

**IWF: Raising the Bar Together
since 1905**





1.

FOREWORD BY THE IWF
PRESIDENT MOHAMMED
JALOOD

P. 4

2.

THE PRE-IWF ERA: A PRACTICE
THAT FOLLOWED THE EVOLUTION
OF HUMAN CIVILISATION

P. 7

3.

TIMELINE 1905-2025

P. 10

4.

120 YEARS,
120 MILESTONES

P. 21

5.

SAM COFFA: WITNESS AND
PROTAGONIST OF THE IWF
HISTORY

P. 91

1.

Foreword by the IWF
President Mohammed
Jalood

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FOREWORD BY THE IWF PRESIDENT MOHAMMED JALOOD



Back in 1905, on June 10, representatives from four nations - Denmark, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands - formally gathered around a table and decided to create a body capable of ruling weightlifting. The world was quite different from the one we know today. The automobile industry was making its first steps, commercial aviation was still a utopia, long distance communication was extremely challenging and international travel was quite limited. However, in the last decades of the 19th and first years of the 20th century, a movement was initiated to somehow get sport activities structured on a global scale. The vision of Pierre de Coubertin and the revival of the Olympic Games in 1896 in Athens was the most significant and visible outcome of this trend: the idea was to unite athletes and nations around the same philosophical principles provided by sport.

With more competitors from more different places practicing physical activities, there was also a need for harmonisation. These sports needed rules, a common framework to ensure a fair and balanced competition, procedures to guarantee events were held under the same conditions, and standards to establish records for the same type of performances.

This was basically what led to the foundation of International Sport Federations. The IWF case was not an exception to this rule. When the "Amateur Athletic World Union" (the first name of the IWF) was formed, it had six basic objectives: 1. To standardise the names, execution, and evaluation of exercises; 2. To hold competitions under standardised regulations; 3. To only accept the presence in these competitions of members affiliated to the new international body; 4. To strictly observe the amateur rules; 5. Whenever needed, to fix the value of prizes to be awarded; 6. To unify the rules related to records.

One hundred and twenty years later, in 2025, the world has dramatically evolved from a technological point of view: the globe is digitally interconnected, and the concept of distance is presently quite relative. But if in a few hours we can reach by plane the other side of the planet,

or in a millisecond we can connect via our mobile devices with anyone, anywhere, the purpose of the IWF remains fundamentally the same.

The International Weightlifting Federation is the world governing body for Olympic weightlifting. In this capacity, it has the responsibility of setting the rules of our sport, determining the format of our competitions, keeping track of the best performances of our athletes, and serving its 195 National Member Federations across the five continents. These basic principles still guide the core business of our International Federation today. Hopefully, in 2145, in another 120 years' time, our successors can continue to say that the IWF exists to conduct, promote and maximise the value of our beloved sport of weightlifting.

The world witnessed many changes since 1905, both in technical and procedural ways of doing things, but we can proudly say that the IWF remained faithful to its founding purpose. From the initial four members, we are today a global organisation; from a modest appearance in the Games programme, we are now an added-value to the Olympic Movement; from an exclusively male-driven sport, we are a perfectly gender-balanced activity; from a non-existing coherent calendar of events, we have now three yearly World Championships (corresponding to different age groups - Youth, Junior and Senior); from non-reliable sport equipment, our lifters can nowadays benefit from state-of-the-art barbell sets; from a list of random results and types of exercises, we have now a comprehensive chart of World Records, bodyweight categories and standardised movements; from an almost exclusively European-approach, our events are now held globally and reach millions of fans worldwide; from local idols in the first decades of the 20th century, our best lifters became international stars in recent years, setting an example and inspiration for many young athletes around the planet.

If this evolution is somehow "organic" - dictated by the natural development of our societies -, many of the achievements in the history of the IWF are the result of the endless work of our predecessors. Thanks

to their devotion to the sport, their determination to progress, their innovative ideas, and their sense of duty, the International Weightlifting Federation steadily developed during these decades, earning an important place in a complex, competitive and challenging sport international environment.

In such a long period, as in the life of each one of us, there were naturally ups and downs. But even when turbulent times hit our Federation, we never lost sight of the vision that drove, drives and will continue driving our activity: our athletes, the protagonists of our sport! They play an essential role in everything we do, and we will always owe them the greatness and reputation of the IWF.

Throughout this publication, you will read about the stories of the many men and women who successfully achieved great results and feats. Their example is the best legacy the history of our International Federation can provide to all of us and to the future generations in charge of weightlifting. Their relentless effort, by training and working day and night, many times in difficult conditions, proves that no matter the circumstances, the desire to win and overcome the hurdles of life, will always prevail. We must never forget this: it is a basic rule in sport!

In 2025, the IWF is a robust and dynamic organisation, driven by clear objectives: good governance, promotion of clean sport, adherence to principles of sustainability, inclusivity and gender equity, enforcement of athlete representation, and search for innovation. In an ever-changing world, these pillars remain absolutely essential if we want to respect the spirit of those who founded our International Federation 120 years ago. The terminology of many words may have changed, but the core philosophy remains intact: to protect and promote the sport and its protagonists!

This mission was and will always be more important and valuable than the transitory and temporary power the IWF officials may have. Our International Federation is “bigger” than each of us – it came before us and will remain after us. As President, in this year of 2025, I am just a piece in the immense puzzle that represents this rich 120-year history. Being aware of this global context, the most important thing is, at each moment, to do the best we can to proceed in this road of excellence and development.

In the cyclic curve I previously mentioned, we can say that the IWF is presently at the “top of the wave”. But as I often say, we cannot rest on our laurels. The work is never finished, the mission is never completed. We all know that the most difficult thing in sport is not to win, but to remain on the top. This is also true for an International Federation – we must continuously strive for more success! History shows us that nothing is eternal and that internal and external challenges can seriously hinder the reputation of an organisation like ours. We must be constantly attentive to the signs of our time and react accordingly; even better, we should try to anticipate those risks and difficulties, so that we can always move forward.

The IWF’s 120th anniversary is an important occasion to reflect on what was achieved, but, more importantly, on what still needs to be done.



1905 - 2025

The past is over, the future is now! On behalf of our predecessors, we must do everything possible to enhance our weightlifting community – our lifters, coaches, officials, administrators, and fans worldwide. Our founding fathers wanted the same, and at their scale, they succeeded it! It is our turn to do the same.

Being an inspirational year, this celebration is therefore an occasion to say THANK YOU to all those great men and women who made us proud of belonging to this outstanding organisation. It is also a privileged opportunity to start a new chapter in the history of the International Weightlifting Federation.

We are ready for it!

Happy Birthday and long live the IWF!

Mohammed Jalood
IWF President

2.

The pre-IWF era: a practice
that followed the evolution
of human civilisation



The pre-IWF era: a practice that followed the evolution of human civilisation

If we can date the emergence of weightlifting as a 'sport' by the end of the 19th century, it is impossible to establish a point in time concerning the practice of lifting heavy objects: it goes back to the beginning of human civilisation!

In generic terms, 'physical activities', or even better, 'athletic performances', become a 'sport' when rules are established to harmonise those practices, national or international bodies are created to regulate them, periodical competitions are held, and a list of records is set so that comparison of results is possible over time.

Those were the main principles guiding the establishment of the precursor of the International Weightlifting Federation, back in 1905. The notion of 'sport' is therefore associated with the concept of a 'frame' whereby the boundaries and possibilities of that 'sport' are established. Those 'boundaries' are not set in stone; they are naturally evolving in time, after consensus is reached among the stakeholders of that 'sport'.

This is the 'organised' part of it. The one we develop in this publication, namely with the 120 milestones in the history of our International Federation, from 1905 to 2025.

But what happened before that structured 'frame' started to emerge?

The will to overcome human limits is as old as the history of humanity. The act of raising heavy objects is part of that philosophy. Considering that those activities clearly symbolise the strength of the person practicing them, and that the concept of 'strength' has potentially a 'limit', ancient rituals soon understood that 'lifting weights' is a demonstration of power and force, generating admiration, a sense of achievement, and working as a tool for body development.



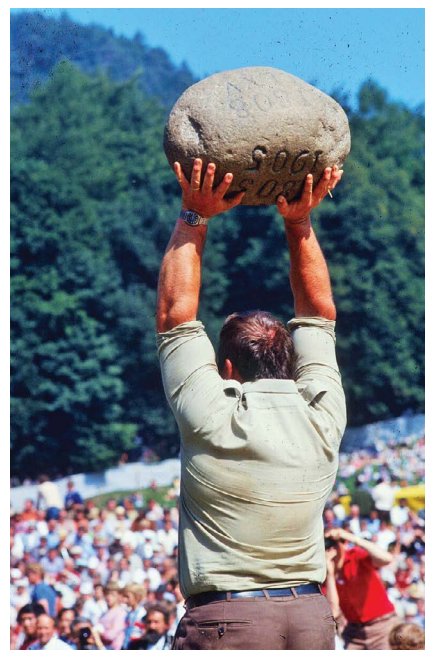
Bybon stone, from Ancient Greece

The first traces of these practices can be found back in those traditional civilisations that left some records, both pictorial and written. They all have a common characteristic: the 'lifting of weights' is mainly reserved for 'differentiated' members of the community, such as warriors, athletes, or leaders. Moreover, these demonstrations of strength are normally part of ceremonial displays, athletic performances, or military training.

Egypt, India, China, and Greece are just examples of ancient civilisations where these activities were practiced thousands of years ago. And before modern barbells and plates were invented, what were the objects lifted by those strong men? Bags of sand, heavy stones, and rudimentary types of metal halteres – depictions in Ancient Greece show that athletes taking part

in the earliest Olympics were building their muscles and strength by training with those halteres. Another example is China: soldiers and warriors had to lift very heavy stones as part of their preparation, and some of those rocks were engraved with the names of those who succeeded.

Throughout time and different cultures, 'weight lifting' also became a sort of rite, allowing young men to successfully prove their 'transition' to adulthood, a military-to-be into a soldier, or the capacity to enter a certain profession. There are reports of those rites in Nordic countries, namely in the fishing villages: young men were asked to lift heavy stones, and only the strongest ones were allowed to work on the boats.



Throwing the Unspunnen stone in Switzerland

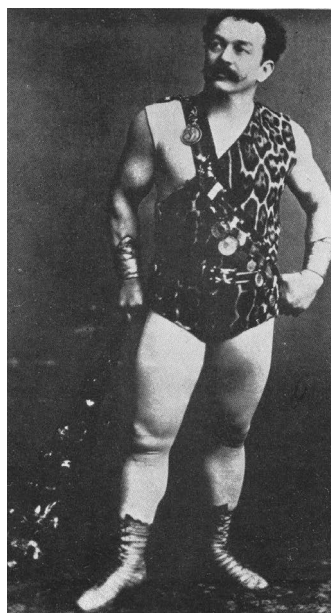
Even today, a reminiscence of those 'stone throws' remains in many countries. In Switzerland, the city of Interlaken (well in the centre of the Alpine nation), has been organising since 1805 (and every three years) the throwing of the "Unspunnen Stone", weighing 83.5kg. The present record stands at 4.11 metres. Many of these local traditions can be found in other parts of the globe – Scotland being another example, with the famous "Inver Stone" or the "Dinnie Stones".

While all these activities have essentially a ceremonial or exhibition character, we need to go back to 1531 to find the first reference in literature about the importance and advantages of weightlifting. Published in London and authored by Sir Thomas Elyot, "The Boke Named the Governor" dedicates a chapter to the "forms of exercise necessary for a gentleman". In there, he describes the physical benefits of lifting or "throwing the heavy stone or barre". Also in the 16th century, a lecturer of the Leipzig University in Germany, defended the model of a school where weightlifting activities were part of the programme. Similar theories were also circulating in academic circles in France.

The 1800s are however the turning point in the history of modern weightlifting.

In 1863, a Scottish gym instructor named Archibald MacClaren published an article called "National Systems of Bodily Exercise", in which eight movements with dumbbells and seven with barbells were described. He also wrote in detail, based on the practical work with his pupils, the effects of those movements on the body morphology.

Simultaneously, some lifters were already famous in Europe. Among those pioneering heroes was Felice Napoli, born in Italy in 1820. Mainly performing in circus exhibitions, he was however the mentor of other three men who had subsequently a great influence in the development of the sport: Ludwig Durlacher (from Germany, and known as Professor Attila), his compatriot and pupil Frederick Muller (who remained in history as Eugen Sandow), and Donald Dinnie (from Scotland).



Professor Attila in 1894

Prof. Attila, initially trained by Napoli, soon became a successful lifter and can be considered the first 'personal physical trainer' for celebrities, after supervising the preparation of many royal family members in Europe. Throughout his successful career, he opened several gyms, including in Brussels, London (where Sandow trained), and

even New York (he emigrated to the United States in 1893). Attila's main contribution and innovation at that time was the extensive use of hollow weights.

Sandow also had a prolific career, touring the world with his athletic performances. Considered by many as the "father of bodybuilding", he was obsessed with the Greek ideal of the human body, and built his physique to these exact proportions. In the publications he wrote, Sandow was the first to write about the methods and weight training to get this predetermined morphology.

Another of Attila's students was Edmond Desbonnet, who later became the main developer and promoter of weightlifting activities in France – he founded a renowned physical culture school in Lille. His magazine "La Culture Physique" became a reference in the French-speaking world.

Regarded as the "Nineteenth Century's Greatest Athlete", Donald Dinnie was an all-round athlete, competing in many sports and disciplines. With a career spanning over 50 years, he took part in thousands of competitions worldwide. Born in 1837, he was almost 60 years old when the first Olympic Games of the modern era took place in Athens (GRE) in 1896. However, sports experts say that had he been young enough to take part in those Games, he could have won seven gold medals!

In general, the dynamics behind the development of weightlifting ran in parallel in three areas: in Britain, as part of the gymnastics programme; in the US, already as an athletic activity; and in Germany and Austria, as essentially an entertainment performance.

1891 is an important year. In Duisburg, Germany, local associations and clubs decided to gather and constitute the "Deutschen Athletik Sport Verbanden" (German Athletic Sport Association), forming the premises of a national federation. Fourteen years later, in 1905, that same city of Duisburg was the place where the genesis of our International Federation took place.

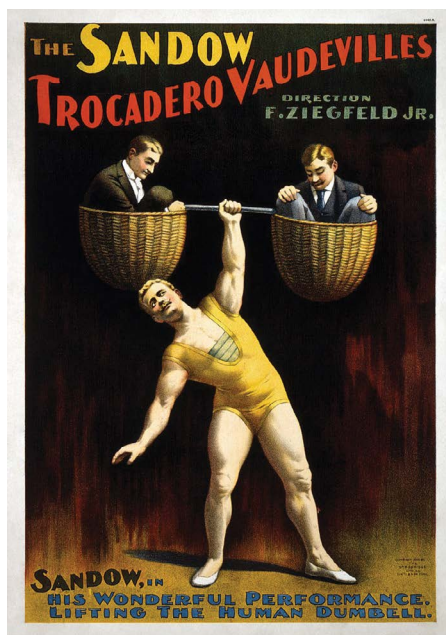
In March 1891, the first recognised international competition took place in London. Officially considered as the first World Championships of our sport, the event had the participation of lifters coming from Austria, Italy, Hungary, Britain, Belgium, and Germany. The winner was home hero Edward Lawrence Levy, after being the most successful athlete in eight "feats", which included the lifting of dumbbells of different weights above the head.

Before 1905, other 'World Championships' took place – in 1898 in Vienna (AUT), in 1899 in Milan (ITA), in 1903 in Paris (FRA), in 1904 again in the Austrian capital, and in 1905 in Berlin (GER).

In the meantime, and still without a formal structure or consolidated rules, weightlifting is one of the nine founding sports present in the 1896 Games in the Hellenic capital. Seven lifters from five countries were the first ones to compete in an Olympic arena, in two events: one-hand (won by Britain's Launceston Elliot) and two-hand (gold to Denmark's Viggo Jensen) lift.

With the multiplication of international events, the co-existence of different rules and unorthodox interpretations of those rules, it became necessary to establish a 'frame'. On June 10, 1905 that work began in a more structured way.

The rest is history!



Poster of Eugen Sandow exhibition

3.

Timeline 1905-2025



TIMELINE

1905-2025

2025 is a very special year for the IWF, as it marks the 120th anniversary since its foundation on June 10, 1905. In Duisburg, Germany, the pioneering national federations that established the basis of the world governing body for the sport of weightlifting, were far from imagining the progress made during this rich and prestigious history.

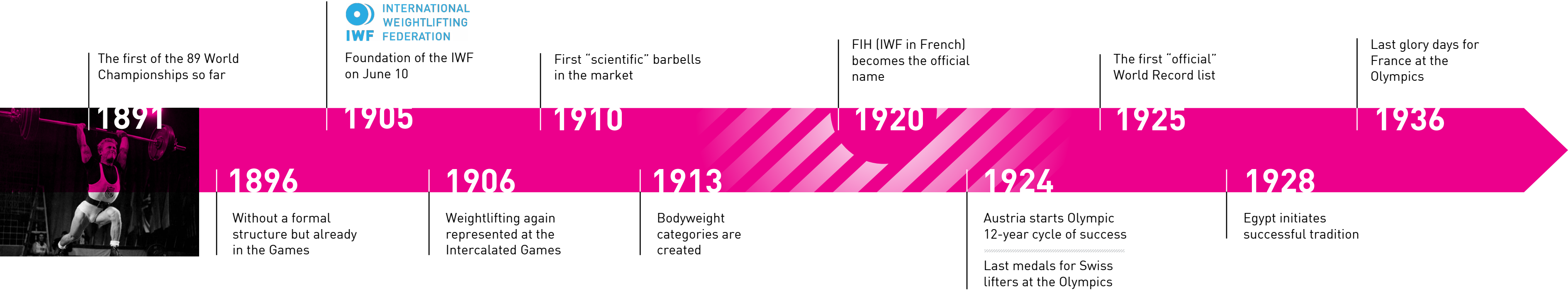
From February 11 to June 10, 2025 (exactly 120 days) a milestone in the history of the IWF was originally published on a daily basis in our International Federation’s website and social media channels. Those short

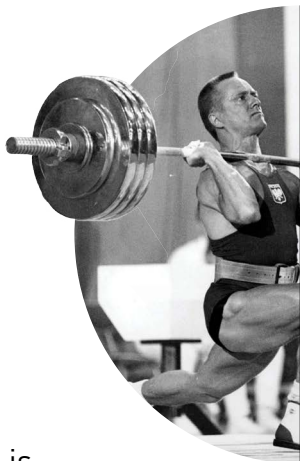
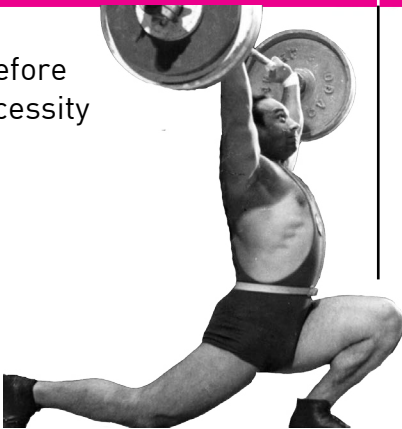
stories included pivotal moments in the IWF’s life, the performances of great legends of the sport, or unforgettable moments at weightlifting major competitions.

These highlights were not presented in chronological order, but were re-ordered by date for the purpose of this publication. They do not pretend to be an exhaustive list of the IWF achievements during these 120 years. They are selected moments and feats of those men and women who made weightlifting a great and important Sport in the Olympic movement.

In a year of celebration, let’s then get inspired by the IWF’s history, an organisation initially created to provide a structured framework for competitions and to create opportunities for weightlifters to showcase their talents on an international stage, but that became over these years an inspiring platform for all those loving the sport of weightlifting.

All the milestones are updated as of June 2025





Lifters from the five continents are represented at the Olympics

Stanley Stanczyk (USA), a winner in sport and in life

Rodney Wilkes, the pride of Trinidad and Tobago

Ibrahim Shams (EGY) wins gold after a 12-year wait

Pan-American federation, the first continental body

Mahmoud Namdjou (IRI), one of the best lifters of the decade

Isaac Berger (USA), three Olympics, three medals

Humberto Selvetti, an Argentinean idol

Asian Federation is founded in Tokyo (JPN)

Leonid Zhabotinsky (URS), a reference of the 1960s

Norbert Schemansky (USA) clinches fourth Olympic medal!

Waldemar Baszanowski, a reference in Polish weightlifting

Sam Coffa proudly competes for Australia at the Olympics

Uesaka gains visibility at the Tokyo Games

Mohammad Nassiri shines at the highest level for Iran

Kaarlo Kangasniemi, an icon of Finnish weightlifting

Serge Reding earns last Olympic medal for Belgium

1948

1951

1956

1958

1964

1968

1950

Time limit before the lift, a necessity

1952

The start of an Olympic saga for Arkady Vorobyov (URS)

John Davis (USA) completes a 14-year winning streak with second Olympic gold

1957

Eleiko, from the kitchen to the fitness centre

1960

Miyake, a dynasty of success in Japan!

Yuri Vlasov (URS), the intellectual “strongest man”

Tan Howe Liang becomes a national hero in Singapore

1967

World Championships, an (almost) annual tradition

First medals for individual movements

European Federation sees the day in Warsaw (POL)

1969

1970

Vasily Alekseyev (URS) emerges to glory

1972

The end of the Press movement

Weightlifting pays a heavy price on Olympics' saddest day

Zygmunt Smalcerz leads Polish success in Munich

Gottfried Schödl (AUT), IWF's longest-serving President

Norair Nurikian, the first Bulgarian golden lifter

Olympic title crowns a superb career for Imre Foldi (HUN)

1973

Olympic weightlifting at the core of the IWF activities

1975

Junior lifters compete at the highest level

1976

Mixed feelings at the Montreal Games

David Rigert (URS), the lifter improving 65 WR!

1977

China starts its pathway to excellence

1980

Oceania Federation is born in Melbourne

1981

Re-setting milestones in the IWF history

1983

Women's weightlifting under IWF's umbrella

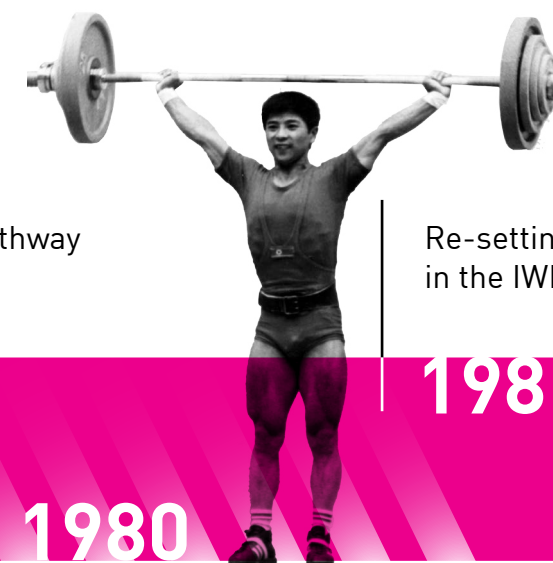
Start of a successful story for ZKC

1984

Dean Lukin, the only Olympic gold for Australia

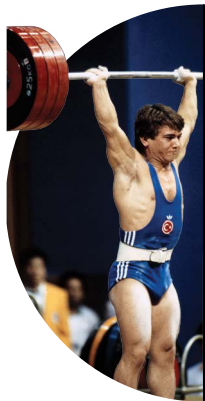
The beginning of a solid Olympic presence for Chinese Taipei

Norberto Oberburger, the last Italian Olympic champion



Yurik Vardanyan (URS) retires after a brilliant career

Joachim Kunz gets the gold in the last Games for the GDR



Naim Suleymanoglu (TUR) becomes a legend
Pablo Lara (CUB) earns his second Olympic medal
Andrey Chemerkin (RUS) is the man to beat in the super heavyweight category

Women compete in the Olympics
Tara Nott (USA), the first female lifter with Olympic gold
Dika Toua (PNG), an example of longevity in sport!
Kakhi Kakhiashvili completes the Olympic treble

Pyrros Dimas, a hero in Greece and in weightlifting
Halil Mutlu (TUR) enters a very 'exclusive' club
Nataliya Skakun, the last Olympic winner for Ukraine

Olympian Marcus Stephen becomes President of Nauru

1985

1988

1996

2000

2004

2007

1987

Karyn Marshall (USA), a pioneer in weightlifting
Maria Takacs (HUN), 33 world medals (but never the gold...)

1992

Hall of Fame honours the 'best of the best'
German ace Ronny Weller reaches the top of a superb career

1997

Last major title for Bulgarian ace Yoto Yotov



2005

Adoption of the 1kg-increment rule

Female lifters set Olympic milestones for Thailand
Nikolay Peshalov clinches sole Olympic gold so far for Croatia
Soraya Jimenez (MEX) shines before a tragic decline
Iran celebrates its new star – Hossein Rezazadeh

A 'delayed' but historical medal for Samoa

Belarus on top of the world with Andrei Aramnau

Matthias Steiner (GER), lifting for gold and for his late wife

Maryam Usman, Nigeria's strongest woman

Chen Yanqing (CHN) – fighting against all odds

Eko Yuli Irawan (INA) starts his Olympic harvest



IWF gets a new visual identity

IWF and ITA together in the fight against doping



Hidilyn Diaz makes history for the Philippines

Ecuador celebrates its brightest Star – Neisi Dajomes

Akbar Djuraev, the best so far for Uzbekistan

Meso Hassona becomes Qatar's first Olympic champion

Shi Zhiyong (CHN) completes nine years of invincibility with gold in Tokyo

Polina Guryeva, a special medal for Turkmenistan

Creation of the IWF Refugee Team

Approval of the first-ever IWF Strategic Plan

A day to be remembered by the weightlifting family – October 16

Knowing one of the basic lifts – Snatch

Knowing one of the basic lifts – Clean & Jerk

2008

2014

2019

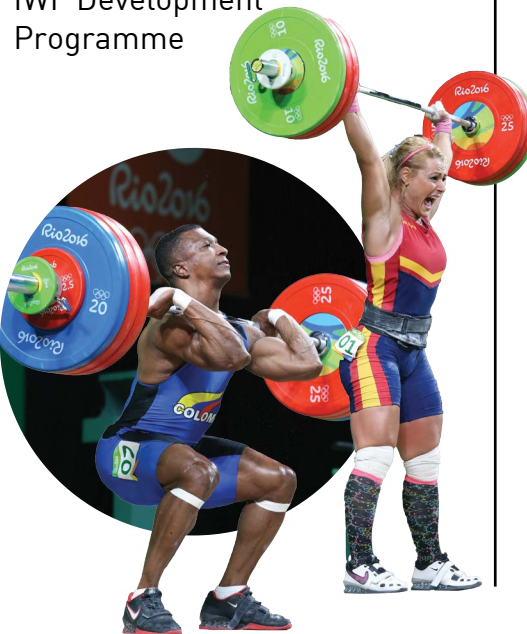
2021

2023

2025

2009

Creation of the IWF Development Programme



2016

Do it first, no matter your body weight!

Lasha Talakhadze (GEO) ascends to stardom

19-year-old Simon Martirosyan shines for Armenia

Deng Wei (CHN) crowns a fantastic career with the Olympic gold

The first, third Olympic medal for Lydia Valentin (ESP)

Oscar Figueroa, the shiniest Colombian star

2020

Ursula Papandrea (USA) reaches the top of the IWF hierarchy

2022

Mohammed Jalood starts a new era for the IWF

Bringing weightlifting to the street

Members of the Athletes Commission are elected by their pee

2024

Lima tests with success the two-platform format

Maude Charron enters in the Canadian weightlifting pantheon

Emily Campbell (GBR) secures her place in the history books

History in the making for Karlos Nasar (BUL)

Solfrid Koanda (NOR) is the last one to know she won gold

Li Wenwen (CHN) 'jumps' for the gold at the Games

4.

120 years,
120 milestones

120 years, 120 milestones

1891



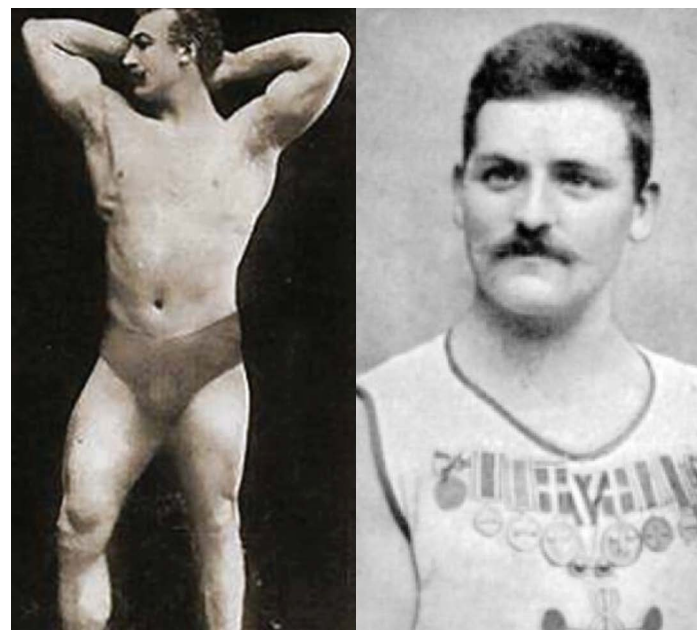
The first of the 89 World Championships so far

Despite being hard to conceive, the first recognised “World Championship” contest took place in March 1891 in London. Fourteen years before the foundation of our International Federation, the event gathered seven athletes from six nations: for the history books, Edward Lawrence Levy (GBR) was the first “world champion”. With awkward athletic exercises and no formal frame, these “championships” had five more editions (1898, 1899, 1903, 1904, and 1905) until IWF’s ancestor saw the day, in June 1905. Since then, things have become more organised, but the “world” event was still totally dominated by Europe. In 1937, after a 14-year hiatus, the 23rd edition takes place in Paris (FRA) and seven lifters from the Americas are present. The following year, in Vienna (AUT), a third continent is represented: Africa. Four continents (including Asia) sent their best athletes to the 1949 event in Schenning (NED) and in 1958 (*in the photo: Ike Berger, USA, winner in the 60kg category*), the entire world meets in Stockholm (including for the first time two lifters from the fifth continent, Oceania). Participation numbers also grow steadily – Vienna 1954 reaches for the first time 100 lifters (only men at the time, and until 1986), Ljubljana (YUG, now SLO) 1982 gathers 205 athletes, and Donaueschingen (GER) 1991 is attended by 308 competitors (200 men and 108 women). If from 1964 to 1984 (included) the Olympics counted as World Championships for that year, the IWF showcase in the year preceding the Games is normally more attended than non-qualifying ones. It was for example the case in 1999 (before the Sydney 2000 Games), when the Worlds in Athens (GRE) registered the highest male participation so far – 395 lifters. Overall, the 2023 edition in Riyadh (KSA) – a qualification event for the Paris 2024 Olympics – was the most attended in IWF’s history, with 682 lifters (348 men, 334 women). Only once, in 2022 in Bogota, female lifters were more numerous than their male counterparts – the Colombian rendezvous attracted 265 women and 263 men.

1896

Without a formal structure but already in the Games

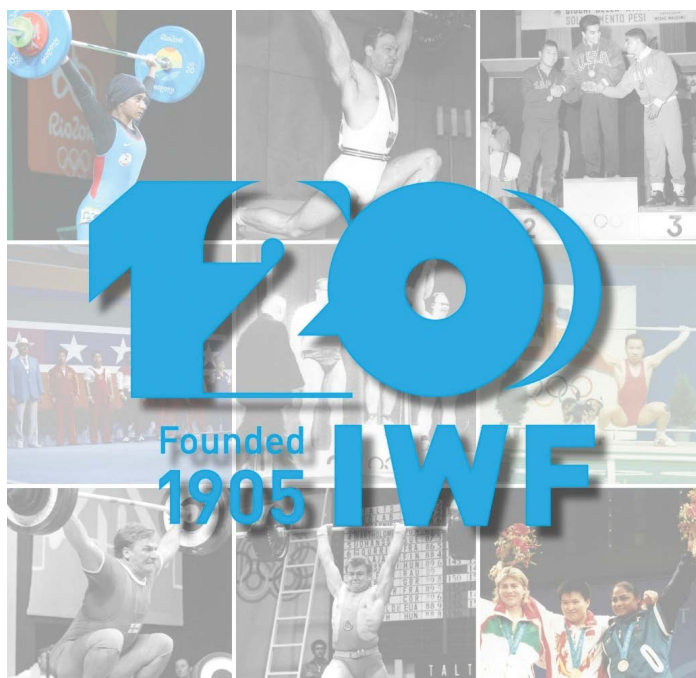
The foundation of the IWF in 1905 does not mean that the sport of weightlifting was only “born” then. From that important moment on, it became more structured, but its practice was popular by the middle of the 19th century. The “strength” movements were part of the physical education exercises, so when Pierre de Coubertin decides to revive the Olympic Games, weightlifting appears without surprise in its first edition, in 1896 in Athens, Greece. It was one of the nine sports on the programme, together with Athletics, Cycling, Fencing, Gymnastics, Shooting, Swimming, Tennis, and Wrestling. At the Panathinaiko Stadium, seven lifters from five nations (Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, and Hungary) competed in two events: one-hand and two-hand lifts. Competitors were not divided by body categories (this was namely one of the rules later imposed by the IWF), and the first two Olympic champions in history came from Great Britain and Denmark. In the one-hand event, Launceston Elliot (*left, photo*), won the first gold of his country in the history of the Games, lifting 71kg. Earlier in that same day, at the two-hand contest, Elliot and Viggo Jensen, from Denmark (*right, photo*), had finished tied at 111.5kg, but judges decided that Jensen’s attempt had been performed with more style... He also remains in the history books as the first Olympic champion representing Denmark.



1905

Foundation of the IWF on June 10

On June 10, 1905, the premises of the International Weightlifting Federation were laid down in the city of Duisburg (GER). The initiative for such a gathering came from the German national body two months earlier. The objective was to create a world union, with the following objectives: 1. To standardise the names, execution, and evaluation of exercises; 2. To hold competitions under standardised regulations; 3. To only accept the presence in these competitions of members affiliated to the world union; 4. To strictly observe the amateur rules; 5. To fix the value of prizes to be awarded; 6. To unify the rules related to records. Despite the invitation being sent to 11 countries, only four were present on that historic day in Duisburg: Denmark, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. They are the official four founding members of the IWF! The only two points on the agenda of that inaugural meeting were: 1. A resolution on founding an international union in weightlifting and wrestling, and a decision about its name; 2. The creation of a commission, with representatives of these four nations, in charge of elaborating the details of the exercises and the running of international competitions. The first name of the world body in charge of governing weightlifting (and wrestling at the time) was "Amateur Athletic World Union". Other nations slowly joined the new organisation, which had 16 members in 1913. In 1920, Weightlifting became the only sport governed by the Federation, and in 1972, the definitive name of 'International Weightlifting Federation' was adopted.



1906

Weightlifting again represented at the Intercalated Games

They are often named the "Forgotten Games", but they were originally called the "Second International Olympic Games in Athens". Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the Modern Olympic Movement, was opposed to the idea of staging this event in the Hellenic capital in 1906, but several factors led to its organisation: the unsuccessful "official" Games in Paris 1900 (all resources going to the Universal Exhibition running in parallel) and St-Louis 1904 (travelling to the USA was not as easy as in present days...); the desire of the Greek officials to "extend" the achievements of the first edition of the Games in 1896 (where our sport was already included), celebrating in the best possible way the 10th anniversary of the Games revival; finally, the possibility for the many athletes that could not travel to St-Louis to take part in an international competition. For the IWF, it was also the opportunity to gather the best lifters of that time, just 10 months after its foundation, in June 1905. Despite the desire for some regulation, athletes from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Sweden, and Turkey continued to perform in just two events: one-hand and two-hand lift. Josef Steinbach (AUT) was the best at one-hand, while Dimitrios Tofalos (*photo*) became a local hero after winning the two-hand competition. Italy, Germany, and France were the other countries with weightlifting medals. Overall, the Games were a success, with the participation of 854 athletes from 20 nations, competing in 12 sports. The Hellenic idea of keeping these Games in Athens every four years (between the "official" Olympic Games) was abandoned after financial difficulties dictated the cancellation of the 1910 edition, and World War I compromised the 1914 and 1918 Games. Because of that, the IOC never officially recognised the performances of the 1906 event as Olympic results.

1905 - 2025



1920

FIH (IWF in French) becomes the official name

The name "International Weightlifting Federation" – and the corresponding acronym (IWF) – was not the one that was originally defined on the foundation date, in 1905. By then, its first designation was "Amateur Athletic World Union", combining the sport of weightlifting and wrestling. In 1912, it became the "International World Federation for Strength Athletics", and one year later, the word "Amateur" was added to the name. The advent of World War I in 1914 provoked a disruption in the Olympic movement (the 1916 Olympics were cancelled) and the international federations were not an exception. After a period of turbulence and almost no sport activity, the 1920 Games were held in Antwerp (BEL), and with no real functional organisation in charge of running the weightlifting events, the Belgian national body took that responsibility. Moreover, there was a spirit of great animosity against the losers of the conflict, namely Germany, Austria, and Hungary. Amidst this turmoil of circumstances, Jules Rosset (photo), initially a wrestler and president of the French Federation (of weightlifting and wrestling), proposes (some historians prefer "imposes") the split of the former body and the creation of the "Fédération Internationale d'Haltérophilie" (FIH, literally IWF), only responsible for weightlifting. The reaction of the "International Amateur World Federation for Strength Athletics" (led by Hungary's Peter Tactics) was immediate but soon the majority of the members adhered to the renovated entity, whose Board is controlled by French representatives (besides Rosset, the General Secretary and Treasurer also come from France). One of the first main milestones in Rosset's presidency (which will last until 1937, and then again from 1946 to 1952) is the announcement in June 1921 that weightlifting will remain in the programme of the Olympic Games. In 1972, the English versions of "International Weightlifting Federation" and IWF are definitively adopted.



1924

Austria starts Olympic 12-year cycle of success

Despite intense discussions around the participation of Austria in the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris – the country had been one of the defeated belligerents during World War I and had been banned in the 1920 edition in Antwerp –, Austrian lifters were finally present in the French capital. And the least we can say is that their participation was quite successful, with four medals – three silver (Andreas Stadler, Anton Zwerina, and Franz Aigner) and a bronze (Leopold Friedrich). Four years later, in Amsterdam, the Austrian delegation clinched two victories, thanks to Franz Andrysek (60kg) and Hans Haas (67.5kg). In Los Angeles 1932, Haas will become the sole Austrian lifter with two Olympic medals until the present day, by adding a silver to his roll of honour. Karl Hipfinger (75kg) also got a bronze medal in California. In 1936, Berlin hosted the Olympics in a dangerous time for Europe, and Robert Fein (gold in the 67.5kg category) closed the Olympic medal count for Austria. With nine medals, weightlifting is the third most successful sport for the central European nation, after sailing and canoeing. Both Haas and Fein (photo) were Jewish: if the first one could complete his career without major problems, Fein's story was completely different. After the victory in Berlin (he was one of the 13 Jewish athletes getting a medal there), he could still earn a silver at the 1937 World Championships in Paris, but with the instauration of anti-Semitic laws in Austria, he was barred from competing. Never again, after World War II, did Austria know such achievements from its athletes. On the administration level, things were different: curiously born in 1924, Gottfried Schödl was one of the most prominent IWF officials, entering the Executive Board in 1964 and being elected IWF President in 1972 (until 2000).

