

**EXCLUSIVE!** YOUR ULTIMATE 2017 OLYMPIA PREVIEW P.56

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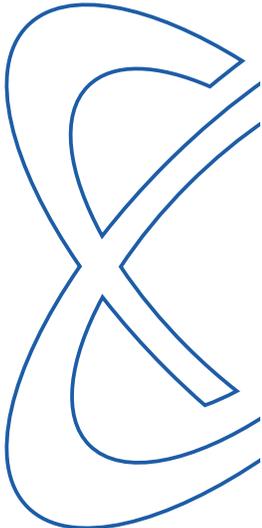
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**8**

**IS KAI DOING THE O?**

Is Kai Greene, the biggest threat to the Mr. Olympia, back after sitting out the past two years?

**FEATURES**

**44 BACK UP**

In gunning for his seventh straight Sandow, Phil Heath is starting from behind with this back workout.

**64 EXTRAORDINARY LEAGUE**

A preview of IFBB Pro League division athletes in action at the 2017 Olympia Fitness and Performance Weekend.

**72 OLYMPIA DYNASTIES**  
Bodybuilding's greatest reigns have been earned over time through its ultimate contest.

**80 WHEELER & LEVRONE**  
The stupendous, parallel careers of Flex Wheeler and Kevin Levrone and their continuing quests to win an Olympia title.

**90 POTVIN POWER**  
Jeremy Potvin is looking to steal the pot at the Men's Physique Olympia in Las Vegas.

**98 AWESOME ANDRE**  
Andre Ferguson has won three out of his last four shows. Now he pushes for one more victory at the Men's Physique Olympia.

**104 THE CONQUEROR RETURNS**  
William Bonac steps onto the Mr. Olympia stage for another shot at the biggest title of all—with an even better back.

**114 A LEG UP ON THE O**  
Shawn "Flexatron" Rhoden pounds his for a Sandow.

**120 THE BIG CONTENDER**  
Is Mamdouh "Big Ramy" Elssbiay the No. 1 threat to Mr. Olympia Phil Heath?

**130 FLEX YOUR TRI'S**  
At 500 reps of intensive torture, is this the world's craziest arm routine? No—it's just the warmup.

**56**

**THE "REALITY" OLYMPIA**

Bodybuilding requires faith and here we take a giant leap to speculate on the destination of the 2017 Sandow.

**DEPARTMENTS**

**6 JUST THE FACTS**  
Groundbreaking research and must-have tips in the training and nutrition universe.

**16 1ST SET**  
All the happenings with Mr. Olympia Phil Heath, 212 Olympia champ Flex Lewis, the entire Team Weider roster, and more.

**28 LIFT**  
Techniques that work, routines that produce results, and other things to help you make the most of your gym time.

**40 FOOD & SUPPS**  
All the things you need to eat, drink, or mix first and then drink to help you reach your bodybuilding and fitness goals.

**138 LAST SET**  
Contest results, athlete profiles, and more from the world of competitive bodybuilding and fitness.

**144 THE SHOT**  
Dexter Jackson toppled Goliath Jay Cutler at the 2008 Mr. Olympia to cap off one of the greatest years in modern pro bodybuilding.



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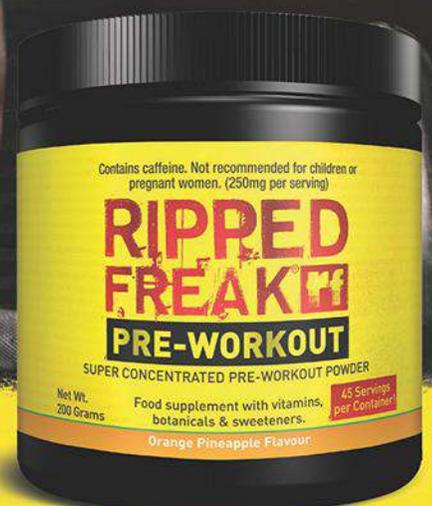
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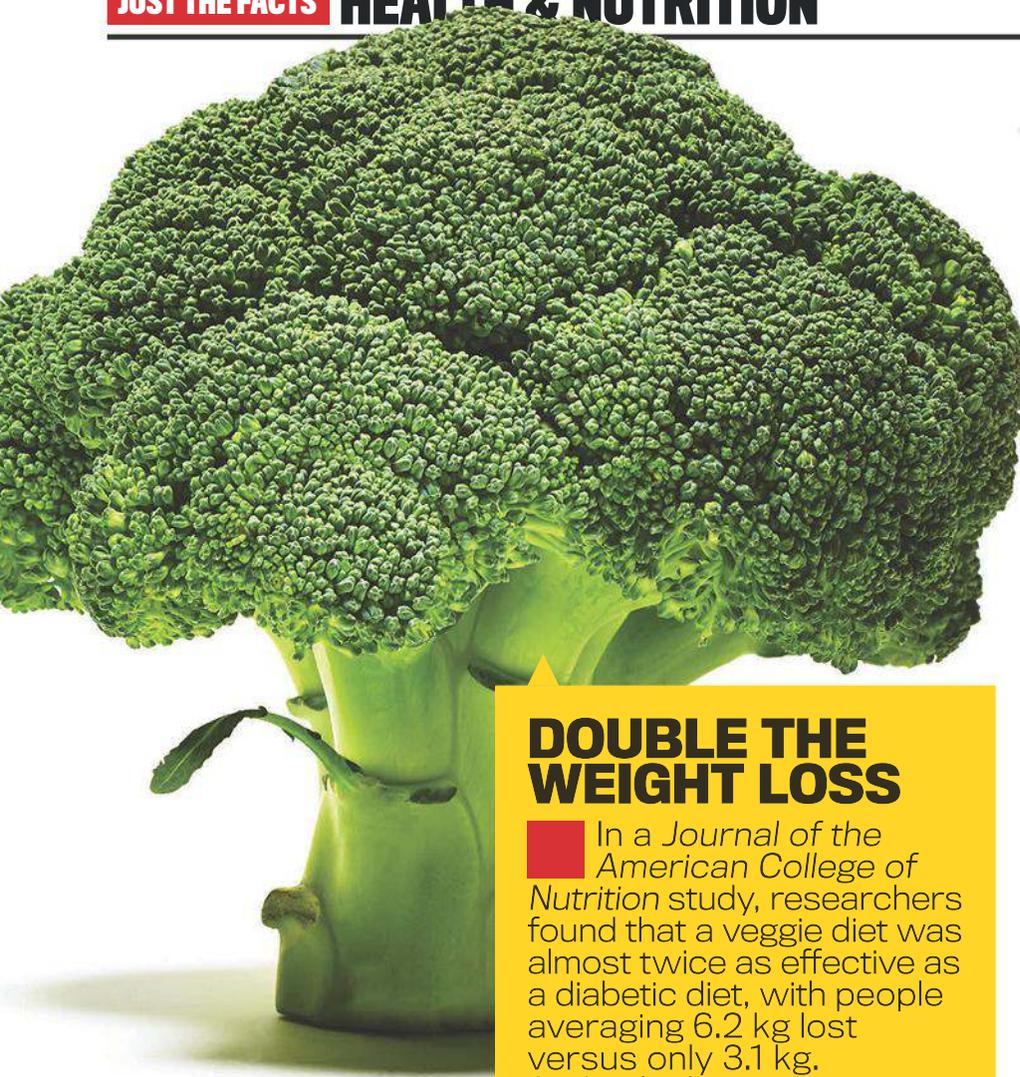
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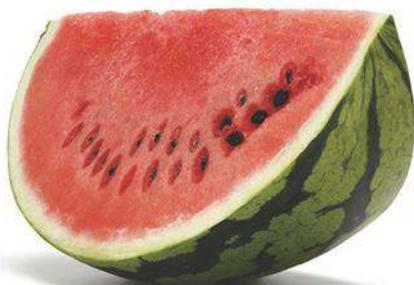


