



Fireworks over the National Stadium during the opening ceremony for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Aug. 8. AP Photo: Bullit Marquez.

Armenia's Bronze Age

Armenian athletes win six bronze medals

by Armenian Reporter staff

YEREVAN – “I was very upset when I won the bronze medal. I had gone to Beijing to win gold. After contemplating everything, however, I told myself, ‘I am only 20 years old and this is my first Olympic Games, and what I accomplished is pretty phenomenal,’” **Tigran G. Martirosian** said in an interview with the *Armenian Reporter*. “I know next time I will change the color of my medal.”

Tigran, or Little Tigran as they call him because of his age and his weight category (69 kg) is wise beyond his years. And also very strong.

“I was in the best athletic shape I could be in when I went to Beijing,” he said. But like other athletes, he admits that the pressure of the competition can play a role in the outcome. Another thing that was an impediment according to the young athlete was the procedure for testing athletes for doping. He said that oftentimes they would be woken up at 7:30 in the morning and told to go to the doping center to be tested. Sometimes they would be tested three times a day. He, like Head Coach **Ashot Mkhitarian**, said that after a time they began questioning the testing procedure and felt like they were being psychologically tested as well. “We began to think that something was seriously wrong,” Tigran said.

Regardless of the medal color, the doping procedures, and the pressure, Tigran said it was all an

amazing experience and worth all the hard work and deprivation. “The unbelievable reception that we received at the airport in Yerevan after returning from the Olympic Games is something I will never forget,” the young athlete said with great emotion. “A lot has changed in Armenia in sport. There are new sports centers and schools opening and there is a lot of attention being paid to sporting activities now. I’m not saying that everything is perfect; but we are definitely on the right road,” Tigran said.

Armenia’s Olympic team has brought home six medals from the XXIX Summer Olympic Games in Beijing.

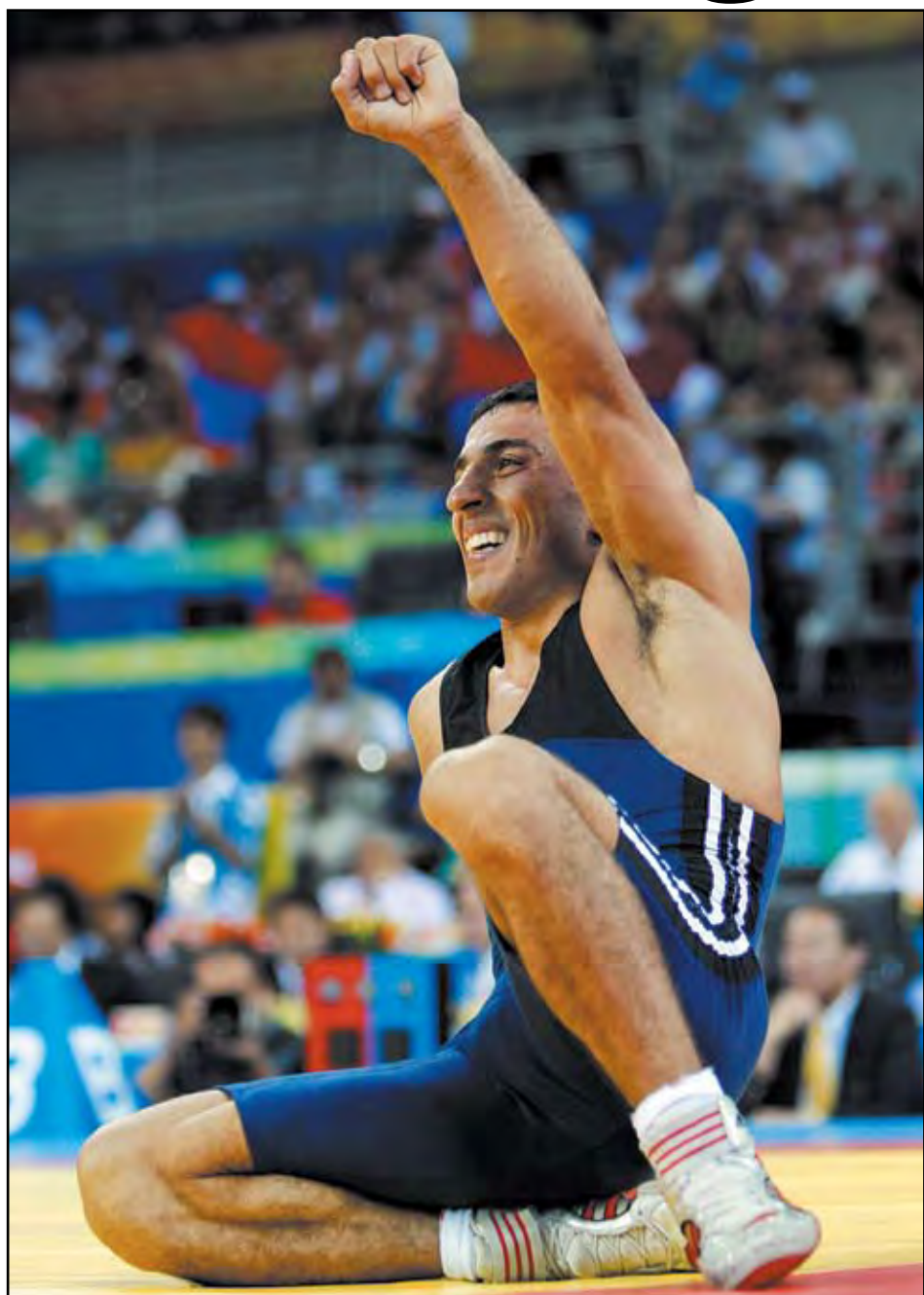
Armenia’s Olympic team participated with 25 athletes – six in weightlifting, six in Greco-Roman wrestling, four in boxing, three in free-style wrestling, two in judo, two in track and field, one in shooting, and one in swimming.

