

Weightlifting Heavyweights

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Steven Patris
The coach

STEVEN Patris was an athlete in weightlifting himself. He was 40 years old when he competed in the 1996 Interstate Games, in which he won the gold medal. Before that, he was a softball player.

"I came into sports very late. And I found weightlifting very interesting," he said.

Two years later, he represented Palau in the 1998

Micronesia Games and won a bronze medal in the 105 kilos category.

After placing 7th out of eight participants in the 1999 South Pacific Games (SPG), he stopped and started coaching.

During the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia, he acted as assistant coach for participant Valerie Pedro, who placed No. 7 in the world in her weight class.

"I learned how to coach and picked up most of my experience in the 2000 Olympics. I learned through pointers given by coaches from countries such as Bulgaria and Germany," he said.

With the upcoming SPG in June, Steven is coaching his two daughters, twins Alexandrina and Alexandra. He said he introduced weightlifting to them when they were 11 years old.

"These girls will compete against older opponents since the SPG has no age limit," he said.



Alexandrina Patris

The twins

Alexandra was born only a few seconds after her sister, Alexandrina. The closeness in birth is probably the reason why they both chose to be in the same sport. And while 14 year-olds like them would usually spend time at home or in some playground, the twins have already competed internationally and won medals for their country.

Alexandrina's first competition was the 2001 Interstate Games, where she won a silver medal in the 50 kilograms category. In the 2002 Micronesia



Alexandra "Alex2" Patris

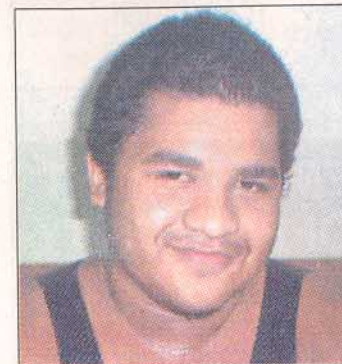
Games, she again won a silver medal in the 58-kilo weight class.

In the last Oceania South Pacific Games Junior Championship on weightlifting held in Melbourne, Australia last Dec. 14 and 15, Alexandria participated in the 63-kilogram category and won the gold for the SPG level and bronze for the Oceania level. She lifted a total weight of 127 kilograms.

This upcoming SPG would be the first ever for the twins, said Alexandrina.

"I want to be like my dad. My

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Tonga Alexander
The rookie

This 17-year old lad just started lifting weights just eight months ago. When he started bodybuilding, he was torn between the sport weightlifting and wrestling. "I wanted to get involved in wrestling or weightlifting when I did a little bodybuilding. And then I chose weightlifting," he said.

Asked why, Tonga said, "It came easy to me because I am a naturally strong person."

The upcoming SPG in June

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Twins....

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mother, she told me to train hard. She is very supportive. I feel very happy to participate in the SPG, and I hope I'll win," she said.

Alexandra, on the other hand, took the gold medal in the 2002 MG in the 53 kilogram weight class. In the weightlifting com-

petition in Australia, Alexandra participated in the 58-kilo class and won gold in the SPG level and silver in the Oceania level. She lifted a total of 115 kilograms, second to the participant from Australia, who lifted a total of 147.5 kilograms.

"I want to make Palauans proud of me. My father taught me everything. I feel really excited and happy. At the same time I feel scared because this is the first time to compete against older athletes," said Alexandra.
