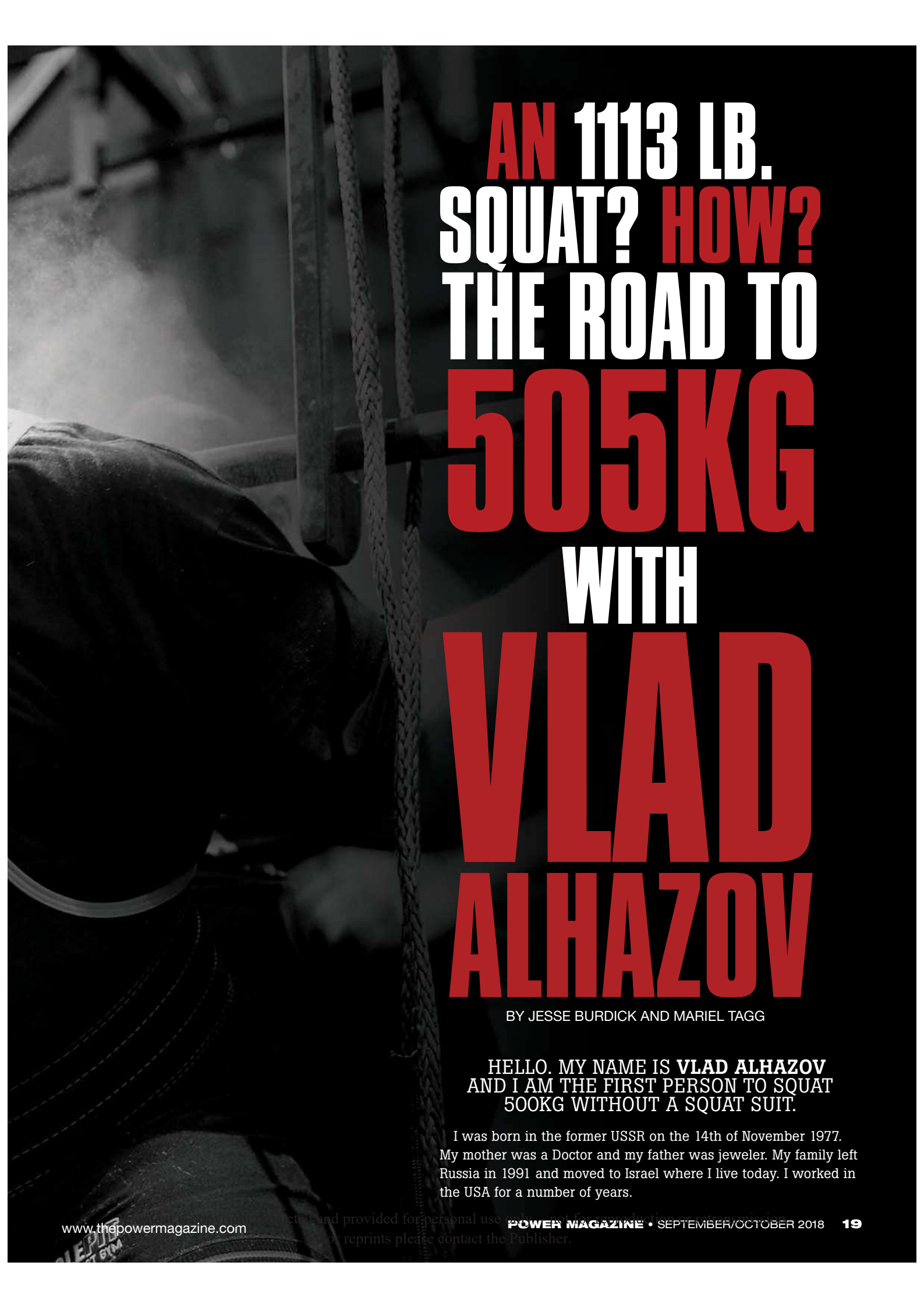


Photo by Nick Edlin



**AN 1113 LB.  
SQUAT? HOW?  
THE ROAD TO  
505KG  
WITH  
VLAD  
ALHAZOV**

BY JESSE BURDICK AND MARIEL TAGG

HELLO. MY NAME IS **VLAD ALHAZOV**  
AND I AM THE FIRST PERSON TO SQUAT  
500KG WITHOUT A SQUAT SUIT.

