

Best Lifters of 2007

Two first-timers: Jang MI-RAN and Andrei RYBAKOU

As per our most recent "traditions", we asked the Weightlifting Family to submit their votes via the internet or by fax to decide who were the best lifters of the world in 2007. The election of the Year's best weightlifter has thus been

cerned had to participate in at least one official event during the year.

Notwithstanding these simple restrictions, we received quite a number of void ballots.

For instance, many fans cast their vote on Hossein

is hard to understand...

As far as the final ranking is concerned, in the men's field the voters were almost unanimous in nominating Andrei Rybakou as Best of 2007. The Belarus lifter collected more than double the points than the other two athletes making it to the top trio: Zhang Guozheng and Andrei Aramnau.

The ladies' finish was a far closer race, especially for the runner-up position behind the winner Jang Mi-Ran, i.e. between Oxana

Slivenko and Liu Haixia.

In the end only four points decided the ranking.

Rybakou is the first weightlifter from Belarus to capture the Lifter of the Year title. His country (home of double Olympic champion Alexander Kurlovich, e.g.) can be particularly proud, because another White-Russian, Aramnau was also able to join Rybakou on the imaginary dais.

Jang Mi-Ran, the Korean superheavy, is also a first-time winner and with her Korea can boast their first ever female Best Lifter.

The only Korean before



Andrei Rybakou BLR

the 26th for the men, and 17th for the women. Anybody wishing to express his judgement had the right to do so. Many ballots were cast, however, this time again there were several voters who disregarded the conditions published. For instance, any voting sheet containing only one name or an obviously ridiculous ranking had to be considered as not valid. Another evident prerequisite for being voted on was that the athlete con-

Reza Zadeh, who is undoubtedly the megastar of today's weightlifting, yet he failed to appear even once in an official competition in the course of 2007. Russian Dimitry Berestov also received a vote to the candidate for the Best of 2007 award; the only problem was that the Olympic champion had not been seen on the international stage since the Games. Some other electors proposed weightlifters to this prestigious title that are hard to find, if at all, in the World Ranking List. Well, it

Jang Mi-Ran KOR



Jang to have sported this important title was a man: Chun Byung-Kwan in 1991.

Lifter of the Year winners in history:

Men

Six times: Suleymanoglu, Naim – BUL/TUR

Four times: Reza Zadeh, Hossein – IRI

Twice: Blagoev, Blagoi – BUL, Ilin, Ilya – KAZ, Ivanov, Ivan – BUL, Mutlu, Halil – TUR

Once: Chemerkin, Andrei – RUS, Chun Byung-Kwan – KOR, Dimas, Pyrros – GRE, Jeliaskov, Plamen – BUL, Peshalov, Nikolai – BUL, Petrov, Alexei – RUS, Petrov, Mikhail – BUL, Rybakou, Andrei – BLR

Women

Twice: Chen Shu-Chih – TPE, Ding Meiyuan – CHN, Liu Chunhong – CHN, Tang Weifang – CHN

Once: Chen Yanqing – CHN, Guan Hong – CHN, Jang Mi-Ran – KOR, Li Hongyun – CHN, Peng Liping – CHN, Popova, Valentina – RUS, Sun Cai – CHN, Wang Mingjuan – CHN.

A few votes in particular:

Coffa, Sam – AUS:

Liu Haixia, Jang Mi-Ran, Shainova Marina – Rybakou Andrei, Stoitsov Ivan, Aramnau Andrei

Hanna, Gamil – African Federation:

Chen Xiexia, Qiu Hongmei, Slivenko Oxana – Cha Kum Chol, Zhang Guozheng, Yang Fan.

Darab, Riahi – IRI:

Chen Xiexia, Slivenko Oxana, Li Ping – Rybakou Andrei, Aramnau Andrei, Zhang Guozheng.

Kurlovich, Alexander – BLR:

Slivenko Oxana, Jang Mi-Ran, Liu Haixia – Rybakou Andrei, Aramnau Andrei, Scerbatihis Viktors.

Mattingsdal, Per – NOR:

Jang Mi-Ran, Slivenko Oxana, Qiu Hongmei – Rybakou Andrei, Zhang Guozheng, Aramnau Andrei

Parkhomenko, Nikolay – RUS:

Slivenko Oxana, Jang Mi-Ran, Liu Haixia – Konstantinov Roman, Rybakou Andrei, Yang Fan

Chinen, Reiko Kato – JPN:

Liu Haixia, Slivenko Oxana, Jang Mi-Ran – Rybakou Andrei, Yang Fan, Scerbatihis Viktors

Schmitz, Jim – USA:

Jang Mi-Ran, Liu Haixia, Slivenko Oxana – Rybakou Andrei, Aramnau Andrei, Zhang Guozheng.

