to participate in the 63kg class at the Dubai-held Asian

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# WONDER WOMAN



*Pawina is all smiles after winning the gold in the women's 75kg weightlifting contest at the Nikaia Weightlifting Hall in Athens during the 2004 Olympics Games.*