Mettle to Medal

Weightlifter Holley Mangold, 22, isn’t exactly living in luxury. The Kettering, Ohio, native sleeps in the utility room of the three-bedroom Columbus house she shares with three male housemates. (Luckily for them, Mangold thinks doing laundry is a stress-buster.)

But the 5-foot-9-inch, 310-pound athlete isn’t complaining. It’s the ideal location to gear up for the 23rd annual Arnold Sports Festival — the largest multisport event in the United States — that returns to the capital city March 1-4. This year, the Columbus event will also be hosting the 2012 U.S. Olympic Team Trials for Weightlifting, considered the most prestigious weightlifting event held in the city since 1970.

Following in the footsteps of her brother, Nick, now a New York Jets offensive lineman, Mangold played football at Archbishop Alter High School. But after realizing that playing professional football is still off-limits to women, Mangold turned to weightlifting. Now Mangold is up for what she considers to be the athletic challenge of her life. She’s spending the next few weeks perfecting her two lifts: To execute the snatch, she raises a 250-pound bar from the floor to above her head in one movement. For the clean and jerk, Mangold hoists a 310-pound bar to her shoulders, then jerks it over her head. Competition will be fierce: The women who can lift the most will travel to London for the 2012 Summer Olympic Games.

“No matter how much natural talent you have, lifting is a completely mental sport that takes years to learn,” reflects Mangold, who began serious training at 18. “You have to give up a lot. I dropped out of Ursuline College with a 3.8 grade average and double majors in theology and sociology to go to the Olympic Training Center in Colorado. But it was worth it.”

For Mangold, the goal is clear.

“My dream is not to just go to the Olympics, but to earn a medal,” she says. “That’s in sight for the 2016 Olympics in Rio.” —Jill Sell