1924

Last medals for Swiss lifters at the Olympics

Switzerland is presently the most important country in the world concerning sports international administration: from 1915 hosting the International Olympic Committee, since then many International Sports Federations – including the IWF – are also headquartered in the Alpine nation. The history of the country at the Olympics has been quite successful, with special emphasis going to the Winter Games. In weightlifting, Switzerland has won four medals so far, the last ones dating back more than 100 years ago. It all started in Antwerp 1920, with Eugene Ryther winning bronze in the 60kg category. His teammate Fritz Hunenberger (*photo*) would become the most successful athlete in the Olympic history of the country, by earning silver in Belgium (in the 82.5kg category), and then by finishing also second at the Paris 1924 Olympics (behind the star of that time, France’s Charles Rigoulot). He is the only Swiss lifter with two podium presences in the Games. Native from the Basel region (on the border with Germany and France), he competed for a German club in the early years of the 1920s. The Swiss harvest in the Olympics was completed by Arthur Reinmann, bronze medallist also in the French capital, 101 years ago. He also took part at the 1928 rendezvous in Amsterdam, but finished fifth. In recent years, Switzerland had in Scheila Meister its most prominent lifter: born in 1987, she had a late entry into the sport, but managed a fourth place at the 2023 European Championships. At 37, at the last IWF World Championships in December 2024, she was still present, finishing 18th in the 59kg category.



WORLD RECORDS

SENIOR MEN'S WORLD RECORDS

Current

Senior

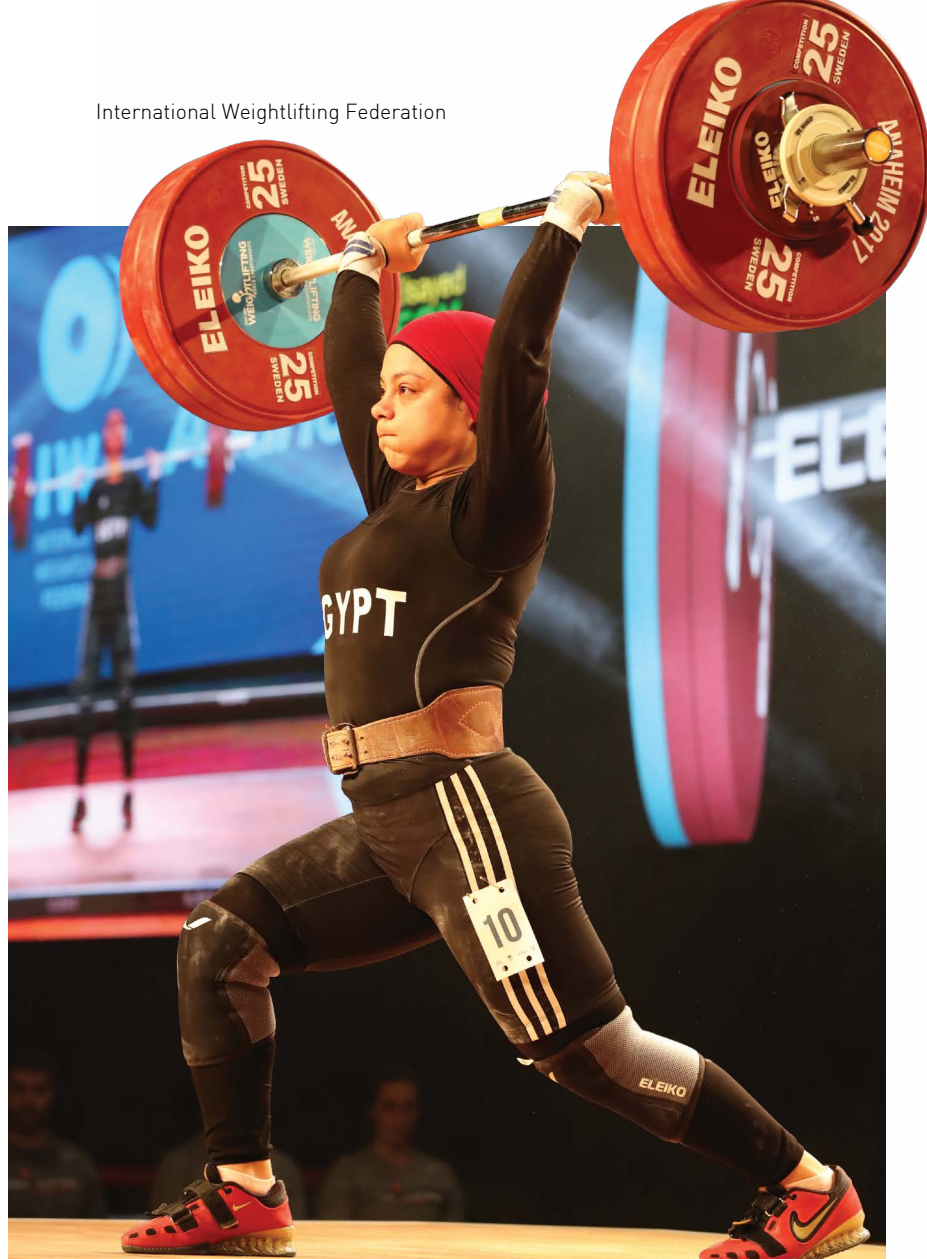
Men

1905 - 2025

1925

The first “official” World Record list

Following the consolidation of the FIH (“Fédération Internationale d’Haltérophilie”, the French version of the IWF) after 1920, and the establishment of the weightlifting programme for the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam – where one-hand movements were banned and remained a triathlon of events formed by the press, snatch, and clean & jerk, all with both hands – an FIH Rules Commission was created in 1924. One of its missions was the establishment of clear sport rules, with one obvious consequence: the “cleaning” of the performances listed until then as “World Records”. The Commission published in March 1925 the first official set of World Records, with results only going back to 1922. With some of the lifts reflecting the results of the Paris Olympic Games, held in July 1924, seven records are proposed for each of the five bodyweight categories (60kg, 67.5kg, 75kg, 82.5kg, and +82.5kg): right-hand snatch, left-hand snatch, right-hand clean & jerk (C&J), left-hand C&J, two-hand press, two-hand snatch, and two-hand C&J. By the standards of 1925, Charles Rigoulot, from France, was the strongest man in the field, with a successful (two-hand) C&J of 160.5kg in the heaviest category. The French star had been the Olympic champion in the 82.5kg, with a total of 502.5kg (for the five events still on the programme, the three with two hands, plus one-hand snatch and one-hand C&J).



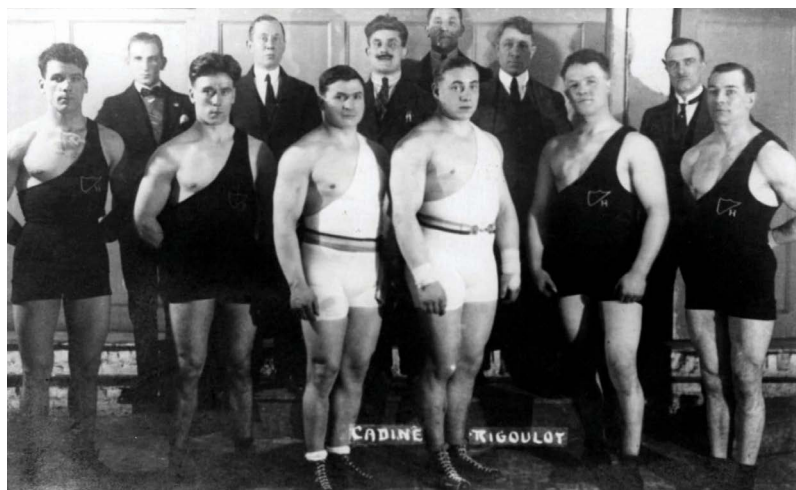
1928

Egypt initiates successful tradition

The Egyptian Weightlifting Federation was the first African national body to be affiliated with the IWF in 1930, a time when its lifters were already shining in the international scene. Two years before, at the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam, El-Sayed Nosseir wins the first-ever gold (all sports included) for his nation, in the men's light heavyweight category. It was the beginning of a successful story for the Land of the Pharaohs. Throughout the Olympic history, Egypt has earned 41 medals, with weightlifting being the most prolific sport, with 15 podium presences, including five titles (out of the overall nine). After Nosseir's feats, Anwar Mesbah and Khadr EL-Touni (both Olympic champions in 1936), but also Mahmoud Fayad and Ibrahim Shams (gold in 1948 for both) shone in the Games. More recently, Egyptian female lifters are also making the headlines at the highest level: Abeer Abdelrahman and Sara Samir (*photo*), who have a silver and a bronze medal each. Abdelrahman was second in London 2012 and third in Beijing 2008, while Samir was the runner-up in Paris 2024 and bronze medallist in Rio 2016. At the IWF World Championships level, Egypt is by far the most successful African nation, with a total of 42 (only Total) and 74 (Snatch, Clean & Jerk, Press, and Total) medals.

Last glory days for France at the Olympics

During its first decades of life, our International Federation had a strong institutional influence from France and it was without surprise that Jules Rosset presided over the world governing body from 1920 to 1937, and then again from 1946 to 1952. In parallel, French lifters were also shining on the platform, amassing nine Olympic gold medals, precisely between 1920 and 1936 – these are the country's only Olympic triumphs in the Sport until today. The most successful lifter of this impressive generation was Louis Hostin, Olympic champion in 1932 and 1936, and runner-up in 1928, competing in the 82.5kg. He was also a two-time world medallist (silver in 1937 and bronze in 1938). Finally, he established 10 World Records throughout his career. He is the only lifter in French Olympic history with two gold medals. The remaining champions at the Games were Ernest Cadine (*photo – appearing with his teammates of the French team in the 1920s*) and Henri Gance (in 1920), Charles Rigoulot and Edmond Decottignies (in 1924), Roger François (1928), René Duverger and Ryamond Suvinny (1932). Besides these 'golden' performances, France would get another three silver (1928, 1976, and 2012) and three bronze (1920, 1928, and 1956) throughout its Olympic participation in weightlifting. The last success was a second place in London 2012, with Vencelas Dabaya, initially fifth, but climbing to the podium after subsequent disqualifications due to doping problems. In 2024, when the Games were back in Paris, the French athletes could not replicate the successes of their predecessors 100 years earlier: despite the presence of four athletes, the best lifter was Marie Fegue, fifth in the women's 71kg.



1936

1978

Lifters from the five continents are represented at the Olympics

The presence of weightlifting at the Games reflects the evolution of the sport in the five continents, the status of our International Federation in the Olympic Movement, and is even determined by the location of the biggest sports event on the planet. It all started modestly, in the first edition of Games, in Athens 1896: seven lifters from five nations. In 1904, in St. Louis (USA), weightlifting had its poorest Olympic presence: only five athletes from two countries (the host nation, plus Greece). Things became more interesting from the 1924 edition onwards: in Paris, our Sport is represented for the first time with more than 100 athletes – 107 (only men at the time). The number of nations remains on the other hand low, with no more than 16 countries. The end of World War II meant a turning point for weightlifting, as the London 1948 Games (*photo from a weightlifting podium ceremony*), attended by 120 lifters, will have representation from the five continents, a first – Australia and New Zealand began their weightlifting Olympic road in the British capital. Oceania was finally present at the Games! Until 1996, the last edition only attended by men, the participation steadily improved (the exception being Melbourne 1956, much due to the geographical location of the event), with the highest number being Barcelona 1992, with 245 male lifters, from 69 countries. From Sydney 2000, women are also part of the competition, and including the last edition of the Games, in 2024 in Paris, the most significant overall presence in the Olympics, was in Rio 2016, with 260 lifters – 156 men and 104 women.



1961



Stanley Stanczyk (USA), a winner in sport and in life

Born in 1925 in a Polish family that had immigrated to Wisconsin (USA), Stanley 'Stan' Stanczyk and his parents moved to Detroit one year later, after an epidemic killed his two elder sisters. In his new home, life never ceased to be difficult: the random jobs of his father and the associated poverty obliged young Stan to be strong, morally and physically. He discovered weightlifting in his teenage years – to "gain muscles" – and in 1943 he was mobilised in the US Army during the last years of World War II. Six months after his discharge, he took part in the 1946 World Championships in Paris (the first major competition after the conflict) and won his first of many titles. He would repeat the achievement in the subsequent four editions of the global showcase, in 1947, 1949, 1950 (when he got his best result of 125-130-165-420), and 1951. In the meantime, he travelled to London, for the 1948 Olympics, and was also above the field in the British capital, clinching gold in 130-130-157.5-417.5. In Helsinki 1952, for his second Olympic appearance, he was the runner-up in his category (82.5kg), securing the silver medal in 127.5-127.5-160-415. In 1951, he was also the best in the first edition of the Pan-American Games. He was still present at the 1953 and 1954 IWF Worlds, earning the bronze on both occasions. After that, he retired from the sport (in which he improved eight World Records) and opened a bowling alley in Florida – together with his wife, they ran the business for 27 years and Stan became also a talented player. He passed away in 1997, aged 72.

1948

Rodney Wilkes, the pride of Trinidad and Tobago

Since it started its Olympic participation at the 1948 Games in London, Trinidad and Tobago has amassed until 2024 a total of 19 medals. Fifteen of them come from Athletics, undoubtedly a sport with great tradition and superb athletes in the Caribbean island. But the second best in the medal chart is Weightlifting, with early podium presences precisely in 1948, and 1952. In the 60kg category, Rodney Wilkes (*photo*) earned the first-ever Olympic medal for his nation, by placing second in the British capital. Born in 1925, Wilkes (nicknamed the "Mighty Midget" or "Midget Atom") was first noticed when he won gold at the 1946 Central American and Caribbean Games. Arrived in London, Wilkes made a combined result (Press, Snatch, and Clean & Jerk) of 97.5-97.5-122.5-317.5, getting silver behind Egypt's Mahmoud Fayad. Four years later, in Helsinki (FIN), the Caribbean ace made a better total (100-100-122.5-322.5), but had to content with the bronze. In the Finnish capital, his teammate Lennox Kilgour (1927-2004) would also shine (in the 90kg), with a third place (Total of 402.5kg). In 1951, at the first Pan-American Games, Wilkes was champion, a feat that he also achieved at the 1954 Commonwealth Games. In a time when international travel was not the norm (and was extremely expensive), Wilkes could never compete at the IWF World Championships, mostly organised in Europe during the 1950s. After achieving a fourth place in Melbourne 1956 (Total of 330kg), and failing the qualification for Rome 1960, Wilkes retires from the sport and works as an electrician in Trinidad and Tobago. Some days after completing his 89th anniversary, he passed away in March 2014. Since his (and Kilgour's) early feats, no more lifters from the Caribbean nation have medalled at the Olympic level.



1948

Ibrahim Shams (EGY) wins gold after a 12-year wait

The successful tale of Olympic legends is often made of resilience and patience, but the story of Ibrahim Shams can be ranked at the top of that list. Born in 1914, he was 22 when he took part in his first Olympics, in Berlin 1936. In the 60kg, he earned the bronze medal, after lifting 80-95-125-300 (lifters from Egypt won five medals at those Games). It was his first major international outcome, in a career that was aimed at greater successes. However, after those Games, World War II halted all sports activities, and two editions of the Olympics – 1940 and 1944 – had to be cancelled. In theory, those could have been the most prolific years for Shams, who nevertheless knew that his most illustrious hour was yet to come. Twelve years after his initial Olympic rendez-vous, the Egyptian legend was ready to make history in London 1948. Competing in the 67.5 category, he clinched gold at the age of 34, with a solid performance of 97.5-115-147.5-360. Proving that this achievement was not an isolated one, Shams added two gold medals to his roll of honour, at the 1949 and 1951 editions of the World Championships. In Egypt's Olympic history, Shams became the second athlete to earn two medals (after diver Simaika, at the 1928 Olympics), and the first one to make it in two different editions of the Games. Until his retirement, at almost 40, Shams also improved five World Records during his brilliant career (one in Snatch and four in Clean & Jerk). The Egyptian legend died in 2001.



1950

Time limit before the lift, a necessity

In October 1950, on the occasion of the World Championships, the International Federation's Congress was convened in Paris (FRA). Welcoming the delegates at home, President Jules Rosset expressed in his report a major concern within the weightlifting family: the time lifters were taking before actually performing their attempt. As there were no restrictions back then, Rosset said: *"It sometimes lasts five and even 10 minutes, as certain athletes stage veritable comedies before seizing the weights. With such a procedure, we shall gradually lose the attendance of many people at our competitions. I think it would be good to set a time limit and then disqualify the performance of any athlete who has gone beyond it"*. Despite the presidential recommendation (and a British proposal to set this limit at three minutes), delegates at the Congress could not reach a consensus, but a compromise was set: at the World Championships in the French capital, there would be a record on the average time for the lifts and a then a formal rule should be applied for the 1951 edition onwards. The three-minute tolerance was effectively approved in the early years of the 1950s and updated more than two decades later (in 1976) to two minutes. At present, at the current IWF events and the Olympic Games, there are the following time limits (whose countdowns are displayed in the attempt board – *illustrative photo*): two minutes if the same athlete performs consecutive lifts and one minute if a different athlete is called on the platform.

1951

Pan-American federation, the first continental body

At the 1948 Congress In London, Vice-President Dietrich Wortmann from the USA, introduced an important subject into the discussion: the possible creation of continental federations. Forty-three years after the foundation of the IWF, his arguments were: *"There should be a representative in each continent who should be officially responsible for holding all international meetings in that continent, supervising any international matters in his own district, and sending in reports and records"* to the IWF. Three years later, in 1951, the first continental body is created in Buenos Aires: the Pan-American Weightlifting Federation. Presided by the José L. Montalvo (ARG) one of its first missions was to help in the organisation of the first-ever Pan-American Games held on that year in the Argentinean capital, and where weightlifting was already part of the programme. Presently comprising 38 members in the Americas (traditionally including North, Central and Caribbean and South America), its headquarters are in accordance with its statutes where the President is located (presently in Lima, Peru). Under the auspices of the Pan-American Weightlifting Federation, continental championships are held annually: the 2024 event was successfully staged in Caracas (Venezuela) and this year's showcase is programmed in Cali (Colombia). Pan-American athletes are quite successful at the IWF events – at the 2024 Worlds in Manama (Bahrain), they got 14 medals, while seven podium presences were proudly achieved some months earlier at the Paris Olympic Games.

1905 - 2025

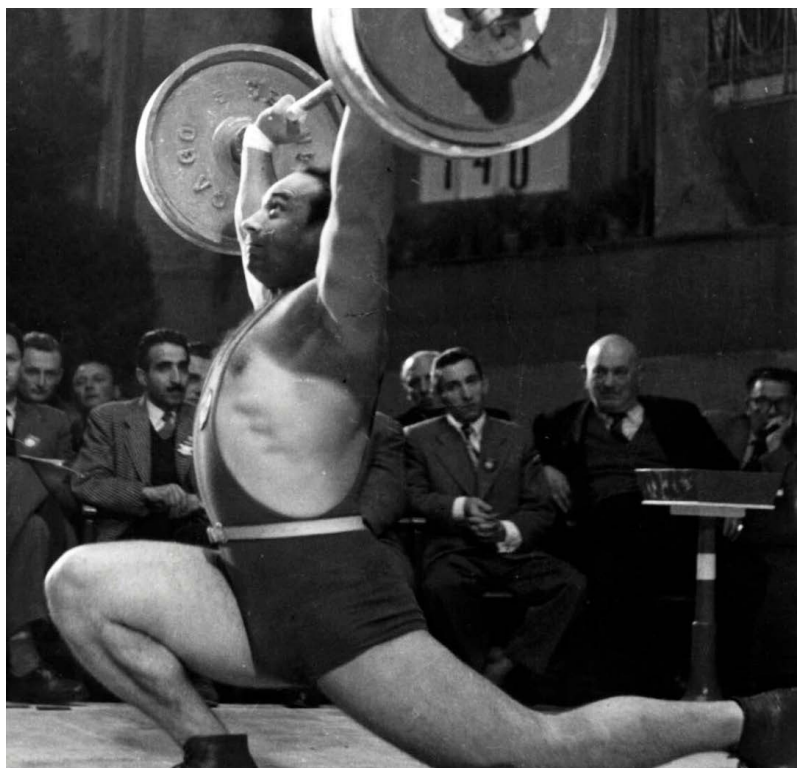


1952

Tommy Kono (USA) wins his first Olympic gold

Tamio "Tommy" Kono is today considered one of the greatest weightlifters in history, but we can say his ascension to fame was basically due to hazardous circumstances. He was born in Sacramento (California, USA) to Japanese descent parents in 1930. When he was 12, the US government decided during World War II that his family (like many other Japanese-American ones in the country) should be relocated to an internment camp. Suffering from asthma, the location of the camp – in the Californian desert – helped him recover from this condition. Moreover, he discovers weightlifting inside the camp and starts training there with other relocated friends. It is evident that the young champion-to-be has a talent for the sport, and after being liberated from the camp at the end of the world conflict, he is some years later enrolled in the US Army. In 1950, his destiny could have been the Korean War, but it was decided to keep him in the country, as his Olympic potential was already notorious. The decision proved wise, as he went on to earn the gold medal (67.5kg category: 105-117.5-140-362.5) at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, followed by a second title four years later in Melbourne 1956 (82.5kg: 140-132.5-175-447.5). At the Rome 1960 Games, he still gets a silver medal in the 75kg bodyweight category (140-127.5-160-427.5). In parallel, he is a six-time world champion, from 1953 to 1959. Finally, he also won three Pan-American titles (1955, 1959, and 1963) and established 22 World Records throughout his amazing career! Also a bodybuilder, he is elected Mr Universe on four occasions – 1954, 1955, 1957, and 1961. After his retirement, he became a coach, namely heading the US team to the 1976 Games in Montreal. Based in Honolulu, Hawaii, since 1955, Tommy Kono died there in April 2016, a couple of months before completing his 86th anniversary.





1952

The start of an Olympic saga for Arkady Vorobyov (URS)

In the multitude of Soviet lifters that excelled at Olympic and world level between the 1950s and 1980s, Arkady Vorobyov emerges as the most successful and prolific one at the Games level, with two gold and one bronze medal. Born in 1924, Vorobyov serves in the Soviet Army during World War II, mainly clearing mines in the port of Odessa, as a diver. It is there that he starts practicing weightlifting, with notable results at the national level. In 1950, he takes part in the World Championships in Paris, finishing second in the 82.5kg category. Two years later, he travels to Helsinki (FIN) for his first Olympic appearance – in the same category, he earns bronze with a result of 120-127.5-160-407.5. He will do much better in the subsequent two editions – Melbourne 1956 and Rome 1960 – where he clinches gold on both occasions. In Australia, he lifts 147.5-137.5-177.5-462.5, while in the Italian capital, his winning performance is 152.5-142.5-177.5-472.5. His supremacy in the 1950s is reinforced by the five world titles between 1953 and 1958, a silver in 1959, and a bronze in 1961. During his golden years, he sets 16 new World Records, including nine in Snatch, his most successful movement (with a best of 145kg, lifted in 1957). After his retirement, he becomes a coach of the Soviet team and is one of the first in his country to apply computer programmes to the training methodologies. With a renowned academic career, he was a member of the IWF Technical Committee and of the IWF Scientific and Research Committee. Vorobyov passed away in 2012, at the age of 88.



1952

John Davis (USA) completes a 14-year winning streak with second Olympic gold

He was one of the weightlifting heroes in the years following World War II: US legend John Davis. Born in January 1921 in Brooklyn (New York), he was only 17 when he won in 1938 his first world title in Vienna (AUT). Statistically, he remained unbeaten until 1952, but his career had to be halted during the world conflict, when he served in the US Army between 1941-1945, being mobilised on the Pacific front. If the Olympics and World Championships had not been cancelled during the period 1939-1945, his roll of honour would have been even more impressive. Despite the adverse circumstances, Davis kept his good shape and strong motivation to win, and appeared stronger than ever at the 1946 Worlds, where he was again the best. He repeated the achievement in 1947 and arrived in London for his first Olympic appearance. In the +82.5kg, his performances went unmatched, as he clinched the gold in 137.5-137.5-177.5-452.5. In subsequent years, he got three more victories at the IWF showcase, in 1949, 1950 and 1951. Arrived at the 1952 Games in Helsinki as the favourite to triumph in the +90kg category, he confirmed his supremacy, winning in 150-145-165-460, a new Olympic record. After two Olympic and six World Championships gold medals, Davis entered the 1953 global showcase in Stockholm, but due to a thigh injury he had to be content with silver. It was the end of a 14-year winning streak that consecrated Davis as one of the greatest lifters in history. After establishing 16 World Records (two in Press, seven in Snatch, four in Clean & Jerk, and three in Total) throughout this impressive career, he definitively left the platforms in 1956, after suffering a serious leg injury at the Olympic Trials for the Melbourne Games. John Davis died in July 1984, aged 63.

1956

Mahmoud Namdjou (IRI), one of the best lifters of the decade

After World War II and for most of the 1950s, Iran had in Mahmoud Namdjou one of the best lifters in its history. Born in 1918 in Rasht (on the Caspian Sea coast), he moved in 1937 to Tehran and started working as a carpenter. Despite his tiny weight (he competed in the 56kg category), he was strong and took weightlifting in a gym close to his workplace. In parallel, he also competed in bodybuilding, but it was in our sport that the results made him a star in the country. At the 1948 London Games, he made his first Olympic appearance, but he finished fifth, with 82.5-82.5-122.5-287.5. In the two subsequent editions, Helsinki 1952 and Melbourne 1956, he did much better: in Finland, he was second (90-95-122.5-307.5), while in Australia he clinched bronze in 100-102.5-130-332.5. At the World Championships, his achievements were even more impressive: three gold medals in 1949, 1950, and 1951, one silver in 1954, and two bronze in 1955 and 1957 (this last one at home, in the Iranian capital, where he got his best Total at the IWF showcase with 97.5-97.5-125-320). With two more podium presences at the Asian Games – first in 1951 and second in 1958 – Namdjou was also quite successful in establishing new World Records. He improved 11 global marks during his career, including three in the Snatch, five in the Clean and Jerk, and three in the Total (with three lifts). With his gold medal in 1949, he became the first Iranian world champion in weightlifting (at Olympic level, this honour goes to Nassiri in 1968), setting the pace for a tradition of great achievements for the country in our sport. In 1960, he still tried to qualify for the Rome Olympics, but he didn't manage to take part in his fourth Games. Namdjou died in 1989, aged 70.



1956

Isaac Berger (USA), three Olympics, three medals

In the second half of the 1950s and the first years of the 1960s, the United States had in Isaac ('Ike') Berger one of its most accomplished and successful lifters. Born in 1936 in Jerusalem, his father was a rabbi and diamond setter, who then moved with the family to New York in 1949. Three years later, at 16, Berger started practicing weightlifting and in 1955 (when he was naturalised American), he won his first US national title. It was the beginning of a prolific career that would include three Olympic participations. The first of these presences – Melbourne 1956 – was the most successful: in Australia, competing in the 60kg category, he clinched gold in 107.5-107.5-137.7-352.5. He would always lift more, both in Rome 1960 and Tokyo 1964, but his performances – respectively of 117.5-105-140-362.5 and 122.5-107.5-152.5-382.5 – were only enough for the silver medal. In addition to these three brilliant Olympic medals, Berger got five more at the World Championships (victories in 1958 and 1961, second place in 1959 and 1963, and bronze in 1957). He also has two gold medals from the Pan-American Games (1959 and 1963). A true specialist in the Press movement, he was the first athlete in his category to lift the double of his body weight in this exercise, with a WR of 121.5kg in 1961. He would establish six more global marks during his career, namely four in Clean & Jerk (best of 152.5kg). Two of those World Records were established during the 1957 and 1961 editions of the Maccabiah Games, held in Tel Aviv – for many years, he held the honour of being the first athlete (in any sport) to improve a WR on Israeli soil. After his retirement, he developed a business around weightlifting equipment. 'Ike' Berger died in June 2022, some months before completing his 86th birthday.



1956

Humberto Selvetti, an Argentinean idol

Argentina has a long and rich Olympic history, having started its participation in the Games from its second edition, in 1900. Since then, the South American nation earned 80 medals in the biggest sports event on the planet: only two of those podium presences come from weightlifting. But they both belong to the same athlete: Humberto Selvetti. He remains until the present day, the only Olympic Argentinean medallist in our sport, after his bronze in Helsinki 1952 and silver in Melbourne 1956. Born in 1932, Selvetti was a prodigy from his teenage years. At 20, he competed in the Finnish capital – his first Olympic appearance – and clinched the bronze in 150-120-162.5-432.5. It was the first-ever Olympic medal in our sport for a Spanish-speaking athlete and also a premiere for a South American lifter. Competing in the +90kg category, the Argentinean ace was nicknamed “El Gordo” (The Fat One) in his country and was again third at the 1953 World Championships. For his second Olympic presence, in 1956, Selvetti performed superbly in Australia, finishing with the same total as the winner – 175-145-180-500. But, by the rules at the time, the gold went to Paul Anderson (USA), who was 5kg lighter. In 1957, the Argentinean champion won his last medal at the World Championships, also a silver. Moreover, he was second on two other occasions at the Pan-American Games of 1955 and 1959. In 1964, at 32, he still managed to qualify for his third Olympics – in Tokyo, he was only 17th. In 1951, he established the sole World Record of his successful career – 157.5kg in the Press. A big fan of the tango dance, he had some minor roles in the movie and theatre industry. The weightlifting venue at the Argentinean High-Performance Centre has his name, thus paying tribute to a lifter who died relatively young, at the age of 60.



1957

Eleiko, from the kitchen to the fitness centre

It could be a slogan, inviting the most gourmet people to visit their fitness centre from time to time. It is not - it's the essence of Eleiko's history, nowadays one of the most renowned barbell companies on the planet. Originally founded in 1928, in the Swedish city of Halmstad (the headquarters of the company are still based there), Eleiko's initial business was the production of electric appliances for the kitchen, namely waffle irons and toasters. In 1957, one of the factory's supervisors, an enthusiast lifter, approached the owner of the company with an idea: to produce weightlifting bars. Until then, it was frequent to see training and competition bars breaking due to the material's fatigue and weakness. Eleiko was already using high-quality Swedish steel for the manufacture of its products, so after some technical developments, the first bars were officially introduced at the 1963 World Championships, staged in Stockholm. The success was immediate and the athletes quickly adhered to this resistant and reliable equipment. In 1967, also by accident, an Eleiko employee had met a weightlifter who was using rubber tires around his plates to reduce the damage caused by the impact of the weights on the floor. The concept was created and the Halmstad Rubber Factory was then implemented. In 1969, Eleiko was certified by the IWF and has since then been present in many top-level competitions and Olympic Games. In 2011, Eleiko celebrated the 1000th World Record achieved with one of its bars.

1958

Asian Federation is founded in Tokyo (JPN)

After the foundation of the first continental federation - Pan-American - in 1951, a coordinated effort in Asia allowed the establishment in 1958 of the second continental body in the history of the IWF, the Asian Weightlifting Federation (AWF). Tokyo, in Japan, was the birthplace of the organisation, six years before the staging of the Olympic Games. In 2025, the AWF is uniting 45 affiliated National Federations spanning across all Asian regions. Like its counterpart in the Americas, the AWF took the responsibility of organising continental championships (from 1969 for men, and 1988 for women), events that worked on many occasions as a platform for the successful staging of the IWF World Championships. Two recent examples include the Asian showcase in 2019 in Ningbo (CHN), the host of the 2026 IWF Worlds, and the organisation in 2022 of the Asian Championships in Manama (BRN), the 2024 location of the IWF showcase. The first edition of a World Championships in Asia occurred in 1957 in Tehran (IRI) - the foundation of the AWF in 1958 is therefore a natural development of this milestone -, while subsequent editions visited the Philippines (Manila, 1974), China (Guangzhou, 1995), Thailand (Chiang Mai, 1997 and 2007; Pattaya, 2019), Qatar (Doha, 2005), Republic of Korea (Goyang, 2009), Kazakhstan (Almaty, 2014), Turkmenistan (Ashgabat, 2018), Uzbekistan (Tashkent, 2021), Saudi Arabia (Riyadh, 2023), and Bahrain (Manama, 2024). After the inaugural edition in 1987, Jakarta (INA) hosted the second edition of the Women's World Championships in 1988. Asia hosts the most prolific nation in terms of medals at the Olympic Games and the IWF World Championships - China.





1960

Miyake, a dynasty of success in Japan!

When thinking about weightlifting in Japan, a name is immediately mentioned: Miyake. From 1960 to the present day, members of this family have marked the history of the sport in the country and on the international scene. It all started 65 years ago, at the Rome Olympic Games, when Yoshinobu Miyake gets a silver medal in the 56kg category. He would do better in 1964, at home, with the Olympic title in the 60kg, and would revalidate his title four years later, in Mexico City. He remains the only Olympic champion in weightlifting as of today. But the connection of the Miyake family to the sport would not stop there: Yoshinobu's brother, Yoshiyuki (six years younger), also travelled to Mexico in that year of 1968 and could celebrate a bronze medal in the same event as his sibling. Between the two brothers, there were also six World Championships titles, between 1962 and 1971. Yoshiyuki has a daughter, born in 1985, Hiromi (*photo*). Following the steps of her uncle and father, the young talent starts to get noticed at the 2006 IWF World Championships, where she gets the bronze medal in the 48kg category. Two years earlier, she has her first Olympic participation, in Athens, where she is ninth. She will compete in four more editions – with two podium presences, silver in London 2012 and bronze in Rio 2016. In Tokyo 2020^{ne} she bombs out in the Clean & Jerk, in what is her last competition. Hiromi Miyake is presently a member of the IWF Executive Board.

1960

Yuri Vlasov (URS), the intellectual “strongest man”

Born in 1935, Yuri Vlasov started weightlifting 21 years later, while studying at the Air Force Academy. His talent and natural abilities were rapidly spotted, and in 1959 he earns his first World and European titles. But his glorious hour would come in 1960, during the Rome Olympic Games: in the Eternal City, in the men's +90kg category, Vlasov gets the gold in 180-155-202.5-537.5 – at that time, three events were on the programme: press, snatch and clean & jerk. The C&J outcome remains a milestone in the history of weightlifting, as it meant the first time an athlete could lift more than 200kg. Named the “World's Strongest Man” on several occasions, the Soviet ace wins three more World Championship titles (1961-1963), establishes 34 Word Records, and wins a second medal (silver) at the 1964 Tokyo Games. After that, he announces his retirement from the sport and dedicates his life to his other passion: writing. Often seen with glasses, he is called the “weightlifting intellectual” and will, in the subsequent years, shine as a successful novelist and journalist. Between 1985 and 1987, he leads the Soviet Weightlifting Federation and is elected on two occasions as a member of the Parliament: firstly in 1989, still at the Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union, and then in 1993, at the Russian State Duma. He passed away in 2021, but left a legion of fans behind: US star Arnold Schwarzenegger is one of them, as he publicly said on several occasions that Vlasov was his “idol”!



1905 - 2025

1960

Tan Howe Liang becomes a national hero in Singapore

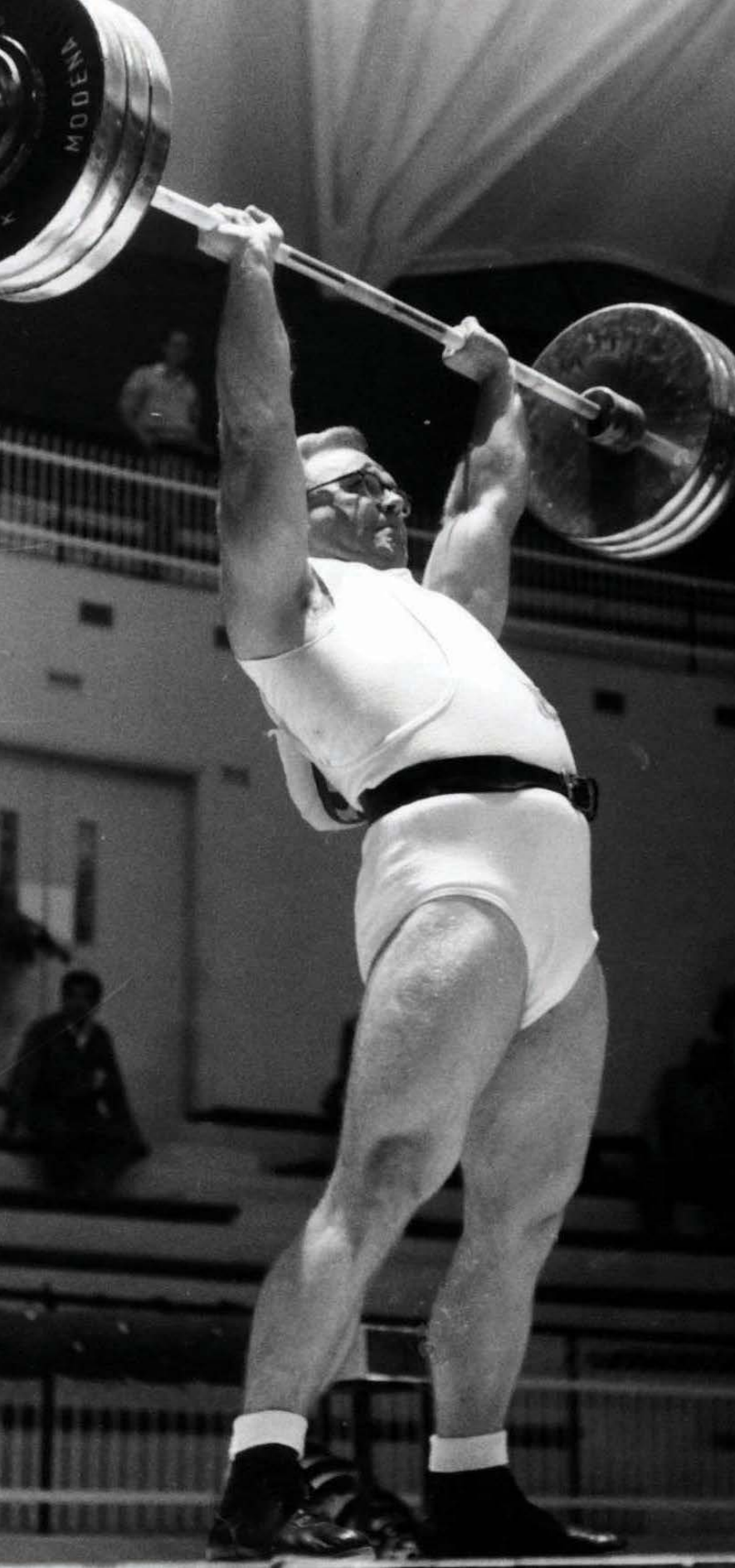
For 48 years, Tan Howe Liang held a very special privilege: to be the first and sole Olympic medallist in his country (all sports included)! Born in the Guangdong (China) region in 1933, he was four when his parents decided to move to Singapore. Third of eight siblings, his living conditions were far from ideal and when his father died (Tan was only 14), he was forced to quit school. One day, passing through an amusement park, he saw a weightlifting exhibition and decided to try the sport. It was the right decision, as he proved quite strong and started winning some national titles. In 1956, he qualified for his first Olympic Games: in Melbourne, his performance went unnoticed as he finished ninth. 1958 was a pivotal year for Tan, as he earned two gold medals, at the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games. Two years later, at the Rome Olympics, he will enter the Olympic history book of the tiny Asian nation: competing in the 67.5kg category, he lifted 115-110-155-380 and secured the silver medal. It was the first podium presence for Singapore, a feat that will remain unmatched until the national women's table tennis team also clinched a silver medal at the... 2008 Games in Beijing (since then, four more medals were won by Singaporean athletes). Tan is the only Olympic medallist for Singapore in weightlifting and was an inspirational model for many young athletes practicing the sport. In 1962, he was again the best at the Commonwealth Games. In 1964, in Tokyo, he lifted a total of 400kg, but this outcome is only sufficient for the 11th place. After his retirement, he tried several jobs and businesses but ended up being a weightlifting coach. Tan received the highest accolades in Singapore and passed away at the age of 91, in December 2024.