I was born in the former USSR on the 14th of November 1977. My mother was a Doctor and my father was jeweler. My family left Russia in 1991 and moved to Israel where I live today. I worked in the USA for a number of years.



Photo by Nick Edlin

“ I ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW HOW STRONG A HUMAN BEING COULD BECOME. THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF MY POWERLIFTING JOURNEY”

As I child, I was very active and enjoyed a lot of sports. I was involved in swimming, boxing and what you now call mixed martial arts. Mostly, I loved boxing.

After moving to Israel, I made some friends who were involved in weightlifting. At that point in time, I was 15 years old. However, I preferred the base movements as I was able to lift heavier weights. I was always leaning towards powerlifting. I enjoyed testing my strength. I always wanted to know how strong a human being could become. This was the beginning of my powerlifting journey.

My best result was in competition



Photo by Nick Edlin

"I TRAIN 3 TO 4 DAYS  
A WEEK DEPENDING  
ON WHAT I FEEL I NEED TO  
DO AND WHAT MY BODY  
TELLS ME I CAN DO"

where a took the world equipped squat record of 1250lbs and totaled 2805lbs (1250-620-935). At that point in time I was already training at Westside Barbell in Columbus, Ohio, under the watchful eye of Louie Simmons. I trained there for 10 months.

My training hasn't really changed from equipped to raw. In equipped, you have to train as a team as it requires a lot of assistance. You will never achieve much by yourself. I loved everything about equipped lifting, apart from bursting blood vessels in my eyes and blood noses. People who say that equipped lifting is easy and gear lifts all the weight are delusional. Training and competing in gear takes a lot of practice and skill. You are constantly dealing with heavy weights and it's



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almost a craft.

Between training raw now and during the peak of my equipped lifting career I haven't really changed much. I train 3 to 4 days a week depending on what I feel I need to do and what my body tells me I can do. Some training sessions are broken up in to morning and evening. Once again, that depends on how I feel. I listen to my body very carefully and advocate the same approach to every one I train. I finish all my heavy work 3-4 weeks before a competition and start my recovery process. I have a lot of meat on me to recover so I increase my protein and calorie intake as much as possible before a competition. In 2008 after the Arnold Classic, I met Louie Simmons and he invited me to Westside. I started squatting sumo which helped a lot and started using bands during my deadlift training. It was then that I showed my best results overall of 2805lbs.

My injury took place during my time at Westside. I was attempting a squat

**"NOW I TRAIN AND COMPETE RAW BECAUSE IT'S LESS TAXING ON MY CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM AND MY BODY. I AM ABLE TO REST MORE AND RECOVER BETTER"**

of 1345lbs (610kg). Prior to that, I had already squatted 1102lbs (500kg) for a triple and 1212lbs (550kg) for a double. I kept missing depth on those attempts because the squat suit was so tight. My knee collapsed and I tore pretty much every tendon. Prior to the operation, the hospital asked me to sign a declaration. It stated that should the operation be unsuccessful, I would not take them to court. In order for me to be able to walk at all, the tendons had to be grafted from a cadaver and there was at best a 50% chance that the operation would work and my body would accept the graft. There was no mention of train-

ing or squatting 500kg. I was very depressed.

Recovery was very long. Due to the amount of damage to me knee and the atrophy of the surrounding muscles, it took 8-10 months for the knee to bend. It was over a year before I could get around. After 2 years of rehabilitation, I was able to go back to training.

I decided to come back because, apart from the knee, everything else was still healthy and strong. Healthiest of all was my desire to lift. Now I train and compete raw because it's less taxing on my central nervous system and my body. I am able to rest more and recover better. My day and my diet are very simple. I wake up, I work as a coach, I train and I recover. In between all that and my family life, I eat.