Winning six medals was obviously a huge accomplishment. At the end of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Armenia’s athletes returned home empty-handed. In the 2000 Games they earned one bronze medal.

The first of Armenia’s Olympic medals this year was won in the Greco-Roman wrestling 55 kg category by **Roman Amoian**, 2006 European champion who in the semi-finals was defeated by Azerbaijan’s **Rovshan Bayramov** by a score of 3-11. In the finals, Bayramov was defeated by the Russian Federation’s **Nazyr Mankiev**.

It was on the same day, August 12, that Tigran G. Martirosian won his bronze medal. Tigran, who is the 2008 European Champion, and hails from the city of Gyumri,

Continued on next page ➡



Armenia’s Roman Amoian celebrates his victory after his 55 kilogram Greco-Roman bronze medal wrestling match, Beijing, Aug. 12. AP Photo:Ed Wray.

XXIX Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, 2008

Armenia's athletes win six bronze medals

Continued from previous page

had a total combined weight of 338 kg. The total weight that Tigran lifted was the same as that lifted by the athlete from France; however because he himself was lighter, he was able to garner the bronze medal.

Gevorg Davtian, the 2007 World Championship silver medalist and European champion in the 77 kg weightlifting category and **Tigran V. Martirosian**, the 2008 European champion in the 85kg weightlifting category also won bronze medals.

In an interview with the *Armenian Reporter*, Tigran V. Martirosian said the athletes realized that a whole nation's hopes were placed on their shoulders as they traveled to China to take part in the XXIX Summer Games. "That sentiment helped us get through the grueling competition. Although we were hoping for gold, during the games you never know what's going to happen," said the 24 year-old athlete. He acknowledges that participating in the Olympics and being one of the top athletes in the world in weightlifting comes with many hardships but he says it's all worth it. "Young boys and girls must be active in sports because there are a lot of rewards," Tigran said.

Armenia's fifth bronze medal went to **Yuri Patrikeev**, in the 120 kg Greco-Roman wrestling category. Yuri was the 2007 World Championship bronze medalist and 2008 European Champion.

The sixth and final bronze medal was won by **Hrachia Javakhian** in the 60 kg boxing competition. Hrachia was the 2006 European Championship silver medalist.

Men's head coach Ashot Mkhitarian said, in an interview with the *Armenian Reporter*, that the thing that he was most proud of was the final result, what the young athletes had been able to accomplish. "You have to understand that all of this was a result of buckets of sweat, years and years of dedication, and unimaginable hardship. The boys have dedicated their whole lives to their sport. As their coach, you can't imagine how nervous I was, how nervous we all were. After all, as European champions in weightlifting we had something to prove and we needed to show our strength," said the coach.

"They are my boys. We have a father-son relationship. We have been together for so many years now." The men's head coach said that this was the third Olympic Games that he had been to as coach and said that it was the most organized Olympics he had seen. "The Chinese government had done everything to make sure that everything went smoothly. But it was obvious that they were intent on winning as many medals as possible, at any cost," he added. Mr. Mkhitarian said that the one major problem that they encountered was with the testing-for-doping procedure. "Our athletes were being constantly asked to present themselves at the doping center. We never once saw a Chinese athlete there," he said.

Biurakn Hakhverdian, 22, an ethnic Armenian born in the Netherlands, won a gold medal as part of the Dutch women's water polo team. Her team beat the United States 9-8.