Best Male Lifters of 2007

1. Rybakou, Andrei	BLR	905 p.	(114, 19, 3)
2. Zhang Guozheng	CHN	428 p.	(12, 32, 46)
3. Aramnau, Andrei	BLR	412 p.	(9, 45, 31)
4. Stoitsov, Ivan	BUL	225 p.	(2, 19, 29)
5. Scerbatihis, Viktors	LAT	153 p.	(2, 15, 16)
6. Yang Fan	CHN	95 p.	(2, 9, 9)
7. Shi Zhiyong	CHN	28 p.	(0, 0, 7)
8. Cha Kum Chol	PRK	7 p.	(1, 0, 0)
9. Ince, Izzet	TUR	5 p.	(0, 1, 0)

Hossein Reza Zadeh received 12 votes for the first place (!?), and Dimitriy Berestov got two votes for second place (!?). As neither one of them entered international calendar events in 2007, these votes were disregarded.

Vlad, Nicu – ROM:

Chen Xiexia, Jang Mi-Ran, Slivenko Oxana – Rybakou Andrei, Yang Fan, Scerbatihis Viktors.

Elected Best of the Year – Why?

Rybakou, Andrei – BLR – 1982

In 2007, Rybakou towered above the field. Among the

men he was the only one to have set a world record (in snatch, 187kg), whereby defending his previous year's three world championship gold medals. His personal best of 393 kilos suggests that he is about to attack the 400-kg dream limit.

In 2001, Rybakou was fifth at the Junior World Championships (345kg) but a year later he was already the winner (370kg). His debut at the senior World Championships in 2003 was not successful: entered to the 94kg he was eliminated in the snatch. The path he covered thereafter included the following events and positions: 2004 – Olympic Games:

2nd (380kg); 2005 – World Championships: 5th (380kg); 2006 – World Championships: 1st (383kg); 2007 – World Championships: 1st (393kg).

During his career, the Belarus prodigy collected an Olympic silver, 7 senior world champion titles, as well as in junior world championships 2 gold medals and one each of the silver and bronze medals. So far he boasts 7 junior and 5 senior world records. Andrey Rybakou counts as a superior favourite for the Olympic gold medal in Beijing in the 85kg.

Best Woman Lifters of 2007

1. Jang Mi-Ran	KOR	471 p.	44, 22, 17
2. Slivenko, Oxana	RUS	342 p.	24, 22, 64
3. Liu Haixia	CHN	338 p.	21, 23, 19
4. Chen Xiexia	CHN	300 p.	21, 21, 12
5. Qiu Hongmei	CHN	201 p.	8, 21, 10
6. Cao Lei	CHN	169 p.	7, 12, 15
7. Mu Shuangshuang	CHN	63 p.	2, 5, 6
8. Zabolotnaya, Natalia	RUS	62 p.	0, 6, 8
9. Shainova, Marina	RUS	12 p.	0, 0, 3
10. Batsiushka, Hanna	BLR	8 p.	0, 0, 2
11. Ozkan, Sibel	TUR	5 p.	0, 1, 0
12. Li Ping	CHN	4 p.	0, 0, 1

Ukrainian Olympic champion Natalia Skakun also received two votes to first place, but as she did not take part in any official events in 2007, these ballots were ignored.

**Zhang Guozheng —
CHN — 1976**

The Chinese champion collected his third consecutive world champion title overall; having met no match since 2002.

Zhang belongs to the older generation of weightlifters. A look back on the begin-

a future glorious career. At the Olympic Games in Sydney Zhang repeated this total result but there and then it was worth a 4th place. However, his triumphant series started in 2002, at the Warsaw World Championships. He took the world titles in that year (347.5kg), then again in



Zhang Guozheng CHN

ning of his career does not reveal too much of his junior-age accomplishments. His international debut arrived at the age of 23 years in 1999, the World Championships of Athens, when his 5th position (337.5kg) failed to hint at

2003 (345kg). In 2004, with a total of 346kg, he captured the Olympic gold medal. The next two world championships went by without Zhang, but in 2007 he picked up the thread dropped three years before. In ChiangMai he took the world title again (347kg). His scorecard up to now includes one Olympic gold,

and seven gold and two silver medals in world championships. No world records have yet been registered under his name. A strong favourite for the Olympic title in Beijing.

**Aramnau, Andrei —
BLR — 1988**

This young man made a gate-crashing entrée to the world's elite. We learned his name in 2006, when in 94kg (393kg) he became a runner-up at the Junior World Championships. The 2007 season already found him in the 105kg. Aramnau swept both the junior (407kg) and the senior (423kg) world events. In a matter of two years, 2006 and 2007, he boosted his results from 393 to 423kg (i.e. by 30 kilos).