**POWER: So you didn't start lifting until you were 15? How did you first train? Was there a squat or a deadlift that made you know that you wanted to be a lifter?**

**VLAD:** I actually started squatting

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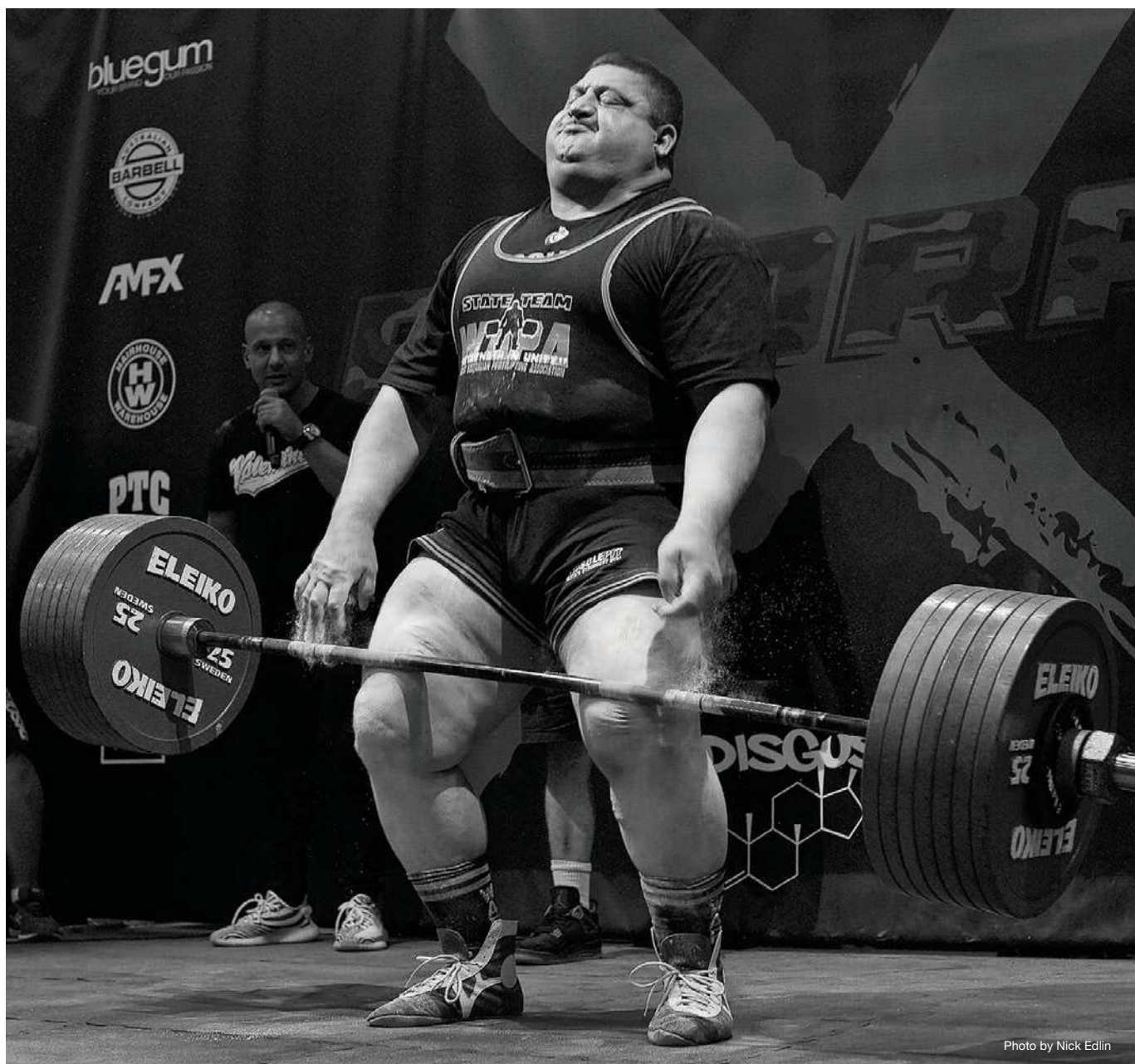


Photo by Nick Edlin

when I was 21 or 22. Before then I just did deadlifts and bench press because I thought I would never grow if I squatted. It was like a scary dream I had. If I squatted I wouldn't grow. And today I am like 6'3".