1964

Leonid Zhabotinsky (URS), a reference of the 1960s

Before the emergence of China in the last decades, lifters from the Soviet Union were systematically at the top of the world weightlifting hierarchy at both the Olympic Games and World Championships. In the 1960s, one name is often cited: Leonid Zhabotinsky. Born in 1938, in what is today the territory of Ukraine, he made his first 'appearance' at the 1957 national championships, where he got a bronze medal. He then proceeded with his sportive career alongside his studies at the Kharkiv Pedagogical Institute, successfully qualifying for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. In the Japanese capital, he managed to beat his main rival and teammate Yury Vlasov, who had won in Rome four years earlier and was always better than Zhabotinsky at the previous world and European championships. Lifting 187.5-167.5-217.5-572.5 (the Clean & Jerk lift was a WR at the time), against a Total of 570kg for Vlasov, he gets his first Olympic title in the +90kg category. In Mexico City 1968, Zhabotinsky was the flagbearer of his delegation (he held the flag all the way through only with one hand, when most of the athletes needed the two hands) and revalidated the title with the same Total of 572.5 (200-170-202.5). Between the two Olympic wins, Zhabotinsky had been twice world champion, in 1965 and 1966. He finished his career in 1974, after setting 19 World Records along the way: his personal bests (and global marks by then) were 201.5 in Press, 185.5 in Snatch, 220 in C&J, and 590 in Total (with three lifts). After his retirement, he became a coach in the Soviet Army and deputy rector at the Moscow Institute of Business and Law. In 2004 (*photo*), he met Arnold Schwarzenegger (actor, politician, and famous bodybuilder), one of his illustrious fans. The Soviet/Ukrainian legend died in 2016, at the age of 77.





1964

Norbert Schemansky (USA) clinches fourth Olympic medal!

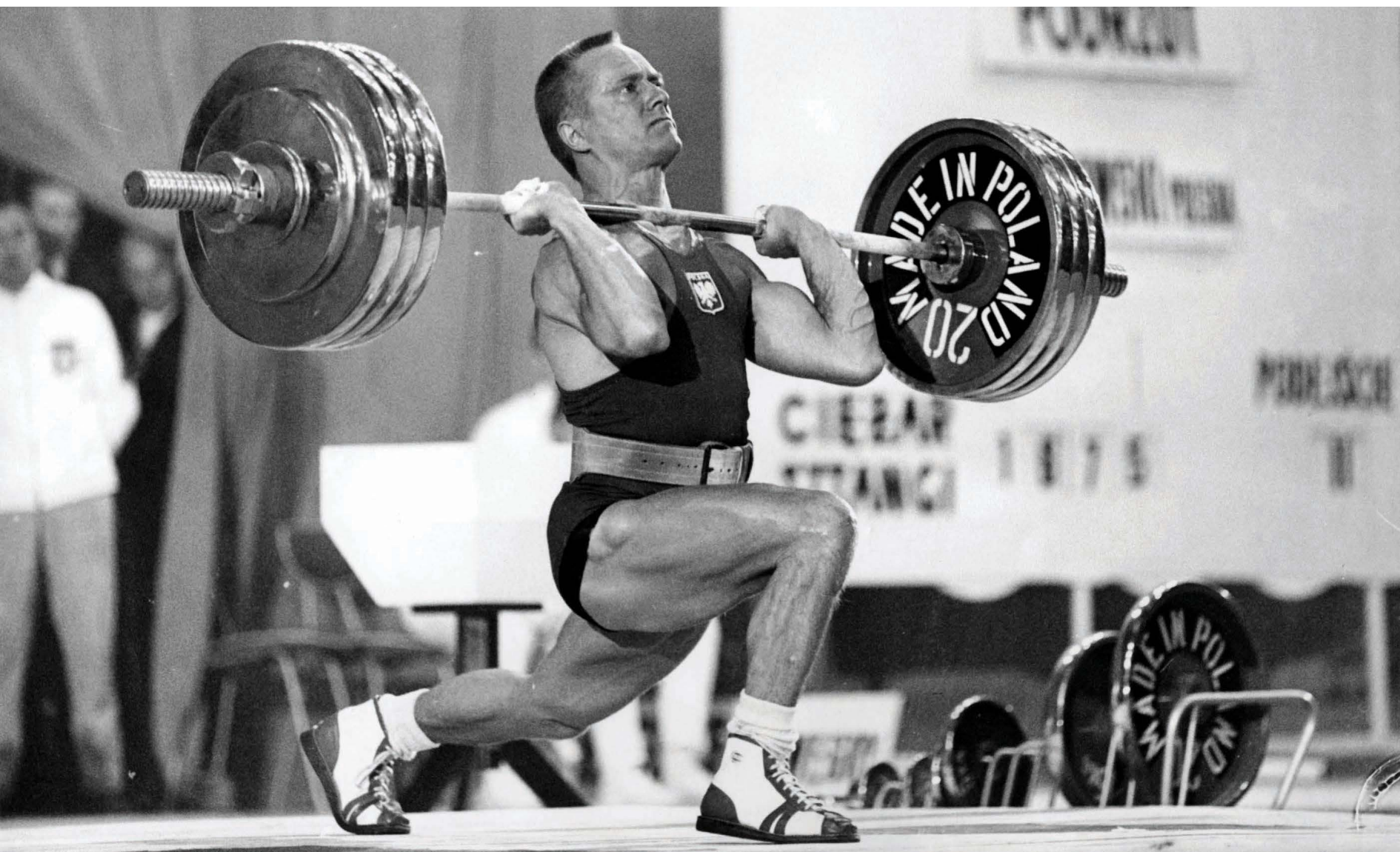
Norbert Schemansky was already 40 when in 1964 in Tokyo he became the first lifter in history to win four Olympic medals! In the Japanese capital, the US champion, competing in the +90kg category, clinched the bronze, 16 years after his first achievement at this level. Born in 1924, he first got noticed in 1947, after finishing second at the World Championships. In London 1948, at his first Olympics, he was also the runner-up, but four years later, in Helsinki (FIN), he climbed to the highest step of the podium, triumphing in 127.5-140-177.5-445. He skipped the 1956 edition in Melbourne (he was injured), but in Rome 1960, he earned bronze. For his last podium presence in Tokyo, he got his best Olympic performance, lifting 180-165-192.5-537.5. At world level, and after his 1947 achievement, he was crowned champion in 1951, 1953, and 1954. In the 1962 and 1963 editions, he added two silver medals to his impressive roll of honour. Having served in the US Army during World War II, Schemansky fought in the Battle of the Bulge, on European soil. He then worked as a fireman in the US, but was fired when actively preparing for the 1952 Olympics. After his retirement – he had an amazingly long career, from 1947 to 1972, improving 24 World Records on the way – Schemansky worked as a civil engineer. Native from the region of Detroit (Michigan), the US ace died in September 2016, aged 92.

1964

Waldemar Baszanowski, a reference in Polish weightlifting

Before arriving in Tokyo, for his second Olympic participation in 1964, Waldemar Baszanowski was already a distinguished athlete in Poland. After winning the 1961 world title in Vienna (AUT) and getting two additional silver medals in 1962 (Budapest, HUN) and 1963 (Stockholm, SWE), he was chosen as his nation's flag-bearer in the Opening Ceremony of the Games in the Japanese capital. Some days later, he would definitively enter into the weightlifting Pantheon, clinching his first Olympic victory in the 67.5kg category (132.5-135-165-432.5). Known for his impeccable style and for being one of the last lifters to use the "split clean", the Polish ace revalidated his title four years later in Mexico City, this time lifting a total of 437.5. In 1972, he competed in his fourth Games (he had been fifth in 1960, in Rome), but couldn't reach the podium in Munich, finishing fourth. At the World Champion-

ships, and besides the above-mentioned medals, he got two additional titles (1965 and 1969) and was second in 1966, 1970, and 1971. He is still today the only Polish lifter with two Olympic titles and the most prolific (10 medals) athlete in the history of the IWF World Championships! Throughout his amazing career, he also set 24 World Records. Poland has a solid tradition in weightlifting, with a total of 34 medals at the Games (six gold, six silver, and 22 bronze)! Off the platform, Baszanowski's life was marked by a tragic car accident (in which he was the driver) in 1969, where his wife tragically died, but their six-year-old son survived. Upon his retirement, he became a successful coach and administrator, being elected in 1999 as President of the European Weightlifting Federation. In 2007, tragedy struck again: after falling from a tree in his garden, Baszanowski was paralysed from the neck down. In April 2011, he passed away in Warsaw, at the age of 75.



1964

Sam Coffa proudly competes for Australia at the Olympics

On his passport, the official name is Salvatore Coffa, but the entire weightlifting world knows him as Sam Coffa. After a successful career as an athlete, coach, manager, official and administrator, the first years of his life were however modest, within a Sicilian family experiencing the difficulties and challenges caused by World War II. Born in Ferla (Sicily, Italy) in January 1936, Coffa emigrated with the family to Australia in 1952, in search of other horizons and opportunities. He will quickly integrate the community in Hawthorn (suburbs of Melbourne), by practicing and developing weightlifting in the local club. As an athlete, he progresses quickly, and after acquiring Australian citizenship in 1959, he takes part in the 1962 Commonwealth Games and 1964 Olympic Games, representing his new country. If the results in Tokyo are somehow deceiving, his most vivid and emotional memory remains the opening ceremony, where he could, in his own words, *"proudly march behind the Australian flag"*. After his retirement as an athlete, he remains a pillar in the development of weightlifting in his town, in the state of Victoria, in Australia (he is presently at the helm of the national body), in the Commonwealth community, continental federation, and at the IWF level. Sam Coffa is the world reference in terms of the weightlifting rules, currently chairing the IWF Technical Committee – he is also a member of the IWF Executive Board, where his highest position was of First Vice-President. Also involved with politics, he was Mayor of Hawthorn on two occasions, was awarded the membership of the Order of Australia, and was inducted into the Weightlifting Hall of Fame in 2009.

1905 - 2025



1964

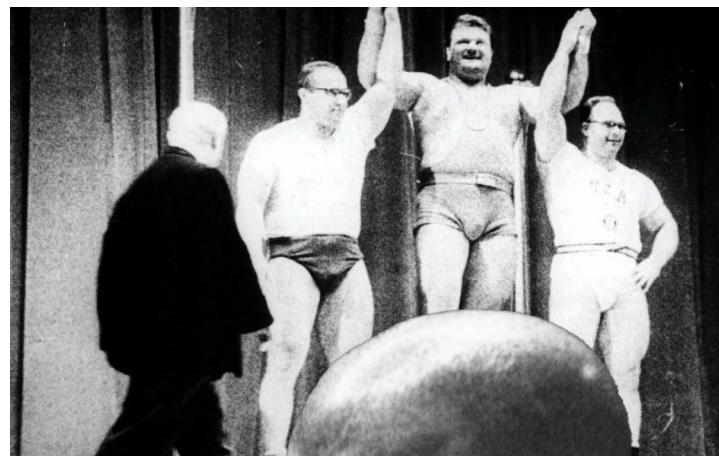
Uesaka gains visibility at the Tokyo Games

The business had started 35 years earlier in a downtown neighbourhood of Tokyo: Uesaka was founded as an ironworks company, taking since then the best possible advantage of high-quality Japanese steel. In 1959, the production started to focus on weightlifting equipment, with bars and plates being manufactured by quite precise engineering methods. The quality of the equipment is recognised in Japan, and the brand is chosen, without surprise, as a supplier of the Tokyo 1964 Olympic Games. It was the opportunity to expand the visibility and exposure of the Uesaka philosophy – it remains today a family business, led by Tadamasa Uesaka (inducted into the Weightlifting Hall of Fame in 2002) – and make the brand known worldwide. After that initial success, the Japanese manufacturer was present in five more editions of the Games – 1988 (photo), 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004. Moreover, they have also been used at several editions of the IWF World Championships (as an IWF Certified barbell company) and Commonwealth Games. Uesaka is proud of defining its products as "durable, precise and safe" and of highlighting the importance of the craftsmanship character of its creations. Almost 100 years after its foundation, Uesaka still produces most of its iron products in the area of Sumida-ku, at the heart of the Japanese capital.

1967

World Championships, an (almost) annual tradition

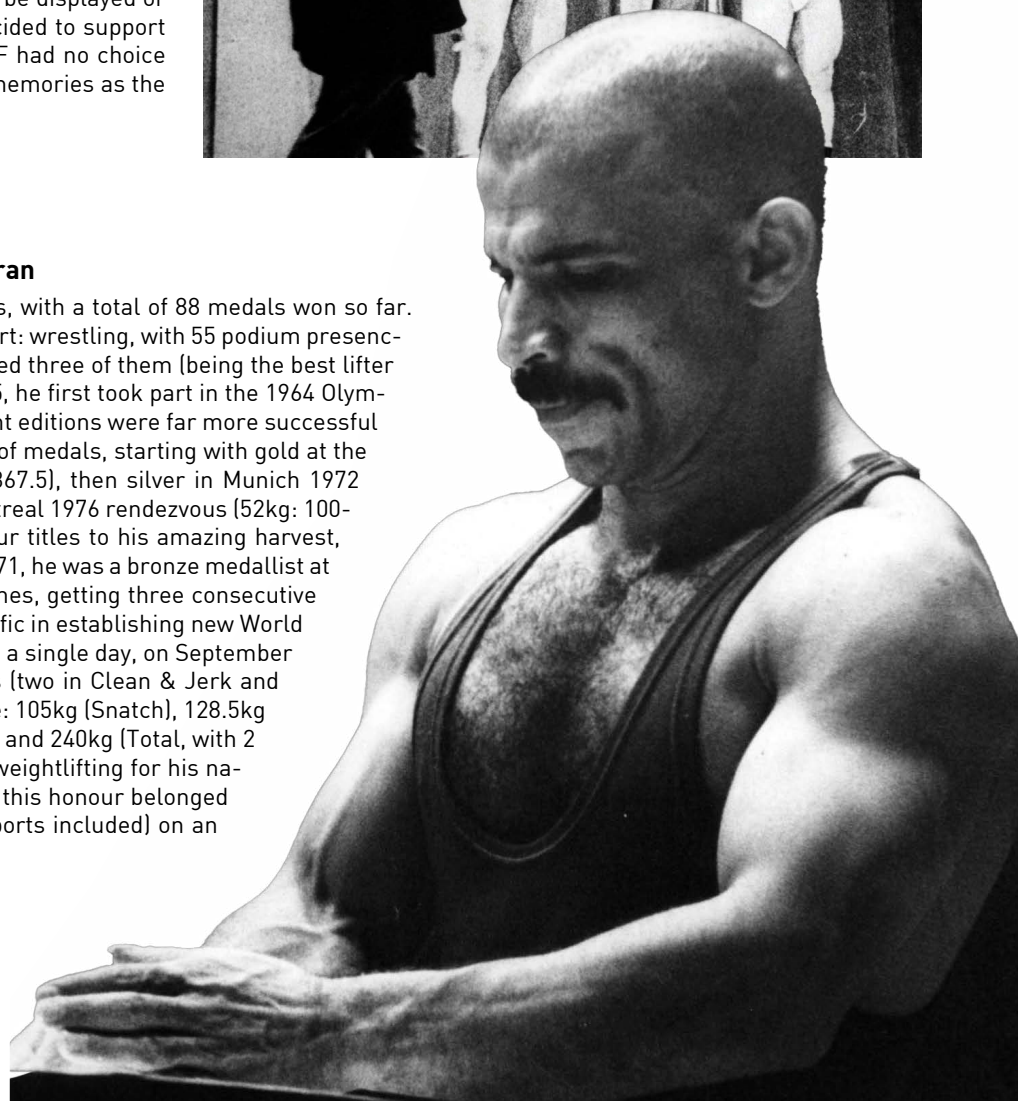
The 2024 IWF World Championships represented the 89th recognised edition of the IWF showcase, with the first one taking place in London, in the now distant year of 1891. There are more than 89 years between that founding date and the present, but as a norm, World Championships are taking place annually. There are however exceptions. Until 1912, these events were erratic and did not follow a coherent calendar (there were four World Championships in 1911, for example!), but after that, there was some regularity. However, two major disruptions occurred during the period of the two world wars - between 1914-1919, and then 1939-1945. Moreover, the four-year cycle determined by the Olympics also dictated the staging (or not) of the IWF showcase. From the 1948 to the 1960 edition of the Games, World Championships were not staged in those years, something that was replicated between 1988 and 2016. From 1964 (photo) to 1984, the Olympics were also counted as World Championships, while in 2021 and 2024, the IWF event was also organised in an Olympic year. Finally, there are three abnormalities to this sequence: from 1924 to 1936, there were no World Championships, as well as in the single years of 1967 and 2020. In the first case, the explanation relates to the deficient organisation of the IWF in the 1920s, the internal divisions between weightlifting factions, and the 'forced' change for the adoption of a triathlon format (press, snatch and clean & jerk) determined by the IOC to be implemented from the 1928 Games. Concerning 1967, the IWF showcase was scheduled to take place in Japan, but the Asian nation did not have diplomatic relations with the German Democratic Republic (still a trace of the WW II conflict). As visas couldn't be delivered to GDR lifters, no flag could be displayed or anthem played, the Soviet and Eastern European bloc decided to support their ally and boycott the event - in consequence, the IWF had no choice but to cancel that edition. Finally, 2020, is still vivid in all memories as the COVID-pandemic year.

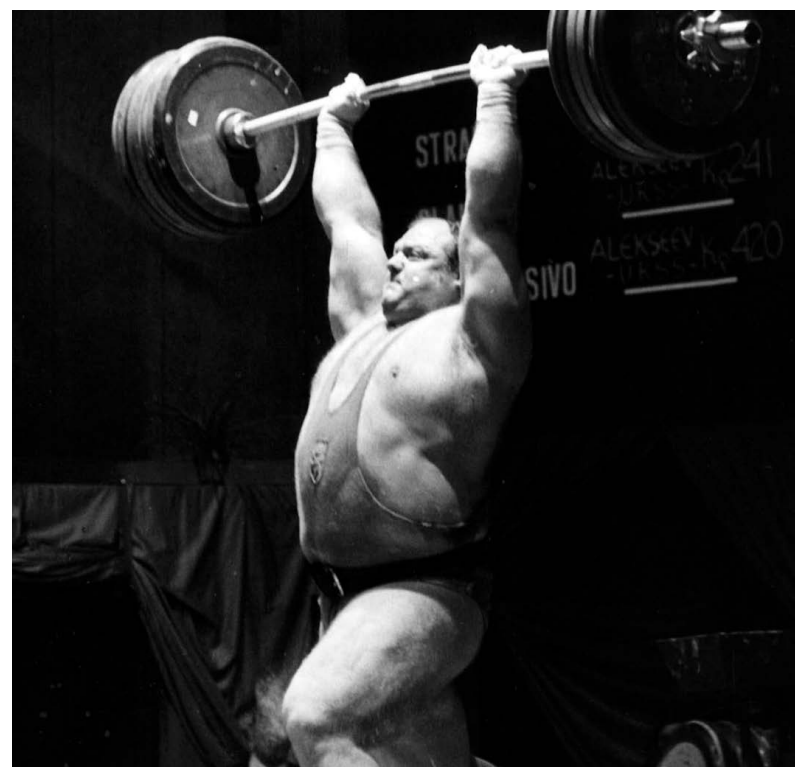
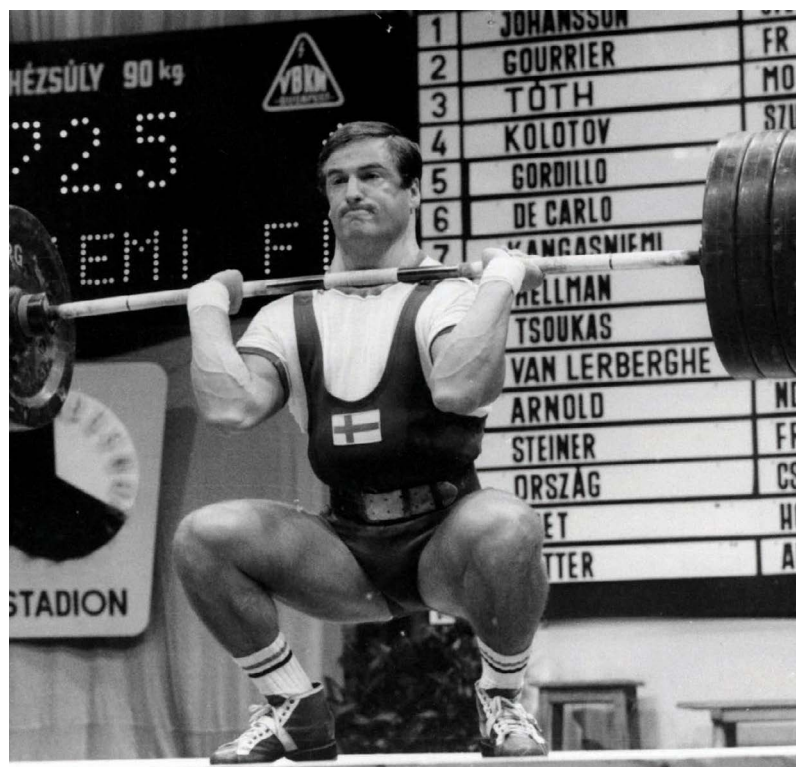


1968

Mohammad Nassiri shines at the highest level for Iran

Iran has a solid tradition of success at the Olympic Games, with a total of 88 medals won so far. Two sports have particularly shone and lead the medal chart: wrestling, with 55 podium presences, followed by weightlifting, with 20. One legend has earned three of them (being the best lifter so far in Iranian history): Mohammad Nassiri. Born in 1945, he first took part in the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo, where he finished 15th. The three subsequent editions were far more successful for the Iranian lifter: in reality, he then collected a full set of medals, starting with gold at the 1968 Mexico City Games (56kg category: 112.5-105-150-367.5), then silver in Munich 1972 (56kg: 127.5-100-142.5-370), and finally bronze at the Montreal 1976 rendezvous (52kg: 100-135-235). At the World Championships level, he added four titles to his amazing harvest, after victories in 1969, 1970, 1973, and 1974. In 1966 and 1971, he was a bronze medallist at the IWF showcase. Finally, he also shone at the Asian Games, getting three consecutive gold medals in 1966, 1970, and 1974. Nassiri was also prolific in establishing new World Records: over his career, he improved 15 global marks. On a single day, on September 15, 1973, at the Worlds in Havana (CUB), he set four WRs (two in Clean & Jerk and two in Total). His personal bests in international events are: 105kg (Snatch), 128.5kg (Press, WR), 150kg (C&J, WR), 370kg (Total, with 3 events), and 240kg (Total, with 2 events, WR). If Nassiri was the first Olympic champion in weightlifting for his nation, he was not the first lifter with a medal at the Games: this honour belonged to Jafar Salmasi, in 1948, who was the first Iranian (all sports included) on an Olympic podium (bronze in 60kg category).





1905 - 2025

1968

Kaarlo Kangasniemi, an icon of Finnish weightlifting

This story starts in Kullaa, a tiny town in the western part of Finland. On February 4, 1941 Kaarlo Kangasniemi is born there and is part of a big clan: he is one of the 11 children of the family. There are eight boys and three girls, and five of these men will practice weightlifting throughout their lives. Kaarlo will be the most successful one. After a seventh place at the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo, he takes part in his second Games in 1968, in Mexico City. At 27, he becomes the first (and only one so far) Olympic champion for his country in weightlifting, earning gold in 172.5-157.5-187.5-517.5 (in the 90kg category). Four years later, in Munich 1972, he arrived in Germany with an ongoing injury, but still managed to place sixth. At the 1968 and 1972 rendezvous, his younger brother Kauko was also part of the Finnish delegation and was ranked seventh on both occasions. After the achievement in Mexico, Kaarlo was again the best at the World Championships, in Warsaw 1969. In 1971, he gets his second medal (silver) at the IWF showcase. Throughout his amazing career, he established 17 new World Records, and his best result at the international level was achieved at the 1970 European Championships, when he lifted 177.5-160-192.5-530. Only two other athletes from Finland medalled in Olympic weightlifting: Jouni Grönman and Pekka Niemi, both getting the bronze at the 1984 Los Angeles Games, respectively in the 67.5kg and 100kg category. At the World Championships, only one woman managed to get the gold so far: Karolina Lundahl, in 1994 and 1998.

1968

Serge Reding earns last Olympic medal for Belgium

1920 is an important date, both for the Olympic Movement and for the IWF. After the horror of World War I (leading to the cancellation of the 1916 edition), the Games were staged in Antwerp. Belgium, with the participation of 29 nations (only one more than in 1912). To symbolise the need for peace and unity around the world, it was the first time the Olympic Oath was heard and the Olympic Flag displayed. In that year, our organisation also underwent major changes, almost like a re-birth since its foundation in 1905, concentrating its efforts on the sole sport of weightlifting. As the host nation of the Games, Belgium (affiliated to the IWF since 1912) sent a strong contingent of athletes to Antwerp. Three of them won medals in weightlifting – Frans De Haes clinched gold (he remains the only Belgian Olympic champion in history) in the 60kg category, while Louis Williquet and Georges Rooms got respectively the silver and the bronze in the 67.5kg. The weightlifting community in Belgium had to wait 48 years to witness another (the last until present days) achievement at Olympic level: in 1968, in Mexico City, Serge Reding (photo) won the silver in the +90kg category, lifting 195-147.5-212.5-555. Until his sudden death at the age of 33 in 1975, Reding won three additional silver medals at the World Championships – 1969, 1970, and 1974. Moreover, he established six World Records throughout his career, becoming the most prolific lifter in Belgian history.



1969

European Federation sees the day in Warsaw (POL)



The first decades in the life of the International Weightlifting Federation were essentially dominated by the influence of European countries: nations from the Old Continent founded the IWF and the first 25 editions of the recognised World Championships were all staged in Europe. The city of Philadelphia, in the United States, was the first one to “break” this hegemony, in 1947. Despite this dominance, most European activities were done within the frame of the International Federation – Pan-Americas and Asia took their “independence” earlier, having found their continental bodies in 1951 and 1958, respectively. But, some months before the organisation of the World Championships in Warsaw (POL) in 1969 – the global showcase was also “integrating” the European Championships – a letter signed by nine European federations had been sent to all members in the Old Continent urging for the necessity to create a continental body. In September – when the event was staged in the Polish capital – those “seeds” had grown and delegates from 19 European nations unanimously approved the creation of the European Weightlifting Federation (EWF). The first president of the organisation was Janusz Przedpelski (POL), who remained at the helm of the EWF until 1983. Five years later, in 1988, the initial Women’s European showcase took place in San Marino, and in 1990 the continental body decided to “separate” the European Championships from other events, thus making it the annual highlight of a complete European calendar of competitions. The EWF presently has 46 national members (plus four additional associate federations, whose territories have no National Olympic Committee).

1905 - 2025

1969

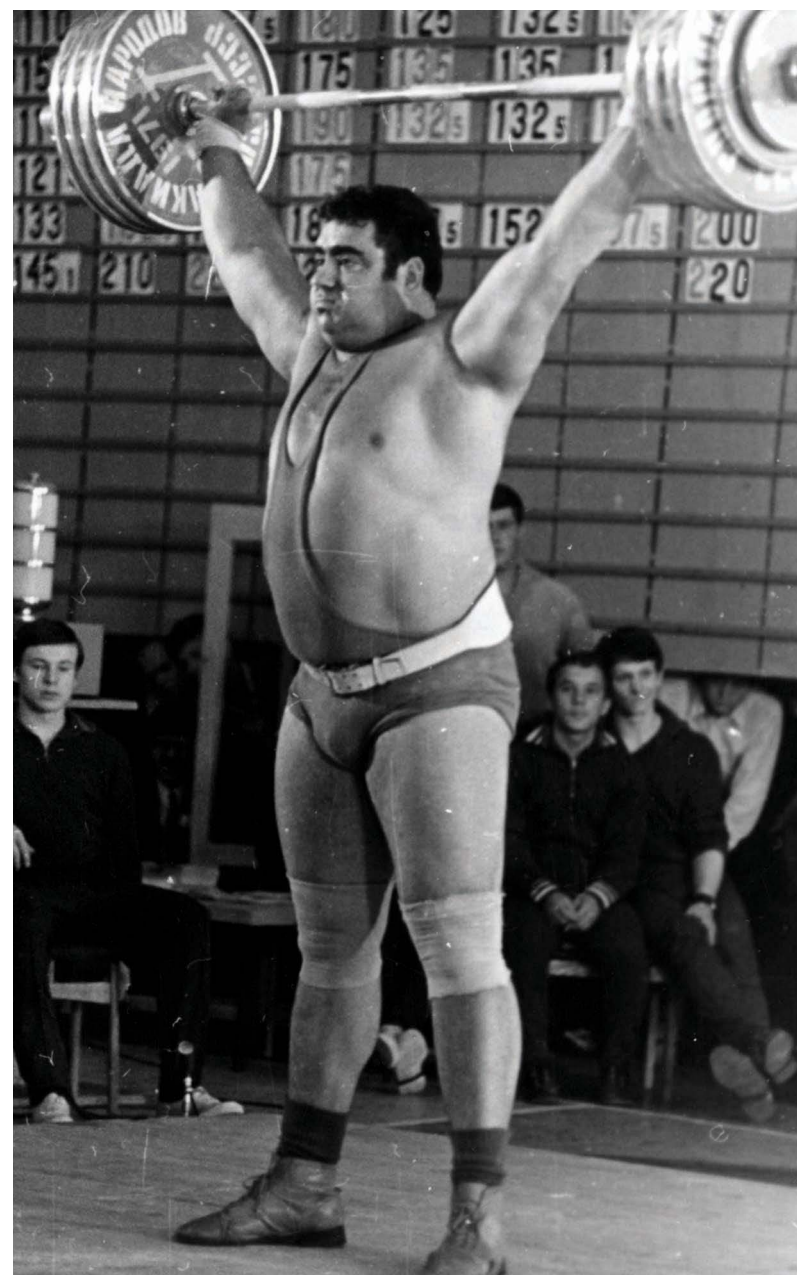
First medals for individual movements

Despite the change in the number of movements, there was a stable rule at the IWF events and Olympic Games: medals were only given based on the Total result of the lifters (the cumulative weight of the movements performed). In Mexico City, in 1968, a proposal to award separate medals for the Press (before its abolition in 1973), Snatch, and Clean & Jerk results (considered individually) was approved by the Congress. Delegates decided that the new rules would be enforced at the subsequent edition of the World Championships, taking place in Warsaw (POL), in 1969. The Congress (which approved the creation of two additional bodyweight categories) also urged the IWF leadership to take these matters to the IOC, for possible inclusion in the Games programme. In the end, only the change of categories was validated by the Olympic instance – otherwise, and concerning the awards, this norm is still valid today, whereby lifters at the Games are only given medals based on their Total result. At the IWF level, the 1969 showcase (only contested by men at the time) distributed therefore 108 medals (the Soviet Union led operations, followed by the United States and Poland), instead of 27 (if only Total had been considered), and this rule was never abandoned. At the latest IWF showcase (photo), the 2024 World Championships in Manama (BRN), men and women competed in 10 categories each, for a total of 180 medals, evenly allocated for the Snatch, C&J, and Total results.

1970

Vasily Alekseyev (URS) emerges to glory

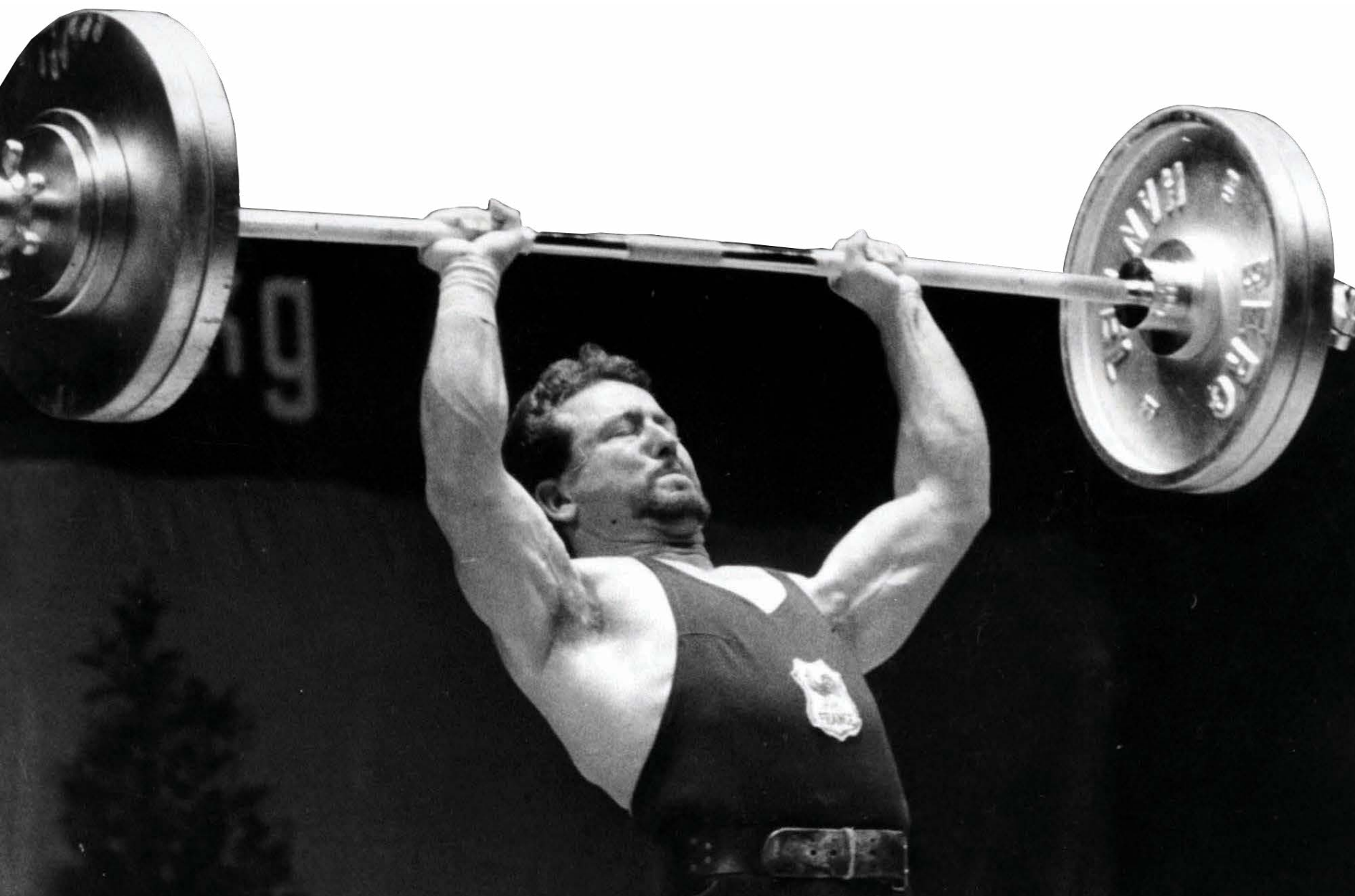
Born in January 1942, it was not before being 18 that Vasily Alekseyev started to practice weightlifting. It was a wise decision, as he became the incontestable star of the 1970s, in the super heavyweight category. The Soviet talent trained with a coach until 1968, but then decided to proceed alone and the results appeared very soon. In 1970, he establishes his first World Record (he would set 80 global marks during his career!) and wins the World Championship title in Columbus (Ohio, USA). It is the start of a golden decade that will include two Olympic titles, in Munich 1972 and Montreal 1976. As the Games were also counted as World Championships, he will therefore establish an extraordinary series of eight consecutive victories at the highest level – 1970 to 1977. In parallel, he is also eight times European champion from 1970 to 1978. He is still today, the most titled lifter in the history of the IWF World Championships. At the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, he overrated his capacity in Snatch and bombed out. He retired from competition immediately after those failed Games. Performance-wise, Alekseyev had no problems during the transition from the three to the two-movement competition (implemented in 1973), having established some landmarks throughout his career – he was the first man to lift more than 600kg in the three movements (press, snatch and clean & jerk), with a personal best and WR of 645kg (in 1972), and more than 400kg in the two-movement competition (445kg being his last WR); the Soviet champion was also the first athlete to successfully perform a C&J of 500 pounds (227kg), in 1970. After his retirement, he remained active as a coach (namely during the 1992 Games in Barcelona), and got involved in politics (he was elected in 1987 to the Soviet Union's Congress of People's Deputies). He passed away in 2011, after serious heart problems. One of his two sons, Dmitry, was also a national-level successful weightlifter.



1972

The end of the Press movement

Historically considered one of the basic weightlifting exercises, the Press movement - whereby the bar is lifted onto the chest/shoulder level and then elevated overhead - had been left as one of the three movements in the Olympic programme since the 1928 edition in Amsterdam. However, constant changes in the technique (with lifters performing most of the times in the "limits" of what was allowed and what was not...) and the associated difficulties in judging, led to a proposal to abolish this technique at the 1964 Congress in Tokyo. The change was rejected and four years later, in Mexico City, the delegates had the opportunity to deliberate once more, and the vote remained the same: Press should continue. In Munich, in 1972, with a set of more solid arguments - namely medical advice on the risk of injury due to an exaggerated arching of the lower back - the proposal was finally adopted (33 delegates in favour, 13 against), much to the relief of the weightlifting referees around the world. From 1973 onwards, the "officially allowed cheating" (as Press was unfortunately known around the world), was banned from the programme at the IWF events (in the *photo*, a Press lift from Marcel Paterni, France, at the 1961 World Championships) and, of course, at the Olympics. From that moment on, Snatch and Clean & Jerk are the two movements to be performed by lifters at the international level. For the record, the last recognised World Record in Press was the successful lift of 157.5kg from Bulgaria's Mladen Kuchev in the 67.5kg category, precisely at the 1972 Games in Munich!



