

INTERVIEW

VLAD ALHAZOV

as interviewed by Mike Lambert

PL USA: I heard that you were born in Russia, and then immigrated to Israel as a young boy. What can you tell us about your early life?

VLAD: I was born in Russia. It was an unstable time and soon enough communism fell and with it so did the USSR. A chaotic period in our history forced my family to leave. I was 12 years old when my parents decided to immigrate to Israel, to start a new beginning for themselves and for their children. My parents have always been very loving and supporting of us and our dreams. I was fortunate to have a family that supported my aspirations as an athlete.

As a young man I excelled in boxing and wrestling, as well as weightlifting. I later become a trainer and taught youngsters for several years. I enjoy camaraderie and sharing ideas.

PL USA: I also understand that you did not exhibit any remarkable strength abilities as a youth. Is that correct?

VLAD: I wouldn't exactly say that. At 14 years old I weighed 200 lbs. and won the Israeli boxing championship in my weight division. From age 19 to 21 I was a member of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) which is like the army. Basically, I was forced into doing a lot of intense cardio. When I returned to civilian life, my strength training improved by leaps and bounds.

PL USA: How did you become interested in strength training? What were your early lifts and at what bodyweight?

VLAD: I always loved sports and strength training was essential to become a better athlete. The funny thing is, I didn't start to squat until the age of 18. It was a stigma in Russia that squatting stunted your growth. At that age I was six feet tall, weighed 240 lbs. and deadlifted 560 lbs. My great love has always been the deadlift. Lend me the most.

PL USA: Which strength athletes inspired your training in Israel, and where did you train?

VLAD: There are several great athletes who have inspired me, and who continue to inspire me today. The great Ed Coan who is greatest powerlifter of all time, Andy Bolton and Ronnie Thompson for pushing the super heavyweight division to a new level, and my old coach Ilya Iznatovski. He was the head

coach of the National Lifting Team for weightlifting and trained me for three years. Today, he is 65 years old, weighs 180 lbs and benches raw 405 lbs.

PL USA: How did you make your way to the USA for the Arnold Classic, and was that when you hooked up with Louie Simmons of Westside Barbell?

VLAD: I qualified for the 2005 Arnold Classic in the Finland semifinals. It was my first time competing in the United States where I came in fourth and therefore qualified for the 2006 Arnold Classic. I have mixed feelings about this experience. It was the first time I met the famous Louie Simmons and his talented athletes and I also fell in love with America and discovered I wanted to make it my home. I also squatted, in conventional style, 1,212 lbs. which at the time would have been the world record. To a lot of people's surprise I was not given credit for the lift. I am usually very critical of myself but I still have people who come up to me and tell me how they felt I was robbed. Enough said about that. I don't like looking backward only forward. It is a shame that the WPC could not flourish; it had a lot of potential. Hopefully the IFA continues on the path they're on with the help of Westside. So far I am very impressed: a class act.

PL USA: Tell us how Louie S. and the Westside Way improved your lift?

VLAD: First, let me start by saying that Louie Simmons is a power lifting legend. I have powerlifted and competed in many strongman events in many countries and no matter what corner of the world you are in everyone knows who Louie Simmons is and know of his accomplishments. Louie introduced me to sumo style squatting incorporating hard resistance, chains, box-squatting, good mornings with chains, and classic good mornings. When I first came to America I lived in Ohio and worked out at Westside for five months.

PL USA: You've shown world record potential in the squat before, but tell us just how it feels to officially be the biggest squatter in history.

VLAD: It is an amazing feeling. I still can't believe it happened.

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The King of the Squat might just end up being the King of the Deadlift.



Two Stars --- Donnie Thompson with Vlad.

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Prior to the meet I squatted at Coliseum Gym, 1,270 lbs. But we all know that gym lifts don't count in the real world.

PL USA: Do you think the 1300 lb. barrier in the squat is reachable?

VLAD: Oh, yes. Not only do I believe that the 1,300 lb. barrier

will be broken in the squat but that the overall superheavyweight total of 3,000 lbs. will be broken as well... and don't be surprised if it happens this year by either Donnie Thompson, Andy Bolton, Jeff Lewis or some other up and coming superheavyweight.

PL USA: Now that you have made a name for yourself, what could you offer a potential sponsor for your future efforts?

VLAD: I will offer the same work ethic, discipline, and drive I use in

powerlifting to help the sponsors with their goals as they help me reach my goals. I will do whatever it takes. Currently I am a personal trainer at Coliseum Gym and thrive on training other powerlifters and advising them on nutritional supplements and power lifting gear.

PL USA: As amazing as your

squatting is, your recent improvement in the deadlift is perhaps even more remarkable. How did this charge through the 900 lb. barrier come about so quickly?

VLAD: My weakness in the deadlift has always been the lockout. So I have been using a lot of band tension which has been key. Since deadlifting has always been my favorite lift, I have been progressing steadily through the years. I recently deadlifted 970 lbs. at Coliseum Gym. My next step is to try to beat Andy Bolton's record. Andy is a good friend and I think our competitiveness is an amazing attribute for our fans to enjoy.

PL USA: What kind of lifts will it take for you to break Donnie Thompson's all time total record of 2850 lbs.?

VLAD: Donnie Thompson is another great athlete and good friend. I congratulate him again for breaking the overall record. He is always amazing to watch. What I need to do is break the 3,000 lb. barrier because I know he will probably break his own record at his next meet. But seriously for me to break any total record I need to bench around 750 lbs. in a meet. My

focus in training is to squat over 1,300 lbs., bench over 750 lbs., and deadlift over 950 lbs.

PL USA: What role has your faith played in your personal lifting achievements?

VLAD: Without my faith in God I know I would not be where I am today. End of story.

PL USA: Who are the people who have played instrumental roles in your success in Powerlifting thus far?

VLAD: First, my family and my girlfriend Dana for their never ending support, my two great coaches Ilya Ignatouskii and Louie Simmons, Westside Barbell, and my extended family Teddy and Stacy Theodoropoulos the owners of Coliseum Gym.

PL USA: What kind of funny experiences have you had working out with Teddy Theodoropoulos at the Coliseum Gym?

VLAD: Teddy is a no-nonsense type of guy and great workout partner. When it comes to working out he is all business and so am I. By the way Mike you are always welcome to visit me in New York any time. I have also been a fan of Powerlifting USA and an avid reader. Thanks for bringing powerlifting into our homes.



Vladimir's Squat Style is clean and upright ... above he is squatting at the 2006 Arnold Classic, where he came up with a 1212 pounds