

# Etxauriko-Harria: A Stone with a Past

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The stone known as Etxauriko-Harria, from Etxauri (Navarra), is a natural stone made of ophite (a greenish porphyry). It measures 52 x 40 cm and weighs 136.5 kg. According to most lifters, the irregular shape makes it one of the most difficult stones to lift. "It has so many edges that it's very difficult to grip it in a convenient way," said José Ramón Iruretagoiena, "Izeta II," at the end of an annual lifting contest in 2011.

The stone has had to be repaired twice due to damage sustained during use in competitions. A small crack appeared when one lifter lost his grip and the stone fell to the ground; it had to be repaired with special glue. On another occasion, the stone was dropped and a small piece broke off. Nevertheless, neither of these repairs has modified the shape of the Etxauriko-Harria.

Elderly members of the village Etxauri remember that the stone had previously sat in the countryside outside the village. "It was alongside an acacia tree," said Martín, known by his father's name, Txomin, "and the boys of the village used it as one of the goalposts when we played soccer matches."

The origins of the stone were largely unknown until a young man from Etxauri, in the Navarra province, went to visit his girlfriend's family in Mutriku, in the Guipúzcoa province. When the young man mentioned to his girlfriend's father,

Pedro Aristondo Amutxastegi, that he was from Etxauri, the father asked him if the famous stone—the "Etxauriko-Harria"—was still in the same place. Amutxastegi declared that he had lifted the stone in 1959 when he was 22 years old and his unit in the Spanish army had been moved to Etxauri. When Pedro and his compatriots saw the stone, they bet some bottles of wine to see who would be able to lift the stone up to his shoulder. Only Pedro managed to lift it.

In 2000, the stonelifting competition Memorial Alberto Lakosta was held in Etxauri as a tribute to Alberto Lakosta, a lumberjack from the village who had died that year in an accident. In the years prior to the inaugural Memorial Alberto Lakosta, the famous Etxauriko-Harria suffered a period of playing the role of a normal, everyday stone, a role that seems unfitting to those who see these stones in a special way. Txomin tells us the story in detail:

"They had to build a wall for a market garden. The bricklayer who was doing it decided that the stone, our stone, the stone of the boys, was going to be the

base for one of the corners of the wall. Another boy and I were forced to help him move the stone. And it was 'buried' there." Before continuing with the story, it is important to emphasize that Txomin truly loves his village and the whole Etxauri valley. Furthermore, knowing the special relationship between the Etxauriko-Harria and the stone's keepers, Txomin and Oskar Barber, it's easy to understand the contempt they felt in that moment . . . not to mention what Txomin did later!

"I was only a boy but the memory is engraved in my mind. As I knew where the stone was and didn't want it to stay there any longer, a friend and I went to the wall to take it. We took it out, leaving a hole in its place."

The Memorial Alberto Lakosta competition, involving the Etxauriko-Harria, is held every year on a Sunday at the end of March or the beginning of April. It coincides with a cross-country race, the Subida a Etxauri, that starts in the village square (407 m high) and finishes on Larraundi mountain (840 m high).

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The first edition was held in 2000, but it was not repeated until 2005. Since then, it has been held every year. The *harrijasotzailes* have a 5-minute set to do as many reps as possible. The use of resin, glue, or any other substance on the hands to assist the lifter was forbidden in 2009. The lifters now have to wash their hands in front of the judges. Violation of this standard resulted in disqualification for the winner of the 2014 competition, Hodei Iruretagoiena. Despite washing his hands, the judges claimed he had resin on his clothes and used this resin during his lifts.

The lifters are also weighed, and in the case that two lifters do the same number of reps, the winner is the one who weighs less. Usually the prize for the winner is the weight of the stone (136.5 kg) in bottles of wine, reminiscent of the bets that were placed in Etxauri dating back to the middle of the 20th century.

This year marked the eleventh Memorial Alberto Lakosta competition. The current record holder is Aimar Irigoien with 17 lifts in the 2013 competition. In 2005, the Etxauriko-Harria competition was attended by the first person known to have lifted the stone, Pedro Aristondo Amutxastegi, who handed out the trophies.

## Memorial Alberto Lakosta competition:

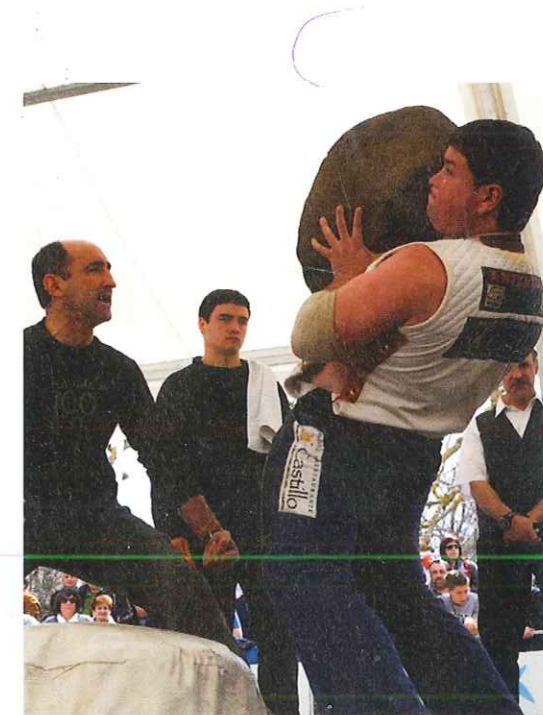
2000:	Patxi Larretxea, 2 reps	2011:	1. José Ramón Iruretagoiena, "Izeta II," 15 reps 2. Unai Bertiz, 10 reps 3. Josetxo Urrutia, 5 reps
2005:	1. Josetxo Urrutia, 5 reps 2. Xabier Igoa, 0 reps	2012:	1. Josetxo Urrutia, 9 reps 2. Jesús Mari Iruretagoiena, "Izeta III," 7 reps 3. Hodei Iruretagoiena, "Izeta IV," 5 reps
2006:	1. Patxi Larretxea, 10 reps 2. Josetxo Urrutia, 5 reps 3. Xabier Igoa, 1 rep	2013:	1. Aimar Irigoien, 17 reps 2. José Ramón Iruretagoiena, "Izeta II," 14 reps 3. Joseba Ostolaza, 11 reps
2007:	1. Joseba Ostolaza, 13 reps 2. Josetxo Urrutia, 9 reps 3. Xabier Igoa, 0 reps	2014:	1. Iban Ugartemendia, 9 reps 2. Unai Bertiz, 8 reps Disqualified Hodei Iruretagoiena, "Izeta IV," 11 reps (using resin)
2008:	1. Josetxo Urrutia, 6 reps 2. Urtxi Tellería, 4 reps 3. Unai Bertiz, 3 reps		
2009:	1. Aimar Irigoien, 13 reps 2. Unai Bertiz, 7 reps 3. Josetxo Urrutia, 0 reps		
2010:	1. Aimar Irigoien, 14 reps 2. Joseba Ostolaza, 12 reps 3. Unai Bertiz, 9 reps		



Contest poster. Courtesy of Lucio Doncel.



Martín Txomin (l.) and Lucio Doncel (second r.) with two stonelifters from Madrid. Courtesy of Lucio Doncel.



Aimar Irigoien lifting the Etxauriko-Harria stone with his coach Tellería giving encouragement. Oskar Barber photo.