## DOUBLE THE WEIGHT LOSS

In a *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* study, researchers found that a veggie diet was almost twice as effective as a diabetic diet, with people averaging 6.2 kg lost versus only 3.1 kg. And only the veggie eaters lost subfascial fat—or fat layers underneath the band of connective tissue under the skin—plus more intramuscular fat was dropped while on the vegetarian diet.

### BAD SUBSTITUTE

Research from Cornell University has found that erythritol, a sugar alcohol that's also found in fruit like pears, grapes, and watermelons, is linked to increased fat mass and weight gain. Erythritol, which has fewer calories than sugar and is mass produced by fermentation for commercial use, is a common ingredient in processed foods labeled "low calorie."



### CHOMP ON CHOCOLATE

A study on more than 55,000 people who were enrolled in the Danish Diet, Cancer, and Health study that provided information on their average weekly chocolate consumption, discovered that those who had two to six 28-gram servings a month had a 20% lower rate of heart arrhythmia, than those who ate less than one serving.

### EAT LATER, GET FATTER

Don't chow down later in the day, says a study from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. Those who ate three meals and snacked from noon to 11 p.m. every day for eight weeks had higher insulin and cholesterol levels and gained weight compared with those who just ate from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

### FRY, GRILL, NUKE 'EM

An *International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition* study found that when grilled or microwaved, mushrooms retain powerful antioxidant compounds. When fried, mushrooms lost a lot of protein and carbs but bumped up fat and energy. Mushrooms are high in vitamin D when exposed to sunlight, contain compounds that boost immune system function, reduce risk of cardiovascular disease, and fight inflammation.

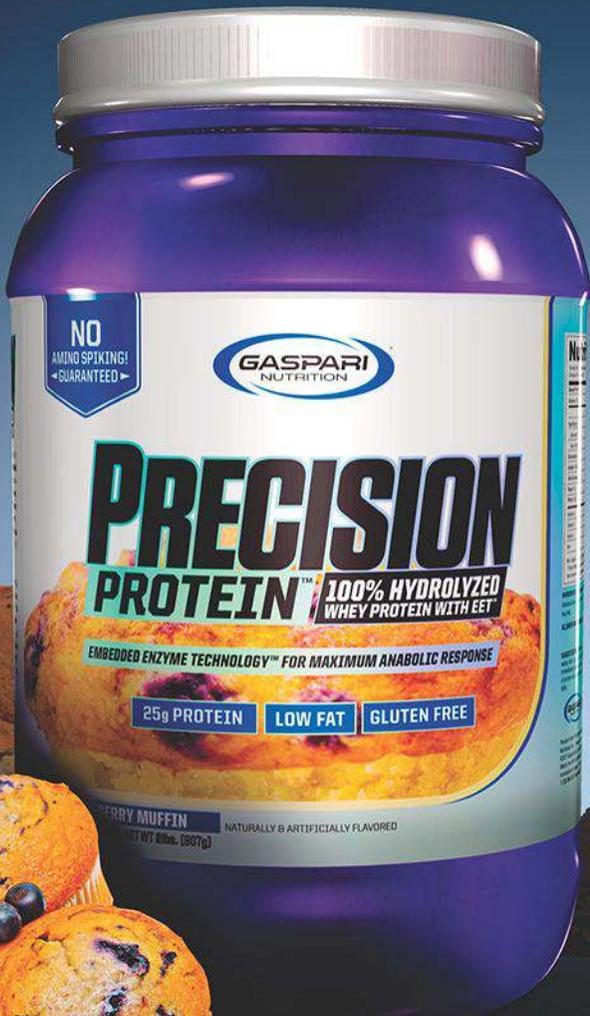
### CAFFEINE ADDICTS CAN STILL GET A BOOST IN PERFORMANCE

In a study in the *Journal of Applied Physiology*, researchers took 40 experienced cyclists and divided them into three groups—one who had only about 60 milligrams a day, another with 143mg, and another with 351mg a day. After ingesting either 600mg of caffeine, placebo, or control, they then cycled as hard as possible for three time trials. Across the board, those who got the caffeine dose, regardless of their average daily amount, cycled about 3%



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# WILL KAI DO IT?

**KAI GREENE HAS A STANDING INVITATION TO THE OLYMPIA. HERE'S WHY THE "PEOPLE'S CHAMP" NEEDS TO COMPETE... AND THREE WAYS HE CAN WIN BODYBUILDING'S ULTIMATE TITLE.**

BY **PETER MCGOUGH**

■ In June, IFBB Pro League president Jim Manion issued a special invite to the 2017 Mr. Olympia, being staged on Sept. 15 and 16 in Las Vegas, to Kai Greene. The three-time (2012-14) Mr. Olympia runner-up hasn't competed in bodybuilding's show of shows since the 2014 event. This was the infamous occasion of when Kai went into Mr. T mode, berating and exchanging trash talk with reigning champ Phil Heath at the press conference, and then later at Friday's prejudging he challenged his nemesis to something more physically hazardous than a double biceps shot. From the fallout of that explosive incident it seemed Kai would never compete in the Olympia again, as his camp cited disagreements with the organizers. Against that scenario it remains true that the most awaited clash in modern bodybuilding is the one involving Messrs. Heath and Greene.





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# AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS THE INVITATION STILL STANDS.

Even if Kai, in the meantime, has seemingly turned down the invite, it will remain open right up until 12:30 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 14. That is the scheduled start time of the 2017 Olympia press conference. So, especially given Kai's gift for the dramatic, don't write off the reality of seeing him stride into the conference room at the 11th hour to accept the invite.