1972

Weightlifting pays a heavy price on Olympics' saddest day

The 1972 Olympic Games in Munich (GER) had entered its second week and were consensually considered a huge sportive and organisational success. The weightlifting competition was also well advanced, but everything came to a shocking halt on September 5. At around 4h30 in the morning, eight Palestinian militants, from a group called "Black September", infiltrated the Olympic Village and penetrated the building hosting the Israeli delegation taking part in the competition. The group kills two athletes at the beginning of the operation and retains nine others as hostages. After a long day of unfruitful negotiations, terrorists and hostages were taken to a German military airport, supposedly to be flown to Cairo, in Egypt, as per the group's demand. A rescue ambush plan was however executed by the police, but it failed and all the hostages lost their lives during the operation. Out of the 11 Israeli victims, four were part of the weightlifting family (four others were from wrestling, and one apiece from shooting, fencing, and athletics). Three lifters – Zeev Friedman (28 years old), Yossef Romano (32), and David Berger (28) – and one referee (Yakov Springer, 52) tragically died in what remains the saddest day in Olympics' history. On September 6, after a memorial for the victims – attended by 80'000 people gathered in the Olympic stadium for the football game Germany-Hungary – the Games resumed following an unprecedented suspension for 34 hours.

1972

Zygmunt Smalcerz leads Polish success in Munich

The Munich 1972 Olympic Games were particularly successful for the Polish weightlifting team, with its athletes getting three medals (one of each colour). The shiniest star of the group was Zygmunt Smalcerz, the champion in the 52kg category. Despite his tiny body structure (he is 1.53m high), the Polish ace got in Germany the main achievement of his career, clinching the title in 112.5-100-125-337.5 (it was the last edition of the Olympics with the Press movement). Behind him in Munich, two Hungarian competitors were relatively distant – Szucs got the silver with a total of 330kg, and Holczreiter was third in 327.5kg. Four years later, Smalcerz had a good motivation to revalidate the Olympic title, but an unfortunate injury in Montreal jeopardised his plans (he had to withdraw from the competition). At the IWF Worlds, the Polish champion was more successful, collecting two gold medals (in 1971 and 1975) and placing third in 1973. At the continental level, Smalcerz dominated the field between 1971 and 1975, earning four gold medals. His only recognised World Record during this period dates from May 1972, when he lifted 103kg in the Snatch. After the conclusion of his career as an athlete at the end of the 1970s (he was born in 1941), he took the coaching path: in 2008, he was namely the Head Coach of the Polish Team competing at the Beijing Olympics. More recently, he has also provided valuable services internationally, namely with the teams of the USA and Norway.





1905 - 2025

1972

Gottfried Schödl (AUT), IWF's longest-serving President

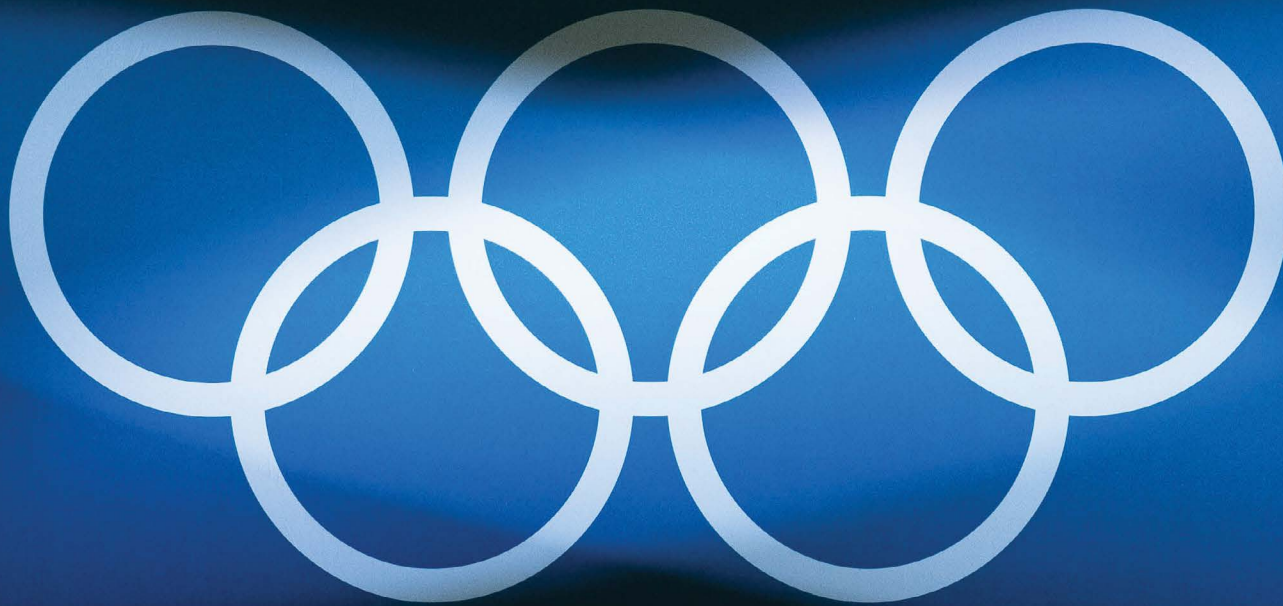
First elected to the IWF Executive Board in 1964, at the age of 40, Gottfried Schödl then became Vice-President in 1968, and in 1972, he was chosen to lead our International Federation. Until the end of his presidency, in 2000, he will become the longest-serving leader in the history of the IWF, a 28-year reign marked by many changes in the sport. Born in 1924 in Vienna, he began his sports career as a skater but switched to weightlifting during his teenage years. If his athlete's career went unnoticed, his administrator skills were notorious: as President of the Austrian Federation, he was namely responsible for the organisation of the 1954 and 1961 editions of the World Championships, taking place in Vienna. On August 25, 1972 within the frame of the Olympic Games in Munich (GER), delegates at the Electoral Congress chose Schödl (photo: Schödl, right, and Johnson, left, in 1992) by a tiny difference of one vote [the Austrian had 32, while Clarence Johnson, President since 1960, collected 31]. In the book he wrote, 'The Lost Past: A Story of the International Weightlifting Federation', he recalls that "private turning point" in his life: "Incredible: how often had I been a passive witness of such elections, and now there I was, myself involved up to my ears as a candidate to the highest position in the International Federation". A highly-respect leader – he was nicknamed "Mr Weightlifting" and considered "an absolute gentleman" – Schödl's highlights during his long tenure as President include: the official name of the Federation was set as 'International Weightlifting Federation', the Press movement was abolished, the women made their entry into the IWF and Olympic programme, and as a stronger promoter of clean sport he decisively introduced an anti-doping strategy into the IWF activities. Also a prolific writer, Schödl attended 11 Olympic Games and 46 World Championships. He passed away in April 2020, aged 95.

1972

Norair Nurikian, the first Bulgarian golden lifter

The first day of the 1972 Munich Olympic Games was on and among the weightlifters it was the moment of the weigh-in for the initial category (men's 60kg) of the competition, to be held the following day. Norair Nurikian was a Bulgarian lifter, born in 1948 to Armenian parents, and was ready for the competition. While on the bus going to the weigh-in, the vehicle burst into flames, but quickly another one is found and Nurikian and others could proceed to the venue (if not, they would have been disqualified). The destiny worked well, as Nurikian became the first-ever Olympic (gold) medallist for his country in weightlifting, winning his category in 127.5-117.5-157.5-402.5. It was the beginning of a successful saga for Bulgarian weightlifting, a sport that has since then brought 39 Olympic medals to the country. Nurikian's feat in Germany was not an isolated one: four years later, in Montreal, he earns his second gold medal at the Games, this time in the 56kg category (117.5-145-262.5). At the IWF Worlds, he was not so successful, but still manages to climb on three occasions on the podium – silver in 1973 and bronze in 1971 and 1974. Finally, he is also the European champion in 1976 and establishes five World Records during his career. Nurikian was trained by coach Ivan Abadjiev, considered the "Father of Bulgarian Weightlifting", having produced many Olympic and world champions. Nurikian married soon after the 1972 Olympics, had a son in 1974, and died in March 2025, aged 76.



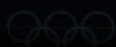


1973

Olympic weightlifting at the core of the IWF activities

Throughout its history, the International Weightlifting Federation has incorporated many activities that have since then gained their independence in the sports scene. It starts from the very beginning: in 1905, the "Amateur Athletes World Union" also comprised wrestling, a sport that was dissociated from our Federation in 1920. But in 1950, at the Paris Congress, the delegates approved the inclusion of the "movement of physical culture" (bodybuilding) to the activities of the Federation, dictating also the change of name from FIH to FIHC (translating from the French acronyms: the International Weightlifting Federation became International Federation of Weightlifting and Bodybuilding). This move was certainly dictated by the more intense activity of bodybuilders around the world, some in a professional manner (something not allowed then in the Olympic sphere). It's not a coincidence that the present International Fitness and Bodybuilding Federation

indicates 1946 as the official year of its foundation. Anyway, the scope of bodybuilding activities within our Federation remains vague and even the rules to implement the "Nicest Athlete of the World Contest" were difficult to implement. In 1968, at the Mexico City Congress, a joint proposal from Great Britain, Germany, and Mexico to remove "bodybuilding" from the rule book was accepted. But at the same gathering, a majority of votes decided on the inclusion of "powerlifting" (Squat, Bench Press, and Dead Lift) in our Constitution. This novelty lasted even shorter, as in November 1972, the founding meeting of the International Powerlifting Federation took place in the USA, the country also hosting the initial World Championships of this sport in 1973. From then to date, the IWF concentrated its efforts on developing and creating the best possible competitive frame for Olympic weightlifting.



PARIS 2024



1975

Junior lifters compete at the highest level

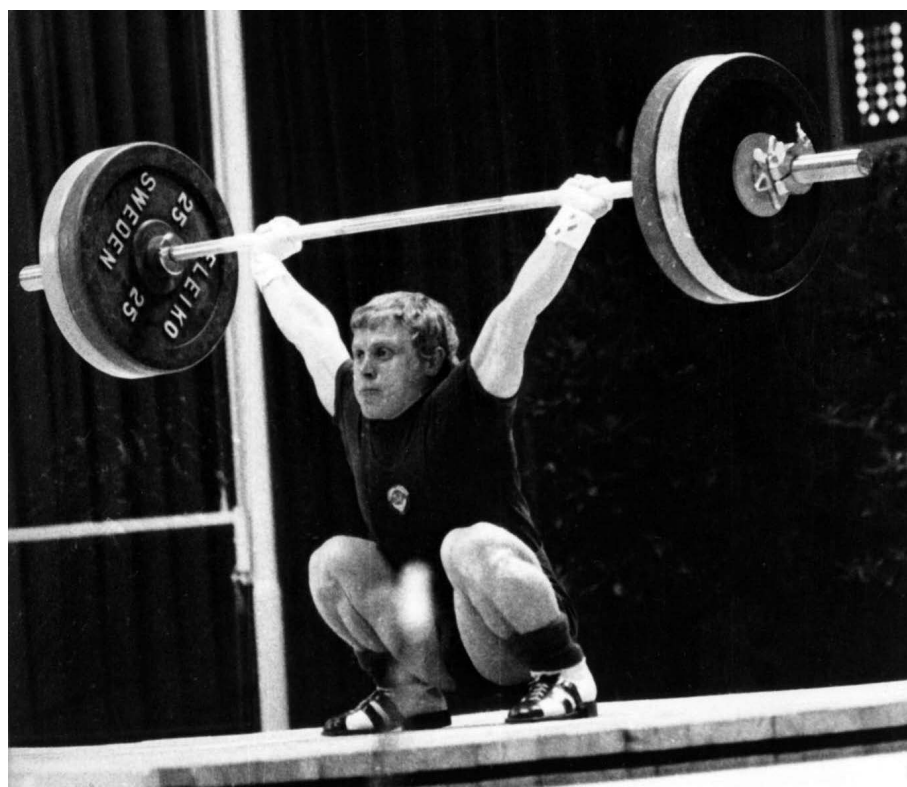
Marseille, in France, had the honour to host in 1975 the first edition of the IWF World Junior Championships, from then a competition where many of the brightest stars of weightlifting could already shine at a younger age (Lasha Talakhadze was junior world champion in 2013, before build-up a career that includes now three Olympic gold medals). Since that inaugural event 50 years ago, 31 nations in the five continents have staged the competition: after Europe, the Americas held its first Championships in Montreal (CAN) in 1980, Africa in 1983 in Cairo (EGY), Asia in 1994 in Jakarta (INA) and Oceania in 2019 in Suva (FIJ). On that premiere in France, nine events (only men at the time) were held and the titles went to Bulgaria (4), the Soviet Union (3), and Poland (2). The Polish capital, Warsaw, hosted the competition in 1995, which was for the first time open to women. The 50th edition of the Championships was held between April 30 and May 5 in Lima (PER) and also constituted an important milestone: it was the first-ever joint Junior (lifters aged 15-20) and Youth (13-17 years old) World Championships in the IWF history!

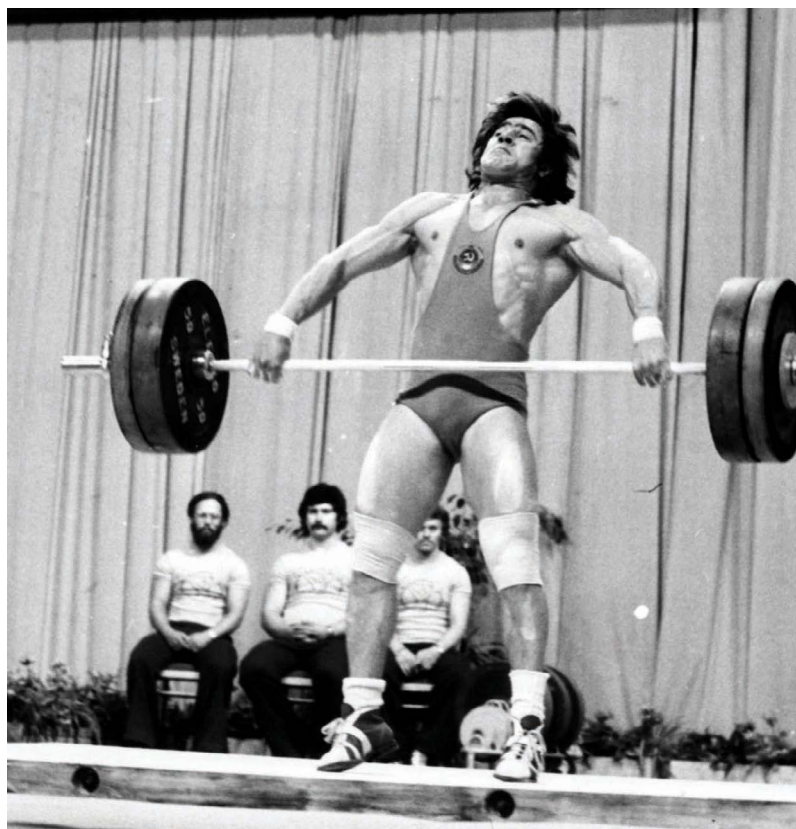


1976

Mixed feelings at the Montreal Games

From an organisational point of view, the 1976 Montreal Olympics were praised as a huge success, and in the case of Weightlifting they will be remembered as the first ones close to the present Games format. Still only accessible to men, and with nine bodyweight categories, they represented a considerable change since the 1928 edition, when three lifts (Press, Snatch, and Clean & Jerk) had to be performed during the weightlifting competition. In Canada, the Press movement was no longer on the programme after the IWF had decided to abolish it from its competitions, starting in 1973. With Snatch and Clean & Jerk firmly established on the programme (as is the case today), 173 lifters travelled to Montreal. 24 of them (13.9%) could not get a valid result in the Games, clearly an unsuccessful ratio for our Sport. Out of these 24 athletes, 16 bombed out either in the Snatch or C&J, but most dramatically eight were disqualified following the first-ever in-competition doping tests for the detection of anabolic steroids. In an event dominated by athletes from the Soviet Union (*photo – Aleksandr Voronin, winner in the 52kg*), two winners were namely stripped of their gold medals: Zbigniew Kaczmarek (POL, 67.5kg) and Valentin Christov (BUL, 110kg). They sadly remain in history as the first Olympic winners in our Sport to lose their title after having tested positive for prohibited substances. In all of the nine weightlifting bodyweight categories contested in Montreal, there was at least one lifter either bombing out or disqualified!

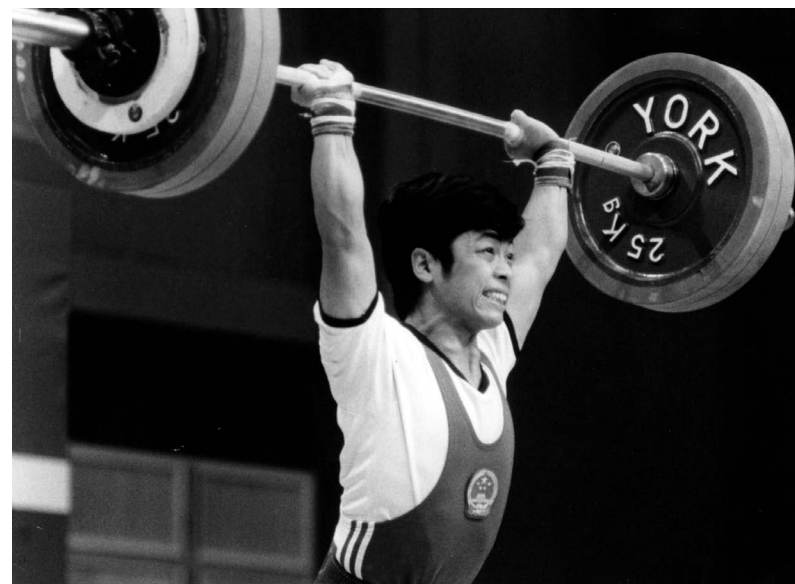




1976

David Rigert (URS), the lifter improving 65 WR!

Some say he was quite inconsistent, but statistics are there to confirm that David Rigert, representing the Soviet Union, was one of the greatest lifters of the 1970s, establishing no less than 65 World Records during his career! Born in March 1947 in Nagornoye (presently in Kazakhstan), he started weightlifting in 1966 and four years later, he was already part of the Soviet team competing at the World Championships (in Columbus, Ohio, US). On that first major appearance, he got the bronze in the 82.5kg. That would be his worst result at the IWF showcase: from 1971 to 1978, he earned five gold medals, mainly in the 90kg category. Despite this supremacy, his performances at the Olympic level weren't so successful. At his first Games, in Munich 1972, he bombed out in the Snatch, a poor result that he would repeat eight years later, at home, in the Moscow 1980 Olympics. The honour was saved in Montreal 1976, when he clinched his only Games medal (gold), lifting 170-212.5-282.5. With nine European titles from 1971-1980, Rigert established during the "golden" decade of his career one WR in Press, 21 in Snatch, 21 in Clean & Jerk, 14 in Total (with two lifts), and eight in Total (with three lifts). In Snatch, his best was a 185kg successful attempt in 1981, while in C&J he lifted 230kg in 1980! After his retirement, Rigert was a successful coach, also developing weightlifting equipment and promoting the construction of sports facilities.



1977

China starts its pathway to excellence

Until the mid-1970s, the sport of weightlifting was dominated by lifters coming from the Soviet Union – they are still ranked second in the Olympic and World Championships medallists' charts – but another powerhouse started to emerge at the highest level: China. We are in Stuttgart (Germany) in 1977, at the World Championships, and Chen Manlin (men's 56kg category) will stay in the history books as the first Chinese lifter with a medal at the IWF showcase – in this case, two, the silver in the Clean & Jerk and the bronze in Total. A discreet debut of what would become an incredible supremacy until the present day. Two years later, at the 1979 Worlds in Thessaloniki (GRE), Wu Shude (*photo*) is the first-ever world gold winner (Snatch), in the men's 52kg. Wu is arguably the initial star of Chinese weightlifting, as he would also clinch the title at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, this time in the 56kg. Before that success, his teammate Zeng Guoqiang officially becomes the first Chinese Olympic champion in the Sport, lifting 105-130-235 in the men's 52kg. The Asian delegation leaves California with a total of four titles out of the 10 on offer. In 1987, the IWF showcase is also contested by women and the inaugural edition in Daytona Beach (USA) is dominated by China (eight out of the nine gold at stake). For the record, the first-ever Chinese female world champion was Cai Jun (44kg category) with 70-75-145. These achievements lead to the organisation in 1995 of the first IWF World Championships in Guangzhou, where the host nation leads the medals chart, with seven overall titles. From 1977 to 2024, China won 1048 medals at the IWF World Championships (including 347 in Total only). At the Olympics, the Asian powerhouse also leads operations with 67 podium presences (43 gold, 16 silver, and eight bronze) – medals at the Games only comprise Total results.

1978



Cairo (EGY) is the founding city of the Weightlifting Federation of Africa

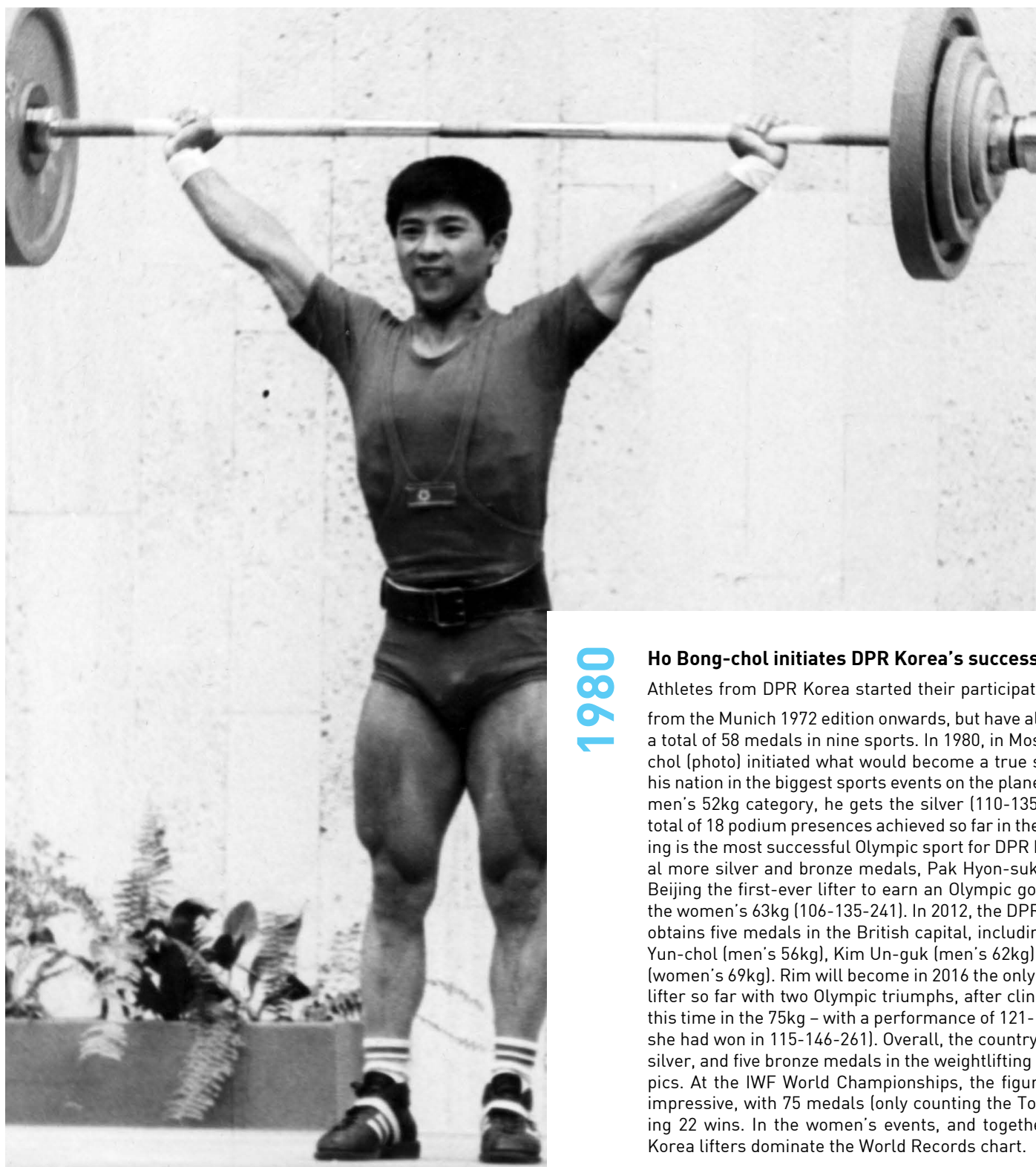
After the Americas (in 1951), Asia (1958), and Europe (1969), the Weightlifting Federation of Africa (WFA) was established in 1978, thus becoming the fourth IWF continental body (Oceania would follow in 1980). Without surprise, the WFA is founded in Cairo, the Egyptian capital. The Land of the Pharaohs always played a key role in the continent: it was the first African federation affiliated to the IWF (in as early as 1920), followed only 28 years later by South Africa (1948), and then Morocco (1958). Moreover, at the Olympic and world level, Egyptian lifters had already excelled by winning several medals: still today, it is the most successful African nation in our sport. Presently, the continental body has 38 national federations, with the last inclusion being Equatorial Guinea at the May 2025 IWF Ordinary Congress. The WFA is directly responsible for the organisation of Youth, Junior, and Senior Championships at the continental level, on an annual basis. The last WFA showcase took place in Mauritius, at the end of April 2025, a competition where Nigeria and Egypt achieved the most remarkable performances. At the Olympic level, three African countries have obtained medals so far in weightlifting: Egypt (15), Nigeria (2) and Cameroon (1). In the long history of the IWF World Championships, the list (only counting Total medals) is a bit longer: Egypt (42), Nigeria (7), Tunisia (2), and Madagascar (1). In accordance with the IWF Constitution, each of the five continental federations' presidents sits on the IWF Executive Board as IWF Vice-President.

1980

Oceania Federation is born in Melbourne

On November 6, 1980, the vibrant Australian city of Melbourne hosted the inaugural meeting of the Oceania Weightlifting Federation (OWF), the fifth and last (in time) IWF continental body. To lead the newly-formed organisation, Les Martyn, from Australia, was elected President, while Bruce Cameron was the first General Secretary of the OWF. Since its foundation, and with the exception of 1983, 1991, 1995, and 2020 annual continental championships have been organised, gathering the 22 national member federations in the continent. From 1993 onwards, the staging of the Oceania Weightlifting Championships incorporates the South Pacific Championships. The junior versions of these events were first staged in 1997, while Youth lifters have had their own event since 2010. In 1993, Melbourne was again in the headlines, as the first Oceanian city to welcome the best lifters on the planet at the IWF World Championships. In 2019, Suva (FIJ) became the first location in the continent organising the IWF World Junior showcase. Australia remains the most successful country in the region at major events, with four Olympic medals so far, and 11 podium presences (in Total) at the IWF World Championships.





1980

Ho Bong-chol initiates DPR Korea's success at the Games

Athletes from DPR Korea started their participation at the Olympics from the Munich 1972 edition onwards, but have already accumulated a total of 58 medals in nine sports. In 1980, in Moscow, tiny Ho Bong-chol (photo) initiated what would become a true story of success for his nation in the biggest sports events on the planet. Competing in the men's 52kg category, he gets the silver (110-135-245), the first of a total of 18 podium presences achieved so far in the Games (weightlifting is the most successful Olympic sport for DPR Korea). After several more silver and bronze medals, Pak Hyon-suk became in 2008 in Beijing the first-ever lifter to earn an Olympic gold for the nation, in the women's 63kg (106-135-241). In 2012, the DPR Korean delegation obtains five medals in the British capital, including three titles – Om Yun-chol (men's 56kg), Kim Un-guk (men's 62kg), and Rim Jong-sim (women's 69kg). Rim will become in 2016 the only DPR Korea weightlifter so far with two Olympic triumphs, after clinching another gold, this time in the 75kg – with a performance of 121-153-274 (in London, she had won in 115-146-261). Overall, the country has five gold, eight silver, and five bronze medals in the weightlifting events at the Olympics. At the IWF World Championships, the figures are much more impressive, with 75 medals (only counting the Total results), including 22 wins. In the women's events, and together with China, DPR Korea lifters dominate the World Records chart.



1983

Women's weightlifting under IWF's umbrella

The road to the integration of women's weightlifting in the IWF has been a long one. The sport was practiced by female lifters in some countries and for some time – there is a piece of funny news in a German newspaper in 1898 reporting that a club in St-Petersburg (Russia) was privately organising female weightlifting sessions for “athletic” ladies – but the prominent conservative mentality still considered the sport as fit for “strong men” only. We are also in Russia, but in October 1983, when an IWF Technical Committee meeting takes place in Moscow and includes one “unusual” topic in the agenda: weightlifting for women. Following a long and heated debate – continental representatives were also attending the meeting – it was unanimously decided that the IWF would incorporate women's weightlifting into its scope of activities. The minutes of the meeting underlined however that despite this outcome “details are to be elaborated later and no world championship is allowed.” Things moved fast and in March 1986 an international competition takes place in Budapest (HUN), with the presence of 23 women from five nations and three continents (Canada, China, Great Britain, Hungary, and the United States). The success was immediate and that decisive turning point opened the way for the organisation, one year later, of the first Women's World Championships in Daytona Beach (USA, photo), and ultimately the integration of women's events in the programme of the Olympic Games, starting from the Sydney 2000 edition onwards. Nowadays, weightlifting is a perfectly gender-balanced sport concerning the participation of men and women at the IWF events.

1983

Start of a successful story for ZKC

In northern China, in the Hebei province, the city of Botou has about 300,000 inhabitants, a small town according to the country's standards. But for the weightlifting world, it assumes a special importance: since 1983, the barbell equipment ZKC has been produced there and has become a major partner of the IWF throughout the years. Certified by our International Federation in 2005, the bars and plates from ZKC were already present at the 2008 Olympics, held in Beijing. Since then, they were again the official suppliers of the Games in Rio 2016, Tokyo 2020, and Paris 2024. ZKC was also present in the first two editions of the Youth Olympic Games, in Singapore 2010 and Nanjing 2014. The Hebei Zhangkong Barbell Manufacturing Co. Ltd. (the official and complete name for ZKC) factory has a surface of 40'000 m² and integrates 70 sets (including 10 fully automatised) of equipment production and 18 more for testing material. Moreover, the ZKC unit incorporates a flaw-detection and straightening department, a barbell quenching and tempering section, and a plate inspection centre. At the IWF World Championships level, ZKC was the equipment supplier at the 2023 showcase in Riyadh (KSA) and has been present in many Asian major events in recent years.



1984



Dean Lukin, the only Olympic gold for Australia

In a country where Swimming is a national pride (the sport brought more than one-third of the medals won at the Olympics), Australia could however shine at the highest level in weightlifting on one occasion: in 1984. In Los Angeles – where the Olympic Games were boycotted by the Soviet Union and its traditional allies – Dinko (Dean) Lukin managed to bring home what is the sole Australian Olympic gold so far in our sport. Born in 1960 in Sydney, his family moved to Port Lincoln (South Australia) when he was only five. At 16, his talent for weightlifting was noticed by who would be his future coach, Leon Holme. Practically at the same time, he becomes a full-time fisherman, spending many months of the year at sea fishing tuna. His training conditions were far from ideal – in an old tin shed –, but he kept on improving his performances. Competing in the +110kg, he achieves his major international result in 1982, winning the gold (Total of 377.5kg) at the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane. Two years later, at the Olympics, Lukin snatches 172.5kg and then successfully lifts 240kg in the Clean & Jerk for a winning performance of 412.5kg. At the 1986 Edinburgh Commonwealth Games, he revalidates his title (392.5kg), in what would be his last international success. In 1985, he was inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame. Australia has three more Olympic weightlifting medallists: Vern Barberis (bronze in 1952), Robert Kabbas (silver in 1984), and Stefan Botev (bronze in 1996). Among women, there isn't any podium presence for the time being: in Paris 2024, Eileen Cikamatana was close to a medal but ended up finishing fourth.

1984

The beginning of a solid Olympic presence for Chinese Taipei

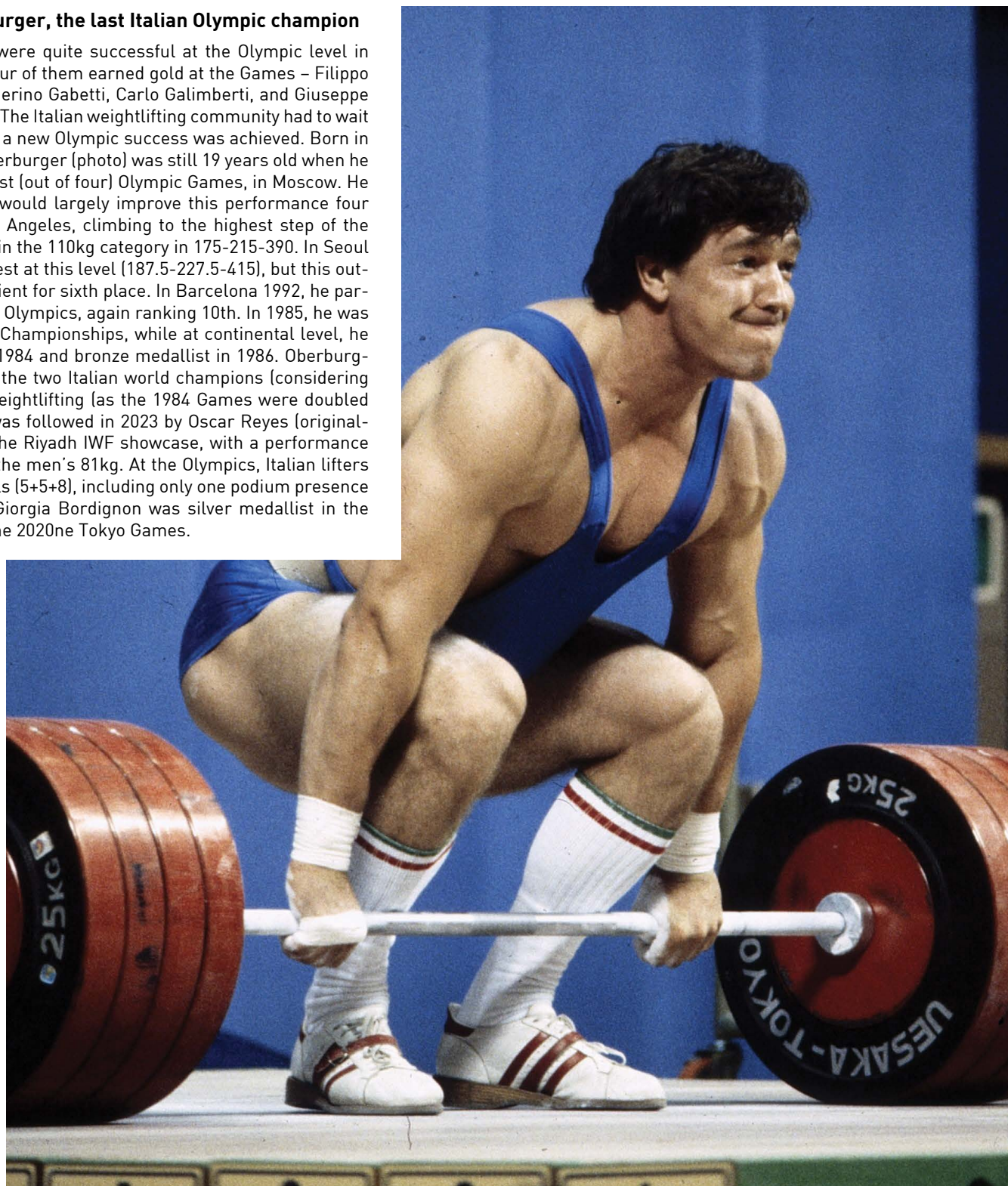
Outside our sports community, it is hard to find someone capable of identifying the most successful sport in Chinese Taipei: the answer is weightlifting. Out of the 43 medals achieved by the island at the Olympics, 11 (leading the chart) were earned by lifters. It all started in 1984, when the Games were only available for men: in the 60kg, Tsai Wen-ye opened the way with a bronze – he remains the only male Olympic weightlifting medallist for Chinese Taipei. The subsequent 10 podium presences were all achieved by women, after female competitions were admitted in the Games, in 2000. On that successful debut in Sydney (AUS), Li Feng-ying and Kuo Yi-hang got respectively the silver in the 53kg and bronze in the 75kg category. From the 2008 Games onwards, and until last year's edition in Paris, female weightlifters from Chinese Taipei have always medalled. In Beijing, Chen Wei-ling became the first-ever gold medallist in the 48kg category, while her teammate Lu Ying-chi earned silver in the 63kg. Chen Wen-huei closes the list of single medallists, with a bronze (64kg) at the Tokyo 2020ne Olympics. Two athletes deserve however a special mention, as they clinched at least two Olympic medals in the Sport: Hsu Shu-ching has two victories in the 53kg (London 2012 and Rio 2016) and Kuo Hsing-chun (photo) was three times on an Olympic podium: gold in Tokyo 2020ne (59kg), and two bronze (in Rio 2016 and Paris 2024). Kuo (or "Tana" as she is also known) is arguably the best weightlifter the island has produced: besides her Olympic achievements, she is also a five-time world champion and winner of six continental championships. At 31, she has established 11 World Records so far throughout her career.