Artur Ayvazyan, 35, a native of Yerevan representing Ukraine, won a gold medal for shooting.

Another Armenian representing Ukraine, 26-year-old **Armen Vartanian** won the bronze medal in the 66 kg Greco-Roman wrestling competition.



Armenia at the opening ceremony, led by Albert Azarian, who won gold for gymnastics in 1956 and 1960. Photo: Martin Shahbazyan.



Armenian athletes at the Olympic Village in Beijing. Photo: Martin Shahbazyan.



Roman Amoian.

Representing Sweden was yet another ethnic Armenian, **Ara Abrahamian**. He won a bronze medal in the 84 kg Greco-Roman wrestling category; he was later stripped of his medal by the International Olympic Committee for conduct unbecoming. Immediately following the medal presentations he had placed his medal on the mat and walked out in protest, claiming that the judging had been rigged.

The Beijing Olympic Games will conclude on August 23 and the official closing ceremonies will take place the following day. Even though Armenia's Olympic team reached new heights of success, our neighbors did somewhat better. At press time, the Georgian Olympic team had won three gold and three bronze medals. The Azerbaijan Olympic team had captured one gold, four silver, and three bronze medals. Turkey, with a population of almost 80 million had won one gold, two silver and one bronze medal. And as for our neighbor to the south, Iran had won one gold and one bronze medal.

Armenia in previous Olympic Games

Athens 2004 - Armenia's Olympic team had its worst showing at these Olympic games. Out of 18 athletes participating in the Summer Games, not one captured a medal. The best showing was by **Norair Bakhtamian** who placed fourth in shooting and **Armen Ghazarian** who placed fifth in the 62kg weightlifting category.

Sydney 2000 - Armenia participated in the Sydney Summer Olympic Games with 24 athletes. **Arsen Melikian** was the only medalist in the games. He won the bronze medal in the 77 kg weightlifting category.

Atlanta 1996 - It was at the Atlanta Summer Olympic Games that Armenia first participated with a separate team. 32 Armenian athletes traveled to the United States to participate in 12 different categories. Armenia's team captured one gold and one silver medal. **Armen Mgrtchian** won the silver in the 48 kg wrestling competition. He lost the gold medal to Korea's **Il Kim**. The gold medal was won by **Armen Nazarian** in the 52 kg Greco-Roman wrestling category. Four years later at the Sydney games, Nazarian would win the gold medal, but as part of the Bulgarian Olympic team.

At the **1992 Barcelona** Olympic Games, Armenia had already become independent. However our athletes participated in those games as part of the CIS Unified Team. In Barcelona our athletes captured three gold and two silver medals. Three times, Armenia's national anthem rang out in Barcelona and the Armenian tricolor was raised in the stadium. Gold medals were won by shooter **Hra-**

Continued on next page

XXIX Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, 2008

Armenia's athletes win six bronze medals



Tigran V. Martirosian.



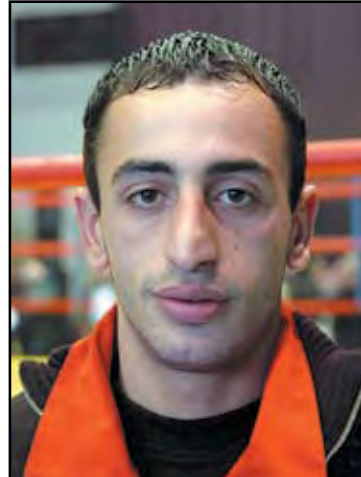
Tigran G. Martirosian.



Yuri Patrikeev.



Gevorg Davtian.



Hrachia Javakhian.



A joyful reception at Yerevan's Zvartnots Airport. Photos: Photolure.



Tigran G. Martirosian.



Roman Amoian.



Fireworks and a celebratory drive through downtown Yerevan marked the athletes' return home.



The President of Armenia's National Olympic Committee, Gagik Tsarukian, greets Roman Amoian.



Roman Amoian.



Weightlifter Hripsime Khurshudyan returns home.

➔ Continued from previous page

chia Bedikian, weightlifter **Israel Militosian** and Greco-Roman wrestler **Mnatsakan Iskandarian**. The silver medal was won by Greco-Roman wrestler **Alfred Ter-Mgrtchian**. Armenia participated in the CIS Unified Team with five athletes and won four medals.

Soviet Armenia in the Olympics

Seoul 1988 - Soviet Armenian athletes participated under the flag of the Soviet Union. During the Seoul Summer Olympic Games, Armenian athlete **Oksen Mirzoyan** won the gold medal and **Israel Militosian** the silver for weightlifting; **Levon Julfalakian** won the gold in the Greco-Roman wrestling com-

petition and **Stepan Sargsian** won the silver in freestyle wrestling.

