

2003 European Weightlifting Championships
15-20 April
Loutraki, Greece

PRESS RELEASE

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SOME OF THE WORLD'S BEST CONVERGE AT LOUTRAKI 2003

Georgia's George Asanidze, one of the three athletes who took part in the "Battle of the Century" at the last Olympic Games, will be competing at the 2003 European Weightlifting Championships, which begin in the spa resort of Loutraki, 80 kilometres west of Athens, on 15 April. Asanidze (85 kg.) won a bronze medal in Sydney, lifting a total of 390 kg.—the exact total that gave Greece's Pyrros Dimas the gold and Germany's Mark Huster the silver, as the battle boiled down to body weight. Asanidze did win, however, become the world champion in 2001 and finished 2nd in the World Championships last year. He was European Champion in 2001, 2001 and 2002 and a runner-up on the continent in 1998. Georgia is coming to Loutraki 2003 with a team of four men and two women.

The 1998 World Champion in the 105 kg. category, Igor Razoryonov, is the Ukraine's top star. The Ukraine is competing in this year's European Championships with six men and seven women. The 33-year-old Razoryonov ranked third in the 2001 World Championships and also boasts a third-place finish from the 1994 European Championships. He was fourth at the Sydney Olympics. Other top Ukrainian stars in Loutraki 2003 are: Olexandr Lykhvald (62 kg.), European Champion in 2002 and third in 2000 and 2001) and Artem Udachin (+105 kg.), third in the 2002 European Championships. In the women's 48 kg. category, Olena Zinovyeva stands out, as the defending champion; she was third in the continental championships of 2000.

Belarus, with eight men and three women, also has to show some brilliant athletes at Loutraki 2003. Amongst them: the 2001 World Champion and Sydney Olympics bronze medallist, Henadzi Altaschlik (62 kg.); Vitali Dzerbianov (56 kg.), last year's European Champion and ranked third in 2001. Aliaksandr Anischanika (85 kg.), runner-up in the World Championships of 2001; Andrei Rybakov (also 85 kg.), who broke the men's snatch world record at last year's Junior World Championships with a lift of 182.5 kg.; and Siarhei Karasiov (+105 kg.), who has fond memories of Greece, as he was crowned the Junior World Champion in Thessaloniki in 2001.

Romania is fielding a strong team too, comprising of six men and two women. Adrian Jigau (56 kg.) is the top star, as runner-up in the 1999 World Championships and bronze medallist last year. He has emerged second in 1999 and 2001 and third in 2001 at European Championships. Valeriu Calancea (85 kg.), Florin Vlad (105 kg.), Marius Alecu (+105 kg.) and Marioara Munteanu (in the women's 53 kg.) also stand out on the Romanian team.

A full team of eight men is expected from Albania. The country's top entry is Ilirjan Suli (85 kg.), who ranked third in the 2000 European Championships and fourth in last year's World Championships (where he did come away with the silver medal in the snatch).

Spain is fielding a strong women's team. Amongst them: Estefania Juan (53 kg.), the 1997 European Champion, runner-up in 1996 and 1999 and third in 2001; Gema Peris (48 kg.), the 2001 European Champion and third in 1999; Rebeca Sires (53 kg.), third in the 1997 and 1999 European Championships; Josefa Perez (69 kg.), runner-up in the 2000 European Championships and third in 1997 and 1998; and Maria Tocino (48 kg.), third in the 2001 European Championships. Spain is taking part in this year's event with eight men and seven women.

Hungary is presenting a new team in Loutraki 2003, including three men and three women. Top-ranked amongst the Hungarians is Aniko Ajkay in the women's 53 kg., who was third in the 1998 and 2002 European Championships. Katalin Laczi in the women's 75 kg. also stands out.

Germany has entered four men and two women in the Loutraki competition, including Axel Franz (+105 kg.), third in the 1996 European Championships, and Andre Rohde (105 kg.).

The Czech Republic's team includes the 1995 Junior World Champion, Petr Sobotka (+105 kg.), as well as the 1999 European Champion in the women's 75 kg., Radka Sevcikova.

A full team of eight men and seven women is also expected from France, headed by the experienced Eric Bonnel (in the men's 56 kg.), who holds medals from Junior World and European Championships, and Ingrid Fevre (in the women's 63 kg.), a runner-up in the 1999 European Championships.

Italy will be fielding eight men (including Moreno Boer in the 105 kg. category) and one woman (Silvia Puxedou in the 58 kg. category)

MORE INFORMATION ON THE WEB:

www.weightlifting.gr/loutraki2003/