

Lifters of the Year 2006

Ilin again, Chen Yanqing for the first time: Best of the Year

In the last few years we complained a few times that, despite all our efforts, the Lifter of the Year elections failed to run the way we wished they should. We made attempts at involving the wide world of weightlifting into the voting process but unfortunately such plans failed to bring the desired success. It seemed that the title of Lifter of the Year was wearing real value so masses did not vote on the actual performance achieved by the

athletes but rather as dictated by their hearts and national sympathy. Two years ago, as we told you, the IWF's entire communication system collapsed due to the thousands of ballots generated in the voting process. These were, however, unable to produce a valid and realistic ranking. Thus, in the process of the 2006 Lifters of the Year elections, we decided to rely on the judgement of a special group of 25 experts. The voters' list included IWF

officials regularly participating in world events and representatives of the weightlifting media. We feel convinced that "The Twenty-Five" cast their votes on a fair and objective basis. Altogether ten women and eight men weightlifters received votes. Among the ladies, the line of 8 Asians was completed by two Europeans; in the men's Europe produced five candidates, whereas Asia was represented by three lifters. In the end, the winners – as non-stop since 2002 – both came from Asia.

In addition to casting their ballots on the top three weightlifters of 2006 in each gender, the 25 members of the voting group were asked to add their own explanations, comments. Let us quote a few herewith:

Sam Coffa, 1st Vice President of the IWF:

– Ilin is one of the all time greats. At the tender age of 18 years, this young athlete keeps improving and eliminating any technical faults he might have.

Matthew Curtain, Chief Executive Officer AWF:

– Defending Olympic Champion, Chen Yanqing established 5 new world records during the 2006 Asian Games and as such, raised the bar to unpassed heights in the women's 58kg category. Ilin reconfirmed his status as favorite in the 94kg category in the



Hossein Reza Zadeh, IRI defended all his titles with ease

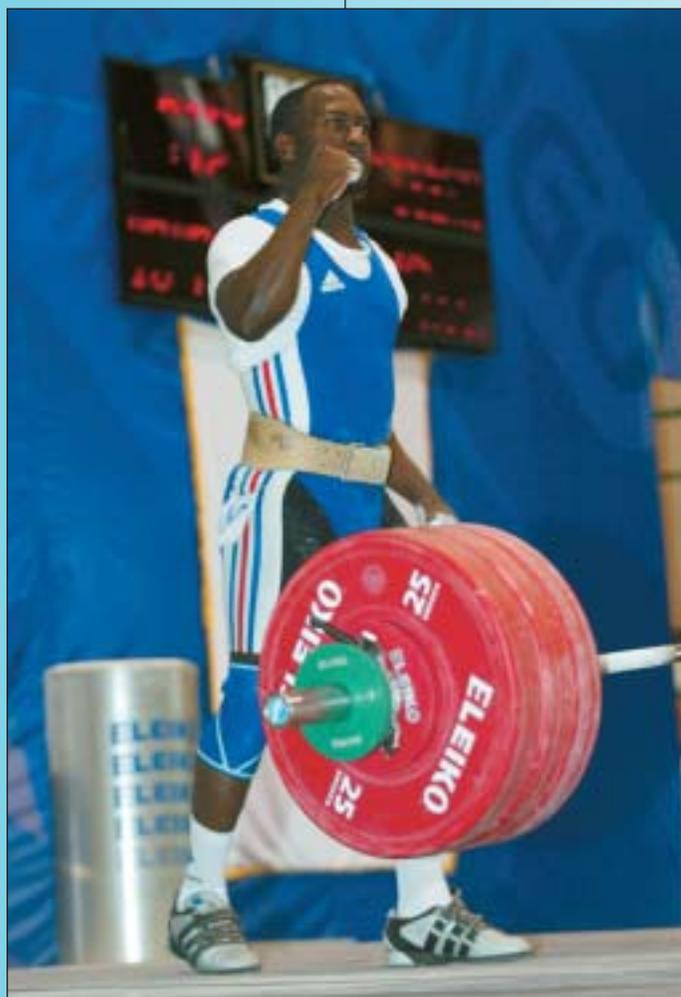
lead up to the XXIX Olympic Games. Still a junior athlete and multiple World Champion, Ilin appears to be the next superstar of our sport.

