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Highest 2012 Vault

Cheers as gold medalist Jenn jumps in her hometown

There is a new highest jump in the world this year for pole vaulting and it was achieved right here in Fredonia.

Gold medalist and Fredonia native Jenn (Stuczynski) Suhr currently holds the world's lead for 2012 and gained that title Saturday.

Jenn jumped along Church Street in the village as part of her Gold Medal Tour. She cleared 4.83 meters, a little over 15 feet 10 inches, to have the world's highest jump for the year.

"I couldn't think of a better spot to jump the world lead in Fredonia, in my hometown with the crowd here," Jenn said after the event. "I didn't think anything could top the Olympics but this was close."

The rain stopped and held off for a sanctioned competition which included vaulters Dave Fritz, Chris Brhel, Claire Dishong, Alexis Bartholomew and Jenn Thill, all from the Buffalo and Rochester areas. As part of the competition, each vaulter took turns trying to clear the bar ranging in heights from 10 feet to over 15 feet.

Jenn's husband and coach, Rich Suhr thought it was phenomenal Jenn did so well.

"Having jumped the world lead is phenomenal. I can't believe she did it. It was 55 degrees...and it rained so hard here," Rick said. "You want it to be about 75 degrees to 80 degrees. Fifty-five (degrees) is very difficult to pole vault in".

During set up for the event, Rick said the crew was soaked and freezing due to rain that lasted throughout the day on Saturday but the sun came out right before the jump. Rick said since the pole vaulting season is typically over in mid-September, Jenn has a good possibility of holding onto this world lead for the rest of the year.

Rick said Barker Common was chosen due to its central location and the opportunity for the community to see Jenn jump.

“It’s right in the square middle of town. Street vaults are made to be in the middle of the street...to be where you don’t pay a dime and you put a lawnchair down and watch,” Rick said. “I think people loved it.

“To not pay 10,000 pounds over in England to watch the Olympics but to come here and see the best jump in the entire world... it’s incredible,” Rick continued. “It’s really meaningful to see people get excited... it’s amazing. We don’t realize the impact we have on other people and the impact that Jenn has on other people.”

In August, Jenn won the gold medal for women’s pole vaulting in the summer Olympics. In 2008, the first time she competed in the Olympics, she won the silver medal.

After her jump Saturday, Jenn thanked everyone who has been a part of her journey.

“I couldn’t have done it without my husband and my coach. He’s been there for me every part of the way. And my family has been there. There are so many people that have been involved and encouraging and I wanted to thank them all and I wanted to thank my husband. He’s the one that pushes me,” she said.

Jenn also gave encouragement to all young athletes in attendance.

“You have to try, you don’t know what you’re good at or what you’ll like so you have to go out there and try,” she said.

Fredonia Mayor Stephen Keefe read a proclamation for Jennifer Suhr Day in the village.

“Every jump you make, every achievement we are behind you,” Keefe said.

County Executive Greg Edwards read the proclamation for Jennifer Suhr Day in Chautauqua County. The Fredonia Central School Sports Booster and Student Council presented Jenn with a banner. Other elected officials in attendance included Sen. Catharine Young and Assemblyman Andy Goodell.

The Gold Medal Tour will continue this upcoming weekend.

“We’re going to do two more (events) like this...then I’m going to relax, eat some ice cream,” Jenn said.

The tour will continue on Friday at Roberts Wesleyan College (her alma mater) and Sunday, Sept. 30 at the Buffalo Bills game. Jenn will jump in the fieldhouse prior to the game from 10:15 a.m. to noon.