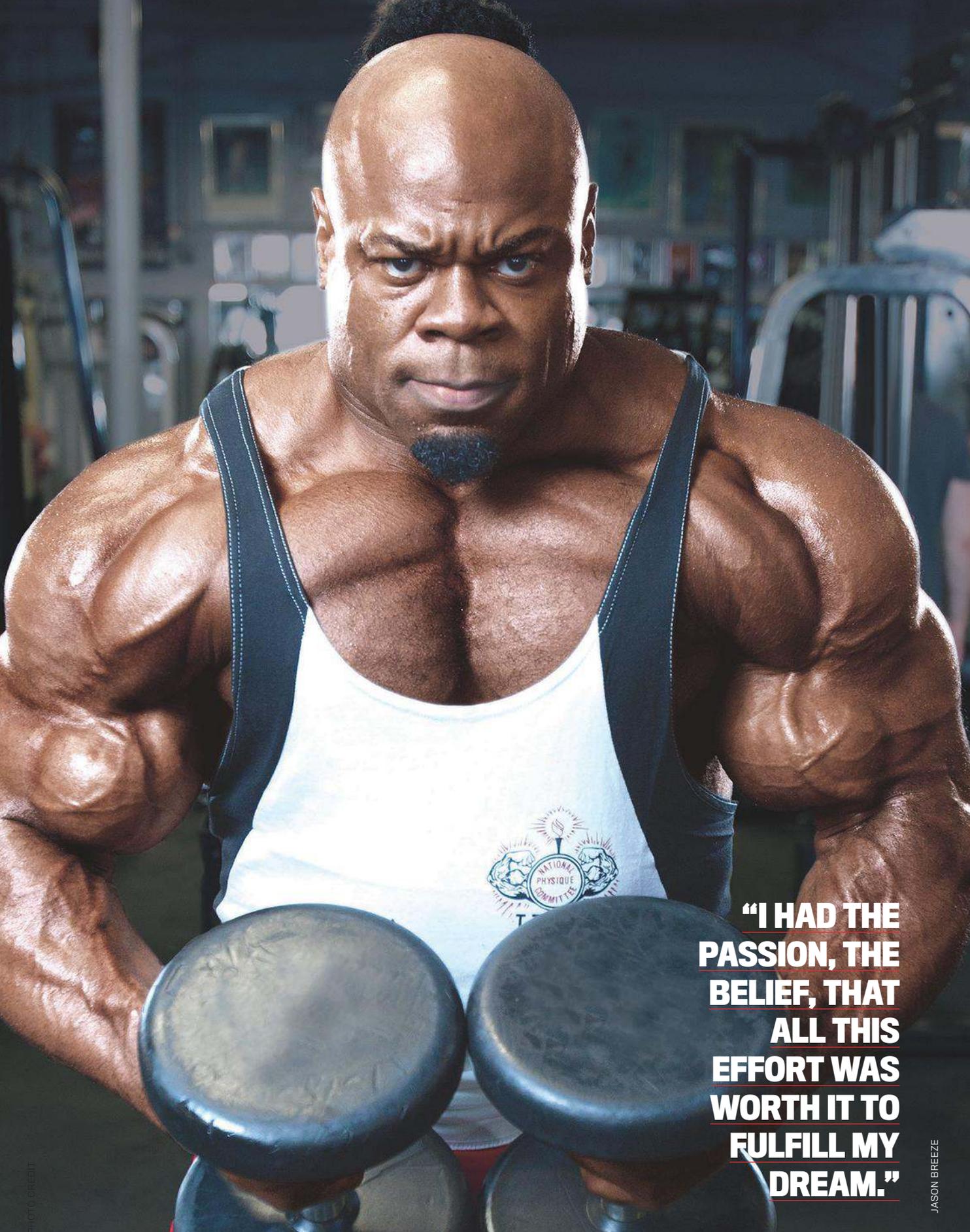
With that option in mind, it's pertinent to assess Greene's chances of striking Olympia gold and toppling Phil Heath. For the academic hell of it, it's worth examining the credentials the guy brings to the stage against a man he has not beaten in eight attempts since he won the 2010 Arnold Classic in Columbus, Ohio. Here are three ways Kai Greene can potentially overcome Phil Heath.



## ROUTE 1

# RIPPED TO SHREDS

In this day and age, condition is, if not the top factor in separating one physique from another, then one of the key aspects. A guy with great shape and proportions but who is softish will lose out to the guy with a sinew-splitting condition whose physique does not flow as well. Phil versus Kai confrontations always come down to the freaky aesthetics of Phil Heath against the WTF "someone call Ripley's Believe It or Not" musculature of Kai Greene. The deciding factor between the two has never really been condition, more like Phil's 3-D look beating out Kai's CGI (computer-generated imagery) look. But if Kai came in more ripped than he's ever been, a process that probably means losing a certain amount of size, and retains eye-popping fullness, then maybe it could be a game changer, a Sandow changer.



**"I HAD THE  
PASSION, THE  
BELIEF, THAT  
ALL THIS  
EFFORT WAS  
WORTH IT TO  
FULFILL MY  
DREAM."**

PHOTO: GREGG

JASON BREEZE



## ROUTE 2

# DROP THE MOST-MUSCULAR

Flashback to the climax of the 2014 Mr. Olympia contest. One last comparison is called for between the bitter foes of the weekend, Phil Heath and Kai Greene. They go through the eight comparisons, and as the duo completed the seventh

pose, the abs and thighs comparison, the climax was approaching. Cue the eighth and final pose; the most-muscular. It was déjà vu and Groundhog Day rolled into one.

It always ends like this. The Mr. Olympia version of gunfight at the O.K. Corral was coming down to one single shot, bodybuilding's money shot: the most-muscular pose. Those succinct words really encapsulate bodybuilding competition: Who has the most muscle?

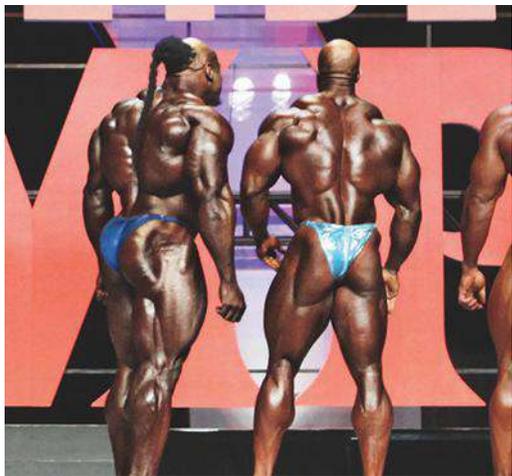
It always ends like this. Phil Heath hit the shot, his green eyes blazing, his teeth grimacing. Kai hit the shot with equal determination, and we witnessed the sight of the unique accumulation of each bodybuilder's muscle tissue fighting to stay on his frame.

It always ends like this because, even not at his best, Phil Heath's most potent shot (apart from back double biceps) is the most-muscular, while that same pose is possibly Kai's least potent weapon. Kai doesn't have the same density and fullness across the whole shoulder girdle that Phil does. For Kai to excel in this shot he has to be huge in order to pack that area with muscle. But when he goes huge, he loses condition and sharpness elsewhere. So even when these modern-day protagonists are close, that final money shot, the finale to the contest, is the lasting image for the fans and judges' pens. The point here is to suggest Kai cuts his losses and sort of forfeits it by hurriedly hitting a one-hand-on-hip, one-hand-clasped-in-front most-muscular (his best version of that pose) and then transition to hit a side chest or serratus shot.

