MTV episode focuses on Alter High grad

Holley Mangold hopes to make the U.S. Olympic weightlifting team.

By Marc Pendleton
Staff Writer

Holley Mangold is girded for the worst and hoping for the best. Any place in between is a victory.

“It’s going to be completely invasive,” said Mangold, the Alter High School grad who found notoriety as a member of the football team and has since focused on training for the U.S. women’s Olympic team as a weight lifter.

That quest and other personal revelations will be on full display in today’s True Life episode on MTV, “I’m the Big Girl” (11 p.m.).

“It’s a little overwhelming,” said Mangold, 22. “It’s going to be very weird (watching herself). You never know what cameras are going to capture. I just hope that I come off ... OK.”

Mangold continued from C1

At best, Mangold is a long shot to make the U.S. team. By her estimation, she currently ranks No. 8 among U.S. super heavyweights. Nations will send teams of two to four lifters, depending on their qualifying marks in the snatch and clean and jerk.

That all will play out for Mangold about this time next year.

What viewers will see today is someone who graduated from warming up for high school track meets at Panera Bread and Wendy’s. Now, she eats six high-protein meals daily, works out about 30 hours per week in the gym and is bigger, stronger and better than ever.

“I’m a lot stronger than I was in high school and certainly a lot quicker,” she said.

“Now, I’m actually dedicated because weight lifting is my life, pretty much.”

Mangold left Ursuline College

So do MTV reality-show producers. It’s not just the 2012 London Games that are at stake for Mangold. So is a 10-episode spinoff of “Big Girl” if Nielsen numbers are enticing enough.

Besides chronicling a rigid strength training regimen — she says she lost 90 pounds over the course of filming — there likely will be plenty of archive footage of her Wee Elks football and Alter days and any of other 11 sports that she excelled in through the years.

The big story

At 5 feet 8 and 320 pounds, Mangold blows up the image of a waif-thin twentysomething female want-to-be. Not only that, but she embraces the larger-than-life image.

That societal flip flop especially appealed to MTV, which had been aware of the younger sister of New York Jets center Nick Mangold since she was profiled in a 2006 New York Times feature when she played at Alter.

“Culturally, we have a real bias against big people,” said Mangold’s father, Vern.

“That’s why the MTV folks think that it’s such a compelling story. Her self-esteem is over the top and she moves effortlessly in a man’s world.”

On Wednesday she flawlessly handled a media blitz, much like she used to pick up a blitz as a reserve Alter offensive lineman.

ESPN and AOL Radio, newspapers “and a lot of others I should remember” scrambled for sound bites and phone interviews to promote the show.

Mangold continued on C3

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in Cleveland after two years in the spring of 2010 to concentrate on lifting. She took lifting to a new level at the U.S. Olympic Training Center at Colorado Springs last fall. Although not an Olympic lift, she has benched more than 300 pounds, in high school.

**No comparison**

MTV reality shows are big on personality quirks and insecurities. There likely will be plenty of that in “Big Girl” as Mangold copes with following in her brother’s high-profile footsteps.

To her pleasant surprise, lifting was the first sport in which she wasn’t compared to Nick.

“He really is (my biggest fan), and it took me a while to realize it,” she said. “On the show, you’ll even see me struggle with what my brother actually thinks of me.”

Mangold was initially introduced to lifting by an intrigued Larry Pacifico, the local strongman and longtime world champion lifter. Her interest was immediate, although for other reasons. In her first competition at Bradford High School, she won a state championship.

“It started at 9 a.m. and they had pork chops for breakfast,” Vern recalled. “My little girl was hooked. She knocked off a four-pack.”

All that weight and strength serves Mangold well now, but could be a concern later. She long ago gave up running — “my knees just can’t take it” — and had minor knee surgery to repair a torn meniscus four months ago.

Remaining healthy and active is her ultimate goal after her lifting career.

“I’ll never be a normal-sized girl, even when I’m 50 or 60,” said the Columbus resident. “I never really want to be a small girl. I think if I drop below 200, I’ll be just really depressed.”

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