

2003 European Weightlifting Championships
15-20 April
Loutraki, Greece

PRESS RELEASE

Athens, 09.04.03

HEAD COACH SAYS GREEK TEAM READY FOR LOUTRAKI 2003

"Our last test will be on Friday and following that I will release the final list of athletes that will represent Greece in the 2003 European Weightlifting Championships," announced Christos Iakovou, Greece's national coach, during a Press Conference in the city of Loutraki. Loutraki, a spa resort 80 kilometres west of Athens will host this year's event 15-20 April. "We cannot speak about successes beforehand, but, as always, we seek the best we can achieve. We have no special knowledge about the condition of the athletes of the other competing countries." Mr. Iakovou will be fielding a team of younger talented lifters at Loutraki 2003. "I like to dive in at the deep end," he said. "And this competition will be an excellent chance for these athletes to gain experience. I don't expect too much of them--just to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves. The girls are in better condition at this time and we can expect two or three medals from them. Our preparation for this competition began on 10 January and now we are ready."

Held at the Club Hotel Loutraki --one of the sponsors of the competition and the hotel of the attending officials-- the Press Conference was well attended. Representing the Executive Committee of the 2003 European Championships was the General Secretary of the Hellenic Weightlifting Federation, Nikos Skiadas, the vice-president, Dimitris Mavromatidis, the Mayor of Loutraki, Pavlos Pavlou, the representative of the National Bank of Greece (National Sponsor of the H.W.F.), and the representative of the Club Hotel Loutraki, Thalys Koutoupis.

"This is a very important competition," said Mr. Skiadas, "as Loutraki will be hosting the best that Europe has to show in weightlifting. All together we will try our best for the success of the competition on the organisation and competition level".

But also present at the Press Conference were all the athletes of the Greek National Team, including the three-time Olympic gold medalist Pyrrros Dimas, who will not be competing at the Loutraki event due to recovery from an operation. "I am well, but I am currently following a special programme," said Dimas. "Following the surgery, I did not want to immerse immediately into such a competition--like jumping from the first floor to the tenth floor. I want to climb step-by-step, because there's always a fear of injury. I currently train for 8 or 9 hours a day and then attend physiotherapy. I too have learned by now that I have to continue despite feeling pain. My goal is not a fourth medal at the Olympics, but just to take part in this prestigious event."

Commenting on his decision to switch from the 85 kg. category to 94 kg., Dimas said: "My new category is 94 kg. and I will not change that. This means that a showdown with Kakhi Kakhiashvili, who made an attempt to move up to 105 kg., but returned to 94 kg. "I've been absent from competition for three years and now is a good occasion to return," said Kakhiashvili. "I am in good condition. I decided that the 105 kg. was not suited to me, so I returned to 94 kg. following a very strict diet. I cannot promise anything more than a good performance."

Also taking part in Loutraki 2003 will be Greece's World Champion in the women's 63 kg. category, Natascha Tsakiri. "I'm not in a better condition than last year," said Tsakiri at the Press Conference, "as I missed some training due to injury and an operation. With the help of my coach I've now returned to intense training. I'm still not in ideal form, but I'll try for the best.

MORE INFORMATION ON THE WEB:

www.weightlifting.gr/loutraki2003/