



Mario Fontanazza started for Oil City since his freshman year and was a three-time, two way all-region star.

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By Ed Brannon

Following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, Oil City High School senior-to-be Mario Fontanazza has long been fascinated by lifting heavy objects. Apparently, powerlifting is in his DNA.

Dogged by nagging injuries the past couple of years, Fontanazza finally got a chance to compete in his first powerlifting event on Saturday and boy, did he make quite a first impression.

Competing in the 41st Annual ADAU 100% Raw Power Day at the Bigler YMCA (near Clearfield), Fontanazza not only shattered Pennsylvania records in all three events (squat, bench press and deadlift), but he also established world records in both the bench press (402.5 pounds) and total weight (1,575 pounds). That total, which included 540 pounds in the squat

and 633 pounds in the deadlift, was the highest of any competitor at the event and also set a state record.



Fontanazza, who turned 18 at the end of May, weighed in at 293 pounds and he competed against 11 others in the 18-19 year-old 308-pound division. He went 9-for-9 on his lifts (no misses, three tries per lift).

The drug-free event is normally held in the spring, but was pushed back a few months because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I can remember lifting heavy things over my head since I was about six years old," Fontanazza said, adding, "When I was 9, I lifted a 420-pound tire, and since I was 11, I've lifted four times a week and haven't stopped since." He noted that he works out mostly at the high school, but also at the Oil City YMCA.

Making the day even more special was the fact that Fontanazza was able to share some of the spotlight with his 74-year-old grandfather, Butch Huey, who ironically competed in the very first ADAU Raw Power Day 41 years ago. And not only did he compete, but Huey took first place in his division (70-74 year-olds, 220-pounds) with a lift of 275 pounds in the bench press. Huey holds the state record in that age and weight division with a lift of 281 pounds set two years ago.

Huey and Fontanazza's father, Mario II, participated in strongman competitions for about five years starting in 2010, which no doubt led to the younger Fontanazza's fascination with feats of strength.

"I've kind of always looked up to Zydrunas Savickas," Fontanazza said of Savickas, a four-time winner of the World's Strongest Man competitions. "He's known as one of the strongest men of all time."

While he hopes to compete in more powerlifting events in the future, Fontanazza's primary focus is on the 2020 high school football season. He was an all-region performer on the offensive and defensive line each of the past two years and was named to the Pa. Football News all-state team in 2018.

"Hopefully, we'll be able to get the season in," Fontanazza said. "Because it's my senior season, I'd really be happy if we get to play."

That's what a lot of seniors across the state are hoping for, but, in the meantime, Fontanazza can always fall back on his budding powerlifting career. And with father and grandfather by his

side for guidance and support, he'll no doubt get plenty of attention when college football recruiters come calling.

Editor's Note – Fontanazza originally signed with Edinboro, but in the middle of his freshman year transferred to Slippery Rock where he elected to give up football and concentrate on his school work. However, he still competes in weight lifting competitions.