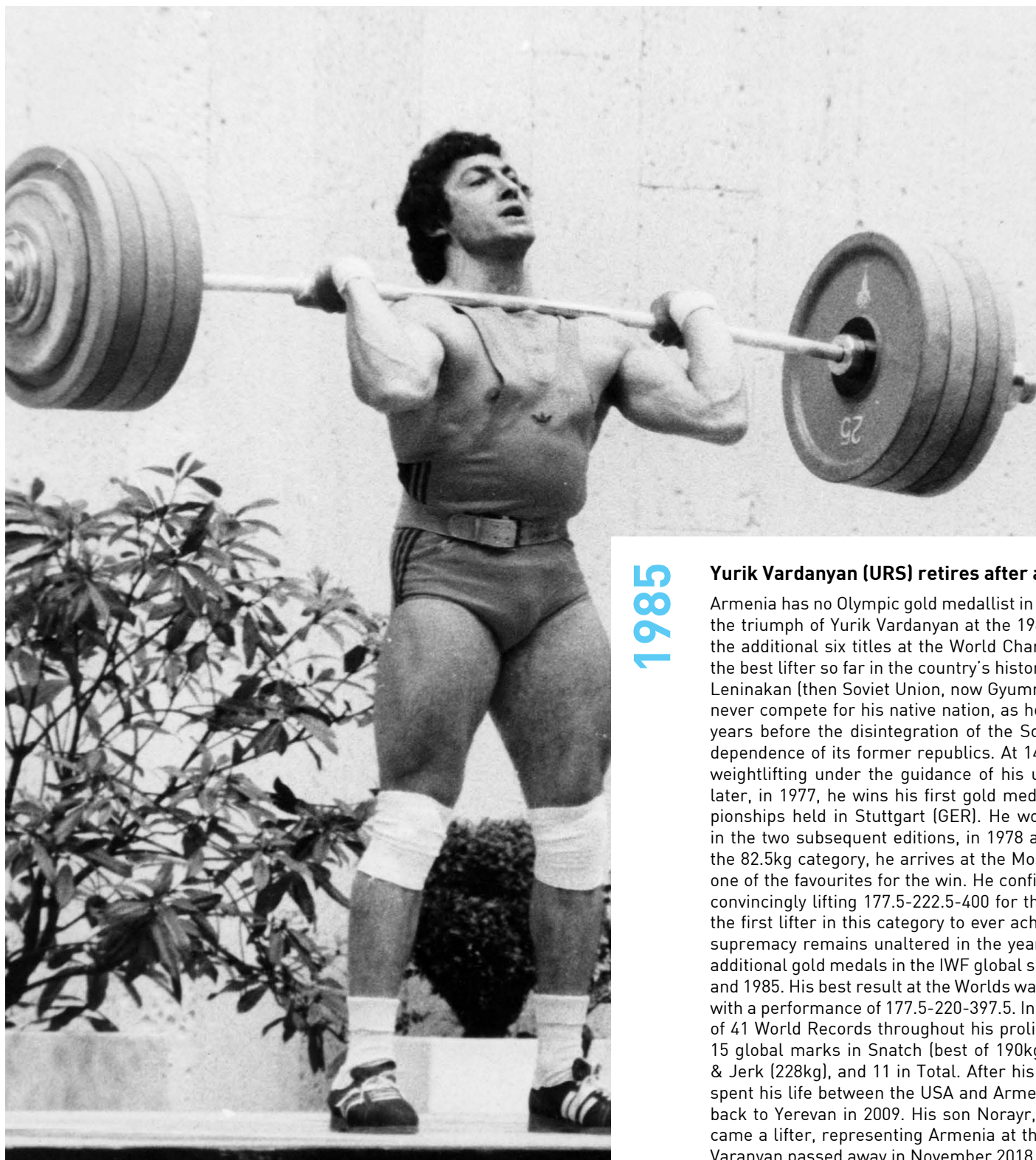


1984

Norberto Oberburger, the last Italian Olympic champion

Lifters from Italy were quite successful at the Olympic level in the 1920s, when four of them earned gold at the Games – Filippo Bottino, in 1920, Pierino Gabetti, Carlo Galimberti, and Giuseppe Tonani, all in 1924. The Italian weightlifting community had to wait 60 long years until a new Olympic success was achieved. Born in 1960, Norberto Oberburger (photo) was still 19 years old when he competed in his first (out of four) Olympic Games, in Moscow. He finished 10th, but would largely improve this performance four years later, in Los Angeles, climbing to the highest step of the podium – triumph in the 110kg category in 175-215-390. In Seoul 1988, he lifts his best at this level (187.5-227.5-415), but this outcome is only sufficient for sixth place. In Barcelona 1992, he participates in his last Olympics, again ranking 10th. In 1985, he was third at the World Championships, while at continental level, he was runner-up in 1984 and bronze medallist in 1986. Oberburger remains one of the two Italian world champions (considering Total results) in weightlifting (as the 1984 Games were doubled up as such), and was followed in 2023 by Oscar Reyes (originally from Cuba), at the Riyadh IWF showcase, with a performance of 163-193-356 in the men's 81kg. At the Olympics, Italian lifters have won 18 medals (5+5+8), including only one podium presence among women – Giorgia Bordignon was silver medallist in the 64kg category at the 2020 Tokyo Games.





1985

Yurik Vardanyan (URS) retires after a brilliant career

Armenia has no Olympic gold medallist in weightlifting so far, but the triumph of Yurik Vardanyan at the 1980 Moscow Games and the additional six titles at the World Championships makes him the best lifter so far in the country's history. Born in June 1956 in Leninakan (then Soviet Union, now Gyumri in Armenia), he could never compete for his native nation, as he retired in 1985, some years before the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the independence of its former republics. At 14, he started practicing weightlifting under the guidance of his uncle, and seven years later, in 1977, he wins his first gold medal at the World Championships held in Stuttgart (GER). He would revalidate his title in the two subsequent editions, in 1978 and 1979. Competing in the 82.5kg category, he arrives at the Moscow 1980 Olympics as one of the favourites for the win. He confirms his credentials, by convincingly lifting 177.5-222.5-400 for the victory (photo). He is the first lifter in this category to ever achieve a 400kg Total. His supremacy remains unaltered in the years to follow, with three additional gold medals in the IWF global showcase, in 1981, 1983, and 1985. His best result at the Worlds was precisely his last one, with a performance of 177.5-220-397.5. In parallel, he sets a total of 41 World Records throughout his prolific career, namely with 15 global marks in Snatch (best of 190kg), another 15 in Clean & Jerk (228kg), and 11 in Total. After his retirement in 1985, he spent his life between the USA and Armenia, coming definitively back to Yerevan in 2009. His son Norayr, born in 1987, also became a lifter, representing Armenia at the 2012 Olympics. Yurik Vardanyan passed away in November 2018, at the age of 62.

1987

Karyn Marshall (USA), a pioneer in weightlifting

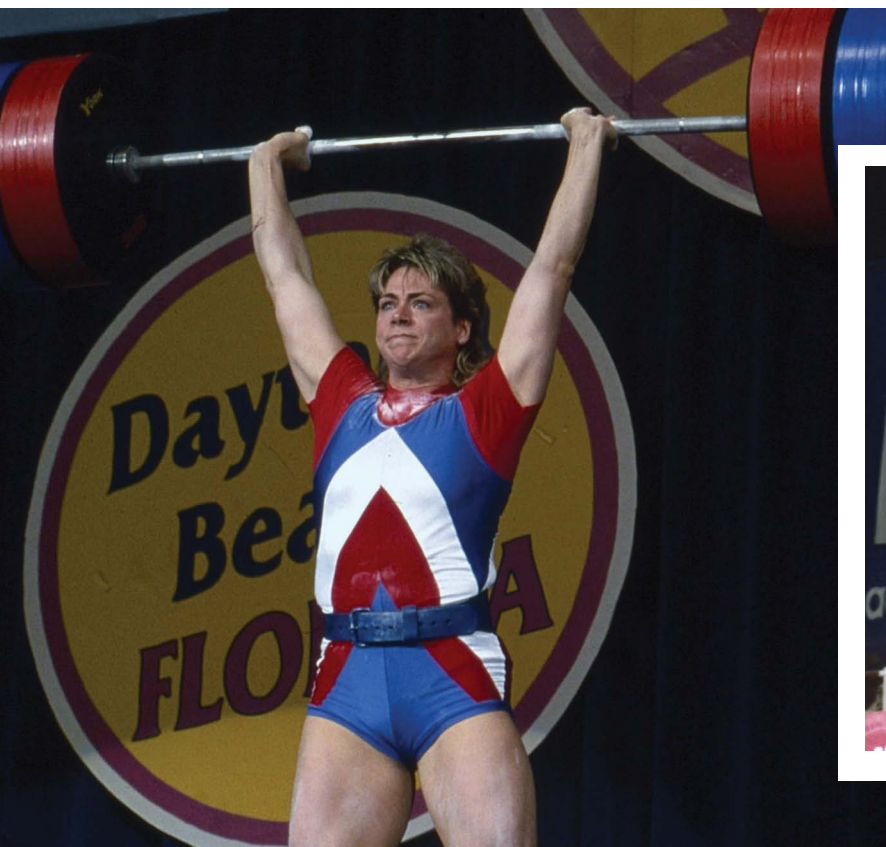
Before the IWF officially recognised and implemented women's events at the beginning of the 1980s, Karyn Marshall (USA) is already training in 1978 in the sport she would later excel at. In 1981, at 25, she wins her first national championships. Four years later, she becomes the first woman ever to lift the symbolic weight of 300 pounds (136kg), and in 1987, in Daytona Beach (Florida), she is one of the US hopes to win the first world championships titles at offer. In this inaugural IWF women's showcase, nine body-weight categories are on the programme. In eight of them, Chinese lifters show an impressive supremacy, and despite a Snatch gold for Arlys Johnson-Maxwell, an overall gold is missing from the home delegation. In the 82.5kg category, Marshall dominates operations, with a 95-125-220 outcome, thus becoming the first non-Chinese female world champion. In the subsequent editions of the Championships, she isn't so successful, but she still earns silver in 1988 (Jakarta, INA), 1989 (Manchester, GBR), and 1990 (Sarajevo, YUG). The 1987 consecration has a special taste for Marshall: after getting a Bachelor of Science (nursing degree), she works for some months as a nurse, but for the next 10 years she is a financial analyst. When the October 17, 1987 Wall Street crash shook the world, the Daytona World Championships were just two weeks away. Despite her 10/12 hours in the office, she manages to train at night and still makes the heaviest lifts at the IWF showcase in Florida. After the end of her career, she became a chiropractor.

1987

Maria Takacs (HUN), 33 world medals (but never the gold...)

In cycling, it's frequent to mention the name of Raymond Poulidor, the French legend, eight times on the podium of the Tour de France, but never on the highest step – he is known in the sport as the “eternal second”. Weightlifting also has its Poulidor – in our case, it is a woman from Hungary: Maria Takacs. Born in 1966, she started her sports career in athletics (shot putter and discus thrower), but together with her sister Erika, they were initiated into weightlifting by their father Istvan, a coach. They both have brilliant international careers, but Maria's deserves a special mention: between 1987 (the first edition for women) and 1998, she took part in 12 consecutive World Championships (in the 67.5kg category and then on the 75/76kg) and out of the possible 36 medals at stake, she collects an amazing harvest of 33! With one significant detail: none of them is a golden award... In Total, she earns six silver and six bronze medals, getting another 21 podium presences for the individual events of snatch and clean & jerk. The only three editions she doesn't get a full collection of medals are 1992 and 1998 (absent from the Snatch podium) and 1993 (in C&J). On those 12 Championships, the [Total] victory in her category was clinched by China on 10 occasions, while Greece and Finland were the remaining winners. Her personal best at the Worlds was her 1997 performance in Chiang Mai (THA), where she got the silver in 100-125-225. Her sister Erika won fewer medals at the IWF showcase but managed to be the world champion in 1995 in the +83kg category. After missing the 2000 Olympic Games (when women's weightlifting made its debut), Maria (on the left, in the photo – at the 1994 Worlds) retired from the elite competition, but remained active as a successful master lifter. She was the first female athlete to be inducted into the Weightlifting Hall of Fame, in 2006, and was in 2025 a member of the IWF Coaching and Research Committee.

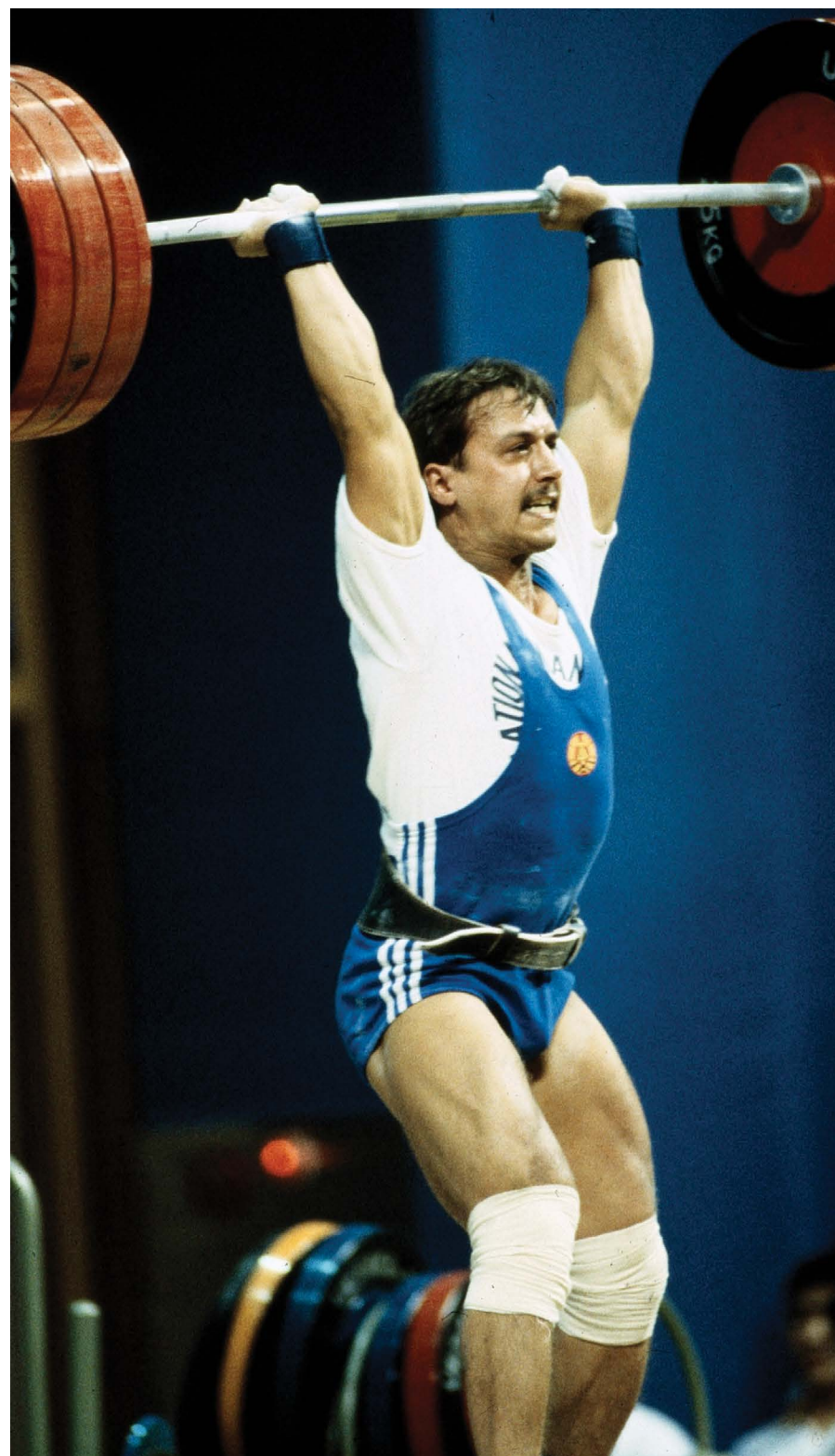
1905 - 2025



1988

Joachim Kunz gets the gold in the last Games for the GDR

During its last decade as a divided country, Germany had in Joachim Kunz its shiniest weightlifting star, competing for the GDR (German Democratic Republic). Born in February 1959 in Stollberg (then in the territory of East Germany), he was already a prodigy in the junior category, having won a gold medal at the World Championships in this age group, in 1977 and 1979. Competing in the 67.5kg category, Kunz arrived at the 1980 Moscow Olympics as one of the lifters to beat – he did not disappoint, getting the silver in 145-190-335. Four years later, in Los Angeles, the Eastern block decided to boycott the Games and Kunz could not compete. However, his domination at the world level was undisputable: after two silver medals at the IWF showcase in 1979 and 1980, the German ace was the best in 1981 and 1983. Had GDR decided to take part in the 1984 Olympic rendezvous, Kunz was, in normal conditions, certainly a candidate for a medal. Despite this important hiatus, he continued to train hard and qualified for the 1988 Games in Seoul. In the Korean capital, he successfully lifted 150-190-340, finishing second behind Angel Genchev (BUL). However, the Bulgarian lifter was subsequently tested positive for prohibited substances and Kunz ended up getting the Olympic title. It was the last time the 'two' Germany competed separately in the Games: one year later, the fall of the Berlin Wall led to the reunification of the country. During his amazing career (which also included several medals at the European Championships), Joachim Kunz also improved nine World Records – four in Snatch, three in Clean & Jerk, and two in Total.



1992

Hall of Fame honours the 'best of the best'

The 'Hall of Fame' concept first appeared in 1936, when the US Baseball League created its Pantheon to honour and celebrate the feats of its biggest stars. Other sports quickly adopted the idea (both on a national and international level), but weightlifting waited until 1992 to implement its Hall of Fame. The project was launched by renowned French sports journalist Alain Lunzenfichter, who was for many years the President of the AIPS (International Sport Press Association) weightlifting commission and deputy editor-in-chief of L'Équipe newspaper. Since then, a Board of Trustees (formed by IWF top officials) may nominate a maximum of 10 new members each year. Nominees may be athletes, coaches, officials, journalists, or sponsors. However, certain conditions must be fulfilled: Athletes must have retired for at least 5 years; Coaches and Officials must have worked for weightlifting for at least 25 years; other individuals are eligible provided they "have significantly assisted the sport of weightlifting". Since the first induction in 1992, many Olympic and world champions have been on the list and are accompanied by several other protagonists in the life of our International Federation. The most recent inductees in the IWF Hall of Fame are Karl Rimböck (GER) and David Montero (BRA – left in the photo, holding his certificate), distinguished IWF official, honoured at the 2024 IWF Congress, held last December in Manama (BRN).

*At the end of these milestones, you can find the list of all the individuals who were mentioned in these 120 stories and who were inducted into the Weightlifting Hall of Fame

1992

German ace Ronny Weller reaches the top of a superb career

Born in July 1969 in what was then the German Democratic Republic, Ronny Weller was an accomplished example of an athlete successfully coping with the political changes that occurred in his country at the end of the 1980s. Initially competing for the GDR, he took part in his first Olympic Games in 1988, in Seoul. In the 110kg category, he got the bronze medal in 190-235-425. In 1989, the Berlin Wall collapsed and Germany got unified, "absorbing" athletes from both the East and West sides. Weller was one of them and will become an icon of German weightlifting with four more Olympic participations. In 1992, in Barcelona, he reached the top of his career, with an Olympic win in 192.5-240-432.5. Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000 will follow, and Weller will get the silver on both occasions. In Australia, he lifted his best at this level, with 210-257.5-467.5. In Athens 2004, at his last Olympic appearance, he got injured in the Snatch competition and couldn't achieve a valid result. He is still today one of the few athletes with five participations in the Games and four Olympic medals! At the IWF World Championships, his career was also prolific, with one triumph in 1993 and three additional silver medals in 1991, 1995, and 1997. At the European level, Weller climbed six times on the podium (two gold, three silver, and one bronze). Finally, the German ace improved six World Records throughout his distinguished career (best Snatch and Clean & Jerk: 210kg and 255kg, respectively).

1905 - 2025

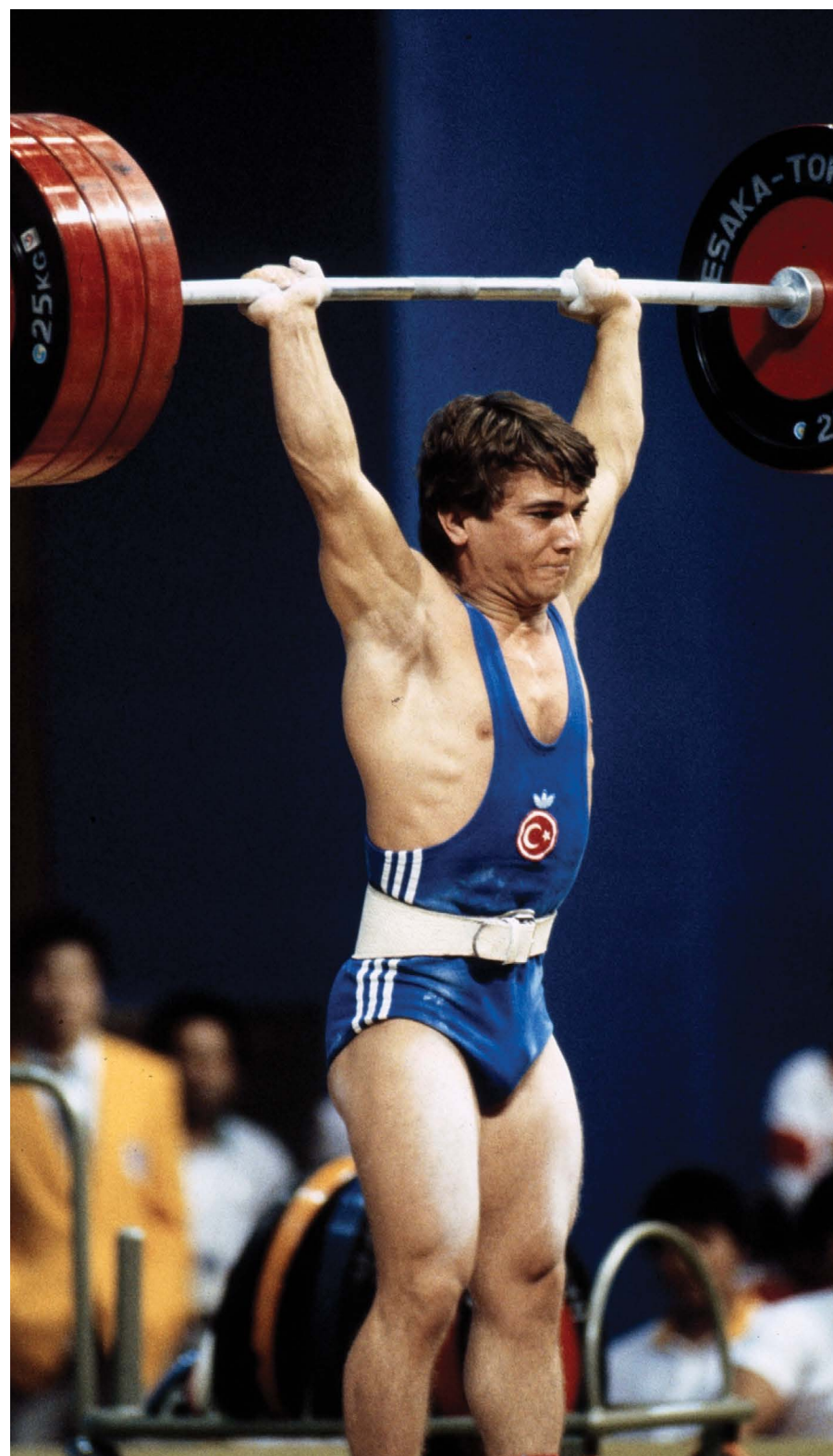




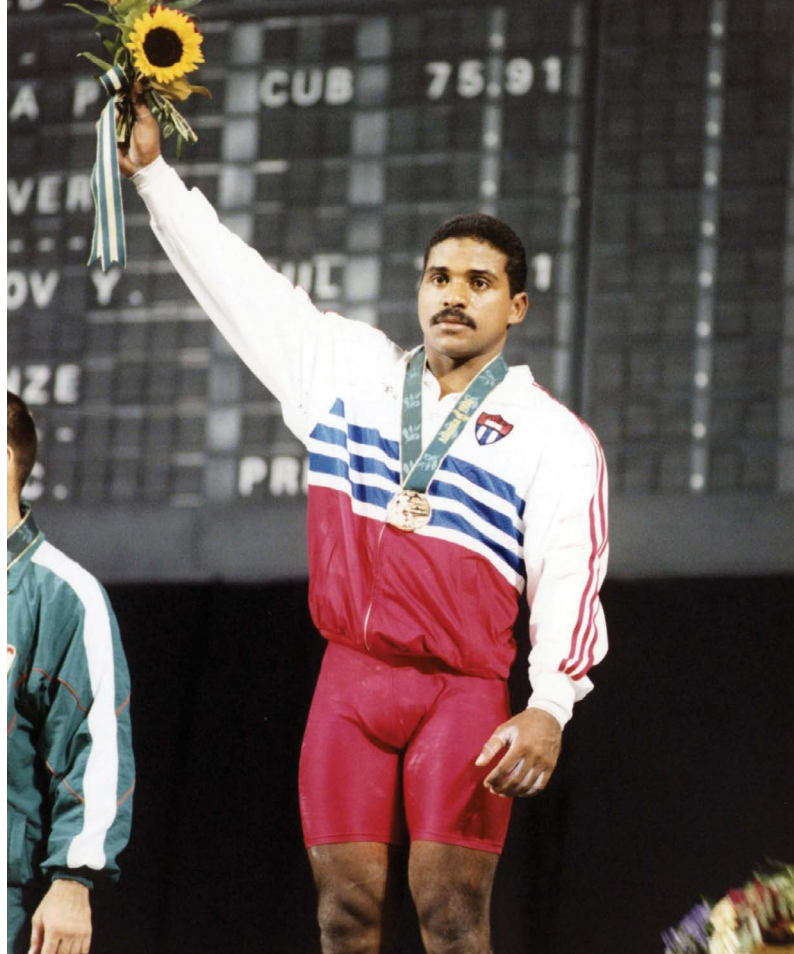
1996

Naim Suleymanoglu (TUR) becomes a legend

Despite his short height (1.47m), Naim Suleymanoglu is considered one of the greatest weightlifters in history, after being the first to earn three gold medals at the Olympic Games. Initially representing Bulgaria (he was born in January 1967 in Ptichar to Turkish parents), he decides in 1986 (due to ethnic tensions) to flee his country and move to Türkiye, where he received support from the local authorities. Under the Turkish flag, Suleymanoglu successfully competed in the 1988 Games in Seoul, getting the gold and three new World Records on the way (Snatch – 152.5kg, Clean & Jerk – 190kg, and Total – 342.5kg). These performances would remain his best results until the end of his career, but in 1992 in Barcelona, and 1996 in Atlanta he earns Olympic gold on both occasions, respectively in the 60kg and 64kg men's category – a legend was born! To this incredible feat, the "Pocket Hercules" (nickname by which he was known) also added seven IWF World Championships titles and 46 WR to his roll of honour! Suleymanoglu died in November 2017, at only 50.



1996



Pablo Lara (CUB) earns his second Olympic medal

If Boxing, Wrestling, Athletics, and Judo lead the Cuban medal chart in the country's Olympic history, Weightlifting proudly brought eight podium presences to the Caribbean island. It all started at the 1980 Moscow Games, when a joyful Daniel Nuñez became the first Cuban Olympic gold medallist in the sport, winning in the 56kg category (125-150-275). His teammate Alberto Blanco brought a second medal from the Russian capital, a bronze in the 100kg. Twelve years passed by until another successful lifter could celebrate an Olympic success: at the 1992 rendezvous in Barcelona, Pablo Lara earned silver in the 75kg, but could do better in Atlanta 1996 (photo), this time getting the gold (162.5-205-367.5) in his category. He remains up to date the only Cuban lifter with two medals at the Olympics. Beijing 2008 also brought good memories for Cuban weightlifting, after three bronze medals – Yordanis Borrero (men's 69kg), Jadier Valladares (men's 85kg), and Yoandry Hernandez (men's 94kg). The last podium presence at the Games happened at the 2012 London Olympics when Ivan Cambar was third in the men's 77kg category. At the IWF World Championships, Cuba collected 24 medals (only considering the Total results), and 84 awards if we take into account the podiums for Snatch, Clean & Jerk, and Total. Also at the IWF showcase, these achievements were almost exclusively achieved by men, with one notable exception: Ludia Montero was a silver medallist at the 2019 edition in Pattaya (THA). The Cuban capital, La Havana, hosted the 1973 World Championships, and 50 years later, the 2023 IWF Grand Prix.

1996

Andrey Chemerkin (RUS) is the man to beat in the super heavyweight category

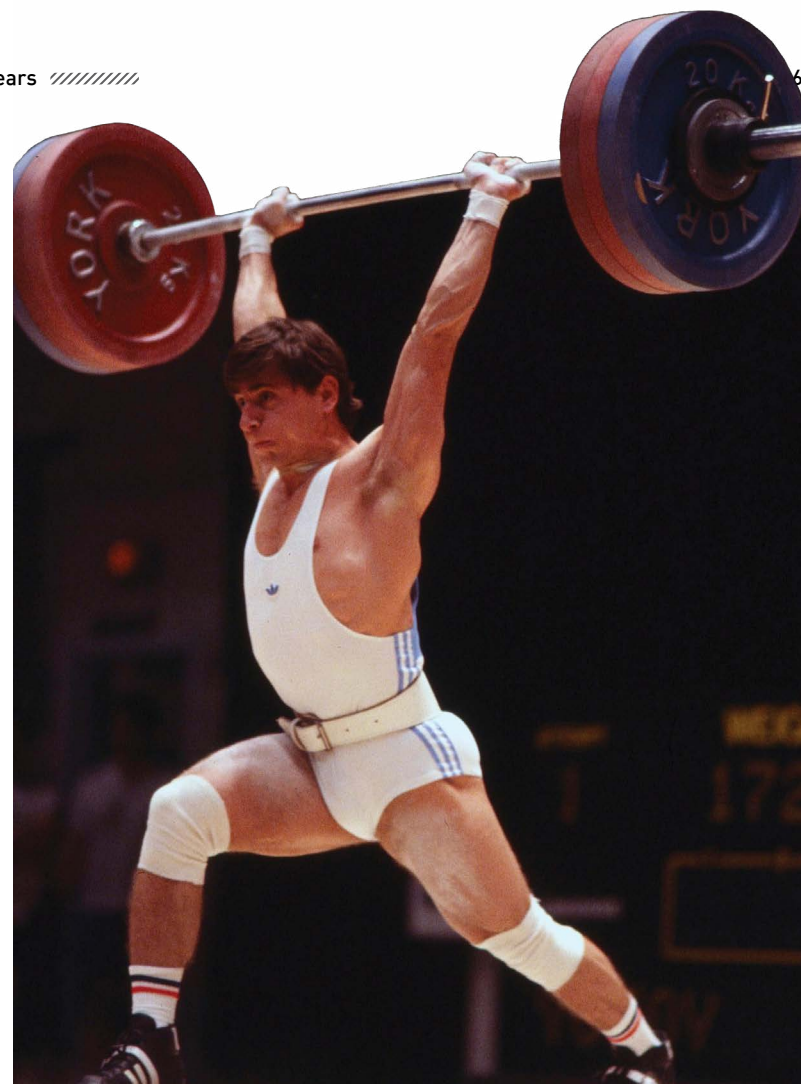
Our historical weightlifting review includes several successful athletes from the former Soviet Union, a powerhouse until its dissolution at the beginning of the 1990s. Russia is the 'natural' successor of the ancient political entity and has remained faithful to the tradition. One of its most distinguished representatives was Andrey Chemerkin, arguably one of the biggest super heavyweight stars in the 1990s. Born in February 1972, he already represented Russia at the 1993 World Championships, where he won a bronze medal. That same year, he was the second-best at the European level. In 1994, he upgraded his world hierarchy – silver –, and in 1995 he got the gold at the IWF showcase in Guangzhou (CHN). He arrived at the Atlanta 1996 Olympics as the man to beat in the +108kg category: and he remained unbeaten, winning the Games gold in 197.5-260-457.5. Chemerkin was once more the best of the field in the three subsequent editions of the IWF World Championships: 1997 (with his best Total of 200-262.5-462.5), 1998, and 1999. After this impressive series, he was again the favourite for the 2000 Sydney Games (photo), but in Australia, his result of 202.5-260-462.5 (better than the one four years earlier) was only sufficient for the bronze medal – behind Hossein Rezazadeh (IRI, 472.5kg) and Ronny Weller (GER, 467.5kg). It was the beginning of the decline for Chemerkin, who was still able to earn a bronze medal at the 2001 IWF Worlds. During his prestigious career (which also comprised two European titles, in 1994 and 1995), the Russian ace improved nine World Records, including one in Snatch (200.5kg, in 1994), five in Clean & Jerk (best of 262.5kg, in 1997), and three in Total.



1997

Last major title for Bulgarian ace Yoto Yotov

In a country of great weightlifters in the history of the Olympic Games and World Championships, Yoto Yotov certainly ranks among the most illustrious athletes of Bulgaria. Born in May 1969, he still competes in the junior category when he earns his first medals at international level – silver at the 1988 Junior Champs and gold in the 1989 edition in Fort Lauderdale (photo). In that same year, he also shines at the senior IWF showcase, clinching silver in the 67.5kg category. In 1991, he finally gets his first senior world title – two more will follow, in 1993 and 1997. In between, he takes part in two Olympic Games – Barcelona 1992 and Atlanta 1996. On both occasions, he is the runner-up: in Spain, in the 67.5kg category, he lifts 150-177.5-327.5 (the gold goes to Israel Militosyan, from the Unified Team, with a Total of 337.5kg), while in the USA he competes in the 76kg category, and reaches 160-200-360 (the winner is Pablo Lara, from Cuba, with 367.5kg). Besides these achievements, Yotov has three additional silver medals at the IWF Worlds (1990, 1994, and 1995), and six European victories (consecutive triumphs from 1990 to 1994, and then 1997). Winner of three IWF World Cups (1989, 1990 and 1991), he was voted the 1997 “Sportsperson of the Year” in Bulgaria, and in 2020 he was awarded the highest state honour in the field of Sport – the “Wreath of the Winner”. Last but not least, the Bulgarian ace also set two World Records during his successful career – one in Clean & Jerk (192.5kg) and one in Total (345kg), both established in 1994.



1905 - 2025



2000

Women compete in the Olympics

While the sport was included in the inaugural edition of the Games, in 1896 in Athens (GRE), only men's events were contested for over 100 years. In 2000, in Sydney (AUS), the door was finally open to women, reflecting the evolution of weightlifting in the five continents. That important premiere was highlighted by the participation of 85 lifters from 47 countries, competing in seven bodyweight categories. China dominated operations with four titles, but three individual stories emerged from the competition: when winning the 75kg event, Maria Isabel Urrutia (*podium photo*) became the first Olympic gold medallist (all sports included, men and women) for Colombia; Soraya Jimenez (MEX, 58kg), was the first-ever female winner for her country in the Games; and in the 69kg category, the bronze of Karnam Malleswari also represented the inaugural women's podium presence in the history of the Olympics for India.



2000

Tara Nott (USA), the first female lifter with Olympic gold

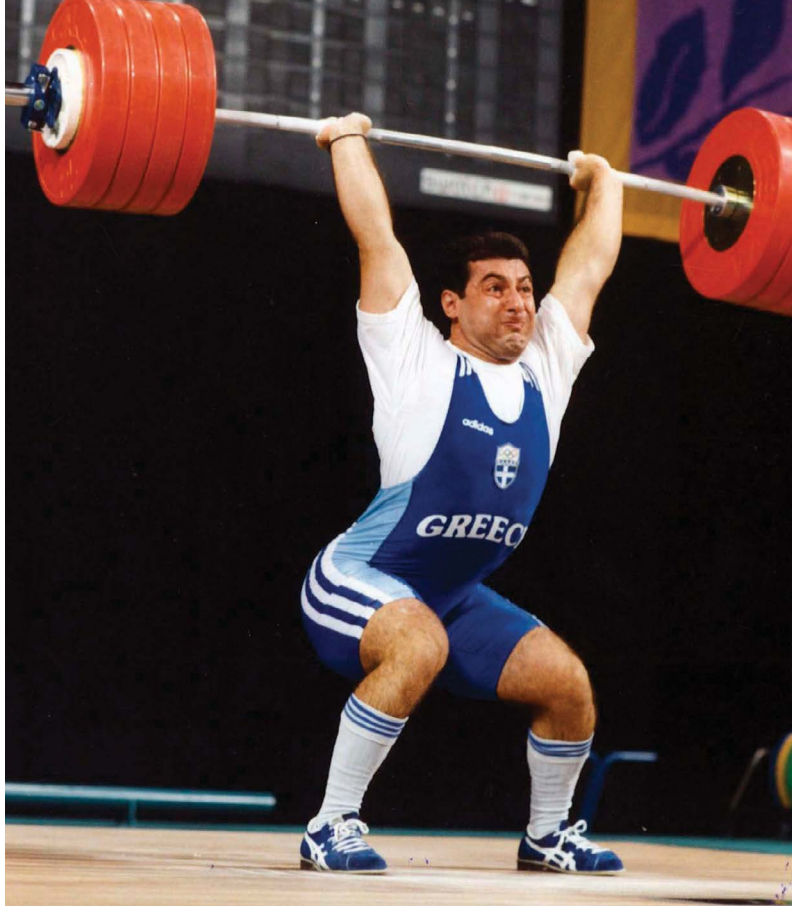
On September 17, 2000 the weightlifting family was in a celebratory mode at the Sydney Olympics. On that day, after more than 100 years only with male participation, the Games presented the first-ever female competition, the women's 48kg category. It was the beginning of a successful road that presently encompasses perfect gender equality between men and women in the greatest sports event on the planet (in Paris 2024, weightlifting was represented by 60 male and 60 female lifters). After fierce competition at that inaugural event, Tara Nott, from the United States, finishes second (82.5-102.5-185) behind Izabela Dragneva, from Bulgaria. Three days later, the European lifter tests positive for a prohibited substance and loses her gold medal. Even if other women's weightlifting events had taken place in the meantime, Nott becomes 'de facto' and in the history books the first-ever female Olympic champion in weightlifting. Born in 1972, Nott (later married to US wrestler Casey Cunningham) is a sport addict, who excels in many of them. She is the only athlete to have trained at the highest level in three different sports (gymnastics, soccer, and weightlifting) at the US Olympic Training Center! After winning the gold at the 1999 Pan-American Games (she is ninth in the same year at the IWF Worlds – photo), Nott gives the US an Olympic gold medal in a sport where their last champion had been Chuck Vinci, in 1960. She remains one of the two US female lifters with an Olympic gold – Olivia Reeves accomplished the same feat 24 years later, at last year's Paris Games. Nott revalidates her Pan-American title in 2003, but at the 2004 Athens Olympics, she finishes 10th.



2000

Dika Toua (PNG), an example of longevity in sport!

Despite her tiny and fragile appearance (she is 1.50m tall and weighs about 50kg), Loa Dika Toua (PNG) is a perfect example of determination, perseverance, and longevity in sport! She is just 16, when in 2000, she is the first woman to lift a bar in the Olympic arena, at the Sydney Games, when the door opened for female participation in weightlifting. Competing in the 48kg, she finished 10th. Still, that discreet debut was just the start of a very long career that included four additional Olympic participations and an impressive number of 45 competitions in the IWF results database from 2000 to 2024! In Athens 2004, she gets her best placing (sixth), but in Beijing 2008 she lifts her heaviest total (184kg) in the Games – she did not do better in London 2012, or Tokyo 2020. At the 2024 IWF World Cup in Phuket (THA), a couple of months before turning 40 (Dika Toua was born on June 23, 1984), she does a good result of 171kg, but that would prove insufficient for an unprecedented sixth Olympic qualification (for the Paris Games). Her best-ever result at the international level was an 82-111-193 performance at the 2014 Commonwealth Games, where she earned gold in the 53kg. Mother of two, she is currently the President of the Papua New Guinea Weightlifting Federation and was recently in the headlines, when she won in September 2024 a Masters competition in Suva (FIJ), in the 40-44 age group category, lifting 68-90-158!



