



► **From page 84**

Championships in September – and winning it in style.

She repeated the feat the following month with a stunning success at the World Championships in Doha, Qatar, where she became the first woman in a century to shatter world records in three different weight classes – 69kg in world meet in Poland in 2003, 75kg in the Athens Olympics, and 63kg in the Asian meet in Dubai.

With this awesome showing, Pawina was named the Best Female Weightlifter of the Year 2005 by the International Weightlifting Federation and named the Wonderful Woman as the first woman in a century to perform so brilliantly.

“It’s a great honour for me and my family alike. I think years of hard work have borne fruit pretty well. My Chinese coach Zhang

Jiaming had the team in tears after body-breaking, mind-numbing training sessions. The training programme was tough, it was too tough at times.”

Asked to comment on Thai sports in the past, Pawina, who also won last year’s Best Female Amateur Athlete of the Year on National Sports Day plus the Chang Award for the Best Female Athlete in the SEA Games, admitted that most Thai athletes dedicate their time and lives to training in preparation for major international competitions. However, she said, many spectators do not see their devotion and do not really support them.

“Serious athlete dedication is, I think, very necessary. Thai athletes performed well in the SEA Games, but the performance fell short at the Asian and the Olympic Games. We still lack people who are sincerely dedicated to sports development.

“ I targeted the gold medal in Athens and I won it at last. I thought it was the last thing I could do in my career, but in fact, I still have many things to continue with. ”

“As far as I’m concerned, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam remain underdogs to Thailand at the SEA Games level, but I’m confident their athletes can catch up with Thais in the near future. Their governments see the importance of sports and always give full financial support to their athletes,” she said.

“Actually, I intended to call it a day after I returned with the well-earned glory from Athens. I think a gold medal from an Olympic Games is the top priority for any athlete. I targeted the gold medal in Athens and I won it at last. I thought it was the last thing I could do in my career, but in fact, I still have many things to continue with.

“I confess that I used to feel down-hearted when I thought about the unknown future. I had injuries and I had much pressure. I really did not know what to do to over-

come those difficulties. To relieve all these tensions, I called my mother. I talked to her and asked her what I should do. Though it could not help that much, it’s better than doing nothing.

“I still have many steps to climb. A tough job awaits me in December when I will take part in the Asian Games in Doha. It’s the only competition in which I have never won a gold medal. After the Asiad, I will try my best again to compete in my third Olympic Games, in Beijing.

“If I’m successful there, I think it’s time for the curtain of my career to come down. However, I will still serve my beloved country as a good officer in the Army Welfare Department. If I’m asked to help coach future weightlifting generations, I’m willing to do so.

“The sport is in my blood and I’m happy to give it my all.” ■