Los Angeles 1984 - The Soviet Union and the majority of Eastern European block countries boycotted the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics in retaliation for the United State's boycott of the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympic Games.

Moscow 1980 - During the Moscow Olympic games, Armenian athletes won nine medals - two gold, three silver, and four bronze. Gold medals were won by weightlifter **Yuri Vartanian** and gymnast **Edward Azarian**. Silver medals were captured by weightlifter **Yuri Sargsian** and 14-year-old diver **Sirvard Emirzyan**. The bronze medals were won by diver **Davit Hambartsumian**, fencer **Ashot Karagian**, and soccer player **Khoren Hovhanessian**.

Montreal 1976 - Armenian athlete **Vartan Militosian** won a silver medal for weightlifting and **Davit Torosian** won a bronze in boxing.

Munich 1972 - **Fayina Melnik** won the gold medal for discus, **Edward Mikaelian** won the silver for gymnastics and soccer players **Arkady Andreasian** and **Hovhanness Zanzanyan** won bronze medals.

Mexico 1968 - Only one Armenian athlete participated in the Mexico Summer Olympic Games. **Nazar Alparyan** placed fourth in wrestling.

Tokyo 1964 - **Igor Novikov** won the gold medal in the team pentathlon category.

Rome 1960 - Five Armenians participated in the Rome Olympics

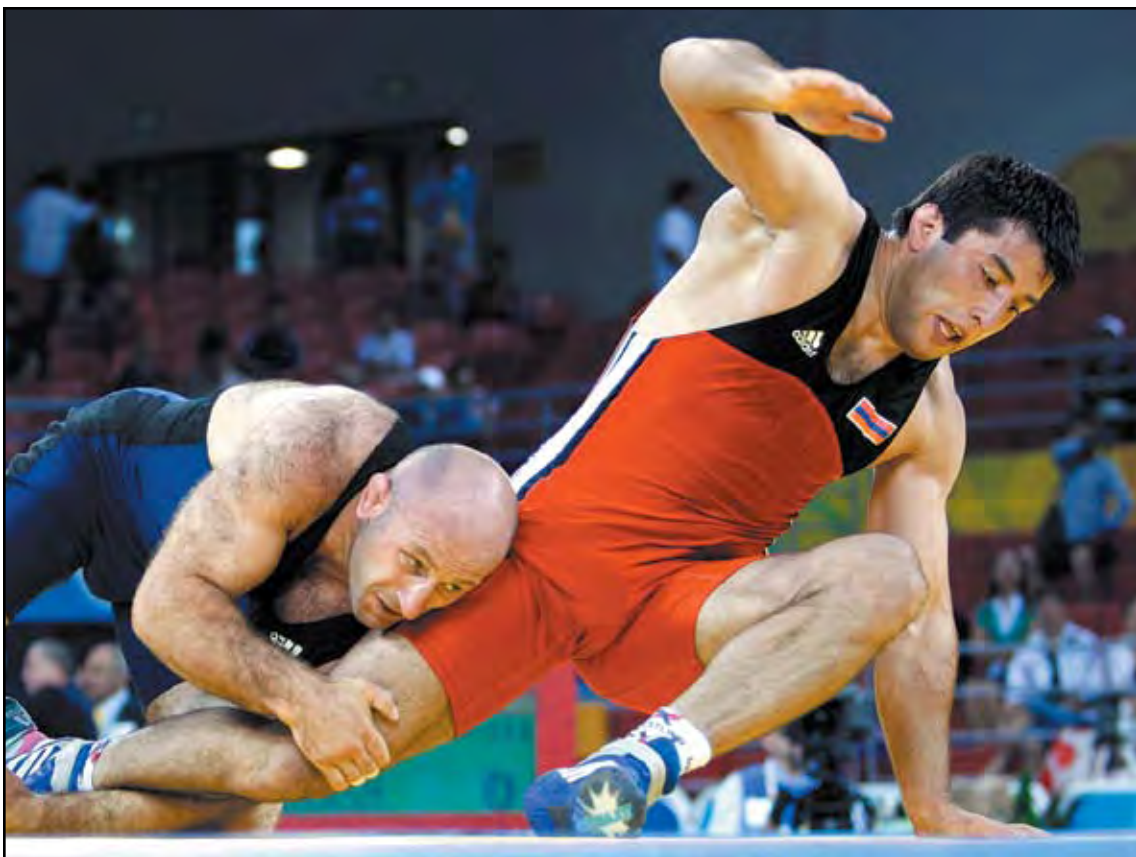
Continued on next page ➔

XXIX Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, 2008

Armenia's athletes win six bronze medals



Hungary's Peter Basci, bottom, is wrapped-up by Armenia's Arsen Julfalakyan during their 74 kilogram Greco-Roman wrestling match in Beijing, Aug. 13. AP Photo: Ed Wray.