**POWER:** How did you perfect your craft?

**VLAD:** I did it over about 15 years of experience lifting.

**POWER:** Can you give us an example of training with some explanation with it? Do you train with a group? Do they do the same training as you?

**VLAD:** No. I was working out with Louie Simmons at Westside Barbell from 2007-2008 and in July of 2008 I had my last biggest knee injury and I

"THESE DAYS I AM ONLY LIFTING RAW. I WARM UP TO 805 LBS. AND DO NOT WEAR A BELT OR KNEE WRAPS UNTIL I HIT 805. I JUST USE KNEE SLEEVES. AFTER 805, I GOT TO 880 OR 900LBS AND SEE HOW THAT FEELS. IF I FEEL STRONGER I DO DOUBLES IF I FEEL NOT AT MY BEST I DO SINGLES. AFTER THAT I WEAR A BELT AND KNEE WRAPS"

had a knee replacement. I had my left knee replaced. I was working out with a program by Westside Barbell. These days I am only lifting raw. I warm up to 805 lbs. and do not wear a belt or knee wraps until I hit 805. I just use knee sleeves. After 805, I got to 880 or 900lbs and see how that feels. If I feel stronger I do doubles if I feel not at my best I do singles. After that I wear a belt and knee wraps.

**POWER:** You spoke of recovery processes, what do you do for recovery?

**VLAD:** A lot of massage, hot tubs, cardio exercises like bicycling and rowing. I like to do those exercises because they have helped me have less cramps in my muscles and build