He should take a leaf out of Arnold Schwarzenegger's 1980 Olympia playbook when he ignored hitting the required compulsory if it was not one of his best and morphed into biceps or side chest mode. If Kai just relinquished the most-muscular pose, fine. He's going to lose it anyway, but by not hanging about in that pose he doesn't leave that final and lasting image of Phil supremacy. In this strategy Kai needs to come in sharp and full and limit the real comparisons to the first seven poses.



JASON BREEZE; BILL COMSTOCK (2)



Will Kai be back on the 2017 Olympia stage to go pose-for-pose with six-time champ Phil Heath? Stay tuned...

### ROUTE 3

# PHIL COMES IN OFF

Phil Heath is one of the few Olympia champs who seem able to come in at less than 100% and still be judged ahead of his peers. It may seem like a negative winning strategy to rely on your rival's shortfall, but a win is a win however it is achieved. The longer Kai stays out of competition, the longer he will be unable to take advantage of any Phil misstep. There are precedents of contenders missing out on maximizing on a champion's vulnerability. At the 2001 Olympia the consensus was that a shrink-wrapped Jay Cutler should have beaten a not-at-his-best-champ Ronnie Coleman. To a fusillade of booing, Cutler was announced runner-up, and then as a reaction to a dispute he had with then-Olympia promoter Wayne DeMilia, he decided not to enter the 2002 Olympia. On that occasion Ronnie, lo and behold, was again not at his best and barely claimed his fifth Sandow against a rampant Kevin Levrone. Jay in his 2001 form would have surely triumphed a year later. The moral here: Sit out at your peril.

A similar situation perhaps occurred in 1997 when reigning champ Dorian Yates made his last defence hindered by a torn triceps. Throughout his career Yates maintained that he felt his biggest threat was that Sultan of Symmetry, Flex Wheeler. Who knows how a 100% Flex would have fared against a wounded Shadow? We'll never know, because shortly before the contest Wheeler got waylaid by a pack of ninja warriors and was karate chopped from the event. The moral again: Sit out at your peril.



## CONCLUSION

So there you have it, three routes to victory for Kai Greene. Time and the press conference on Thursday, Sept. 14, will decide whether he is indeed planning a path to victory.



## WHY KAI NEEDS TO COMPETE AT THE 2017 OLYMPIA

Why? Because he's one of the best bodybuilders in the world, his Olympia ranking from 2012 through 2014 making him second best in the world. Supporters hail him as the People's Champ, but that will never stick unless he steps on the Olympia stage and takes top honours. Let's be honest, the Olympia needs Kai Greene, but equally Kai Greene needs the Olympia to put the final exclamation point on maybe bodybuilding's ultimate reps-to-riches story. From the most desperate beginnings, he discovered bodybuilding as a teenager, and the flame was lit inside that he wanted to be the absolute best he could be. That flame evolved into being a pro, then into being a winning pro, then proceeded to be an Olympia contender, and then the Holy Grail, the ambition and ability to be Mr. Olympia. This is the man who said of his Olympia quest: "I would sacrifice everything for a Sandow. I would have been willing to sacrifice my organs to make it happen. No price was too great. I had a passion to win a Sandow. I believed it was my destiny. It was that belief that allowed me to put 365 kilos on my back and squat down to the floor and made me throw up, but it didn't put me off doing it again and again and again. I had the passion, the belief, that all this effort was worth it to fulfill my dream."

C'mon Kai, deep, deep inside it's a good bet that that passion, that flame, still burns fiercely. Get on that Olympia stage where you belong. Stay true to that decades-old dream, and even if you fail you won't spend the rest of your life wondering what might have been if only you had persevered. Don't be that guy. Be that Kai Greene guy, the quintessential underdog, the guy who overcame every obstacle put in his path. Be that guy, Kai, you owe it to yourself. **FLEX**

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212 Olympia champ Flex Lewis speaks on his training style (or lack thereof), politics, and workout partners.

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# STRAIGHT TALK

**THE BULLY PULPIT, IDOLS, AND LESS TIME ON THE ROAD**



**Q**

**IT SEEMS THAT WHENEVER YOU SAY SOMETHING, IT GETS BROADCAST EVERYWHERE. DOES THAT BULLY PULPIT MAKE YOU FEEL AS THOUGH YOU HAVE TO WATCH YOUR WORDS?**

I don't feel that way. I'm not in any way overexposed. I think because I'm truthful and direct and because people want to know what the O champ has to say, sometimes things get magnified. I try to keep it authentic and consistent. People who see it as more than that need to grow up. I try to be humble about it, but I'm not going to sugarcoat it. I think that whatever you say, you've got to back it up, and I back it up.

**Q WHOM DO YOU ADMIRE OUTSIDE OF BODYBUILDING?**

Denzel Washington and Kobe Bryant come to mind. Two individuals who both exhibit humanity and great

ability, and who both are able to connect to and inspire people in all walks of life while also making their silent contributions to bringing about change. Kobe because he has the hero/redemption aspect of being the best. His basketball career solidified his legacy—no matter how many times it seemed as if he was down, he always rose to the challenge. He absolutely gave it his all and showed greatness and walked away with no regrets. Kobe's farewell song was his last game, which perfectly captured the greatness of his career.

**Q YOU USED TO REGULARLY TRAVEL A LOT—LIKE 20,000 MILES IN A MONTH. ARE YOU STILL ON THE ROAD**

**THAT MUCH?**

Not at all. I do still travel some—I went to FIBO to guest pose in April, for example, and I do make appearances, but it's nothing like it used to be.

## 2017 NPC PHIL HEATH FIT EXPO

April 29 was commencement day at the 2017 NPC Phil Heath Fit Expo in Arlington, Texas, for a group of NPC competitors who graduated to national competition after winning their divisions:

Open bodybuilding:  
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Novice bodybuilding:  
**REECE LEWIS**  
Men's physique:  
**JEREMY HARTMAN**

Classic physique:  
**MARK ZAMORA**  
Women's physique:  
**JESSICA BELT**  
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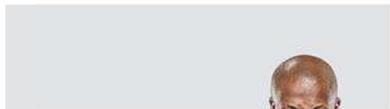
# STEVE KUCLO

**CONGRATULATIONS ON SIGNING FOR ANOTHER YEAR AS A WEIDER ATHLETE! DO YOU FIND THE WEIDER NAME STILL GETS NOTICED IN THE HEALTH AND PHYSIQUE INDUSTRY?**

There truly is no higher regard in the health and fitness industry than Weider. He was the "Godfather" of bodybuilding and helped launch our sport and industry to the levels they are at today. When I tell people that I'm signed with FLEX magazine and a Weider athlete, they immediately know that only a select few in the sport of bodybuilding really get to obtain that status. I do not take that for granted at all, and I'm very appreciative for everything that they do for me.