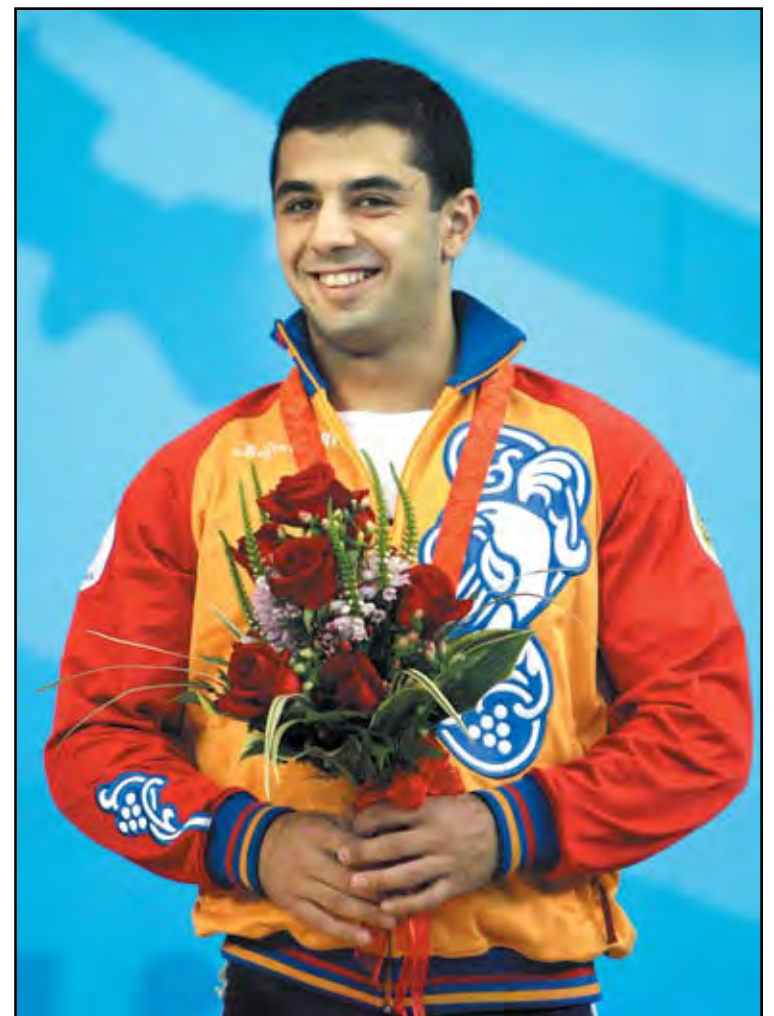
Armenia's Harutyun Yenokyan, right, wrestles Georgia's Revazi Mindorashvili during their 84 kilogram freestyle wrestling match in Beijing, Aug. 21. AP Photo: Ed Wray.



Hrachik Javakhyan of Armenia, red, fights Alexey Tishchenko of Russia, blue, during a men's lightweight 60 kilogram semifinal boxing match in Beijing, Aug. 22. AP Photo: Murad Sezer.



Bronze medalist Gevorg Davtyan of Armenia acknowledges the applause of the crowd from the podium in the men's 77 kg weightlifting competition in Beijing, Aug. 13. AP Photo: Andres Leighton.



Armenia's Tigran G. Martirosyan stands on the podium with his bronze medal in the men's 69 kg weightlifting competition in Beijing, Aug. 12. AP Photo: David Guttenfelder.

Continued from previous page

under the banner of the USSR. **Albert Azarian** won one gold and one silver in gymnastics; **Igor Novikov** won the silver in the pentathlon; and **Valentine Tchernikov** won the bronze in fencing.

Melbourne 1956 - Armenian athletes won four gold medals in Melbourne. **Albert Azarian** won two gold, **Igor Novikov** in the pen-

tathlon and **Vladimir Yengibarian** in boxing.

Helsinki 1952 - Armenian athletes participated in the Olympic games the first time during the Helsinki Summer Olympics. Two Armenians participated as part of the USSR Olympic team - gymnast **Hrand Shahinian** and **Igor Novikov** in the pentathlon. **Hrand Shahinian** captured four medals, two gold and two silver for the USSR.