2000

Kakhi Kakhiashvili completes the Olympic treble

Born in July 1969 in Georgia, Kakhi Kakhiashvili's career reflected the turbulent times of the Soviet Union's dissolution in the first years of the 1990s. With a Georgian father and Greek mother, Kakhiashvili starts practicing weightlifting at the age of 11, much against the opinion of his parents (as he had already broken his two arms). But the young boy remains determined and results appear quickly – in 1988, he wins his first gold, at the World Junior Championships. In 1992, in Barcelona, he participates in his first Olympics (in the 90kg category), competing for the Unified Team (a sports entity created then, to assemble the ex-Soviet republics), and is trained by the legendary Vasily Alekseyev. In a time when national sensibilities were high, Alekseyev tried to promote his Russian protégé Sergei Syrtsov to the gold medal (to the detriment of the Georgian champion), but Kakhiashvili decided otherwise: in the Clean & Jerk portion of the competition, he lifts 235kg and despite the tie with Syrtsov, he gets the title as he was lighter than his Russian opponent. With a Total of 412.5kg (Snatch of 177.5), Kakhiashvili wins the first of his three Olympic titles. Until 1994, he still represents Georgia, but moves to Greece in that year, where he finds more favourable training conditions. In Atlanta 1996, under the Hellenic flag, he gets his second gold, in the 99kg category, lifting 185-235-420. Four years later, in Sydney 2000, he completes the treble, with a 185-220-405 performance in the 94kg. He had entered the very restricted club of the lifters with three Olympic gold medals, after Naim Suleymanoglu (TUR, 1988-1996) and Pyrros Dimas (GRE), who had achieved the same feat one day earlier. Throughout his amazing career, Kakhiashvili amassed three world titles and was crowned four times European champion. He also established seven World Records until his retirement, in 2004.



2000

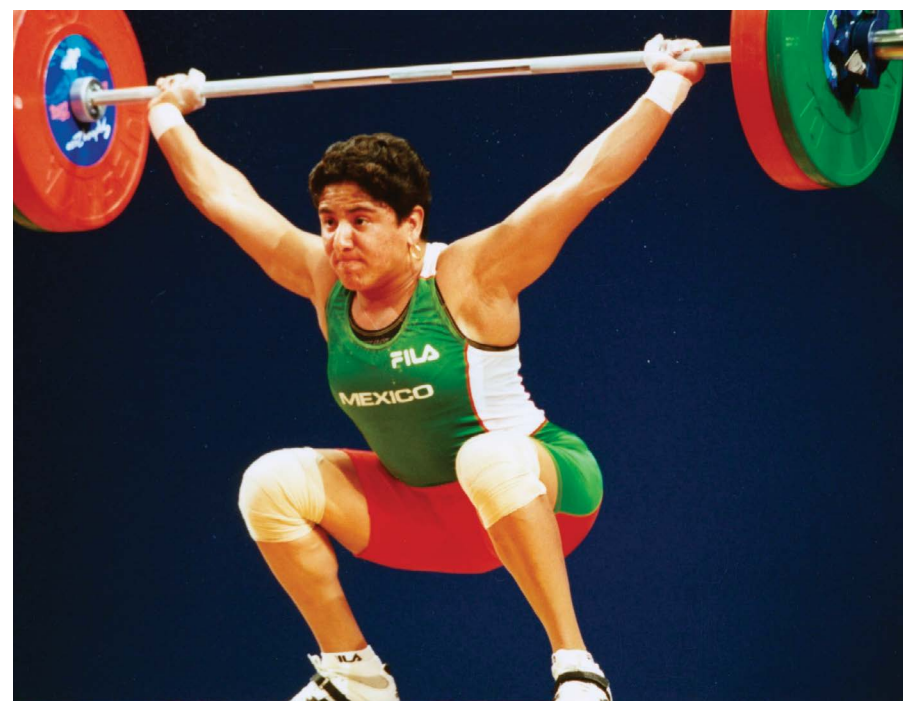
Female lifters set Olympic milestones for Thailand

Weightlifting and Boxing are quite popular sports in Thailand and appear at the top of the medal chart concerning medals won at the Olympic Games. Lifters have a slight advantage, with 17 podium presences, including five gold, four silver, and eight bronze medals. In our Sport, this successful road started in 2000, when women could participate for the first time in the Games. In the 58kg category, Khassaraporn Suta became the first-ever female Olympic medallist (all sports) for her country, earning the bronze (97.5-117.5-210). Four years later, her compatriot Udomporn Polsak (photo – at the 2003 IWF Worlds) 'upgraded' this achievement, with the first-ever Thai gold medal for a female athlete in the 53kg category (97.5-125-222.5). This trend continued until 2016, when in Rio (BRA), Sinphet Kruaithong was the first man to climb on an Olympic podium – winning a bronze (132-157-289) in the 56kg. Out of the 17 medals, 14 were obtained by women and only three by Thai male lifters. The last edition of the Games, Paris 2024, was particularly successful for the Asian nation, with three podium presences (silver in the men's 61kg and 73kg, and bronze in the women's 49kg). At the IWF World Championships, Thailand consolidated its status as a powerhouse in our Sport: 51 (only Total results) and 140 (Snatch, Clean & Jerk, Total) medals.

2000

Nikolay Peshalov clinches sole Olympic gold so far for Croatia

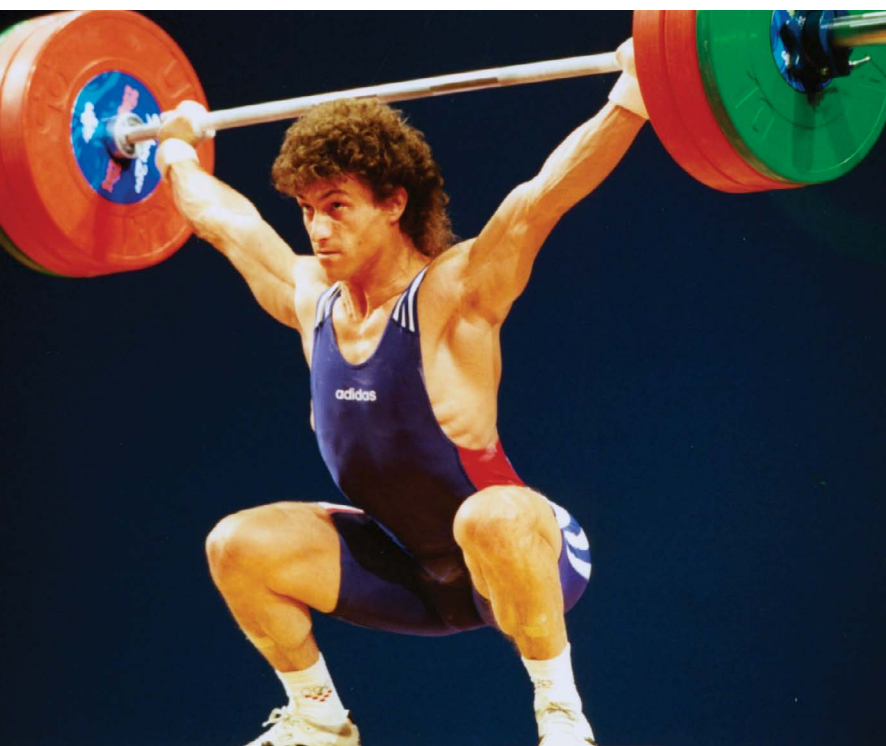
Nikolay Peshalov is one of the very few lifters to have won four Olympic medals throughout a very accomplished career! Born in Bulgaria in 1970, he represented his country until 1998, then switching to Croatia. In 1989, he competes in his first major event, the World Championships in Greece – getting a silver medal in the 60kg category. A year later, in Budapest (HUN), he gets his first title in the IWF showcase, with a total of 127.5-170-297.5. Two more world gold medals will follow, in 1993 and 1994, respectively in 137.5-167.5-305 and 135-167.5-302.5. In the meantime, he qualifies for the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona and clinches his first success at this level – a silver medal. Four years later, in Atlanta, he is third. After the change of nationality, he qualifies for the Sydney 2000 Games under the Croatian flag and he climbs to the highest step of the podium (150-175-325), winning what is so far the only Olympic gold for Croatia in the sport of weightlifting. He concludes his brilliant career in Athens 2004, with a fourth podium presence – bronze. Those are still today the only successes for the Balkan nation at this level (while for Bulgaria, his two Olympic medals are part of a long and sustained tradition of the country at the Games in our sport). Peshalov improved five World Records as a lifter, namely three in the Clean & Jerk (his best: 170kg) and two in Total. Representing Croatia, and besides the Olympic gold, his best results were a silver at the 1998 Worlds and two European titles, in 2000 and 2001.



2000

Soraya Jimenez (MEX) shines before a tragic decline

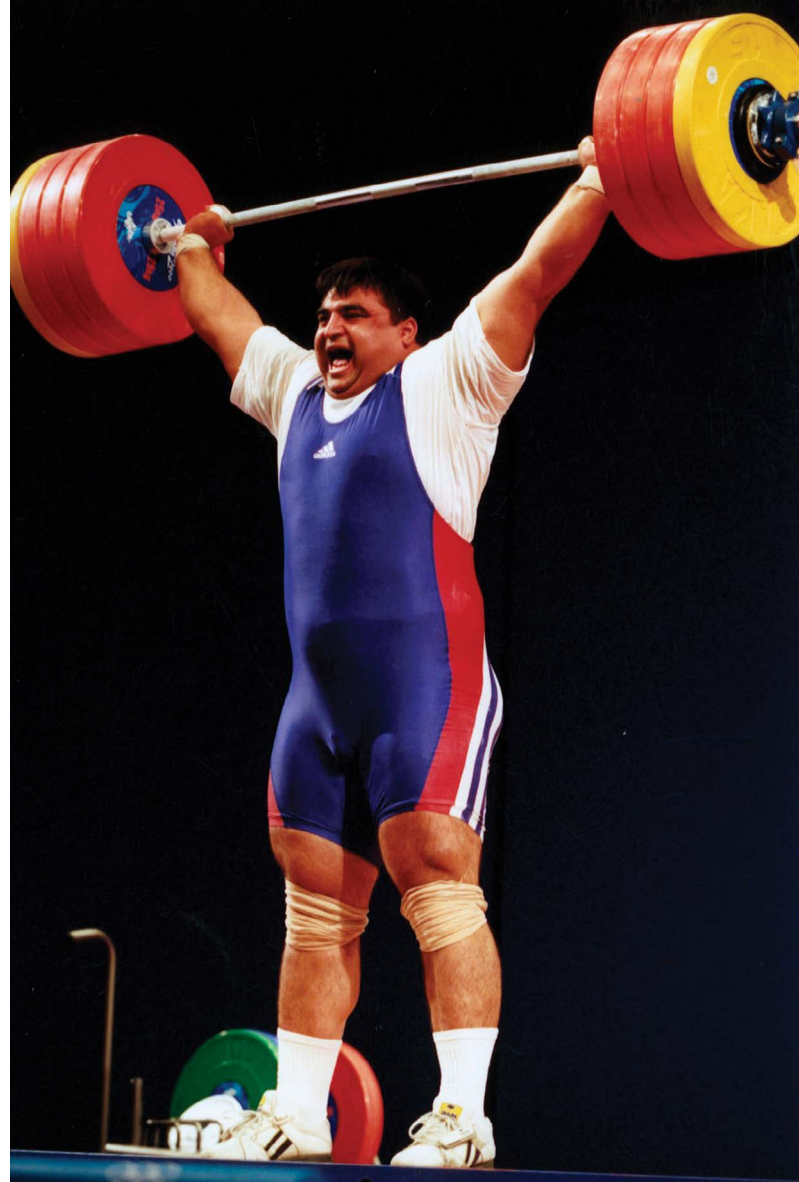
In 1997, when the International Olympic Committee decided on the introduction of women's weightlifting in the Games programme (from Sydney 2000), Soraya Jimenez (MEX) was 20 years old. Years before, with her sister, she practiced basketball, but her relatively low height soon became a challenge. After trying badminton and swimming, she opts for weightlifting when she is 14. Soon spotted by the best coaches in the country, amazed by her strength, she starts getting her first notable results, mainly at domestic and regional level. In 1996, she wins gold at an international competition in Venezuela and establishes her first Mexican record. In 1999, she is second at the Pan-American Games in Winnipeg (CAN) and manages to qualify for the 2000 Olympics, in the group of women competing for the first time at this level. In the 58kg category, and despite the favourite status of DPR Korea's Ri Song Hui, she obtains the first-ever Olympic gold medal (all sports included) for a female athlete from Mexico. Successfully lifting all her six attempts, she finishes in 95-127.5-222.5. She remains the only lifter (all genders) with a gold medal for Mexico in our sport. After this amazing success, her career (and personal life) will soon decline. In 2002, she forges documents to prove she is a university student in order to attend the University Games. Soon after, she receives a six-month suspension for the use of prohibited substances and in 2004 she fails to qualify for the Athens Olympics. She then decides to retire, but her health deteriorates very quickly. After several operations on her left leg, and a near-to-death situation in 2007 (due to a bad case of influenza), she succumbs to a heart attack in 2013, at the age of 35.



2000

Iran celebrates its new star – Hossein Rezazadeh

Weightlifting symbolises strength, and the super heavyweight category is often associated with the 'strongest men' on earth. Lifters shining in this category are often elevated to a stardom status, both in the history of the sport and of their respective country. Hossein Rezazadeh, from Iran, is certainly a good example of this principle. Born in 1978, he started to shine at the end of the 1990s, with one bronze medal at the 1998 Asian Games, the gold at the 1999 Asian Championships, and another third place at the 1999 World Championships. Arrived in Sydney (AUS) for his first Games in 2000 (photo), Rezazadeh breaks the hegemony of Soviet/Russian lifters in the heaviest category, earning his Olympic title in 212.5-260-472.5. It was the initial highlight of an outstanding career that would include another Olympic victory in Athens 2004 and four World wins, from 2002 to 2006. He triumphed also in the 2002 and 2006 editions of the Asian Games. Moreover, the Iranian ace established six World Records during his career, with bests of 213kg in Snatch and 263.5kg in Clean & Jerk. In 2008, before the Games in Beijing, he was advised by his medical team to stop weightlifting, and much to the surprise of his fans, he announced his retirement. A true hero in his country, he was immediately invited to join the Iranian Weightlifting Federation as special advisor (then manager and coach) and initiated also a political career, namely as a member of Tehran's City Council. Having won 'Iran's Sportsperson of the Year' award on four occasions, he is the only athlete in his country to have achieved such an accolade.

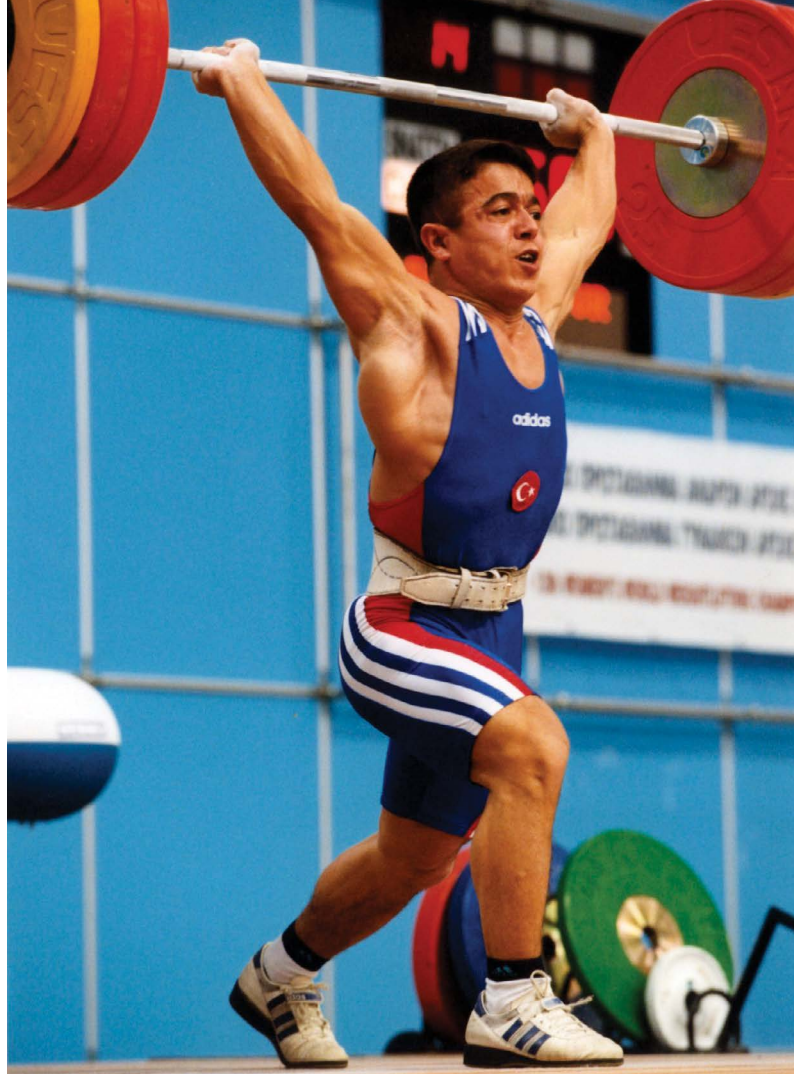


2004

Pyrros Dimas, a hero in Greece and in weightlifting

Being the most decorated Olympian in Greece, the birthplace of the Games, is an honour all Hellenic athletes aspire to have. This special status is for the time being reserved for a hero, arguably one of the best weightlifters of all time, Pyrros Dimas. Born in 1971 in Himara (Albania), to ethnic Greek parents, he soon demonstrates a great ability for the sport and moves in the beginning of the 1990s to Athens. At his first Olympic participation – Barcelona 1992 – Dimas gets the gold in the 82.5kg, with a total of 167.5-202.5-370. After this success, he is received like a hero at the Panathinaiko Stadium in Athens (the one hosting the 1896 first Olympics of the modern era), but the world (and Greece) had only witnessed the start of a legendary journey that would include two more gold (Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000) and one bronze medal (Athens 2004) – the most significant harvest in the history of Olympic weightlifting. Competing at home, and suffering from a knee injury, the "Lion of Himara" (as he was also known), Dimas considers this last podium appearance as the most special one in his career. After the awards ceremony, in a crowded and ecstatic arena, he leaves his weightlifting shoes on the platform, as a sign of his retirement after these so inspiring Games. The fans in the stands, in a several-minute standing ovation, scream his name and this moment is widely seen as the most touching one in the two weeks of the Olympics. With personal bests of 180.5kg in Snatch, 215kg in C&J, and 392.5kg in Total, Dimas was also world champion on three occasions (1993, 1995, and 1998) and is presently an IWF Executive Board member. Between 2012 and 2015, he is also a member of the Hellenic Parliament.





2004

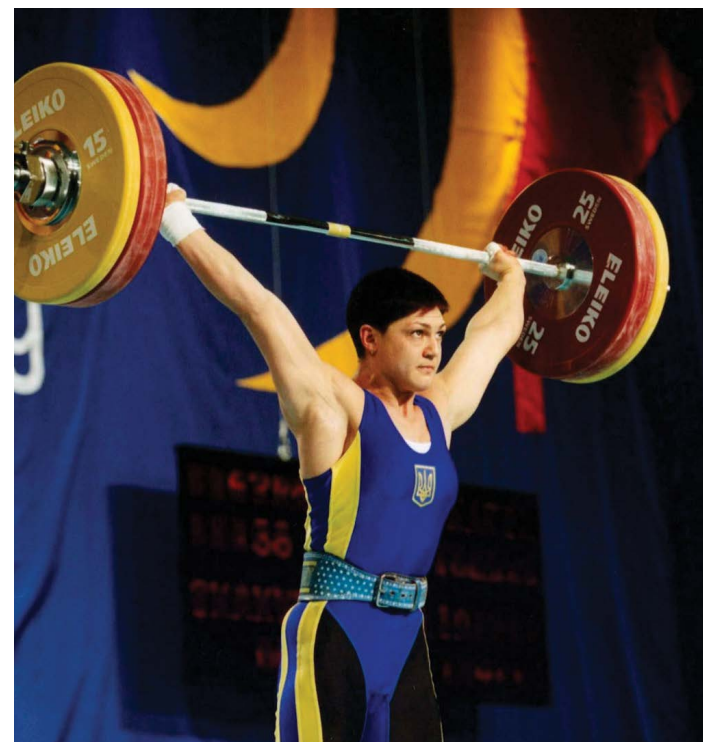
Halil Mutlu (TUR) enters a very 'exclusive' club

After winning his third consecutive gold medal at the Games, Halil Mutlu (TUR) entered in 2004 in the very "exclusive" club of the lifters with three Olympic titles. Born in July 1973 in Bulgaria, he starts to be noticed at the beginning of the 1990s, when he won his first medals at the European level: bronze in 1991 and 1992. At 19, he takes part in his first Games, in Barcelona, finishing fifth in his category (52kg). The following years, his domination is overwhelming and will materialise in three Olympic victories (Atlanta 1996: 132.5-155-287.5; Sydney 2000: 137.5-167.5-305; Athens 2004: 135-160-295) and five titles at the IWF World Championships (1994, 1998, 1999, 2001, and 2003). Competing in four different bodyweight categories throughout his career (52kg, 54kg, 56kg, and 62kg), Mutlu established 21 World Records (10 in Snatch, six in Clean & Jerk, and five in Total). His personal bests were 138.5 in Snatch, 168 in C&J, and 305 in Total. Having retired in 2008, the Turkish "Dynamo" (the nickname by which he was known) also collected nine gold medals at the European Championships and was one of the few athletes in history to have lifted the equivalent of three times his own body weight. Mutlu was the fourth weightlifter to have earned three gold medals at the Olympics, after his compatriot Naim Suleymanoglu (1988-1996), Pyrrhos Dimas (GRE, 1992-2000), and Kakhi Kakhiashvili (GEO/GRE, 1992-2000).

2004

Nataliya Skakun, the last Olympic winner for Ukraine

As with the other republics formerly integrated in the immense territory of the Soviet Union, Ukraine began to 'exist' independently since the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. Before that, lifters born in what is presently Ukraine shone at the Olympic level (as was the case for athletes from Georgia or Armenia), but their successes never counted as a medal for their country. In 1992, we are in a transition phase, and the 'Soviet' team is present in Barcelona under the name 'Unified Team' – Timur Taymazov is one of the group's lifters, and earns silver in the Spanish metropolis, with a result of 185-217.5-402.5. Four years later, already under the Ukrainian flag, he will do better, clinching gold in the 108kg category – 195-235-430. Between his two Olympic appearances, he had been the best at two World Championships, in 1993 and 1994. On the women's side, the sport integrated the Olympic programme in 2000, so female lifters always competed for Ukraine. The most successful one until today was Nataliya Skakun – after a seventh place in Australia, her moment of glory arrives four years later, in Athens 2004. In the 63kg category, she clinches gold in 107.5-135-242.5. Before that, she was the world champion in 2003 (photo), and the best European in 2002. She remains the last Ukrainian lifter with an Olympic victory. Since 1996, and besides the two golds, Ukraine has one silver and two bronze medals at the Games' level. At the Paris 2024 rendez-vous, Kamila Konotop was the only Ukrainian representative, placing seventh in the women's 59kg category.



2005

Adoption of the 1kg-increment rule

Traditionally, the rules of weightlifting stipulated that the minimum increase of weight in a bar between two lifts should be of 2.5kg. This meant that whenever an athlete was successfully lifting for example a bar of 150kg, his/her next attempt should be at least 152.5kg. The only exception was the World Record attempt, where the bar could be “upgraded” by intervals of 0.5kg. In March 2005, at its Congress, the IWF decided to change these standards and approved the introduction of a universal 1kg-increment rule. This was considered a “revolutionary step towards a clearer, closer and even more exciting competition” (as written in the report following the IWF gathering), a change that is still in vigour today and is, indeed, quite straightforward and understandable for spectators and fans following a weightlifting competition. The new rule was applied almost immediately, as the first event adopting it was the 2005 IWF World Junior Championships, organised in May 2005 in Busan (KOR). This change also allowed an “easier” reading of the results, as the “.5” decimal simply disappeared, and the weight lifted by athletes is only displayed in natural numbers. In practical terms, the reduction from 2.5kg to 1kg also allowed a reduction in the number of ties, as the “variety” of results can be statistically bigger. Eleven years later, in 2016, a new system to untie the lifters (based on who lifted first, and not based on the athlete’s body weight) completed the 1kg-increment rule, establishing the standards of the weightlifting competition format as we know it today.

2007

Olympian Marcus Stephen becomes President of Nauru

It is not uncommon to see successful weightlifters reaching, upon their retirement, high positions in the sports administration (Federation or Olympic Committee) of their respective countries. There are also several cases of former athletes choosing a political career, as members of the parliament or as top officials at the ministry of sport. But the case of Marcus Stephen is exceptional: after competing internationally in the 1990s, he became President of Nauru, the microstate in Oceania, from 2007 to 2011! Three-time Olympian in Barcelona 1992 (under the flag of Samoa, as Nauru didn’t have an Olympic Committee at the time), Atlanta 1996, and Sydney 2000 (on both occasions, already representing Nauru), his best result was a ninth place in Spain. At the IWF level, he clinched a silver medal in the Clean & Jerk section (with a lift of 172.5kg) of the 1999 World Championships. With four participations at the Commonwealth Games, Stephen earned two gold (in 1994 and 1998) and two silver medals (1990 and 2002). Throughout his career, he lifted in the 59/60/62kg categories. Off the platform, he was elected MP in 2003 and ascended in the political hierarchy of his nation, until reaching the Presidency in 2007. His Excellency Marcus Stephen is presently President of the Oceania Weightlifting Federation, Nauru Olympic Committee, and IWF Executive Board Member. At home, he is since 2019 the Speaker of the Parliament of Nauru.



2008

A 'delayed' but historical medal for Samoa

In 1983, the Samoan Olympic Committee was created, and the first athletes representing the nation in the Games travelled to Los Angeles in 1984. The following year, Ele Opeloge was born and would become the only Olympic Samoan medallist (all sports) so far in the history of her country. She is also the first and only Pacific islander (natives from the Oceania islands grouped in one of these three regions: Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia) with a weightlifting Olympic podium presence! But the story is not simple: at the Beijing 2008 rendezvous, Opeloge competed in the women's +75kg and ranked fourth (119-150-269). Years later, following the re-analysis of samples from those Games, the silver and bronze medallist in Opeloge's event were found positive for prohibited substances and their medals withdrawn. Upgrading into the Olympic hierarchy, the Samoan star ended up with the silver medal, a pride for a nation that has a solid tradition in weightlifting. If you type "Opeloge" in the IWF athletes' result database, you will find numerous lifters. In fact, Ele comes from a successful weightlifting family, where 10 out of the 12 siblings competed internationally in the sport – her brother Niusula (born in 1980) was a gold medallist at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in the men's 105kg, in the same day Ele triumphed in the women's +75kg. Sister Mary (born in 1992) is a nine-time winner at the Oceania Championships (between 2008 and 2016). Ele is also a three-time winner at the Pacific Games and earned two gold medals at the Oceania Weightlifting Championships. She had a second Olympic participation in London 2012, finishing fifth. Ele is the aunt of Avatu Opeloge (her twin sister's daughter), a silver medallist at the 2023 Pacific Games.





2008

Belarus on top of the world with Andrei Aramnau

Presently competing under a neutral status in the major international sports events (in consequence of the country's position in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine), Belarus has eight medals in our sport at Olympic level, since its participation as an independent nation from 1996. These podium presences include one gold, four silver, and three bronze medals. In Beijing 2008, Belarus had its sole Olympic champion so far, thanks to the superb performance of Andrei Aramnau, who lifted 200-236-436 in the men's 105kg category. It was the pinnacle of a career that also included a world title in 2007 and a silver medal at the 2019 (photo) IWF showcase. At European level, Aramnau also got two medals – silver in 2014 and 2019. The Belarusian star had a long career – the first result record in the IWF database is from 2006 (when he won a junior world title), while the last registered performance was achieved in 2021 (14th at the Europeans)! Before Aramnau, Gennady Oleshchuk (men's 62kg category) and Sergey Lavrenov (men's 69kg) were the first lifters from Belarus with Olympic medals – both won bronze at the Sydney 2000 Games. On the side of the most recent ones, Yauheni Tsikhantsou, competing as an independent neutral athlete at the 2024 Paris Games was also third in the men's 102kg, after having successfully lifted 183-219-402, just 4kg and 2kg short of the gold and silver medal, respectively. Among women, three lifters have Olympic medals for Belarus: Hanna Batsiushka (silver, Athens 2004), Tatsiana Stukalava (bronze, Athens 2004), and Darya Naumava (silver, Rio 2016).



2008

Matthias Steiner (GER), lifting for gold and for his late wife

One of the most emotive moments in Olympic weightlifting history happened in 2008, at the Beijing Games, in the +105kg category. Born in Vienna, in 1982, Matthias Steiner initially represents his native Austria. In 2005, a conflict with his weightlifting national federation dictates his move to Germany, where he had met some months earlier a fan who had contacted him after watching his performances on TV. He gets married to her, but in July 2007, Susann tragically dies in a car accident. Despite the huge shock and some weight loss, Steiner continues training hard for the 2008 Olympics in the Chinese capital. Having obtained German nationality at the beginning of that year, he competes for his new country and is not the favourite for the gold (the best lifter on the way to Beijing was recent World and European champion Viktors Scerbatihs from Latvia). After finishing fourth in Snatch (203kg), Steiner takes maximum advantage of his most direct opponents' failures in Clean & Jerk, and with a successful 258kg attempt, he clinches the Olympic title. His joy on the platform is euphoric – his moment of glory had arrived, after a 2008 silver in the Europeans (precisely behind the Latvian ace) and two seven placings, at the 2003 Worlds and 2004 Olympics. At the podium ceremony in Beijing, while receiving his medal, Steiner displays a photo of his late wife, causing a wave of unparalleled emotion in the venue. After the Olympic success, he wins three more medals at the highest level – in 2010, silver at the Worlds, and bronze at the Europeans, and in 2012, he is the runner-up at the continental level. He marries his current wife in 2011 and retires from competition in 2013.

2008

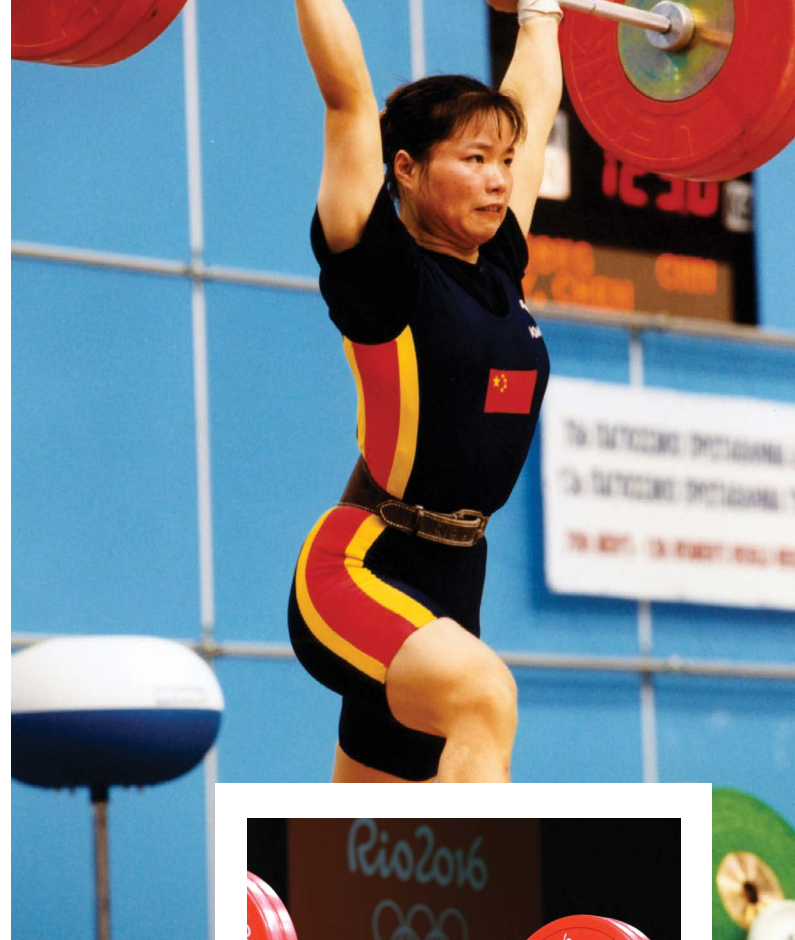
Maryam Usman, Nigeria's strongest woman

Besides Egypt, an early and traditional powerhouse in our sport, the continent of Africa only medalled with two other countries at Olympic weightlifting events: Nigeria (one silver and one bronze) and Cameroon (one bronze). The Nigerian success story has two women playing the leading roles: Ruth Ogbeifo and Maryam Usman. The first one shone at the 1999 World Championships (bronze), successfully qualifying for the Sydney 2000 Games, the first edition open to women. In Australia, in the 75kg category, she earned the silver, lifting 105-140-245. By that time, Usman was only 10 years old, but would become a collector of successes at the highest level. In 2007, she was a silver medallist at the African Games and one year later, in Beijing, she got the Olympic bronze in the +75kg category, with 115-150-265 (she was initially fifth, but was upgraded after two athletes tested positive for prohibited substances). It was the pinnacle of a career that would also include a third place at the 2011 IWF World Championships, four African titles, and one victory at the 2014 Commonwealth Games. Usman took part in two more editions of the Olympics: in London 2012 she bombed out in the Clean & Jerk section (after making her best at international level in the Snatch – 129kg), and in Rio 2016 (photo) she finished in ninth place. With a personal Total best of 125-156-281 (at the 2012 African Championships), Usman retired after the Brazilian rendezvous, remaining to the present day the last Nigerian lifter with an Olympic medal.

2008

Chen Yanqing (CHN) – fighting against all odds

This is the successful story of a lifter who could have remained in the most strict anonymity but ended up being the first Chinese female athlete in our Sport to win two (consecutive) Olympic gold medals. Born in 1979 in a remote part of China – in a tiny farming village called Xishan, on an island near Suzhou, two hours away from Shanghai – the modest conditions of the family didn't allow Chen Yanqing to have big dreams concerning her future. She had however one quality: she was physically strong! At 10, she is spotted by a local coach and is sent to a state athletic school to continue her education and training. Significant international results appear some years later – gold at the 1997 and 1999 IWF World Championships (photo), and also a victory at the 1998 Asian Games. Despite these achievements, she is not called to the Chinese national team competing at the Sydney 2000 Olympics – where, for the first time, women were admitted to the event. This decision was painful for Chen, who decided to retire and dedicate some years to her education, a Business Management degree in Suzhou. Things could have ended here concerning her weightlifting story, but the Chinese ace still wanted to prove she could shine at the Olympic level. She qualifies for the 2004 rendezvous in Athens and gets her first gold in the 58kg category, in 107.5-130-237.5. Four years later, on home soil, she does even better, revalidating in Beijing her title in 106-138-244 – this was an impressive outcome in this category, as she lifted 18kg more than the silver medallist! After Chen's feats, only two other Chinese female lifters have earned so far two Olympic gold medals: Li Wenwen and Hou Zhihui, both in Tokyo 2020ne and Paris 2024.



2008

Eko Yuli Irawan (INA) starts his Olympic harvest

Indonesia's most prolific sport in terms of Olympic medals is undoubtedly Badminton – with 22 out of the 40 podium presences (including eight of the 10 gold won so far) of the Asian nation at the Games. Weightlifting arrives next on the list, with 16 awards, including one gold, seven silver, and eight bronze medals. Two lifters deserve special mention: Eko Yuli Irawan (photo) and Rizki Juniansyah. Irawan, born in 1989, is the only Indonesian athlete with four Olympic medals and also the first one to take part in five consecutive editions of the Games. It all started in Beijing 2008, when he got the bronze in the 56kg. Four years later, in London, he competed in the 62kg and was again third (with his best-ever Olympic performance of 145-172-317). He would improve his ranking in Rio 2026 and Tokyo2020ne, earning silver on both occasions. In Paris 2024, and besides the weight of the bars, he had a big responsibility on his shoulders: he could become the first athlete in the history of the Sport with five Olympic medals! He didn't succeed – after lifting 135kg in the Snatch, he bombed out in the Clean & Jerk. A day after this hiccup on his amazing career, he celebrated the gold medal of his teammate Rizki Juniansyah in the men's 73kg, the first Olympic title in the history of Indonesian weightlifting. Still with 21 (he was born in June 2003), Juniansyah

was junior world champion in 2021 and 2022 and also won two medals (silver) at the senior level – in 2022 and 2024. His Olympic triumph in 155-199-354 was achieved a few hours after the gold medal of a compatriot in sport climbing – on the same day, they became the only Indonesian Olympic champions outside the sport of Badminton! On the women's side, lifter Raema Lisa Rumbewas (deceased in January 2024, at the age of 43) was the country's first athlete to have won medals in three Olympic Games (silver in Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004, and bronze in Beijing 2008).

2009

Creation of the IWF Development Programme

The idea had been launched 30 years earlier, at the end of the 1970s, when a “Development and Assistance Programme” was initiated to “support member countries of a low standard of weightlifting”, but the implementation of this project as we know it nowadays was set in 2009. Since then, formal procedures and requirements have been in place and the scope of the programme has been enlarged, allowing the allocation of direct financial support to potentially all IWF Member National and Continental Federations, as well as regional weightlifting bodies around the world. The amounts received by each of these entities can be used for several types of projects, namely: purchase of weightlifting equipment, organisation of seminars (photo – 2024 clinic in Nepal), support for event participation, the possibility of attending training camps, financing of coaching licenses, and assistance to ITOs (International Technical Officials). Besides the global programme, specific actions can be implemented for federations having suffered an important disruption of their activities due to natural catastrophes or situations of conflict. Moreover, immediate support to lifters is also possible – before the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, an “IWF Athletes Direct Support Programme” was put in place to assist 10 international elite competitors with Olympic potential. The IWF Development Programme has been pivotal, throughout the years, to ensure universal participation of athletes and officials in our events.

2014

IWF gets a new visual identity

In order to modernise its image and gain a renovated dynamism, the present IWF characteristic logo is created in 2014. With its distinctive intricate plates and the acronym (IWF) or full name (International Weightlifting Federation) next to them, the new visual identity is primarily the first ‘image’ perceived by both the external world and the weightlifting family when an IWF event is held, a correspondence is sent, or our website homepage is displayed. According to our official branding guidelines, the logo can be shown in six different colours, but over the years the cyan and magenta versions have been privileged. The logo’s simplicity has now helped to ‘reshape’ it for the first time since its creation – in 2025, celebrating IWF’s 120th anniversary. The official logo can be easily recognised on the right side (plates and acronym), but the mention ‘120’ (years) was added and the information ‘Founded 1905’ is also mentioned. During 2025, this logo is seen on many of the IWF channels and platforms, providing additional visibility to the celebrations of our International Federation’s 120 years!



1905 - 2025

2016

Do it first, no matter your body weight!