Jean-Paul Bulgaridhes, IWF Executive Member, President of the French Federation:

– My heart tells me to put Dabaya in the first place, who brought such great glory to my country after 84 years. Still I voted for Rybakou, because of his world record and world champion title.

Denis Reno, USA, photographer and editor:

– Chen Qanqing broke all 58kg world records at the Asian Games – her total topped the 63kg winning total at the World Championships. Her jerk would have won the 69kg Gold at the World Championships.



Vencelas Dabaya, FRA was voted in 2nd place

**Dr. Shimon Barak, Israel,
IWF Executive Board Member:**

- To me the most pleasant surprise of the year was Vencelas Dabaya of France, who is an emerging star of European weightlifting. It is always pleasing to see the palette of champions widening and getting more colourful in terms of nations involved. I wish more countries were able to come up with young champions of their own talent-pool in the future, adding to the popularity of weightlifting worldwide.

**Sergey Butov, Russia,
journalist:**

- Thongsuk missed the World Championships to get ready for the Asian Games. In Doha she showed her superiority in a duel with the World Champion of 2006, Quyang Xiaofang and also established new world record in clean and jerk. Ilin showed a brilliant performance in 94kg in all crucial events of the year.

The great world record of Jang Mi-Ran, KOR was appreciated by voters: she placed second

**Mohammad Reza Akhouni,
Iran, journalist:**

- Reza Zadeh easily gained gold medal in two important competitions in 2006. Mu Shuangshuang, although she was defeated by her Korean rival in the WC, in Doha she came in first and upset the Korean, besides setting a new world record.

Jim Schmitz, USA, journalist:

- Yang Lian, because she was perfect at the World Championships, breaking all the World Records in her class, but it was her only championship for the year.

**Anikó Németh-Móra,
Senior Editor
World Weightlifting:**

- Weightlifting needs superstars, role models for the young and upcoming generation. One of those potential greats is undoubtedly the still young but already brilliant Ilya Ilin of Kazakhstan. He has a becoming character and still has a lot to show us. It is more difficult to choose from the women's ranks as there are so many outstanding ladies from 48kg to plus 75kg. My favourite though is Yang



Yang Lian, CHN won the 48kg with world records in Santo Domingo

Lian, who has a charming and all-round personality both on and outside the platform and who can be a perfect image for female weightlifting.

**Veronica Facer,
Switzerland, journalist:**

- My vote goes to Korean Jang Mi-Ran. I have great respect for her determination and persistence, not to mention her incredible world record total 318kg, which, I believe, is a fantastic result for a woman.