**YOU'RE MARRIED TO IFBB BIKINI PRO AMANDA LATONA. DO YOU DO CONTEST PREP TOGETHER?**

Yes I am the most blessed man to be married to my wife, Amanda! We have never really done a prep together, but I know it would be a challenge we could handle. We're both very good dieters and do not complain about being hungry. When I prepped for shows in the past two years my wife ate the same foods and pretty much dieted with me so it made it very easy for both of us.



## SHAWN RHODEN

**HOW STRICT ARE YOU WITH YOUR DIET, KNOWING YOU WON'T BE COMPETING FOR A YEAR?**

› I haven't been strict. With no contests looming, it's pointless to restrict yourself. I mean, even though you're a bodybuilder, a top athlete, you're also a human and deserve to eat in a restaurant and not always worry about your diet. Being strict really becomes something that your family has to suffer through. Why do that if you don't need to?

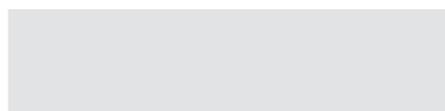
PER BERNAL; PAVEL YTHJALL



## WILLIAM BONAC

### HAVE YOU EVER HAD ANOTHER PRO TRY TO PSYCH YOU OUT BEFORE A CONTEST? HOW DID THEY TRY TO THROW YOU OFF YOUR GAME?

> That's funny! I won't mention anyone's name out of respect for my colleagues, but last year at the EVLS Prague Pro Championships [which Bonac won] there was a little mischief before the show. The programme was running a bit late with getting to the start of the men's open. I was warming up and one of the other athletes encouraged me to take my time, as he said we would not be starting just yet—that it would be at least 45 minutes. So I just kept doing my thing, for only 10 minutes it turns out, because that was when we were called onstage.



## JUAN MOREL

### WHAT WAS THE LAST THING YOU GOOGLED?

Best Buy. Looking for a camera. Always trying to improve the home system.

### WHAT ABOUT YOUR APPROACH TO DIET HAS CHANGED SINCE YOU STARTED BODYBUILDING?

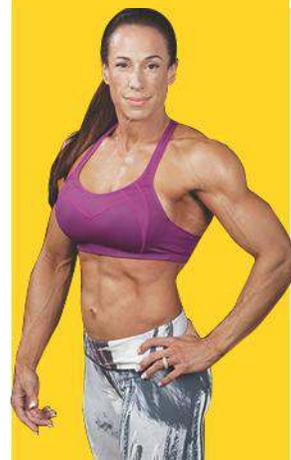
A lot! I didn't know anything about diet when I started. I had, like, no carbs in my diet. I was always so focused on working in the gym, and I didn't do enough for my diet. And you learn sooner or later that diet is big. So, I've learned the low-carb approach was not for me. I always used to feel depleted. That's not the case anymore.

## DANY GARCIA

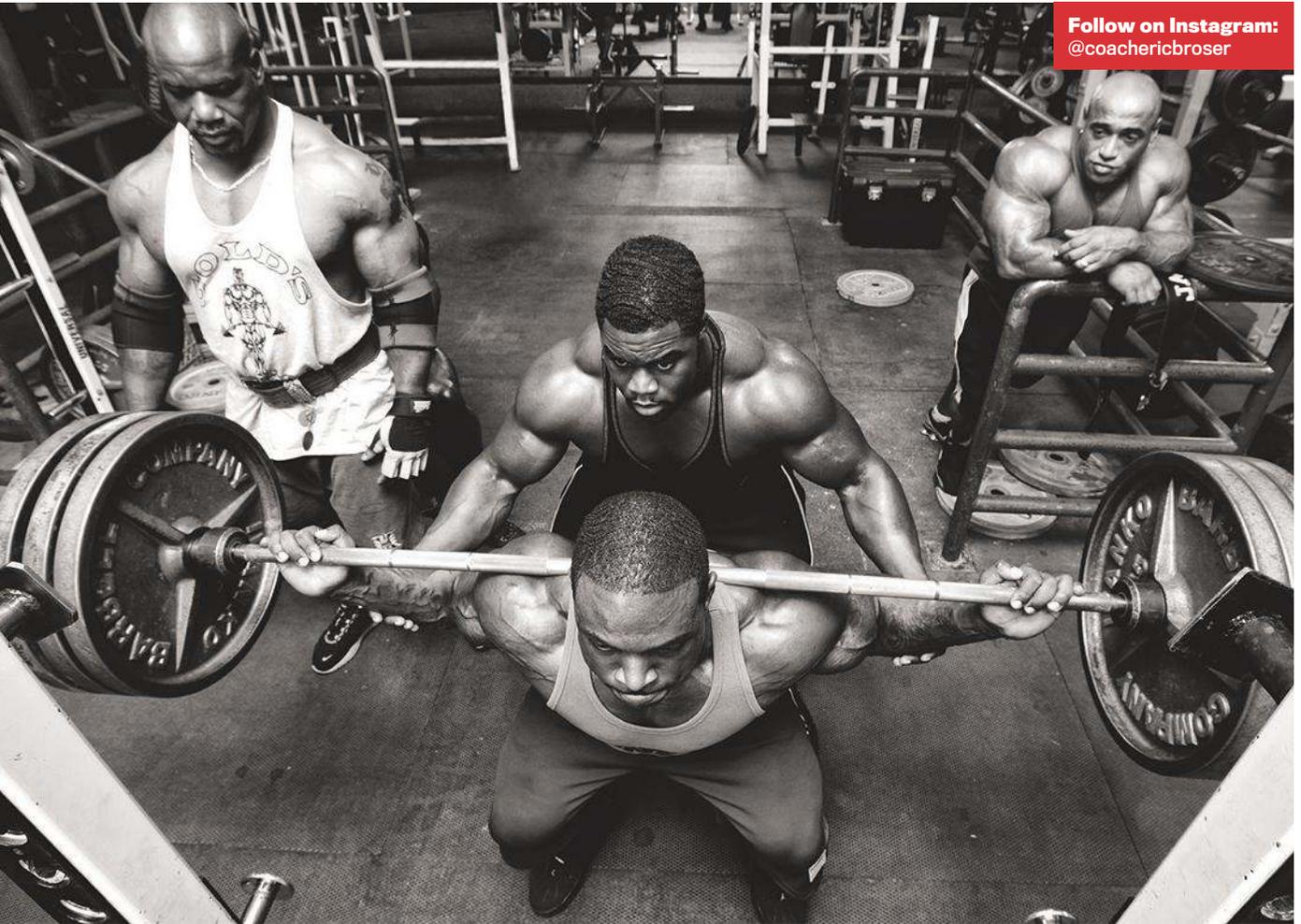
### HOW DO YOU KEEP A REGULAR WORKOUT SCHEDULE?