Despite the tiny minimal differences (initially 0.5kg, nowadays 1kg) when considering a weightlifting result (thus allowing for a potential range of different outcomes), it happens on many occasions that a tie is registered, meaning that two different athletes have lifted the exact same number of kilos. Traditionally, this problem was solved in the past with a very straightforward method: if tied, the lightest lifter (the one whose body weight was inferior) would win. This method was based on simple logic: for the same weight on the bar, the heaviest athlete has some advantage, so the lightest one should be favoured. In 2016, the IWF decided to change this rule and adopt a new procedure: from 2017 onwards, in case of a tie, the athlete who has first lifted or achieved a cumulative result wins (in reality, this rule already existed since the mid-1980s, but only as a second element to untie a result, if lifters with the same result had also the exact same body weight). The idea is to enforce the sacred principle in our Sport: who lifts more, triumphs! Additional arguments in favour of this idea include an improvement of ‘active’ strategies during the competition (and not the simple comparison of the body weights), the enforcement of the principle that athletes must win on the platform (and not in the sauna), and a better understanding of the rules by neophytes in weightlifting (spectators, TV viewers, or media representatives). In practical terms, this rule obliges the lifter to look for the next kilo in order to overcome his/her most direct opponent. It has one more non-negligible advantage: if a World Record is set, and then matched, the first lifter establishing it will necessarily and logically win the gold.

INTERNATIONAL WEIGHTLIFTING FEDERATION

IWF World Championships
Manama - BRN 06.12.2024 - 15.12.2024
MEN 67 kg SNATCH
SENIOR

RANK	LOT	NAME	DOB	NATION	GROUP	1	2	3	RESULT
1	371	PAK Pyol	03.09.2003	PRK	A	142	147	150	150
2	433	ZHENG Xinhao	15.12.2000	CHN	A	142	148	151	148
3	446	KAHRIMAN Kaan	12.09.2004	TUR	A	143	148	151	148
4	198	GENC Yusuf Fehmi	23.05.2002	TUR	A	141	146	149	146
5	15	Ri Won Ju	17.09.2002	PRK	A	138	143	146	146
6	278	GARCIA Hector Armando	17.06.1999	COL	B	140	145	148	145
7	123	CANO TRUJILLO David	01.12.2001	COL	B	138	142	142	138
8	463	MUHAMAD Aznil Bin Bidin	04.06.1994	MAS	C	130	133	137	137
9	86	ZHONG Yuanlong	06.12.2001	CHN	A	133	137	141	137
10	191	ALSALEEM Seraj Abdulrahim M	10.02.1996	KSA	B	131	135	138	135
11	100	ANDRIATSITOHAINA Tojonirina Alain	26.02.1995	MAD	A	135	135	140	135
12	9	IRAWAN Eko Yuli	24.07.1989	INA	B	126	131	131	131
13	33	RATPHET Teerawat	06.11.1999	THA	C	130	134	134	130
14	53	BAE Moonsu	07.03.1999	KOR	B	130	135	135	130
15	115	SALEM Ayoub	18.09.2002	TUN	B	130	130	132	130
16	203	AKMOLDA Sairamkez	18.05.2002	KAZ	A	130	135	135	130
17	469	BARDALEZ TUISIMA Luis David	03.10.1995	PER	B	126	129	131	129
18	470	YASIN Mohammad	18.01.2000	INA	B	127	127	131	127
19	411	GARRIDO BUENAIRE Victor Jesus	27.05.1998	ECU	C	121	126	126	126
20	217	GENCHEV Valentin Romyanov	03.04.2000	BUL	B	125	125	131	125
21	300	GUEMEZ CEL Victor Badur	23.06.2000	MEX	C	116	121	125	121
22	347	HU Jun-Siang	02.11.1999	TPE	C	120	120	120	120
23	8	HAN Myeongmok	01.02.1991	KOR	B	105	110	115	115
24	40	CRISTOBAL Leowell Ladringan	25.09.1998	NMI	C	101	105	109	105
25	367	BILLAH Baki	03.09.1994	BAN	C	102	107	107	102
459		GONZALEZ RODRIGUEZ Luis Jaime	11.02.1999	PUR	C	122	122	122	*****
133		PACALDO ZAMORA Dave Lloyd	01.10.1999	PHI	B	125	125	125	*****

NEW RECORDS			WORLD		
RESULT	NAME	DATE	SENIOR	JUNIOR	YOUTH
1 148	KAHRIMAN Kaan	08.12.2024		67	



2016

Lasha Talakhadze (GEO) ascends to stardom

He is the most titled Olympic athlete in the history of Georgia and one of the very few lifters with three gold medals at the Games: Lasha Talakhadze is presently the brightest star of our Sport! His successful trajectory starts with his first world title, in 2015, in Houston (USA). Since that initial success, the Georgian ace (born in 1993) will never lose any major international competition in which he takes part. At the Rio 2016 Olympics, he gets his first title in the super-heavyweight category, with a 215-258-473 performance. At the Tokyo 2020ne rendezvous, he claims his best result so far at Olympic level, clinching gold in 223-265-488. Finally, in Paris 2024, his victory was achieved after a 215-255-470 outcome. In parallel, at the World Championships, he earned seven consecutive gold medals between 2015 and 2023, having skipped the 2024 edition in Manama (BRN). His best performance at the IWF showcase was achieved in 2021 in Tashkent (UZB), with 225-267-492, the current World Records in the heaviest category. These are also the best-ever results achieved in history (regardless of the changes in the weight body categories) for the Snatch, Clean & Jerk, and Total. At the continental level, he is also the absolute master between 2016 and 2023, with seven European titles. Throughout his amazing career, he has established 26 World Records so far. In his national team, Talakhadze is trained by Giorgi Asanidze, the only other lifter who won gold at Olympic level for Georgia (at the 2004 Games in Athens, in the 85kg category).

2016

19-year-old Simon Martirosyan shines for Armenia

Simon Martirosyan is the only lifter representing Armenia with two Olympic medals so far. Born in 1997, he was still a junior athlete, when in Rio 2016 he won the silver medal in the 105kg category, lifting 190-227-417. Some months earlier, at the Europeans in Forde (NOR), he was third, and before that, in 2014, at 17, he won his category at the second edition of the Youth Olympic Games, in Nanjing (CHN). After the Brazilian achievement, Martirosyan (photo) continued to shine, namely by getting two world titles, in 2018 and 2019. In 2021, at the Tokyo Olympics (in the 109kg), the Armenian ace is again very consistent, earning a second silver medal, this time in 195-228-423. Not qualified for the Paris 2024 Games, he shone again in 2025, finishing second at the European Championships. In 2023, despite his fifth place at the 2023 Worlds, he performed his best international result, with 200-250-450. As an independent country (since 1996 – before that, many Armenians also shone on the Olympic scene, but under the flag of the Soviet Union), Armenia has a total of 22 Olympic medals, including seven (five silver, two bronze) in weightlifting (the second most prolific sport, after wrestling, the only one with two Olympic champions). Other Armenian lifters with Olympic medals are Tigran Vardan Martirosyan (silver, 2008), Gor Minasyan (silver, 2016), Varazdat Lalayan (silver, 2024), Arsen Melikyan (bronze, 2000), and Gevorg Davtyan (bronze, 2008).



2016

Deng Wei (CHN) crowns a fantastic career with the Olympic gold

Born in February 1993, Deng Wei is 17 when she takes part in the first edition of the Youth Olympic Games, in 2010. The talented Chinese lifter gets the gold in Singapore, in what would be the premises of an outstanding career. Just a month later, in Antalya (TUR), she is also the best at the IWF World Championships, competing in the 58kg (102-135-237). Until the end of her career in 2021, she will collect four more world titles, becoming one of the most successful female athletes in the history of the IWF showcase. In the 63kg, she is the world champion in 2014 (110-142-252) and in 2015 (113-146-259), and is the clear favourite for an Olympic title at the 2016 Rio Games. She arrives in Brazil and confirms her credentials, climbing to the highest step of the podium, after a 115-147-262 result. The Clean & Jerk and Total performance remained the World Records in her body category (that no longer exists). From 2018, she competes in the 64kg and her domination remains intact at the international level, with two additional world titles in 2018 (112-140-252) and 2019 (116-145-261). Also in 2019, at the IWF World Cup, she establishes the WR in the Snatch, with a successful 117kg attempt (throughout her career, she improved 20 global marks). Deng trained at the Fujian Weightlifting National Sports Centre, a facility that has produced many Chinese stars since its opening in 2005. Lifters from the Fujian team earned already nine Olympic medals (including six gold), and 61 victories at the IWF Championships.



2016

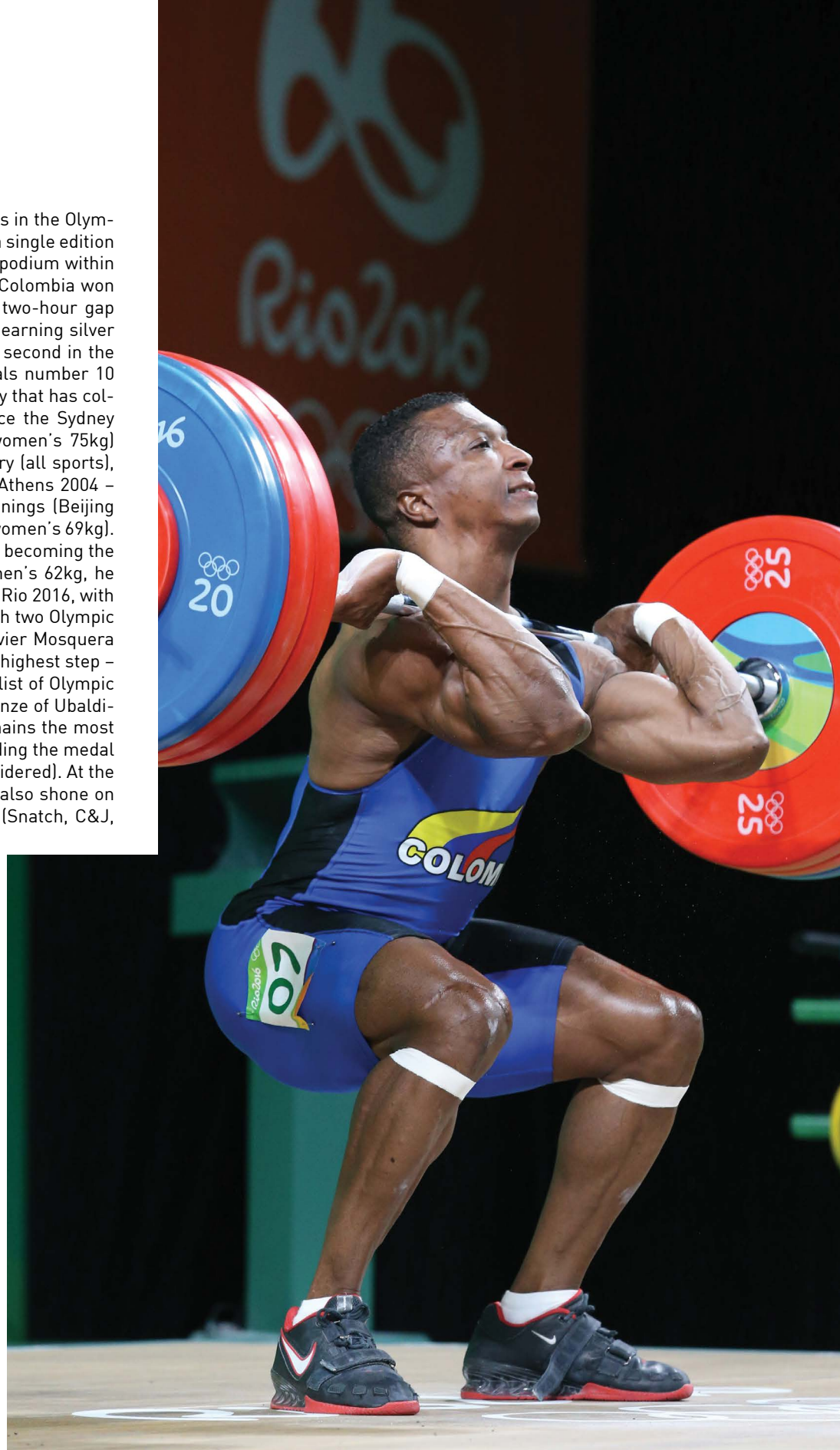
The first, third Olympic medal for Lydia Valentin (ESP)

No, there isn't any mistake in the way the title of this story is written. In 2016, at the Rio Olympic Games, Spain enjoyed its first-ever medal in weightlifting, a feat brilliantly achieved by Lydia Valentin, in the women's 75kg. With a result of 116-141-257, the Iberian star earned the bronze medal. It was an encouraging improvement after a fifth and fourth place in Beijing 2008 and London 2012, respectively. However, what was initially celebrated as the first podium presence for Spain in the Sport soon became obsolete, with several disqualifications (due to positive doping re-analysis of samples) leading to two more medals for Valentin: in 2018 and 2019, she received retrospectively a silver for her 2008 performance (115-135-250) and then a gold for her 2012 outcome of 120-145-265. Born in February 1985, Valentin may have missed the medal ceremony momentum on two occasions but remains the sole Olympic medallist (all genders) for Spanish weightlifting and became one of the most popular athletes in the country. Besides her three Olympic successes, she was a two-time world and four-time European champion. Valentin still qualified for her fourth Olympics, in Tokyo 2020, but finished in 10th. "When I received the gold medal from London 2012, almost seven years later, I felt a kind of tranquility and peace. I knew from the beginning that I was the 'real' Olympic champion in that event!" commented the Spanish ace, reflecting on the highest moment in her career. Lydia Valentin announced her retirement in September 2023.

2016

Oscar Figueroa, the shiniest Colombian star

It is normally a feat associated with strong countries in the Olympic arena, those winning many dozens of medals in a single edition of the Games: to place two of their athletes on the podium within a difference of hours. At the Paris 2024 Olympics, Colombia won four medals (overall), but two of them came in a two-hour gap in the weightlifting competition, with Yeison Lopez earning silver in the men's 89kg and Mari Sanchez finishing also second in the women's 71kg, on August 9. These were the medals number 10 and 11 in Colombian Olympic weightlifting, a country that has collected podium presences without interruption since the Sydney 2000 edition. In Australia, Maria Isabel Urrutia (women's 75kg) became the first-ever gold medallist for her country (all sports), an achievement that was followed by one bronze (Athens 2004 – Mabel Mosquera, women's 63kg) and two silver linings (Beijing 2008 – Diego Salazar, men's 62kg, and Leydi Solis, women's 69kg). In London 2012, Oscar Figueroa started his route to becoming the most successful Colombian lifter so far – in the men's 62kg, he earned a silver, but he would upgrade that result in Rio 2016, with the Olympic title. He is the only Colombian lifter with two Olympic medals, including one gold. His teammate Luis Javier Mosquera climbed also on the podium twice, but never on the highest step – bronze in Rio 2016 and silver in Tokyo 2020ne. The list of Olympic Colombian medallists is completed by the 2012 bronze of Ubaldina Valoyes, in the women's 69kg. Weightlifting remains the most successful sport at Olympic level for Colombia, leading the medal chart with 11 medals (out of 38 if all sports are considered). At the IWF World Championships, Colombian lifters have also shone on many occasions, clinching 41 (only Total) and 127 (Snatch, C&J, and Total) medals so far.

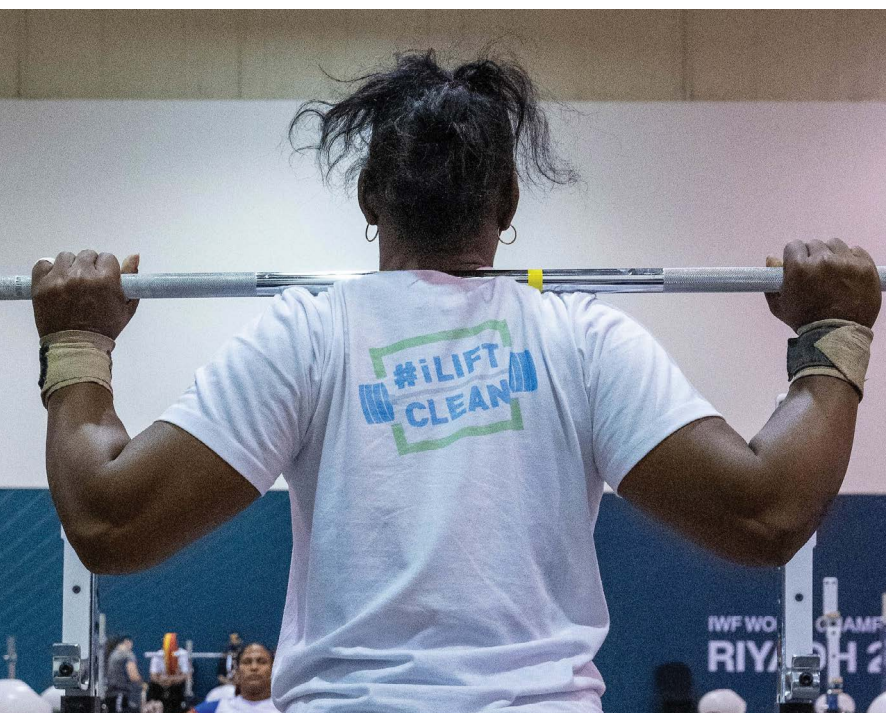


2019

IWF and ITA together in the fight against doping

Starting in 2019 – the agreement had been signed in November 2018, at the IWF World Championships in Ashgabat (TKM) – the IWF partnered with the International Testing Agency (ITA) for the development of a transparent and independent strategy in the fight against doping. Since then, this collaboration has been pivotal for the development of weightlifting and the improvement of the IWF's status within the Olympic Movement. In 2025 – the contract with the ITA has been recently renovated until the end of 2028 – the International Testing Agency is responsible for all activities related to IWF's anti-doping programme. These activities include: Risk assessment; Test distribution planning and management; In and out-of-competition testing; Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) management; Athlete Biological Passport programme; Result management; Long-term storage and re-analysis of samples; Support to the IWF's educational programmes. This last point is of paramount importance, and regular Clean Sport seminars are organised within the frame of the IWF major events, namely the Junior and Youth World Championships. These initiatives aim at providing senior and younger athletes, as well as their support personnel, all the relevant information on this topic (under the general motto "I Lift Clean"). Commenting on this fruitful relationship, IWF President Mohammed Jalood recently said: "We are extremely satisfied with this partnership, as it allowed us to pursue in a transparent and independent way our anti-doping strategy. Weightlifting definitively changed from the moment we partnered with the ITA – and this was essential for our credibility and growth as an Olympic sport. We are now a respected International Federation that operated a structural change in the way it looks at this essential area."

1905 - 2025



2020

Ursula Papandrea (USA) reaches the top of the IWF hierarchy

Ursula Papandrea is the most successful female administrator in the history of the IWF, after serving as Acting President of our International Federation in 2020, in order to restore credibility and cease the institutional turbulence in the IWF. A Houston (Texas) native, Papandrea fell in love with the sport from a very early age, when there were still many difficulties concerning the acceptance of women in weightlifting. In a 2023 interview, she recalled: "In the 1980s, when I started in the sport, there was a stigma attached to women lifting weights and so many ridiculous ideas of how it would impact our bodies. Of course, we now know that lifting weights has so many incredible health benefits that it has become common to the workout routines for men and women, old and young". Despite the challenges, she became a successful national athlete, having also represented the USA in four editions of the IWF World Championships (whose first edition for women took place in 1987, precisely on US soil). She then went on a coaching career – she was the first female coach to drive a men's team to the national title, in 2014 – and on providing her best expertise as an administrator. She was first elected as President of USA Weightlifting in 2016 (first woman to ascend to that position), and in 2017, she chaired the IWF Women's Commission, while sitting as Vice-President on the IWF Executive Board. A strong promoter of gender equity and good governance, Papandrea (graduated with a major in exercise and sport science, followed by a Masters in political science) was elected IWF First Vice-President in 2022, and then re-confirmed in this position at the 2025 IWF Electoral Congress.

2021

Hidilyn Diaz makes history for the Philippines

Her tiny morphology (she is 1.50m high) hides a strong woman and a hero in the Philippines: Hidilyn Diaz. Initiated in the sport of weightlifting almost by accident – through one of her cousins, after trying basketball and volleyball – Diaz built up a career that made her become the first-ever Olympic gold medalist for her nation (all sports and genders included), after clinching the Games title at the Tokyo 2020 Games. Competing in the 55kg category, Diaz lifted 97-127-224 (her personal best at international competitions) and entered the history of the Filipino sport! It was also a rewarding outcome after a very challenging preparation for those Games, including a stranded stay for many months in Malaysia due to the COVID pandemic travel restrictions. This major success at her fourth Olympics followed a silver medal in Rio 2016 (88-112-200, in the 53kg category), and a 10th place in Beijing 2008 (in London 2012, she bombed out in Clean & Jerk). In 2018, she was the best in her category at the Asian Games. Despite a gold medal at the 2022 IWF World Championships in Bogota (COL), she could not do better than her teammate Elreen Ando (both competing in the 59kg category) in the qualification period for the Paris 2024 Olympics, thus missing what would have been her fifth Olympic participation. Born in 1991, Diaz has a business management degree and is a member of the IWF Athletes Commission in 2025.

2021

Ecuador celebrates its brightest Star – Neisi Dajomes

After a participation in the 1924 Olympics, Ecuador only returns to the Olympic arena from 1968 onwards. Following the Paris 2024 Games, the country has secured 10 medals in the biggest sports event on the planet. Four of them come from weightlifting – and all of them from women! Neisi Dajomes is the brightest star among those Ecuadorian idols: at the Tokyo 2020 Games, she becomes the first female Olympic gold medalist for her nation, after winning the 76kg category, in 118-145-263. Born on May 12, 1998 she enters the sport through her older brother Javier (who passed away in 2018) and competed in 2011 in her first IWF event, the Youth World Championships. Two years later, she wins her first title precisely in that competition and gets the silver at the 2015 Pan-American Games. Her first Olympic participation, in Rio 2016, concludes with a seventh place. After several medals at the world and continental level, she is the Olympic champion in Tokyo (JPN). “After that win, Ecuador discovered weightlifting and started following the Sport. Moreover, it also deeply changed the way people were looking at women’s weightlifting,” Dajomes admits. Qualified for her third Olympics, she earns bronze (122-145-267) in the 81kg category last year in the French capital (photo). She becomes the only Ecuadorian female athlete with more than one Olympic medal. Weightlifting is a matter of family for Neisi – following the example of their late brother, three other siblings are also competing at the highest level in the Sport: Angie (also third in Paris 2024, in the 71kg category), Jessica, and German. Besides the three medals in the Dajomes family, Tamara Salazar (silver in Tokyo 2020) completes the group of illustrious female weightlifters in Ecuador.



2021

Akbar Djuraev, the best so far for Uzbekistan

Taking part in the Olympic Games as an independent nation since 1996, Uzbekistan has successfully amassed a total of 49 medals so far. Four come from weightlifting and Akbar Djuraev is responsible for half of them. Born in October 1999, the Uzbek star had a very successful junior career, winning the silver in the 2018 world championships in this age group, and then the gold in the 2019 edition. In both years, he was fourth at the IWF (senior) Worlds. Arrived at the Tokyo 2020 Games, he competed in the 109kg category and convincingly became the Olympic champion (photo) in 193-237-430. The success in Japan was followed by two world titles in 2021 and 2023. Qualified for the Paris 2024 rendezvous in the 102kg category, he had a solid competition in the French capital, clinching the silver in 185-219-404, just 2kg less than the winner (China's Liu Huanhua). He is the only lifter from Uzbekistan with two Olympic medals so far. Despite his great feats, he was not the first lifter from his country to reach the top of the Games hierarchy – in 2016, in Rio de Janeiro (BRA), Ruslan Nurudinov gave the first-ever gold in the sport for Uzbekistan. In 2013, he was also the first world champion for his nation, an achievement he repeated on two other occasions (2022 and 2024). Closing the Olympic medal count for Uzbekistan, Ivan Efremov was on the other hand the first Uzbek lifter to climb to a Games podium, after earning a bronze medal in London 2012 (in the 105kg category). At the World Championships level, Uzbekistan has a total of 16 medals (only considering Total results) – two of them were obtained in the last edition of the event, in Manama (BRN) in 2024.

2021

Meso Hassona becomes Qatar's first Olympic champion

His name is Fares Ibrahim El-Bakh, but everyone knows him in the weightlifting world as Meso Hassona. Born in June 1998 and representing Qatar, he descends from an Egyptian family deeply connected to the sport: his grandfather was a successful lifter and his father took part in three consecutive editions of the Olympic Games – 1984, 1988, and 1992. In the first of these appearances, he is fifth. Proud of this tradition, Meso starts the sport at nine and becomes a full-time weightlifter in 2012, only aged 14. In 2016, he is 'revealed' at the highest level, with the bronze medal at the IWF World Junior Championships, and the seventh place at the Rio Olympics. In 2017, he is a junior world champion and third in the senior IWF showcase. After a silver medal at the Worlds in 2019, he qualifies for the Tokyo 2020 Games in the 96kg category. In the Snatch, he lifts 177kg (the fourth best result in the field), but then excels in the Clean & Jerk, clearly dominating operations with a successful 225kg lift, for a Total of 402kg, an Olympic record. With this achievement, he became the first Olympic champion in the history of Qatar (all sports included) – one day later, the country celebrates its second golden star, Mutaz Barsham (in Athletics). They remain as of today, the only two Olympic champions for Qatar. After a gold medal at the 2022 IWF World Championships and a smooth qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, Meso is clearly the man to beat in the 102kg category in the French capital. Things won't go as planned – the Qatari ace fails all his Snatch attempts at 178kg and withdraws from the C&J section. Some months later, in December 2024, he bounces back at the IWF Worlds in Manama (BRN), with a silver medal in the same category (174-225-399).

1905 - 2025



2021

Shi Zhiyong (CHN) completes nine years of invincibility with gold in Tokyo

From 2012 until 2021, Shi Zhiyong, from China, had a perfect record in all international events he took part in: each participation had been the synonym of a gold medal! Born in October 1993, his success story started at the 2012 Asian Championships, where he was the best in the 69kg category (144-180-324). He then competed in heavier categories, but always topped the podium – the first continental victory was followed by three subsequent ones in 2016, 2019, and 2021. At the world level, he also displayed his supremacy in the IWF showcases of 2015, 2018, and 2019. At the Olympics, he had no problems beating the rest of the field in Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020ne (photo). In Brazil (69kg category), he lifted 162-190-352 for the gold, while in Japan (73kg), he was crowned champion with a 166-198-364 performance. At the end of 2021, he got an injury in the back and returned back to competition in December 2023, at the IWF Grand Prix, one of the qualification events for the Paris 2024 Games. He was a silver medallist, an outcome he replicated some months later at the IWF World Cup in Phuket (THA). With a qualification total of 165-191-356, he was behind Rizki Juniansyah (INA), who arrived in Paris with a 164-201-365 performance also from the Thai event. In the French capital, all eyes were set on the 73kg event, where Shi could eventually join the very restricted club of lifters with three Olympic victories. In the end, the Chinese star led the Snatch portion of the competition by 10kg (165kg, against 155kg for the Indonesian ace), but then failed all his Clean & Jerk attempts at 191kg. Juniansyah lifted 199kg and got the gold in the French capital with a total of 354kg.



2021

Polina Guryeva, a special medal for Turkmenistan

In the weightlifting Olympic story, among the three countries with one single medal at the Games, they all have another common characteristic: that podium presence is the only one for the nation, all sports included, in their respective Olympic trajectory. These countries are Iraq, Samoa, and Turkmenistan. The most recent case comes precisely from Polina Guryeva (photo), who earned in Tokyo 2020ne the sole medal so far in the history of her nation, Turkmenistan. Competing in the women's 59kg category, she earned silver after lifting 96-121-217, an achievement that brought her the highest recognition from the Turkmen authorities: she was offered a new apartment and car upon her return to Ashgabat. Born in October 1999, she never replicated this success on a later stage: having gained weight and moved to the 76kg category, she was 20th at the 2023 IWF Worlds in Riyadh (KSA) and seventh at the 2024 Asian Championships. In Beijing 2008, Ele Opeloge clinched the sole medal so far in the Olympic history of Samoa: lifting in the women's +75kg, she initially finished fourth, but was upgraded to second after two athletes tested positive for prohibited substances. Going back even further, we arrive at the 1960 Rome Olympics. In the men's 67.5kg category, Abdul-Wahid Aziz will achieve an unparalleled feat in the history of Iraq so far: an Olympic medal! After lifting 117.5-115-147.5-380, he got the bronze medal. One year earlier, at the World Championships in Warsaw (POL), the Iraqi star was also third, with a Total of 105-112.5-145-362.5.



2022

Mohammed Jalood starts a new era for the IWF

After his election as IWF President in June 2022, Mohammed Jalood and his colleagues from a renovated Executive Board undertook immediate, structural, and robust reforms to address two of the main problems undermining our International Federation's reputation: good governance and anti-doping policy. The approval of a new Constitution and By-Laws was the main mechanism to cover the first topic, establishing clear rules and procedures to ensure gender equity, athlete representation, term limits, and a code of conduct for officials serving in the IWF. Moreover, considerable efforts were made in the fields of inclusivity – namely with the creation of the first-ever IWF Refugee Team, in 2023, or the adoption of a gender identity policy – and sustainability (the IWF has since developed a partnership with the United Nations in this field). On the anti-doping front, the IWF President was a strong promoter of a solid collaboration between our International Federation and the ITA (International Testing Agency), thus guaranteeing that the entirety of anti-doping operations is run in an independent and transparent way. Other major initiatives under Jalood's presidency include the reinforcement of the IWF headquarters in Lausanne, the establishment of a 2024-2032 IWF Strategic Plan, the integration of safeguarding policies, and the adoption of a Human Rights and Non-Discrimination Policy. These reforms played an essential role in the IOC's positive decision to keep Weightlifting in the Olympic programme for the 2028 Los Angeles Games. This 'culture change' was also largely valued by the IWF National Federations in May 2025, when Mohammed Jalood was re-elected as the IWF President for the period 2025-2029.

2022

Bringing weightlifting to the street

In an effort to introduce innovation in the way our sport is presented to fans and reaches new audiences, the IWF, in collaboration with the Swiss Weightlifting Federation and Eleiko, organised in 2022 the first edition of the Street Weightlifting Championships, staged in Lausanne (SUI). The initiative attracted local and some international stars and was a huge popular success, with spectators watching the lifters performances some metres away from the platforms. Besides the new scenario – urban and outdoor – the competition format also differed from the regular weightlifting competitions. It included the concept of "team", and even "mixed" teams. Altogether, 14 athletes participated in seven teams (one female and one male per team): Team Austria, Team France, Team Germany, Team Italy, Team Switzerland and 2 combined teams, Team International (Colombia and Great Britain) and Team Ambassador (Malta and Qatar). The initiative was successfully organised in 2023 and 2024 (photo), always receiving the same enthusiasm from lifters and the local population. One of the tools to reinforce the "links" between lifters and fans was the organisation of a bench press exhibition open to everyone, as well as a demonstration of street workouts (thus bringing together athletes and spectators). Besides the Olympic capital in Switzerland, other nations around the world have implemented similar initiatives in recent years, proving that the opportunities for innovation continue to grow.

1905 - 2025



IWF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS
MANAMA 2024 BAHRAIN





2022

Members of the Athletes Commission are elected by their peers

2022 was a turning point in terms of the athletes' voice and representation within the IWF. If an Athletes Commission was already in place before that, the new Executive Board and updated Constitution that resulted from the June 2022 elections stipulated that the future composition of the athletes' body had to be voted by the lifters themselves. Therefore, in December 2022, during the IWF World Championships in Bogota (COL) and for the first time in the IWF's history, a vote was organised and participants in the event were able to cast their preference between the 18 candidates who were deemed eligible by a vetting panel. As a result of that vote, 10 members were elected, representing the five continents and ensuring a gender-balanced composition (five men and five women). In the early days of January 2023, the new Commission met and elected Forrester Osei (GHA) as Chair. Moreover, and in accordance with the Constitution, three members were chosen to sit on the IWF Executive Board. Osei, Hidilyn Diaz (PHI), and Luisa Peters (COK) are currently EB members (photo), with full voting rights at both the Executive Board and the Congress. This is quite pioneering in the world of sport international federations and brings the IWF to a unique position in terms of its athletes' voice and representation.

2023

Creation of the IWF Refugee Team

At the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro (BRA), an important novelty occurred: the International Olympic Committee (IOC) introduced the first-ever Refugee Olympic Team. Consisting of 10 athletes, this important symbolic step was aimed at raising global awareness of the growing number of refugees worldwide. In Tokyo 2020 the Team comprised 29 athletes (including one lifter – Cyrille Tchatchet) and before the Paris Olympics, the IWF decided to create, in 2023, its own Refugee Team. It consisted of seven athletes: four women – Parisa Jahanfekrian, originally from Iran, but residing in Germany, Clementine Meukeugni Noubissi (Cameroon/Great Britain), Aline de Souza (Brazil/USA), Monique Lima de Araujo (Brazil/USA) -, and three men – Addriel Garcia (Cuba/Italy), Fawaz Mohammed Saleh Hussein (Yemen/Saudi Arabia), and Reza Rouhi (Iran/Great Britain). At the 2023 IWF World Championships in Riyadh (KSA), Aline de Souza became officially the first IWF Refugee Athlete in action, in the women's 55kg category. In 2024, the project continued with four IWF lifters, plus two athletes included in the IOC Refugee Team Scholarship programme. Those two lifters – Ramiro Mora and Yekta Jamali – were selected for the 37-member team that constituted the Refugee Olympic Team competing in Paris. At the IWF level, Jamali (photo) was the first refugee lifter to get a medal, earning bronze at the 2024 IWF World Junior Championships, in the women's 81kg. To provide more stability to the programme, the next IWF Refugee Team will be in place for the period 2025-2028.



2023

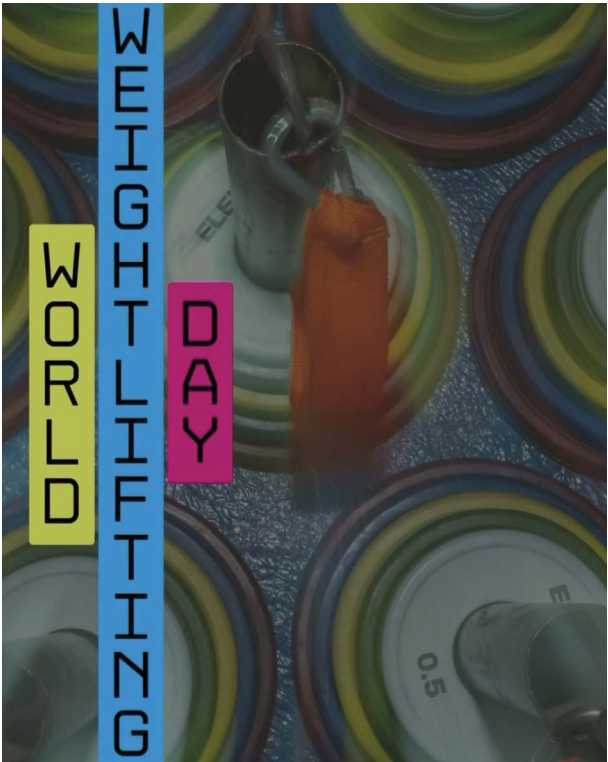
Approval of the first-ever IWF Strategic Plan

With the momentum created in 2022 with the election of a renovated IWF Executive Board and the subsequent structural reforms in the IWF Constitution, the creation of an IWF Strategic Plan was also deemed a necessity for our International Federation. A working group is created to co-ordinate the production of this document, namely by conducting an extensive consultation with all IWF stakeholders (including its National Member Federations). In September 2023, at the IWF Congress in Riyadh (KSA), this Plan is unanimously approved by the delegates. Covering the period 2024-2032, it comprises the four pillars sustaining all the IWF activities: Safeguarding the IWF Stars; Enhancing the IWF Events; Keeping the IWF Safe; and Reaching beyond the IWF. For each of these main points, several sub-pillars were created and more than 100 action points are to be implemented in the years to come. The Plan also highlights the IWF values, “condensed” in the word “Fortius” (Stronger), which is also part of the Olympic motto. For each of its letters, an important value – F for Fair-Play, O for Objective-driven, R for Responsibility, T for Transformation, I for Inclusion, U for Unity, and S for Sustainability. The IWF Strategic Plan also includes the vision of our organisation, as a guide to its action and future decisions: “A world where people of all ages and conditions live healthier, stronger and happier lives through the exciting, empowering and clean sport of weightlifting.”

2023

A day to be remembered by the weightlifting family – October 16

After some years of uncertainty concerning the Olympic future of our Sport, the IOC held its Session in Mumbai (IND) in 2023, and among its many decisions, one was particularly celebrated by the IWF: weightlifting was confirmed in the programme of the 2028 Los Angeles Games. On the same day of that important milestone – October 16 – the IWF President Mohammed Jalood expressed his joy and satisfaction. Present in Mumbai, the IWF leader considered: “My first thoughts today are for our global weightlifting community – and especially the athletes – for whom this news will be both a great relief and a cause for rejoicing. It is thanks to everyone’s collective efforts that we are here today, and we thank the members of the International Olympic Committee for recognising our unity, commitment to change, and the great progress we are making as a sport. Today is a moment for weightlifting to celebrate, but it should not be seen as an end. We must – and will – continue, in line with our strategic priorities, towards a new future for weightlifting as a healthy, modern, and athlete-centred sport.” The importance of this decision and the way it reflected the positive evolution of weightlifting’s reputation within the Olympic Movement, prompted the IWF to establish the creation of an annual World Weightlifting Day (WWD), precisely on October 16 – the first WWD was celebrated in 2024 by lifters and national federations in the five continents.





1905 - 2025

2024

Lima tests with success the two-platform format

With the steady improvement of the number of lifters taking part in the IWF events – thus testifying on the universal development of the sport in the five continents –, the number of sessions and days at the major competitions has been under consideration. The choice between having more (less charged) or fewer (with continuous sessions from morning to evening) days has in many cases reached its limits, so a new solution was tested at the 2024 IWF World Youth Championships, held in Lima (PER) from May 22-26: the simultaneous use of two platforms in the same venue. This scenario is not new for many national members (who are using it at their domestic events), but at the IWF level, this was a premiere. With one platform featuring male lifters and the other one welcoming female action, this format allowed a faster running of the event, attended by 277 athletes (137 men, 140 women). During the five-day competition, spectators on the site and those following the event remotely could enjoy a more “compacted” action, with fewer stops between the lifts running on both platforms. Athletes, officials, and organisers praised this innovative solution and the system was used again in the Peruvian capital, for the joint organisation (also a premiere) of the 2025 IWF World Junior and Youth Championships.