**Lifters of
the Year
2006**

Juniors at the Peak

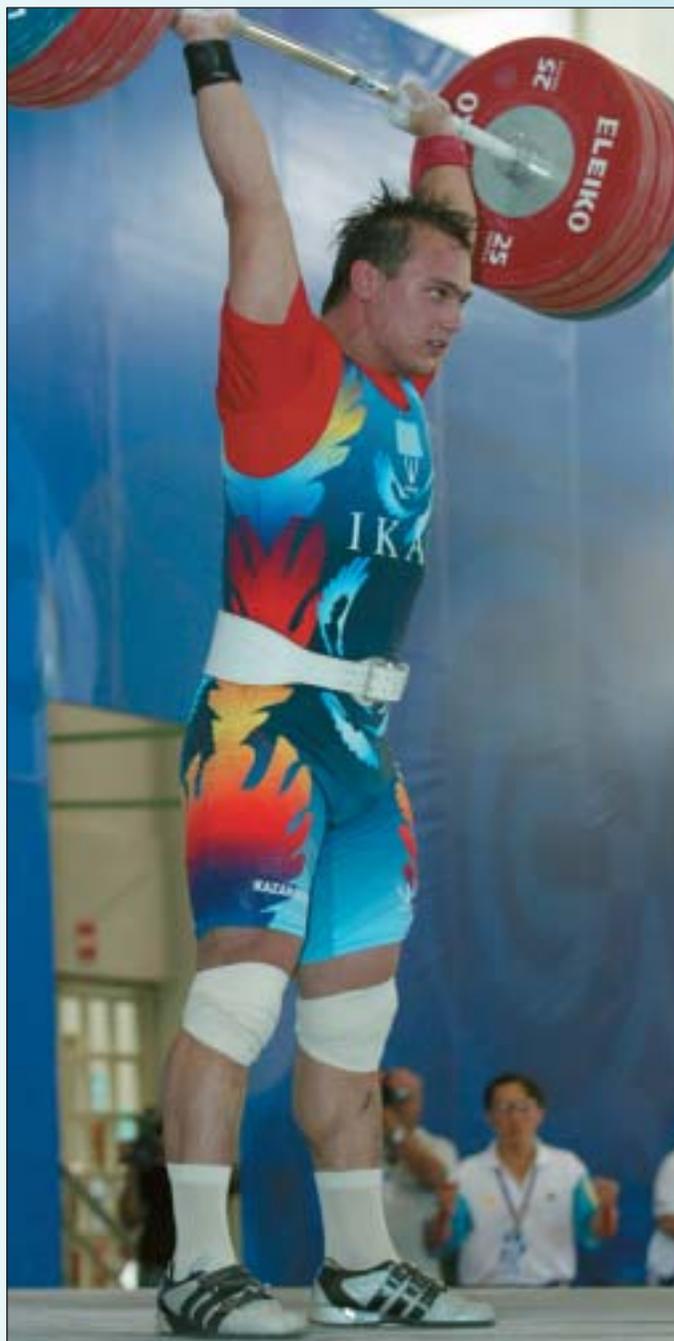
According to the decision of the 25-member "Extra Commando", in the men's voting Ilya Ilin defended his surprising 1st place from the previous year but among the women a new winner was crowned: Chen Yanqing. Speaking of Ilin we should stop for a moment. In the long history of the Lifters of the Year elections it happens for the second time that a weightlifter should become the Best of the Year at the age of 18 years, that is very much in his junior age. Evidence goes back to 1984 and 1985, when Naim Suleymanoglu (under names as Naim Suleymanov and Neum Shalamanov) earned the title at the age of 17 and 18 years, respectively. What is more, the triple Olympic champion topped it all off in 1986, when he was elected as Lifter of the Year even in 1986, i.e. for the third consecutive year, and still a junior.

Ivan Ivanov was also in his junior years when winning in 1989 and 1990, likewise Alexei Petrov who deserved this prestigious title in 1994.

Women mature faster, they say. Two of the winner ladies were just 17 years old when capturing the Best Lifter awards: in 1991 Sun Caiyan, and in 2002 Wang Mingjuan. Further juniors who proved to be the best of the relevant years were: Guan Hong (1994), Li Hongjun (1996), Tang Weifang (1997 and 1998), Ding Meiyuan (1999) and Liu Chunhong (2003 and 2004).

Ilin hopes to set Senior World Record

interview • interview



Lifter of the Year 2006: Ilya Ilin, KAZ

Hardly did we imagine, two years ago, that nearly unknown Ilya Ilin would earn the honourable title of Lifter of the Year both in 2005 and in 2006. Nevertheless, the distinction was well merited by the young star. Ever since he popped up, he kept on winning, just winning, through two senior, two junior world championships plus the Asian Games.

He was pleased to answer World Weightlifting's questions, prior to the Best Lifter election:

- Are you satisfied with your season in 2006?
- It would be impertinence to answer this question with 'No', he said. I tried my luck in a new bodyweight category and I could win in this 94kg, too. My total is over 400 kilos. On the other hand, I was unsuccessful in

Ilya ILIN, KAZ

24.05.1988

In the year 2005 he virtually crashed the gate and positioned himself as one of the best in the world.

Just turning 17, he proved to be supreme in the 85 kilos category first at the Junior, then at the Senior World Championships.

He duly deserved the title "Best Lifter of 2005".