> This is a question that speaks to the support that surrounds me. The mental state necessary to build multibillion-dollar brands and create global enterprises requires most of my attention. My enterprise, as well as the brands I work with, understand how important bodybuilding is to me and the scheduling requirements that come with it.

To that extent, I block my morning hours, from 6 a.m. until noon, to prep, do cardio, and execute on my 1- to 2½-hour training sessions. That in itself, though, is not enough for me to be able to meet the demands of our sport, which is a career in itself, so I work with an incredible team of talented coaches—my husband, Dave Rienzi; Hany Rambod; and Larry Brun. They create the plan and I execute.



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# A GOOD REP

**FOCUS MORE ON HOW YOU LIFT TO GET THE MOST OUT OF EACH REP**

**Q**

**WHAT IS THE OPTIMAL AMOUNT OF REPS PER SET FOR FORCING MUSCLE GROWTH?**

If you've been reading my articles and columns over the past 15 years, you are well aware that I believe very firmly in exposing each muscle to a very wide range of reps (but more specifically "tension times"), from as few as four all the way up to 50 or more (in a single set). This is the only way to tap into every growth mechanism and truly annihilate all muscle fibres along the continuum. With that said, for the majority

of lifters, the greatest percentage of work sets should keep the target muscle under tension for between 35 and 60 seconds. Now, what does that translate to in terms of reps? Well, that depends on what lifting tempo one is utilizing for each repetition. If you are lowering the weight in one second and without pause, and lifting it in one second (1/0/1 rep tempo), then you'll need between 18 and 30 reps to reach optimal TUT (time

under tension). Sounds like a lot of repetitions for multiple sets, huh? Well, among other important reasons, this is precisely why it is best to slow things down, taking more time to move the weight from point A to B and back to A. If one were to lower the weight in four seconds, pause for one second at the midpoint, then raise the weight in one second, that would total six seconds per rep. You would require only six to 10 reps to achieve the necessary TUT to foster growth. Additionally, by slowing down the eccentric rep, you'll damage muscle fibres, which will ignite hypertrophy.

KEVIN HORTON

# HOUSE RULES

WORKING OUT  
WITH OTHERS,  
TRAINING  
STYLE, AND  
POLITICS



**Q**

**IT SEEMS AS IF YOU'RE OFTEN TWEETING ABOUT WORKING OUT WITH OTHER ATHLETES. WHEN THAT HAPPENS, WHO CHOOSES THE BODY PART OR THE ROUTINE?**

I am blessed to be able to travel and train alongside some of the best athletes and coaches the world. If I'm in their gym, it can vary whose lead we follow. If they're coming into my gym, they'll do it my way—though I'll listen, too, and try new things if they've got a new exercise or a new variation to add. The beauty is that, in either circumstance, I'm learning new things, or sometimes relearning old ones that are very effective. I love training with a variety of people because each person brings a different energy and different training style into play.

**Q CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR TRAINING SYSTEM?**

I don't have a training system. It's more instinctive than that; it's a training style. I keep the pace fast, the heart rate up. I don't like performing more than two sets—the max is three. I love to share my training style. It's my unique combination of everything I've ever learned thrown into one melting pot.

**Q AS A WELSHMAN LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES, HAS THE CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE AFFECTED YOU?**

I admit, before I moved here I didn't pay attention to U.K. politics, but now that I'm a businessman, the political situation seems to affect me more. My birth home is always Wales, but my

country for many years now is the United States. In fact, if I were doing all of my work in the U.K., I'd get more money back—but the U.S. is my home. My daughter is half and half, or both, as far as citizenship goes. Politically, I'm not going to say how I vote, but I will say that my business interests play a far greater role in my choices than social issues do.

# ROY CALLENDER

**THIS MARATHON MUSCLEMAN MAY HAVE DESERVED A SANDOW**

**■ ROY CALLENDER**

may be history's most underrated bodybuilder. Although virtually uncelebrated today, he won four pro shows and thrice finished in the Mr. Olympia top five. Let's focus on the Olympias. As a 38-year-old rookie in 1978, he placed an eye-opening third. In the controversial 1982 O, he was fourth, but some, including Joe Weider, felt he should've won. How differently would we think of him if he'd been given the nod? And he was fifth in 1984 at 44, ahead of defending champ Samir Bannout and two other Mr. O's.

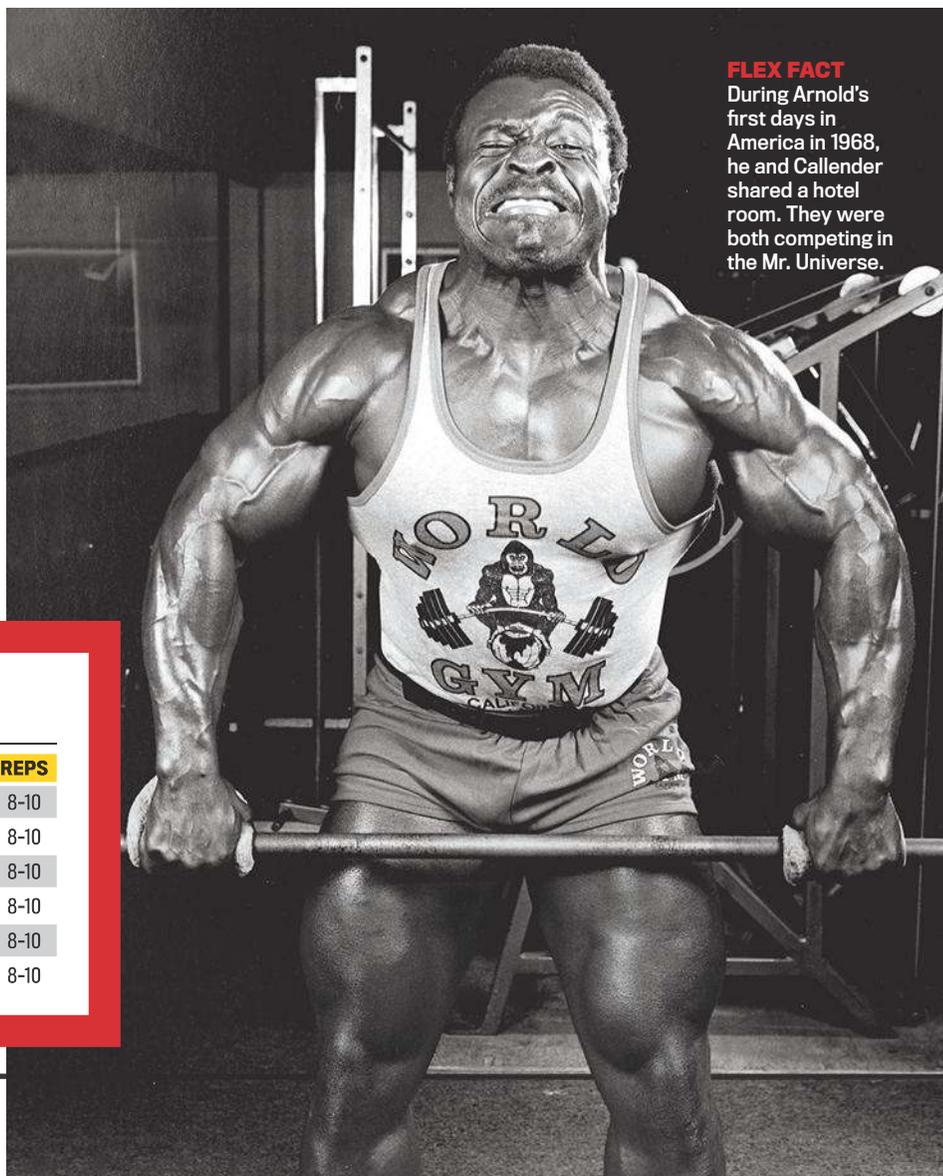
In addition to his middle-aged excellence, Callender was unique because of his marathon workouts. A typical session lasted