2024

Maude Charron enters in the Canadian weightlifting pantheon

The Canadian achievements at the Olympics are normally rather associated with other sports than with weightlifting (athletics, swimming, or ice hockey, just to name a few), but lifters from the maple leaf country have already earned six medals in the Games. Four of them were won by two remarkable women: Christine Girard and Maude Charron (photo). They are so far the only two Olympic weightlifting champions for their country – Girard in 2012 and Charron in 2020ne. Member of the IWF Athletes Commission, Maude Charron lifted 105-131-236 in Tokyo (in the 64kg category), and became the most successful Canadian lifter in 2024, after clinching the silver in the 59kg with a Total of 106-130-236 in Paris. At the world level, Charron (born in April 1993) won a bronze in 2022 – she was also champion at the 2018 and 2022 Commonwealth Games. If Charron could properly enjoy her award ceremonies, that was not the case for Christina Girard. Also with two medals – besides the gold in London, she was a bronze medallist in Beijing 2008 –, they were given to Girard on a ‘delayed’ mode: in 2008, she had finished fourth, and in 2012 she was initially third. In 2016, a re-analysis of samples from both Olympics revealed that other athletes with medals had tested positive for prohibited substances. This led to the upgrade of Girard, who received in 2018 the gold medal for the London 2012 and the bronze for the Beijing 2008 Games. Moreover, she was first at the 2010 Commonwealth Games and the 2011 Pan-American Games. Before these two ‘golden’ ladies, Canada had medalled on two occasions at the Olympics: in 1952, with Gerry Gratton, and in 1984 with Jacques Demers, both with a silver medal.

Emily Campbell (GBR) secures her place in the history books

Besides the strength displayed on the platform, Emily Campbell (GBR) is presently one of the most charismatic female lifters in the circuit. After seven Olympic medals, all won by men – ranging from the distant first edition of the Games, in 1896, until 1984 –, Campbell is the only female lifter from Great Britain on an Olympic podium. And she did it twice: in Tokyo 2020ne, competing in the +87kg category, she secured the silver in 122-161-283, and in Paris 2024, she was again among the best, clinching the bronze in the +81kg event (126-162-288, her best Total in international events). At the IWF World Championships, she has the exact same harvest – second in 2022 (122-165-287) and third in 2021 (121-157-278). “Weightlifting is very special and we should be so thankful that we have such beautiful people in our sport,” Campbell said after her world silver medal in Bogota, Colombia. On a continental level, her supremacy is complete in the +87kg category, with five consecutive European titles (2021 to 2025). Finally, she was also a Commonwealth Games champion in 2022 (after getting the bronze in 2018). Born in May 1994 in Nottingham, she graduated in 2016 with a Sports Science degree. In 2025, celebrating the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, she was again inspirational: “I want to be more than just an athlete. I would love to open my own gym for, predominately, youth and development. But I want anyone to be able to walk into my gym, to be able to have that community space to learn weightlifting, to learn physical literacy and to be comfortable and to live a healthy lifestyle”. Before Campbell, Louis Martin was the only British lifter with two medals in two editions of the Olympics – bronze in 1960 and silver in 1964.



2024



2024

History in the making for Karlos Nasar (BUL)

It is not frequent to report on a 21-year-old athlete, still active and necessarily at the beginning of his career, in a series of historical milestones of an international federation. Karlos Nasar, from Bulgaria, has about 1/6 of the IWF age, but the indicators and results so far suggest that we are writing about a lifter who will surely be part of the history books. Issued from a nation with a great tradition in weightlifting, Nasar is a prodigy in our Sport, having already won one Olympic, two world, and three European titles. In Paris, at last year's Olympics, the Bulgarian ace was clearly above the rest of the field in the men's 89kg! On his way to a 14kg-difference comfortable victory, he lifted 180kg in the Snatch, 224kg in the Clean & Jerk (a new World Record), and 404kg in Total (also a new best global mark). His performance was only 2kg lower than the winner in the 102kg... Besides the Olympic gold medal, he was also the champion in the 2021 and 2024 editions of the IWF World Championships, and climbed on another three occasions to the highest step of the podium at the European level (2023, 2024, and 2025). His major career hiccup until now is the performance at the 2022 Worlds, where he bombed out in the Snatch, but still found enough motivation to set a new WR in the C&J (220kg). Born in Paris in May 2004 to a Bulgarian mother and Lebanese father, Nasar is the current holder of 15 World Records (five in each of the age groups – senior, junior, and youth).

2024

Solfrid Koanda (NOR) is the last one to know she won gold

It is certainly one of the funniest and most remembered images of the weightlifting competition at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games: in the women's 81kg, Solfrid Koanda wins the gold for Norway, but always in her "bubble" and "protected" by her coaches regarding the progress of the event, she is finally informed that she was Olympic champion after the world and spectators on site had already understood the victory was hers. And what a triumph it was: after lifting 121kg in Snatch, she performs 154kg in the Clean & Jerk, for a total of 275kg. Her last failed C&J of 162kg was not even necessary to ensure the gold... With this success, Koanda, born in 1998, became the first female Norwegian lifter to win (and medal) at the Olympics, after a solitary achievement by her compatriot Leif Jenssen in Munich 1972 (gold in the men's 82.5kg category). Besides the sportive performance, it was also a sweet revenge for a difficult life for Koanda, born to a Finnish mother and Ivorian father, but put into foster care during her teenage years. She starts weightlifting only in 2020, after practicing CrossFit, but very soon obtains excellent results at the international level. In 2021, she earns bronze at the IWF Worlds, before getting the gold a year later. Also with four European titles, the Olympic achievement definitively consecrates Koanda as a star in the world of weightlifting. A full-professional athlete since the end of 2022, she earned her life before as an electrician (she has a degree in electrotechnology).





2024

Li Wenwen (CHN) 'jumps' for the gold at the Games

The last weightlifting competition day at the 2024 Paris Olympics had only one event on the programme: the women's +81kg. And what a great way to conclude the Games it was! With the group of 12 lifters visibly happy to be performing in such a prestigious scenario, the gold medal went to favourite Li Wenwen from China, in 136-173-309, her second consecutive Olympic title after also reaching the highest step of the podium in Tokyo 2020 (then, with a performance of 140-180-320). But if in the Japanese capital the podium celebrations had to be more sober (COVID pandemic oblige), the atmosphere in Paris was clearly more relaxed. While on both sides of the podium, Hyejeong Park (KOR, silver) and Emily Campbell (GBR, bronze) had received their medals, a very happy Chinese ace literally jumps to the highest step when she is called

to receive her gold award. It was one of the moments of the Paris competition, in what was also the most followed (TV-wise) weightlifting event of the entire Games. Born in March 2000, Li is one of the five female lifters so far with two Olympic titles. Her road to stardom started in 2019, when she is second at the IWF World Cup. In the same year, she wins her first continental title in Asia (she got two more gold medals, in 2020 and 2023), and she is also first at the IWF Worlds (in the +87kg category, 146-186-332). After Tokyo's achievement, she is the best at the 2022 IWF showcase, and she already gives a good indication of her motivation for Paris 2024, winning some months before the IWF World Cup in 145-180-325. Li is also the current WR holder in her category for the Clean and Jerk (187kg) and Total (335kg).

2025

Knowing one of the basic lifts - Snatch

Olympic weightlifting comprises presently two basic lifts, which are performed successively: the athlete first executes up to three Snatch attempts, followed by a maximum of three Clean & Jerk lifts. The Snatch movement has been always linked with weightlifting, being historically known as the “two-hand lift”, or also the “one-motion lift”. In reality, and despite the variety of techniques used throughout the sports’ evolution, the “two-hand” and “one-motion” characteristics always remained at the core of this movement. The main difference over time relates to the way the bar is initially kept overhead – if until the first half of the 20th century, lifters opted for splitting the legs, it soon appeared that a squat position (photo) was preferable, allowing for more stability

and more kilos on the bar (as it remains in a lower position when compared with a splitting-leg position). However, both techniques are still permitted today, as described in the 2025 IWF Technical Competition Rules and Regulations: “The barbell is gripped, palms downward and pulled in a single movement from the platform to the full extent of both arms above the head, while either splitting or bending the legs. During this continuous movement upward the barbell should remain close to the body and may slide along the thighs. No part of the body other than the feet may touch the platform during the execution of the Snatch. The athlete may recover in his / her own time, either from a split or a squat position. The lifted weight must be maintained in the final motionless position, with both arms and legs fully extended and feet on the same line and parallel to the plane of the trunk and the barbell”.





2025

Knowing one of the basic lifts – Clean & Jerk

Together with the Snatch, the Clean & Jerk is one of the two basic lifts in Olympic weightlifting. Considered in the early days a rudimentary test of strength, it became a highly technical movement from the moment coaches and athletes began to understand the importance of biomechanics and training methods, leading to significant improvements in performance. Requiring precision, strength, and coordination, it implies explosive power, flexibility, and technique. Unlike the Snatch, the main characteristic of the Clean & Jerk is that the lift is executed in two consecutive movements (thus also allowing for heavier weights): the 'clean' phase, where the barbell is lifted to the shoulders (photo), and the 'jerk' part where it is propelled overhead. According to the 2025 IWF Technical Competition Rules and Regulations, the correct 'clean' must be as follows: "The barbell is gripped, palm downward and pulled in a single movement from the platform to the shoulders, while either splitting or bending the legs. During this continuous movement upward the barbell should remain close to the body and the barbell may slide along the thighs. The barbell must not touch the chest before it stops at the final position either on the clavicles, chest, or on fully bent arms. The athlete's feet must return to the same line and the legs must be fully extended before starting the Jerk. Before the Jerk, the athlete may adjust the position of the barbell for the following reasons: a) to withdraw or "unhook" the thumbs b) if breathing is impeded c) if the barbell causes pain d) to change the width of the grip". As for the 'Jerk', the rules stipulate that "the athlete bends and dynamically extends the legs and arms simultaneously to move the barbell upward in one motion to the full extent of the arms, while either splitting or bending the legs. The athlete returns his / her feet to the same line parallel to the plane of the trunk and the barbell with his / her arms and legs fully extended."

WEIGHTLIFTING HALL OF FAME

List of Weightlifting Hall of Fame inductees who
were mentioned in the 120 milestones:

- Gottfried Schödl (AUT, inducted in 1992)

- Alain Lunzenfichter (FRA, 1992)

- Vasily Alekseyev (URS, 1993)

- Waldemar Baszanowski (POL, 1993)

- Imre Foldi (HUN, 1993)

- Tommy Kono (USA, 1993)

- Yoshinobu Miyake (JPN, 1993)

- Clarence Johnson (USA, 1993)

- Yurik Vardanyan (URS, 1994)

- Louis Hostin (FRA, 1994)

- Norair Nurikian (BUL, 1994)

- Janusz Przedpelski (POL, 1994)

- Mohammad Nassiri (IRI, 1995)

- Arkady Vorobyov (URS, 1995)

- Norbert Schemansky (USA, 1997)

- Vladan Mihajlovic (SRB, 1997)

- Kaarlo Kangasniemi (FIN, 1998)

- David Rigert (URS, 1999)

- Naim Suleymanoglu (TUR, 2000)

- Zygmunt Smalcerz (POL, 2002)

- Tadamasa Uesaka (JPN, 2002)

- Marcus Stephen (NRU, 2005)

- Maria Takacs (HUN, 2006)

- Sam Coffa (AUS, 2009)

- Pyrros Dimas (GRE, 2009)

- Kakhi Kakhiashvili (GEO/GRE, 2010)

- Andrey Chemerkin (RUS, 2010)

- Tara Nott (USA, 2015)

- Karyn Marshall (USA, 2015)

- Loa Dika Toua (PNG, 2022)

5. ■

Sam Coffa: witness and
protagonist of the IWF
history

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SAM COFFA: WITNESS AND PROTAGONIST OF THE IWF HISTORY

Salvatore 'Sam' Coffa is a living legend in the weightlifting world. At almost 90, he is a privileged witness, but also an important protagonist of our International Federation's rich history. For more than seven decades involved in our Sport, as an athlete, coach, official, and successful administrator, Coffa is also a remarkable storyteller. With his outstanding vitality and prodigious memory, he sat down in May 2025 for a couple of hours and recalled his life. An existence marked by initial difficulties in his homeland (Sicily, Italy) but also with many achievements in his adoptive country, Australia.

His long trajectory incorporates aspects that could illustrate the career of many lifters around the world: his childhood and teenage years, his introduction to weightlifting, and his athletic career, culminating in the dream of his life, the participation in the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

After his retirement, he made his entry into politics (he was twice Mayor of Hawthorn, in the suburbs of Melbourne). As a sport administrator, Coffa was also a successful President of the Australian Weightlifting Federation for 25 years.

At the end of the 1980s, he became part of IWF sphere. One of his first and most important assignments was the leadership of the Women's Commission, a role that he particularly cherished. His decisive contribution was pivotal for the entry of the women's events in the Olympic programme, in 2000 in Sydney.

Sam Coffa reflects on the technical changes occurred in the Sport, in the future challenges related with the place of Weightlifting in the Olympic Movement, but is also pleased to recall his best memories in the Sport.

On a more personal note, this globetrotter (he has been in 102 countries) still makes a daily walk in the morning and enjoys being with his four chil-

dren, nine grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. With his contagious smile, he recognises that his extraordinary career was a "sweet revenge" for the difficult early life in Italy.

Let's start from the beginning. You were born in 1936, in Sicily. And then you left for Australia in 1951. How were your childhood and teenage years? What was your family context?

The family context was a post-war one. I was about 10 years old when the war ended – as you may imagine, living in Italy, those were really difficult times...

Education-wise, could you go to school?

In education terms, I entered school late because as I was born in January I had to wait until I was six. But the family is very poor, and they want me to start work, so they said, 'You don't go to school.' They got my uncle, who was a teacher, to train me and I eventually succeeded in the exams. This just gives you an idea that things were tough. No food, not much to go about. And I lived in those few years under fascism. Mussolini told us that we had to wear green pants, black shirts, and march in the street to the beat of the drum. That is something I have never accepted: someone telling me what to do, when to do it, and how to do it.

But do you still have memories of that?

Oh, yes. I have memories because my mother didn't have a way to produce green pants. She did not have the material to make it! She eventually sought help from another uncle who owned a bar. In this bar, there was a billiard table, and he had just removed the green cloth and put a new one so with this old green one she made a pair of pants. But this material was like sandpaper, which provoked a rash in my legs, a kind of allergy. So that's why I remember it so vividly!

The idea of leaving those precarious conditions then made its way...

I thought, no, I cannot live under these conditions. Somehow, we must seek alternatives. We decided we could go to three locations: Switzerland, Argentina, and Australia. My father thought that Switzerland was too close, we would be going back every fortnight, every week, and we would waste money. The idea was to go overseas. Stay there five years, six years, make a few dollars, and come back. And that was the plan. And so we chose Australia because it was very far.

Did you have anyone there from your family already?

Yes, I had one uncle, the one who coached me for my school work. He eventually provided accommodation for me and my father when we arrived in Australia. Don't forget I was still in my teenage years... However, and despite not speaking a word of English, within 18 months we started a business.

And the rest of the family, remained in Italy?

Yes, we are four siblings – I have a brother and two sisters. I am the older boy, so I quickly became the breadwinner of the family. I learnt English quite quickly and after some years, my father wanted us to go back. I decided that I would not go back, I just said to my father, 'Sorry, you can go back, I'm staying'. In the meantime, I had also met who would become my future wife... And he said, 'No, this is not good, either we stay or we all go'. As my sister got engaged in Italy, she would not come to Australia. We couldn't fulfill what my father was saying. Either all in Italy or all in Australia. In the end, some remained in Europe and we stayed in Australia. My younger brother Paul, and the rest of the family, joined us in 1956.

ON HIS CHILDHOOD:

"No food, not much to go about. And I lived in those few years under fascism. Mussolini told us that we had to wear green pants, black shirts, and march in the street to the beat of the drum. That is something I have never accepted: someone telling me what to do, when to do it, and how to do it." On his childhood: "No food, not much to go about. And I lived in those few years under fascism. Mussolini told us that we had to wear green pants, black shirts, and march in the street to the beat of the drum. That is something I have never accepted: someone telling me what to do, when to do it, and how to do it."

Despite the move, those first years in Australia were also not easy...

Very complicated. None of us spoke a word of English! Not one word. My father had many problems, but I used to go and do the shopping. I could then start translating some words and read the few signs in the shop.

And soon after that, you launch a shoe-repairing business?

To be more exact, our business was bespoke orthopedic shoemaking. We used to make shoes for people who had something wrong with their feet or their legs, particularly children, if they were born with bendy legs and all this. We worked together with the hospitals. We also repaired shoes, bags, and all sorts of things like that.

And how weightlifting came across in your life?

We were already in Australia. Back in the village, in Italy, believe it or not, I was the goalkeeper of the local football team. At the age of 12, I was the

same height as what I am now... So, I was considered to be a giant, but I never grew... So when I arrived in Australia for reasons which I would never know, I had this idea that I would want to go to the Olympic Games.

Nothing less than that?

I just wanted to be an Olympian, and I looked at myself in the mirror and I thought 'What can I do'? I was not brave enough to be a boxer. I didn't mind wrestling because I had still big legs. And a strong torso. Or weightlifting. Things like this. So I chose wrestling as number one - I did Greco-Roman wrestling for quite some time. We used to wrestle on canvas mats, which left burns on my cheeks. And they never healed. Because as soon as they would heal a little bit, you'd go back and blood would come out. And it was terrible. At the same time, I was going out with my girlfriend then. So she said, 'You know, I don't want to go out with a guy like this, with a destroyed face!' So that's the end of my career as a wrestler.

That was definitively a short career...

The nearest thing to it was weightlifting. And so I quickly went to the local boys club and said, 'You know, I want to be a lifter.' And they said they had no coaches and no specific equipment. They told me 'You can bring your own equipment. And you try it by yourself in the corner of the room.' It was a big basketball court.

And did you have any equipment?

No, I didn't have any equipment, but the person I was living with had some homemade material. Just one bar with a screw at the end and a 40kg weight.

I could get some additional weights and started doing some training twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays. But you know, when you do something new, some people would come in and look and say 'Can I do some too?' And that's how I started. I knew nothing about weightlifting. I read Bob Hoffman's [US weightlifter and bodybuilder, co-founder of the 'Strength and Health Magazine', in 1932] books about weightlifting, the Press, the Snatch, the Clean and Jerk, the Total, and all that. And we started there. And then, instead of two, we were three, then four, five, and so on... And then I had a team of about ten youngsters who wanted to do weightlifting like me. Without coach. I then became the coach. And then the committee of this youth club said, 'Well, look, you are one of the biggest groups.' We were now a weightlifting club! It grew in front of me. And I started to worry because I didn't have any knowledge of the sport. So we asked the committee to do something about it. Firstly, to get a proper set of weights.

Did it work out?

Yes, the Rotary Club of Hawthorn came to our rescue and they bought us a set of weights, then they somehow found somebody who had done weightlifting, and he came in to give us a couple of lessons. And the Hawthorn Club officially started.

When did you start competing?

The club itself started competition in 1958. This man gave us a few hints, and in the end they gave us another room to progress. And we grew from there, really. With that, we also completely ruined the floor and had to repair it!

I started to evolve as a coach and we had 25, 30, 40 people in this room. We started to lobby the council, and the local government, to see if we could find something else. Come the year 1962 and I was selected for the Commonwealth Games in Perth. I had won the state and national title and I ended up being a Commonwealth Games representative. The council thought this was terrific for the community, as I was the only one from that club that went to the Commonwealth Games. They thought they should capitalise on that and they did. We managed to get a purpose-built weightlifting centre in Hawthorn! It wasn't elaborate but we had a big hall, we had a kitchen, we had a sauna, and so I was in charge of it. We stayed there for some years until 1964 when two members of the club went to the Olympic Games, and this put another pressure. We urged the council to provide us with even better facilities...

And you are one of these two Olympians. You had fulfilled your goal! How was the feeling, the long trip to Japan...

I had made a long trip before, coming to Australia, but by boat... The plane was something new for us. We were kids and we jumped in the overhead where you put the luggage - we didn't know what we were doing! The first stop was a training camp in Sydney. This was also completely new. We went to the port, and there you could buy crayfish, lobsters, and king-size prawns. I tasted some and it didn't taste good. However, the night before we left the camp, we were offered a nice dinner. On the table, there were prawn cutlets. Big prawns, king-size. And I thought, 'Wow, this is sophisticated'. And I said to my friend, 'We've got nothing to eat here, only prawns. What are we going to do?' Well, he said, 'We just have to eat some.' And of course, I tasted one. It was delicious. I've never stopped eating them!

Before recalling the competition in Tokyo, and as a resident in Melbourne, the 1956 Games were perhaps your first Olympic "experience". Were you there as a spectator?

The 1956 Games in Melbourne were the catalyst for me getting into weightlifting. I was lucky enough that the training hall for the weightlifting was within 200 metres from my shop. Honestly, just one street out. And so at midday, for lunchtime, I used to take my bike, go there, and watch the greats of America, like Tommy Kono.

So you never watched the competition, just the training?

At this stage, I was only watching the training, and taking pictures, because I used to do a bit of photography, and then go back and get signatures. Then I thought, 'This is what I want to do!' I went to this training hall day after day and the man in charge there said, 'Listen, you're coming in every day. What about if you stay at the door to open it? If you do a good job, I'll give you the position of doorman at the Olympic Games.' I just jumped at it. And I was at



the Olympic venue door when the super heavies were contested. I opened the door and shut the door when it finished at one o'clock in the morning. It was something that blew my mind. And that's when my brother Paul arrived in Australia. And so he joined also the club. And he was the same as me. Same category. And I was extraordinarily good in the Press, which was one of the elements. But he was very good in the Snatch and the Clean and Jerk, but he was terrible in the Press. So in all the time we competed together, he was always beaten because he just couldn't catch me after the Press. And so he decided at a very young age to go into coaching. That's why he never had the chance to compete at the Olympics.

We then come back to your 1964 Olympic experience in Tokyo.

I quickly realised I couldn't get anywhere like the top people because they were evolving in a professional way. In my case, I was training, but I was still working in the family business. I had to. I was married with four kids. I had to feed them. It was hard. It was difficult to accept that even though I considered myself to be as strong as they were, I just couldn't compete with them. There was something else...

What?

In those days anabolic steroids were just coming in. In 1962, I saw the first symptoms of, I didn't know honestly, had no idea what steroids were. Before the Commonwealth Games, I was ranked number two. So I was selected as a potential medallist, of course. The number one was a Canadian. I had never met him, but I saw him training. And just by looking at him, I thought something was wrong. This guy was handling weights that just blew me out of the water completely. There was an improvement of 25 kilos or something like that in a matter of months. I just couldn't believe it. But we took it philosophically. So I competed and finished fifth at the Commonwealth Games. After that, I started to read about it and then found out by Tokyo what it was all about.

HIS FIRST OLYMPIC 'EXPERIENCE':

"The 1956 Games in Melbourne were the catalyst for me getting into weightlifting. I was lucky enough that the training hall for the weightlifting was within 200 metres from my shop. Honestly, just one street out. And so at midday, for lunch-time, I used to take my bike, go there, and watch the greats of America, like Tommy Kono."

What are your best memories from Tokyo?

It was a buzz! To march behind the flag of Australia! To be selected for the Games, we had to be citizens of Australia. So we had to go through the routine of becoming Australian citizens. I had to do it, I did it, and I became an Australian citizen in 1959. And I was very proud of it! Besides that special moment, the most important thing for me was the introduction of professionals like the American basketball Dream Team. I remember going to the bus to welcome them. I knew to play the trumpet and I had brought mine from Australia. So I played some music for them! That perception of professionalism in sports was a turning point in my career.

So your athletic career finished soon after the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo...

I just competed until 1970 and also became a national coach. In that same year, I took the Australian team as manager coach to the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh. We were quite successful there and we brought four gold medals. At the same time, I was also the Technical Coordinator of the Australian Weightlifting Federation and Treasurer of the Victorian Weightlifting Association. But my passion was the technical side of it.

Still today, you are a world reference on weightlifting's technical side...

That's what I wanted to be. I wanted to be a good referee and very quickly I became a Category Two referee. But in Edinburgh, I convinced the then General Secretary of the International Federation, Oscar State, if he could give me the opportunity to be examined for Category One, as we had only

three Category One referees in Australia. One was blind of one eye, one had one eye missing, and the other one used to fall asleep, so instead of six eyes you only had two eyes... Given the situation, he was very nice to me and he took me under his wing. I refereed three sessions at those Commonwealth Games, they examined me and I got 98 percent, so I was pretty good – that's how I got my Category One status. I said, 'This is my future', but soon after that things got complicated.

Why?

You might not know this but I was disqualified by the Australian Federation for 10 years. The president at the time was a self-made millionaire and he saw me as a potential leader. In order to get rid of me, they conjured up a couple of reasons why I didn't do this, why I didn't do that at the Commonwealth Games. To make a long story short, they accused me of not liaising in Scotland with the person they had indicated – I didn't even know what 'liaison' meant... Another reason was that the Federation was pushing for one of our athletes – Nick Ciancio – to move one category up in order to beat Louis Martin, an English guy, originally from Jamaica. I didn't do that and Ciancio eventually won a gold medal in his category, the Light Heavyweight. I was always a strategist man and I preferred to get the gold than to potentially lose to Martin, who was a world champion. When I arrived in Australia and I presented my report they kept me asking why I hadn't strictly followed their rules. And I said, 'Listen, when I left Australia it was to win gold medals. He won the gold medal. What more do you want?' He said, 'When you leave the country and you have a team, you have to abide by the rules.' It was simply to get rid of me. And they got rid of me.

How did you deal with this situation?

Despite the sanction, they didn't disqualify me. So, every year, you are supposed to renew your membership by paying a fee. And I continued doing so – every year, I used to send a bank check of four pounds with my nomination. They would come back, each time, and say, 'We regret to inform that your membership has not been accepted.' They would never indicate a reason, so there was nothing I could do. They did this for nine years, and back then you could not appeal, there was no court of arbitration...

In a way, you were out of the sport...

Yes, and because I was out of the sport, I became involved in local politics...

...you were Mayor of Hawthorn on two occasions, right?

I had a political election and I won, and I stayed on the council for 14 years. And also to keep fit, I started to follow my son's soccer team. And I became a football referee for 18 years.

Australian football?

No, no, soccer. And it was good for my son. But then it became like a profession, because I used to get good money. Not many people know about this. I had a family of four children, and if it hadn't been for the football, I don't know how I could have managed. Sometimes you had a midweek football match, and then on Saturday – two in the morning, and a major one in the afternoon –, and then Sunday, two junior matches again. So I had to keep fit, and I did this for 18 years!

Coming back to your mandates in the city council...

Under my leadership, as Mayor, we built a recreation centre, a big one, with a weightlifting dedicated facility. When it came the inauguration day,

I officially invited a couple of big names in the sport, including Australian star Robert Kabbas [he would win, in 1984, a silver medal at the Olympics] and the German Olympic and world champion Rolf Milser. But I couldn't invite him officially without going through the President of the Australian Weightlifting Federation. So I went to meet him and told him what I wanted to do. I was also giving £1,000 pounds in those days for a world record, free accommodation for them, and some sponsorship. It was a very exciting event. Came the competition and the only thing that happened was that Kabbas injured himself, so we replaced him. Also, the German guy could not improve the world record, but at the end of it the President of Australian Weightlifting came to me and said, 'Oh, by the way, about your membership for next year, put it in and it should be all right.'

Did he keep his promise?

Yes, but it was the worst thing he could have done! Because one year later, they kicked him out as President and I became the President. And that's how my 'second' weightlifting career began. We were in 1979. By then, I had built a career, let's say, as a top person: I was a politician, but also a businessman. When I arrived at the presidency, I understood the Federation owed about \$72,000 under this leader who was himself a self-made millionaire. That's why they thought, 'No, we can't have this.' So they made a coup, and I became the President. I was in the lead for 25 years...

...until 2005? But now [May 2025] you are again the President.

Yes, they called me back. Again, because they were broken and because I was supported by my brother Paul, who by that time had become a promotional and financial guru.

How did your political experience help in your sports career as an administrator?

I think I was good at convincing other people when I was on the council. We were 12 people there. I know to be persuasive, and for that you have to debate, and debate well. I also learned very quickly about the older councillors, how they used to operate. And I understood, for instance, that there is no logic in losing. I mean, in the end you need to have votes. From a strategic point of view, you only got one chance to speak to the council and I decided as a general rule that I would speak towards the end of it, when everybody is tired. When I knew I would lose the argument, I would propose a postponement (that was normally accepted), and then prepare another 'assault' for the upcoming meeting. That's how I got the recreation centre built because there was no consensus and no appetite for it. But, with perseverance, I just wanted them to believe it was good for the community, it was good for sport, it was good for health. So, yes, I learnt that ability to discuss and debate, and that's how I became involved in weightlifting.

And how did you get involved with the IWF?

After I became President of the national federation, the first meeting I attended was in 1988 in Jakarta. We had the World Senior Championships there for women, but at the same time there was an electoral congress. I was proposed to be a candidate for the technical committee, and I thought, 'Yeah, I think I would like that.' I was elected, and no matter what I brought up, changes that I had in mind that we could do and so on, there were always voices saying, 'We don't want to do this, we don't want to do that.' And I quickly became very disillusioned. I wanted to achieve things, not just sitting in meetings and listening to people with no vision. My intention was to leave after four years, but much to my surprise, at the next Congress, I nominated for VP and Executive Board and became a vice-president. I came in and I could then start to make a mark. My first appointment was to be the chairman of the Women's Commission. And during that time we did a lot of work. And I think people saw that I was working and that I got up there and spoke. I mean, I wasn't that good, but I was good enough.

Were you always convinced, even before that nomination, that women had a place in weightlifting?

Oh yes! To bring you back to when I joined the club in Australia, it was a boys' club. Girls were not allowed in. And it was me who convinced the council to change our constitution to allow girls to come in and we became the Hawthorn Citizens Youth Club, not only the Boys Club. I had the privilege of serving as general secretary of the club when the first woman president was elected, so I've been on the avant-garde about women in weightlifting. I couldn't see why the women couldn't practice our sport. I worked hard for that recognition and I was partly responsible for the Olympic Games qualification system when the IOC decided on the inclusion of women in the programme of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. But they only wanted to give us three categories for them. As I thought this was not right, I convinced the Executive Board to then change the categories. So we eventually reduced the men's categories in order to make room for more women. And I remember writing an article saying 'When less means more'. It was the right thing to do. I still think that's one of the best things I've worked on.

Which other highlights would you recall?

The financial part. IWF's financial statements were just taking one A4 page – half income, half expenses. I was then saying to the Board, 'In my youth club, I'm the general secretary and I know that the financial statements of this club, which is a small club, has five pages and two pages of audit. Here, we don't even have an audit...' After this, they worked very hard to get rid of me. I grew up on them. I think they could see that I could be useful, and by the time the Sydney Olympics came around, I was ready to take over the

ON THE INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN WEIGHTLIFTING:

"When I joined the club in Australia, it was a boys' club. Girls were not allowed in. And it was me who convinced the council to change our constitution to allow girls to come in and we became the Hawthorn Citizens Youth Club, not only the Boys Club. I had the privilege of serving as general secretary of the club when the first woman president was elected, so I've been on the avant-garde about women in weightlifting. I couldn't see why the women couldn't practice our sport."

ON THE EVOLUTION OF WEIGHTLIFTING:

“The essence of weightlifting remains intact. It’s basically a very beautiful and elegant sport. I wish I could have done it as good as some of the great lifters, but it was delightful to watch all those superb lifts. The Snatch is a fast and elegant movement, the Clean and Jerk is just terrific, as it provides a real sense of strength.”



technical committee. I was ready to challenge anyone because I had made an impression on the world. That’s when I became First Vice-President for a couple of terms. And the Chairman of the Technical Committee.

Was it special for you that women entered the Olympic programme in Australia?

I think it was inevitable and it was the right time to strike. The world was ready for the movement: we were having World Championships open to women since 1987, so when this happened, of course I was very happy. We achieved what we wanted to achieve, a gender equal sport, which is important.

Do you still think the IWF is conservative?

I don’t know if the people sitting around the table know exactly what the word ‘conservative’ means. Really, I don’t. I’m not sure if we can call it ‘conservatism’. I think we need to think from a practical point of view. If you don’t think like that, we would have been out of the Olympic Games, and if we had been out of the Olympic Games, we would have ceased to exist for sure. Moreover, we need to work by joining our forces. We did that during our most recent turbulent times and it saved us. There was a real possibility that we could have been finished but unity of purpose by the Executive Board under the strong and decisive leadership of Mohammed Jalood, saved the day.

Let’s come back to technical matters. What has changed in weightlifting in these last decades? Or do you think the sport is essentially the same?

I think in substance, nothing changed. The Press movement, for instance, was abolished, and this eliminated many lifters, who had specialised in the Press. But the essence of weightlifting remains intact. It’s basically a very beautiful and elegant sport. I wish I could have done it as good as some of the great lifters, but it was delightful to watch all those superb lifts. The Snatch is a fast and elegant movement, the Clean and Jerk is just terrific, as it provides a real sense of strength. Essentially, I don’t think there has been

such a big change other than when we eliminated the Press, but what has changed is the technical side of things, the technical rules.

And you were personally behind many of those changes?

I still have a lot in my mind which I haven’t been able to produce, but with some humility, I must say, I don’t think anyone has done more to change the technical rules as I have. The elimination of the three minutes, that was a brilliant move, in my opinion. But many others, like the introduction of the jury monitoring system, the elimination of the body weight advantage, and the one-kilo increment. It used to be two and a half kilos, but I thoroughly studied the question and we came to the conclusion that the one-kilo solution was a good one. It proved right.

Do you think we now have a good competition format?

I think we do. I’m not saying it couldn’t be improved, it could. There is always the discussion that the time could be shortened, and the competition could be sped up a little bit more. But it takes time and I am quite busy. It’s not just attending meetings, it’s replying to the whole world who writes to me. And trying to solve sometimes the details that could be easily solved with common sense. I give you an example: someone came to me about the colours of the Appeal Card, which should be the same as the one allowing the entry in the warm-up area. They had printed it in another colour... Was this wrong, and against the rules? I replied to this person, ‘Look, what is the objective of this card? When you put it up, what is the objective? It’s to show the technical controllers that you’re appealing. Do you think it’s relevant if it’s purple or white? Will anyone complain about this?’ That’s the kind of problems we have sometimes...

Do you like the two-platform solution?

I’m a purist or, to use your words, a conservatist. I could never see the seniors being on two platforms. For me, the World Senior Championship should be for the best weightlifters in the world. We don’t need big numbers for that. If we keep it reasonable, you can better promote it. Maybe for the

youth or juniors, if you've got too many, I can stomach it. We did the experiment twice and it worked.

What is the future of our sport in the Olympic Games?

I think the future of our sport is in the hands of the Executive Board. There's no turning back from doping and there's no turning back from good governance and that sort of thing. One step backwards and we lose everything. Therefore, the President and the Executive have to be strong and make wise and rightful decisions.

You live in Australia, which is far away from everything. You are a true globetrotter. How many countries have you visited?

How many countries have I visited? I know that because my grandson was asked to do a project at school. And he came over to me and he said, 'I want to do a project on you'. I said, 'Very good. Let's sit down and find out what you want'. And the first question he asked was, 'How many countries have you been?' I had no idea. So I looked at my passports, and I also looked at my technical official card, in which every trip must be registered. And the conclusion is 102. I believe that's good...

Family-wise, you told me you have four children...

Three boys and one girl...

...and how many grandchildren?

How many have I got? Nine. And one great-grandchild, a little boy.

What is your routine life in Australia? What are you doing when you are not travelling?

It's quite mundane really. We all love sports. My children all did their own thing and I never pushed them to do anything. Iolanda, my daughter, did some school weightlifting but she's very deep in calisthenics, which is a big sport in Australia. She's got a daughter who is exceptionally good at Calisthenics. Often my son rings me up, 'We're going to watch football tonight'. We go and then we have something to eat. We also get together for the big celebrations, Easter and Christmas.

Any special tradition you would like to share?

We do certain things that people say, 'What the hell is that?'. For instance, in the wintertime, we used to prepare a calzone with broccoli. It started one year for Anzac Day [celebrated each year on April 25, as a remembrance

day for all Australians and New Zealanders who died in situations of war, conflict or peacekeeping operations]. I used to play the trumpet, and I used to go there at dawn, when the sun comes up and you have to play the last post, like they do in the army. But that was early in the morning, six o'clock or half past five. So when we came back, it was cold, and my wife had this food for lunch. It was hot and delicious! It became a tradition that every time I'd come home from such events, you'd eat calzone-broccoli. But you wouldn't do that at any other time. Things like this. We have those idiosyncrasies, which I'm sure many families have, and we like them.

From where do you take your remarkable energy?

I just don't stop! In the early days, I did a lot of writing, reading - especially when I was learning English. I don't know how many times I've read for instance 'The Count of Monte Cristo' or you know the classics. Now, I just don't have the time to concentrate and so I do things which appeal to me, like cooking a lot. Every morning I go for a walk, not a very long walk, but I go for a walk and I think a lot, you know, I really do. At a certain moment, we acquired a magnificent property near the beach, with a nice garden. I used to go there on a Friday and stay there for the weekend. And some of my best writing and speeches have come whilst digging in the ground... So I've kept myself busy. And including my mind, of course; I think that's where the energy comes.



ON HIS FAVOURITE ATHLETE:

"Naim Suleymanoglu. He was a weightlifting prodigy. At youth age he was breaking senior world records. He was one of the few lifters who lifted three times his bodyweight in the Clean & Jerk. Three Olympic gold medals. A magnificent athlete."



Do you think your successful career was a sweet revenge for the difficult life you had in the beginning?

In a word, yes. I wasn't born in a place where things were given to you. You had to work. And I worked hard in my short time in the village before I migrated to Australia. But because my mother and father believed I had something extra that I could give, they tried very hard to find a position where I might do something meaningful. So I did a stint at the post office delivering telegrams, but at the same time learning Morse code and sending telegraphic messages. I also did a stint at the bar coffee where my uncle and aunt had two children: one was a doctor, one was a professor, so no one of them would go for a barman. That's why they called me. I also learned to be a barber, which was my second trade. The barber himself had two daughters. And he definitely had it that the first daughter was going to be my wife. He just liked me, but it was just before I migrated... and actually knew my future wife, already in Australia! As I said before, I was practical and I think I've been in the right moment, at the right time.

In this long road, what is THE moment you specially remember or are most proud of?

Marching behind the Australian flag at the 1964 Games.

Why?

It was a moment in time that will never come back. Other items will always come back in different forms, but that one will never come back.

Two obvious questions for the end. Firstly, who is the lifter/idol you admire the most since you got involved with weightlifting? And why?

Naim Suleymanoglu. He was a weightlifting prodigy. At youth age he was breaking senior world records. He was one of the few lifters who lifted three times his bodyweight in the Clean & Jerk. Three Olympic gold medals. A magnificent athlete.

Secondly, what was the most memorable competition (or competition moment) you witnessed?

The 1987 World Senior Championships in Ostrava – Czechoslovakia. There were world records broken or attempted in every category. It was an enormously successful championship, filled to capacity. I was seated alongside Lyn Jones [former IWF Coaching and Research Committee member, from Australia] and we were pinching ourselves to believe we were watching such an event.

Anything else to say in the end of this pleasant talk?

I bless the day my father chose Australia for our family to migrate to. Where else in the world a young 15-year-old migrant boy has the opportunity to become the Mayor of one of the Cities of Melbourne, act as a door keeper for the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games and in the 2000 Sydney Olympics be in charge as President of the Weightlifting Federation of the Host Country. Speaks volume of Australia as a nation!

That was a nice conclusion. Thank you and all the best, Sam!



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