In 2006 the young Kazakh changed categories but it did not break his dream career. Moreover, not only did he capture the junior and senior world champion titles but he won hands down – in the 94kg – at the Asian Games as well. He made an attempt at breaking Kolecki's famous 232.5kg world record, untouchable since 2000.

Ilin boasts a collection of 11 World Championship medals (in a matter of two years), of which the number of gold is 8, silver 2 and one in bronze.

In 2006, he was once again voted as Lifter of the Year.

breaking the clean and jerk world record, either for juniors or for seniors. God knows: I tried to jerk 233kg twice at the Junior World Championships in China.

- Are you planning to enter three major competitions in 2007 as well?

- Over and above the two World Championships I would like to participate also in the Asian Championships, but my coaches will decide whether I can, or if I have to skip one, and which one.

- Besides going on winning, in terms of kilos what are your objectives?

- In total I should get at least to 410 kilos. In clean and jerk I want to be a

world record holder by all means. My target is to be able to bring the same result on the platform that I can do in training. It did not work that way for me in 2006.

- *Who do you think are your most dangerous rivals?*
- Allow me not to say any names. The competition is very strong and the field is tight. There are even younger ones than me and of course the older ones are still around and powerful. My coaches and I, we consider everyone as potential rivals who lift in Group A. Better to say, remembering Santo Domingo, even some who are lifting in Group B deserve attention.
- *The Beijing Olympics are drawing near. How do you see your chances?*
- You cannot win medals with what is the best result today. No question about it, therefore, that I must make significant steps forward to realize my dream. It requires

**Best Female Lifter in 2006:
Chen Yanqing, CHN**

a development without injuries and lots of hard training. As regards injuries, I hope that I'll be lucky. There shouldn't be any problem with the training. I'll do my best to be successful at the Olympic Games.

- *What result is necessary to win the Games?*
- It takes a prophet to tell. One thing is sure that only big results and high performance will earn medals in Beijing. I must get ready to lift much.
- *Who will be the best lifter of 2006 in the world?*
- I hope that it'll be me again. Last year, we were all tremendously surprised that I was chosen. I was very happy and proud. Now I would like to re-live this sensation. I would think that I have earned this honour, having won the three major competitions of 2006.

CHEN Yanqing, CHN

05.04.1979

She won the senior World Championships before winning the Juniors. She cap-

tured her first gold medals 10 years ago in Chiang Mai, Thailand, as winner of the 64kg category. One year later she collected the University World titles in Ramat Gan, Israel. In 1999, she doubled and excelled both as a Junior and a Senior. Almost believed to have retired, she made a sudden comeback and snatched the Olympic gold medal in 2004. A few more years without her on the platform followed, before she returned again to the Asian Games in Doha, 2006 and stunned the world with five new senior world records.

Olympic champion, owner of 11 gold and 2 silver medals in senior, junior and university world championships.

Chen Yanqing started to make world records in 1997 and until the end of 2006 she established altogether 20 senior and 15 junior world records, in three different bodyweight categories.

Chen Yanqing breaks a promise and five world records

● *interview* ● *interview* ● *interview*

● *By Sportswriter Liu Yang*

Olympic champion lifter Chen Yanqing retired last year and vowed never to lift barbells again.

In the Asian Games, the 27-year-old Chen returned to the platform to break five world records as she won the women's 58kg category, saying that her love of the sport was too deep to quit. Exactly one year ago, when Chinese weightlifting officials charged her with an East Asian Games duty in Macao, Chen said she was bored by the repetitive pumping of barbells. Alas, she reappeared in the national team in January and took a national title in April, underlining her status as the queen of the 58kg category.

"I am so sorry for the announcement of my retirement. My love for weightlifting is endless so I decided to come back," Chen said later on.



Lifters of the Year 2006

In her first international action since the 2004 Olympics, Chen astonished Asia as she broke three total world records to win the 58kg class gold medal with a final total of 251kg.

"The Asian Games are the second largest sports meeting in the world. In my heart, the Olympics and the Asiad: both are very important. I told myself to be brilliant in Doha, and I was successful," she said.