five hours and, with two body parts, consisted of more than 80 sets. (Those are not misprints.) And don't think he was lightly pumping. He pushed himself hard from the

start to much, much later, the finish. Few of us have the time or focus to train Callender-style to even determine its efficacy, but it certainly worked for him.

**CALLENDER ON MARATHON TRAINING**

- "Four hours, six hours, I go till I'm done. I never think about the end, only the next set."
- "I want to know the muscle has been completely exhausted before I call it quits."
- "I've trained with less volume. But I found this is what works for me."
- "Almost everyone who scoffs at my style of training has never tried it."



**FLEX FACT**  
During Arnold's first days in America in 1968, he and Callender shared a hotel room. They were both competing in the Mr. Universe.

**CALLENDER'S SHOULDER ROUTINE**

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Barbell Shoulder Press	8-10	8-10
Wide-grip Upright Row	8-10	8-10
Barbell Front Raise	8-10	8-10
Dumbbell Side Lateral	8-10	8-10
Dumbbell Rear Lateral	8-10	8-10
Dumbbell Shrug	8-10	8-10

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*William Bonac*

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# BE AFRAID

SIX-TIME MR. OLYMPIA PHIL HEATH IS MORE AFRAID OF HIMSELF THAN HE IS OF HIS COMPETITORS—AFRAID OF WHAT HE'S STILL CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING. AT 37 YEARS OLD, HE HASN'T PEAKED YET, ACCORDING TO HEATH, AND FANS AND FOES ALIKE SHOULD FEAR WHAT HE WILL BRING TO THE STAGE. HERE'S HIS TAKE ON LAST YEAR'S MR. OLYMPIA TOP FIVE.

**NONE OF LAST YEAR'S MR. O TOP FIVE HAS COMPETED IN 2017. WORRIED ABOUT SURPRISES?**

No.

**WHY COULDN'T SHAWN RHODEN BEAT YOU LAST YEAR?**

Not good enough. Never was, never will be. Best evidence of that is the contest tour that followed last year's

Olympia, which I wasn't part of. If Shawn was the threat he says he is, he would have won those shows instead of losing them to Ramy, Dexter, and William. Saying he beat me in 2016 is disrespectful to all of them, too. They're the ones he should be losing sleep over.

**SINCE 2014, PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SAYING RAMY WILL ONE DAY BEAT YOU.**

I beat Ramy like I beat everyone—better muscle, better symmetry, better separation, better overall conditioning. Ramy should weigh less, but the problem is that when he weighs less, he sacrifices muscle and conditioning. And when he does that, he stops being able to dwarf people on the stage. It kind of seems like when he loses the weight, he loses his advantage, but at the same time, he's never going to look his best without losing the weight.

**COMPETING AGAINST THE LEGENDARY BLADE...**

Dexter Jackson is a champion, but I've beaten him in contests ever since 2009, when he was dethroned. He hasn't earned a point against me in, what—we're approaching 10 years since he's beaten me. Yes, he's been in a lot more shows, and yes, he has more wins than any other pro in the IFBB...but you have to ask: If I'd done all those shows, too, if I'd been competing with him along the way since I won my first Olympia

**“They're all incredible competitors with incredible physiques. They get credit for that—but I also take some credit for that myself, because I'm the reason they're pushing themselves to the limits of what they can do. No one can look me in the eye and say I've maxed out. Getting past me isn't going to be easy for anyone. I've taken their best before, and they don't know what they're going to be facing from me in September. Going up against me, nothing less is going to count.”**



title, would he have as many wins on the record? I don't think so.

**WILL “THE CONQUEROR” HAVE HIS DAY?**

What does William Bonac have to do to win

the O title? Well, for starters, he's going to have to go through me. I don't think that's going to happen, but you have to be honest and know that everyone up there is a threat. I happen to think William is a threat

to everyone other than me. There's no frontrunner against me. I was one of those who noticed William early on, when no one knew who he was. I've got nothing bad to say about William.

# LIFT

TRAINING TIPS  
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**74**

Don't be a meathead! Building your muscles can help improve brain function, so hit the weights to smarten up.



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# SMARTEN UP

## BODYBUILDING MIGHT MAKE YOU SMARTER. WHO'S THE MEATHEAD, NOW?

### HYPOTHESIS

There is substantial evidence showing that physical activity and specially structured exercise supports cognitive health. One of the known mechanisms that connect exercise and the brain is a protein called brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF). BDNF is involved in the growth

and repair of brain cells. Results from aerobic exercise studies have shown upregulation and increased circulating levels of BDNF. The effect of aerobic exercise on BDNF increases as exercise intensity increases. The impact of resistance exercise on BDNF is less clear so researchers from Murdoch University in Australia conducted a study to find out.

### RESEARCH

This study, published in the *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport* compared the effect of two different resistance

exercise workouts on BDNF levels. One group performed a strength-focused workout (5 reps x 5 sets with 3 minutes' rest between sets). The other group performed a hypertrophy-focused workout (10 reps x 3 sets with 1 minute's rest between sets). To measure BDNF levels, blood samples were collected before warmup, immediately after the workout, and then 30 minutes later.

### FINDINGS

Hypertrophy workouts produced a significant increase in BDNF levels while strength workouts did not.

### CONCLUSION

Acute resistance exercise using a moderate rep range increases serum BDNF concentrations when performed at 100% of 10RM with 60 seconds of rest in between sets. Hypertrophy-type resistance exercise is likely to provide cognitive benefit due to increased BDNF expression.

### APPLICATION

The take-home message from this study is that bodybuilding, or at least the time training in the gym, is a healthy endeavour and should be maintained throughout your life not just to maintain physical strength but also to help maintain cognitive function as you age.



