



Russian weightlifting legend Vasily Alexeev (Bruce Klemens photo)

# Iron Game History

## The Massification Model of Sport Created by the USSR

by Dr. Alfredo Herrera

The process of massification of sports practice in the USSR had the declared goals to improve the health of the Russian population, to raise well-being and productivity to work, and to elevate physical engine performance to have an army more ready for the defense of the new state.

In the beginning, they did not declare the intention to develop high-performance sports. In the practical order, it was a priority to massify physical activities to detect and prioritize attention to those citizens with whom they could put the Soviet flag in the state of award in World Championships and Olympic Games.

In 1921, the USSR organized the International Red Sport. It was an analogue of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as a strategy for the proletariat's fight against bourgeoisie through sports. It is important to remember that Imperial Russia, the third largest empire in human history, had active participation in the IOC Foundation.

Russian athletes had competed in the 1908 and 1912 Olympics, winning one gold medal, two silver medals, and two bronze. Russia's first National Olympic Committee was founded in 1911. However, the triumph of the Bolsheviks 1917, both IOC and other economic and social organizations were declared bourgeois and consequently suppressed or confiscated.

The first Spartakiada of the USSR was challenged by the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam. The Soviet Games began on August 12, 1928, the same day the Olympics were closed. The Soviets conquered their “bourgeois adversary” in numbers of sports present (21-14) and participants (7,125-2,883).

The officialization of the new sports course that would take sport in the USSR materialized in 1923 when the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR was established by decree. In that same year, the largest sports society, “Dinamo Club,” was organized. It belonged to the Interior Ministry of the USSR.

The Central Army Deportivo Club (CSKA) was founded in 1911 in the time of the Russian Empire. We think that among the reasons to maintain this sporting society is that a group of officers and soldiers of the Tsarist army went on to serve in the Red Army. Another reasoning is that the new movement Sportsman would help the union between the army and intelligence organs. In them was the source where the USSR's world and Olympic champions would emerge with a high ideological education. Therefore, they were supported with the necessary material foundation for the recruitment of the best coaches in the country, selection of the best sports prospects, and protected in the mandatory military service with a law enacted in September 1925.

The substantial economic support allowed the organization of national championships and the construction of sports complexes that included specialized training centers. It was, therefore, not coincidental that most of the world and Olympic champions emerged from the Dinamo Club or CSKA, including the following: Arcadio Voroviov, Yury Vlasov, Alexei Medvedev, Nicolai Saksonov, and footballer Lev Ivanovich Yashin.



Weightlifting coach and sports scientist Dr. Alfredo Herrera will be a Strength Sensei guest presenter on May 15-17 in Braselton, Georgia. The title of Dr. Herrera's presentation is *The Soviet Weightlifting Project*.

Another historic moment in the massification of physical activities as the basis for the development of high returns was the approval and implementation of the PTD complex in 1931 (Translated: Prepared for Work and Defense). The PTD complex had several stages. The early stage included 15 standards for various types of exercises and these three requirements:

- 1) Learning the basic concepts of the Soviet physical culture movement
- 2) Military Affairs
- 3) Self-control

In 1932, the second-most complex stage of the PTD complex was introduced. It included three theoretical requirements and 22 standards, which could only be approved with the condition of systematic training. In 1934, it was introduced for schoolchildren and contained 13 rules and three requirements.

Depending on the achievement level, those who passed each stage's standards received a gold or silver PTD badge. Those who had met the standards for several years: the honorary PTD badge. It was considered a shame for a graduate to leave school without a Grade I PTD badge. In the 1930s, the PTD complex played an important role for high returns. Before its introduction, there were around 700 thousand athletes. In the first year, its number rose by a million, and at the end of the decade reached 7 million.

In 1945, at the end of World War II, the political and military power achieved by the USSR and the presence of the socialist block of states (led by the USSR) advised their return to the World Olympic movement. The strategy was another dominate sport on the global level.

The process of rejoining the IOC began in 1946, when the USSR national football and weightlifting associations were accepted as members of the respective international federations. Finally, at the 45th IOC session on May 7, 1951, the USSR was recognized. The country was able to participate in the 1952 Olympics and ranked second by country, and in the 1956 Olympics took first place.

The Spartaquiates continued to be celebrated, but from 1956 and without foreign athletes, or as against dotting with the IOC, were considered internal competitions. That is, they served as “control and evaluation” of athletes with a view to participating USSR in the Olympics. In 1962, the first Peoples Winter Spartakad of the USSR was celebrated. The event took place every four years but didn't match the Olympics.

The 1967 competition was dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution. It set a record for this type of event for participants with more than 85 million athletes. It included “amateur” athletes and invited foreign athletes. The following year, Moscow was hosting the Olympics, so that event was basically a rehearsal.

The massification model that created the USSR was basic to its sporting achievements, particularly the Olympians. It participated in nine Summer Olympics, earned first place by country in six and second in three. In the Winter Olympics, they earned first place in country in seven and second in two.

In summary, the model of massification of sport was created by the USSR and years later adapted in the countries of the socialist bloc, under the advice of the USSR. Although it gave very good dividends, it currently has only a high comparative historical value. We are committed to studying more effective models and with lower economic and social cost.

### **About Dr. Alfredo Herrera**

Dr. Herrera completed his Post Doctorate in the Soviet Union in Theory and Methodology in sports Training and Physical Education and Weightlifting at the State Central Institute in Moscow (Russia). His Doctoral degree was completed at Pedagogic Science from the State Central Institute of Physical Culture in Moscow, USSR (now Russia) where he was a part of the many studies and research strength coaches still used to support training theories even today. He has a degree in physical education from Manuel Fejardo University in Havana, Cuba. For information on how to attend Dr. Alfredo Herrera's presentation, *The Soviet Weightlifting Project*, follow this link: <https://strengthsenseiinc.com/events/dr-alfredo-herrera-the-soviet-weightlifting-project/>