"When I decided to quit last year, it was because I felt I didn't want to spend all my best years in an isolated training hall. I wanted to enjoy the best time in my life before 30," Chen explained why she chose to retire.

"Even in my retirement, I knew my love of weightlifting didn't end. I thought about my future over and over in winter and decided to come back.

"The gold medal in the Asiad is the best award for my decision."

"After all, the Beijing Olympic Games is an opportunity once and for all, for which I am willing to give up my bloom years."

Chen began lifting at the age of 11 but retired in 2001 to study for weightlifting coach at the Suzhou University. But she returned to lifting and won a gold medal in the Athens Olympic Games.

Chen's coach Cao Xinmin once told Xinhua News Agency that Chen's short coaching experience had made her a better lifter.

"When she retired in 2001, she was invited to coach a provincial team. I think that experience helped her a lot when she was back to the platform. She is more disciplined than others," Cao said.

So, what is Chen's next promise?

2006 BEST LIFTER VOTING

MEN

POS.	NAME	NAT	POINTS	1 ST	2 ND	3 RD
1	ILIN Ilya	KAZ	111	12	3	3
2	DABAYA Vencelas	FRA	90	7	5	4
3	REZA ZADEH Hossein	IRI	84	1	9	8
4	RYBAKOU Andrei	BLR	58	3	5	3
5	DOLEGA Marcin	POL	41	2	3	3
6	SAGIR Taner	TUR	8	-	-	2
7	EDIEV Aslambek	RUS	4	-	-	1
	QIU Le	CHN	4	-	-	1

WOMEN

POS.	NAME	NAT	POINTS	1 ST	2 ND	3 RD
1	CHEN Yanqing	CHN	121	10	7	4
2	JANG Mi-Ran	KOR	87	7	6	2
3	YANG Lian	CHN	73	5	6	2
4	THONGSUK Pawina	THA	30	1	3	2
5	CAO Lei	CHN	21	1	2	1
6	SLIVENKO Oxana	RUS	20	-	-	5
7	PODOBEDOVA Svetlana	RUS	16	-	-	4
8	MU Shuangshuang	CHN	15	1	-	2
9	QIU Hongxia	CHN	13	-	1	2
10	QIU Hongmei	CHN	4	-	-	1

Lifters of the Year 2006

ALL-TIME LIFTERS OF THE YEAR

M E N			W O M E N	
1982	BLAGOEV Blagoi	BUL		
1983	BLAGOEV Blagoi	BUL		
1984	SULEYMANOV Naim	BUL		
1985	SHALAMANOV Neum	BUL		
1986	SULEYMANOV Naim	BUL		
1987	PETROV Mikhail	BUL		
1988	SULEYMANOGLU Naim	TUR		
1989	IVANOV Ivan	BUL		
1990	IVANOV Ivan	BUL		
1991	CHUN Byung-Kwan	KOR	SUN Caiyan	CHN
1992	SULEYMANOGLU Naim	TUR	PENG Liping	CHN
1993	PESHALOV Nikolai	BUL	CHEN Chu-Chih	TPE
1994	PETROV Alexei	RUS	GUAN Hong	CHN
1995	DIMAS Pyrros	GRE	CHEN Chu-Chih	TPE
1996	SULEYMANOGLU Naim	TUR	LI Hongyun	CHN
1997	CHEMERKIN Andrei	RUS	TANG Weifang	CHN
1998	JELIAZKOV Plamen	BUL	TANG Weifang	CHN
1999	MUTLU Halil	TUR	DING Meiyuan	CHN
2000	REZA ZADEH Hossein	IRI	DING Meiyuan	CHN
2001	MUTLU Halil	TUR	POPOVA Valentina	RUS
2002	REZA ZADEH Hossein	IRI	WANG Mingjuan	CHN
2003	REZA ZADEH Hossein	IRI	LIU Chunhong	CHN
2004	REZA ZADEH Hossein	IRI	LIU Chunhong	CHN
2005	ILIN Ilya	KAZ	THONGSUK Pawina	THA
2006	ILIN Ilya	KAZ	CHEN Yanqing	CHN