Andrei Aramnau BLR



He improved his personal best by 16 kilos between the junior and the senior World Championships in 2007. Back in 2005 he was only 17th in the world ranking; promoted to 3rd place in 2006 and in 2007 he is standing in first place. Holding three world champion titles among seniors, he also sports 4 gold and 2 silver medals among the juniors. With his 420 and 423kg world records in Thailand, he eradicated Marcin Dolega's five-year-old junior world records. He will be feared by many in Beijing this coming summer.

Jang Mi-Ran — KOR — 1983

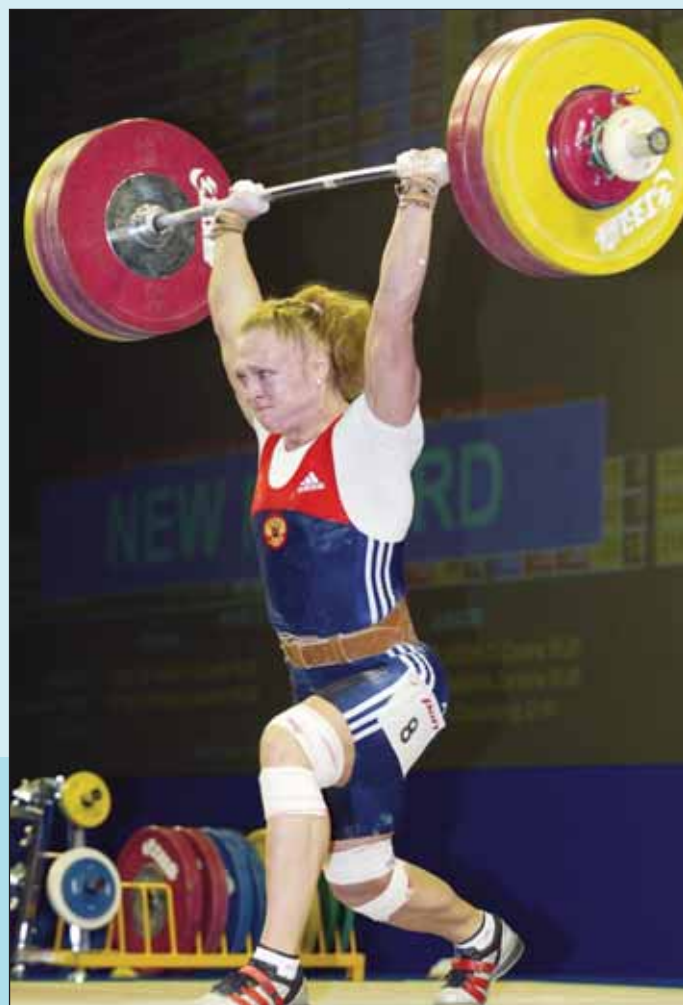
World Championship winner three consecutive times. And she won again in an exhilarating duel against Mu Shuangshuang, with a total equalling the world record.

When the Korean young lady took the bronze medal in 2001 at the junior World Championships with a result of 250kg (110, 140), following Cheryl Haworth and Viktória Varga, she was not yet believed to grow into a great champion. She reappeared on the international stage in 2003: at the senior Worlds she finished in 5th position (272.5kg). In Athens, bringing her total above 300 kg, Jang earned an Olympic silver medal. This was followed

by the world championship gold medals in 2005 (300kg), 2006 (314kg) and 2007 (319kg). She has a collection of 6 gold and 3 silver medals in senior World Championships. All the world is expecting an encore of the Jang vs. Mu clash in Beijing.

**Slivenko, Oxana –
RUS – 1986**

Like in Santo Domingo, Slivenko won the world championship title again in ChiangMai in the 69kg. She



Oxana Slivenko RUS

now has 5 gold medals and one silver. At first, 263 kilos were still enough to become the world champion, but in 2007 she pushed the winning total up to 276kg, a new world record. With that she broke the world record of Liu Chunhong, Olympic and world champion. From three junior World Championships – first in 63kg, then in 69kg – Oxana captured 3 – 5 – 1 medals. Beside her 276-kg world record total, she pinned another one in snatch: 123kg – a new mark both for juniors and seniors.

Liu Haixia – CHN – 1980

In the category up to 69kg, Liu eliminated the world record of the Olympic and world champion Pawina Thongsuk (257kg) when

taking the world title in 2007. With this accomplishment she managed to compensate for a (with Chinese standards) weaker report card of Doha, 2005, when a total of 274kg had put her “only” into second position behind Zarema Kasaeva, and where she had won the gold “only” in snatch. In the following year Liu returned to Doha; became the winner of the Asian Games with 265kg and occupied the world-ranking leader’s position, together with Evsthyukhina. For the 2007 World Championships she went down one category, the 63kg, and this move, as well as a new world record result, crowned her world champion. She is facing the challenges of 2008 with four world championship gold and two silver medals in her safe.

Liu Haixia CHN

