

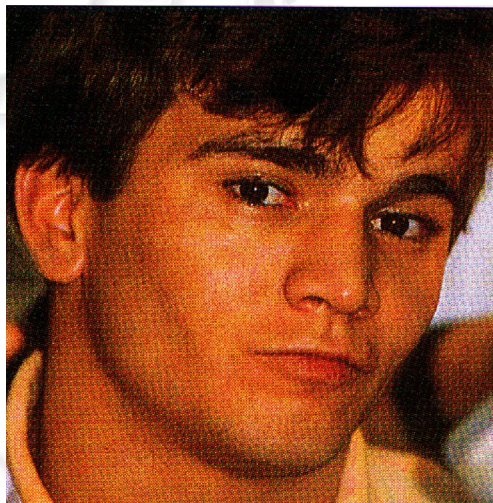
SPORTING LEGENDS: NAIM SULEYMANOGLU

SPORT: OLYMPIC WEIGHT-LIFTING

COMPETITIVE ERA: 1983 - 2000

Naim Süleymano lu (also Naim Suleimanov, born January 23, 1967 at Ptichar, Bulgaria) is a Turkish World and Olympic Champion in weightlifting.

He won three Olympic Championships, seven World Championships and six European Championships and improved world records 46 times.



Of Turkish descent born in Bulgaria, Naim Suleimanov was a boy wonder who set his first world record in weightlifting at age 16. Due to his small stature, he was nicknamed "The Pocket Hercules". He missed his first chance at Olympic success in 1984 when Bulgaria joined the Soviet boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

Soon afterward, the Communist regime in Bulgaria forced its Turkish minority to adopt Bulgarian names, and he was then known internationally as Naum Shalamanov.

While on a trip to the World Cup Final in Melbourne in 1986, Suleimanov defected. He resurfaced in Turkey, where he applied for citizenship. He also changed his name from the Bulgarian Suleimanov/Shalamanov to the Turkish Süleymano lu.

A battle over which country he would represent in the 1988 Seoul Olympics arose. The Bulgarian government asked for, and received, \$1,000,000 from Turkey to allow Naim to compete for Turkey.

SPORTING LEGENDS: NAIM SULEYMANOGLU



Suleymanoglu's power-to-weight ratio was incredible

The 4'11" (150 cm) Naim did not disappoint, winning the lightweight title at the 1988 Summer Olympics. He retired after winning the world championship in 1989 at the age of 22. After the fall of Communism in Bulgaria, his family was able to join him in Turkey.

The allure of competition was too strong, and Naim returned in 1991 and he won a second Olympic gold medal at Barcelona in 1992. Between the Olympiads, Naim continued to win world titles and set records.

The 1996 Olympic Games were to be his swan song. He announced his retirement again, effective after the Atlanta Olympics. Not to disappoint, Naim won a third Olympic gold medal.

Once again, Naim retired, only to be lured back. He returned to competition in 1999 but the great champion was not the same. He failed to win a medal at Sydney in 2000 and retired for a final time at age 33. He appeared on the cover of *Time* and was the second of only four men to lift more than 3 times his body weight.

SPORTING LEGENDS: NAIM SULEYMANOGLU



Scott Burton's Final Thought

This guy was not just strong, but UNBELIEVABLY strong!

Check out these lifetime bests, and you will see why!

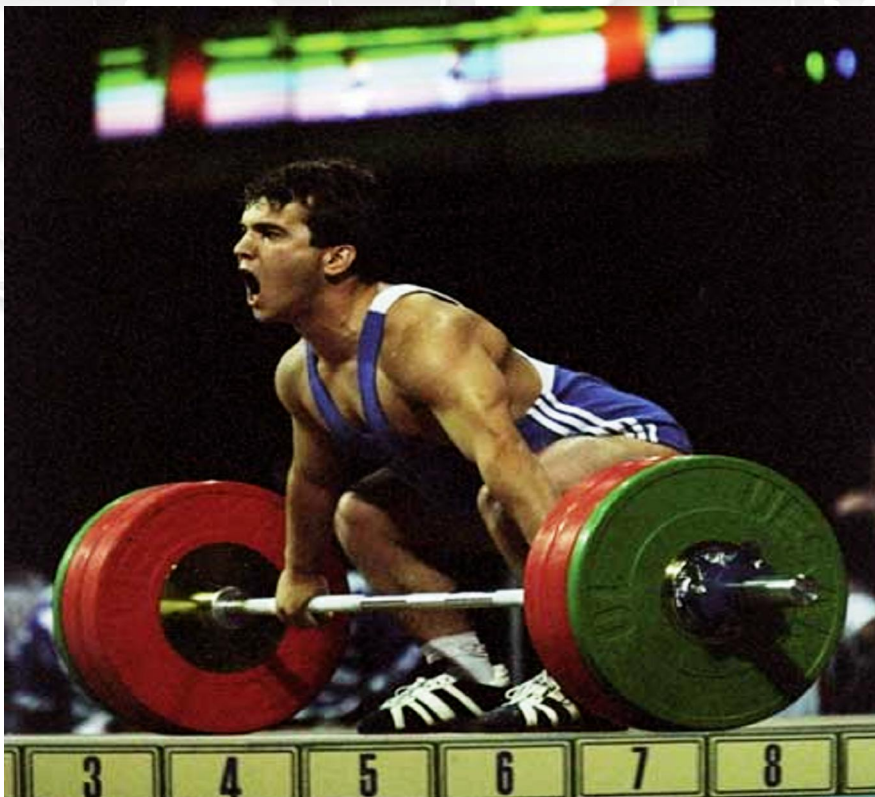
Snatch: 152.5 kg in class to 60 kg.

Clean and Jerk: 170.5 kg 1984 in Varna in class to 56 kg.

Clean and Jerk: 190.0 kg in class to 60 kg.

Total: 300.0 kg 1984 in Varna in class to 56 kg.

Total: 342.5 kg (152.5 + 190.0) 1988 Summer Olympics in class to 60 kg.



Olympic Weight-Lifting at its very finest!