Photo by Nick Edlin

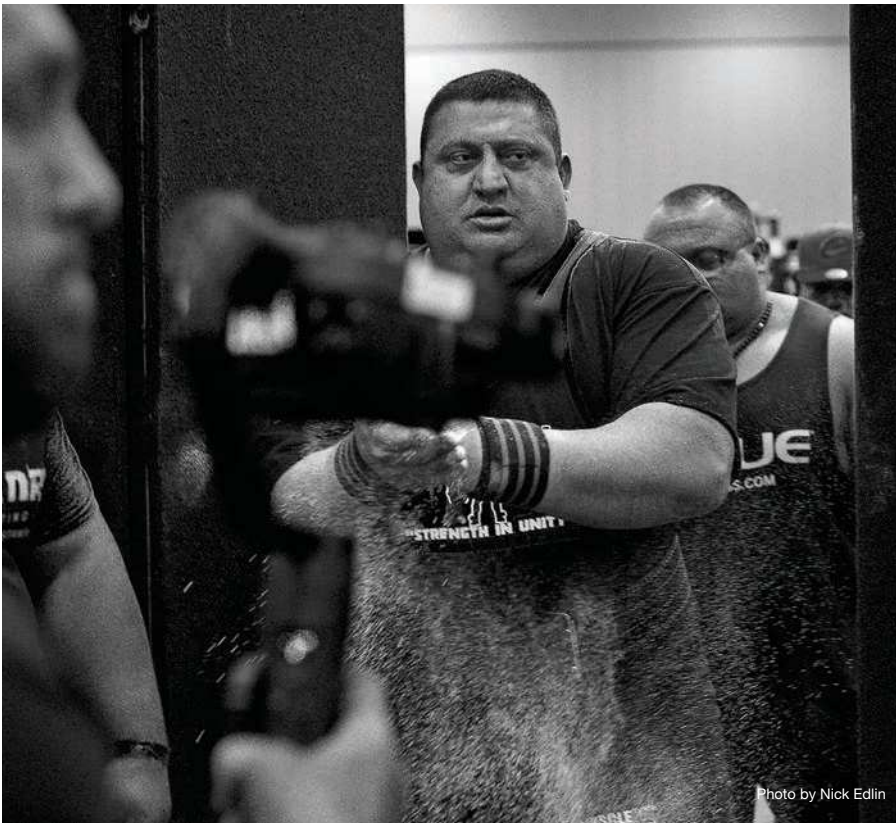


Photo by Nick Edlin

“I NEVER USED CHAINS. I LIKE TO DO RESISTANCE BANDS WORK, PARTICULARLY ON THE DEADLIFT.”

my recovery system.

**POWER:** How did squatting sumo and the use of bands on the deadlift change things for you?

**VLAD:** Actually, I never used chains. I like to do resistance bands work, particularly on the deadlift. Actually, on the squat, Louie changed my technique to sumo style. Before, I just did conventional but Louie noticed that my hips were very strong and abs were very strong. He suggested I try sumo style on the squat and since then I've changed my technique and my squat went up about 60-70lbs in a couple months.

**POWER:** Talk about the depression of hearing your surgery only had a 50% chance of being successful.





Photo by Martin Rock

**VLAD:** First the doctor said that I would no longer be a normal human because I would now have 3 ligaments from a dead body inside of my left knee. They were the ACL, MCL and PCL. Those were all removed from a dead body and put into my left knee. The doctor said there was a very low possibility that I would ever be able to squat again. He said I would never come back to powerlifting professionally like I had before. I said, "okay." My first full meet after surgery was 2017, last year, and I hit 500kg or 1100lbs.

**POWER:** What are you training for now?

**VLAD:** My next goal is October in Germany. It will be a big show -- deadlift only. By the way, in 2015 Eddie Hall pulled 420kg. Last year, I did 975lbs. I was competing with Steve Johnson from Chicago. I hope he will be there this year and it will be interesting.

**POWER:** You work as a coach during the days, who are you coaching? How do you coach them?

**VLAD:** I coach people who try and want to build their strength. Actually, I have between 8-10 guys. But unfortunately,

in my country, powerlifting is not as popular as in the United States. It's growing, but not as much as I'd like it to be. But it is growing. We do not have professional powerlifting, but I help them with their lifts and getting stronger.

**POWER:** Can you talk a little bit about your family? kids? life outside of lifting.

**VLAD:** My wife is very close to me and she always supports me. I have a daughter, too. My mom lives far away but all my family supports me, which is



Photo by Martin Rock

a cool thing. My goal was to be the first man to squat 500kg or 1100 lbs and I did that. So my next goal is to hit that on the deadlift.

**POWER:** Can you give us more specifics on your diet day to day and then as you lead into a competition? foods, amounts, etc

**VLAD:** Before a contest, I put a lot of attention on my carbs. If I do not have a contest coming up I will try to eat less carbs and ore protein. Before a contest, I feel much dizzier because the work-outs are heavier so I need to use more sugar. But when I'm in the off-season I feel great.

**POWER:** What's next for you? any chance you get back into geared lifting again?

**VLAD:** Maybe, but only in the deadlift. On the squat, I don't think so. But also, the era of equipped lifting is dying and my hope is that it's just dead. I think it's dead. Except Dave Hoff, no-body uses gear.

I never thought I would be able to get back to these numbers, and I did it after a horrible injury and a left knee replacement. Last year, I got my best



total at 2458lbs or 1150kg. In Australia last year, I squatted 505kg, 200kg and 350kg on the deadlift. But somehow the judges decided not to count the deadlift because they thought I was too aggressive putting it back on the floor.

But I know I was successful on my lifts. Either way, I did my plan which was to hit over 500kg on the squat. So I have no excuses. I did my best. And I believe I'm going to hit 540kg or 1185lbs on the squat in my next contest. **PM**

STRONG HAS MANY FORMS, FIND YOURS.