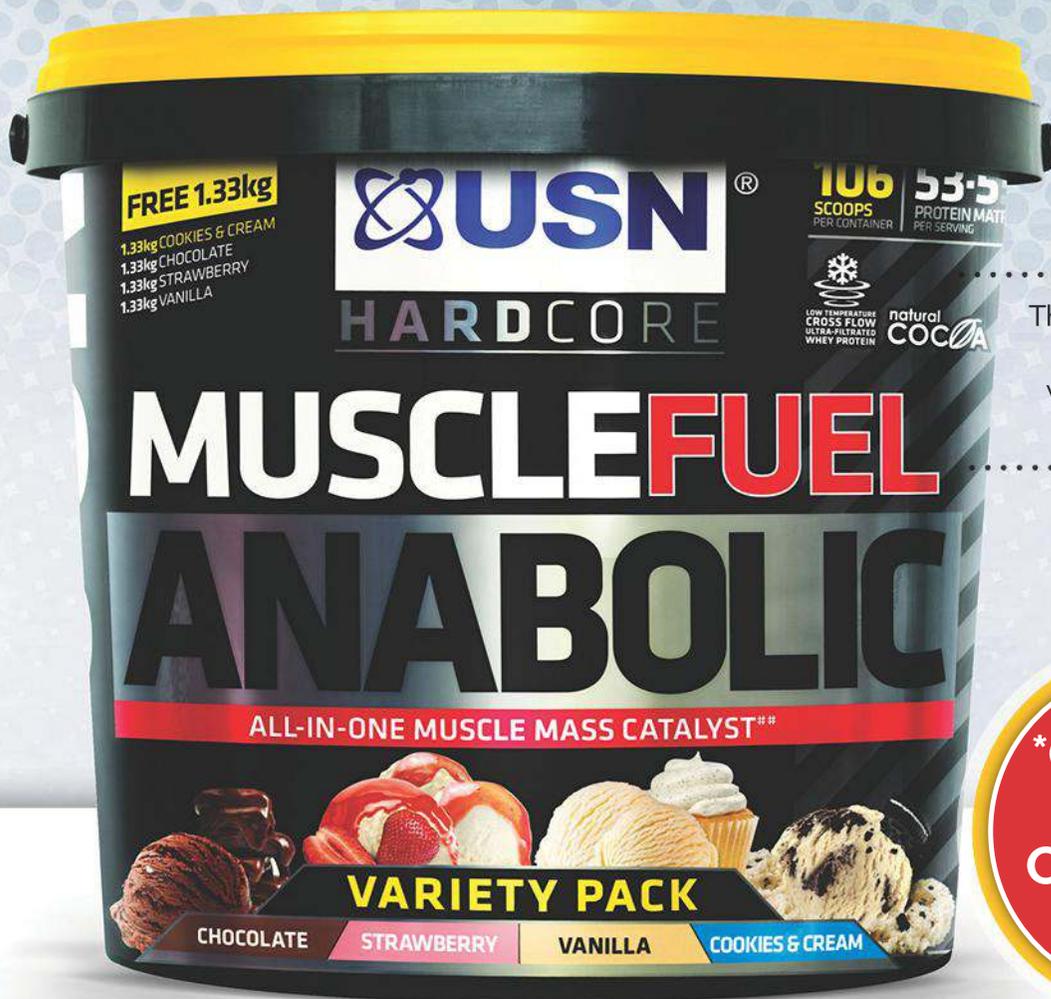
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# OLYMPIA GAME DAY

IAN SPANIER



## GETTING FLEX LEWIS AND WILLIAM BONAC READY FOR THE BIG O STAGE

### ■ SHOW DAY AT THE

Olympia for Team Y3T is always very demanding. There are naturally a lot of expectations from around the world of bodybuilding for Flex Lewis to defend his 212 Olympia title and for William Bonac to climb farther up the Mr. Olympia ladder. As the coach, I'm going to give you a never-before-shared insight into what Olympia show day looks like for myself and Team Y3T athletes Flex Lewis and William Bonac.

### EARLY-MORNING ASSESSMENTS

I'll rise very early, usually between 5 and 6 a.m. to go and see Flex and William. Generally, we make a habit of staying in the same hotel to set up camp—this allows us the added convenience of being close enough to one another so I can keep an eye on things for the whole duration of our stay. The reason I get up so early is to see what their condition is looking like. There is always a plan of action we implement seven to 10 days out from show day as part of the “peak week” strategy. However, things don't always go as you'd like them to. Seemingly minor details can make drastic alterations in the way their physique appears on that Olympia stage. Absolutely nothing is left to chance!

In this early-morning assessment what I'm looking for are key markers I use to judge their condition for that time of day. For instance, I know that there are certain tie-ins around Flex's glutes that indicate if he's where he needs to be. When William hits a double-biceps rear shot I know the skin folds in his lower back need to be very tight to ensure he's sharp enough this far out from stepping onstage.

### CREATING THE DIET PLAN

Once I have assessed both

athletes individually I will then immediately write out their diet plan for the day. Variables like carbohydrate intake and essential fatty acids are going to play a key role in how their final conditioning appears onstage. If we don't consume enough, then they might look flat, and if we push too hard they could spill over and retain subcutaneous fluid. Neither is desirable—we want hard, sharp, crisp conditioning with full muscle bellies from every angle.

Other key considerations include meal timings and food sources. For instance, I know that there are certain foods that can upset Flex's GI tract, potentially leaving him with bloating or even fluid retention. Usually my preference is to use easily digestible foods because the gut is naturally going to be under more stress than usual while the body is this lean because it's fighting an unnatural state. On top of this, it's fair to presume both athletes will feel stressed because of the occasion, which can mean cortisol levels go up, again affecting digestion. These are the kinds of details which really matter and could be the difference between first and second place.

In regard to timing meals correctly, it isn't enough to simply eat the net calories and macros I've set for the day. As the show nears, by the hour I might swap food sources as a means of helping retain fullness, or opt for a variety of food, which has a different sodium content in comparison with other alternatives.

### ADDRESSING FLUID INTAKE

Depending on how the athlete has looked during the week, I will have done some form of water manipulation going into the show along



with adjustments in sodium intake. The reason for this is to make the muscles more responsive going into the show, drawing more fluid and glycogen into the muscle cell from underneath the skin. As a result, conditioning becomes much sharper and overall muscle fullness also improves.

Again, the amount of fluid William or Flex will take in on show day is very dependant on where their overall appearance is during the morning assessment. I've never used extreme dehydration principles because I don't feel it is productive or healthy. However, there will be a degree of manipulation taking place that will be dictated by their condition and fullness. Adding sodium on show day can play a very positive role in increasing fullness and an uptake in condition.

One key point I'd like to make in relation to sodium and water

is that they are both relevant to carbohydrate intake. For instance, if I'm heavily carb loading Flex or William because I feel that's what they need, then their water intake will need to reflect that. There's little point going overkill with carbohydrates without enough water present to distribute the glycogen. There are many small parts to the bigger picture.

### REASSESSING PROGRESS

The initial phases I've covered give an insight into what is required in order to come up with the action plan on show day. However, even once that's in place there is still a need for constant reassessment. For instance, if I've asked Flex or William to carb load and increase their fluid, I need to check in

every three to four hours to see that their body is changing as I want it to. This requires another in-person assessment as I do first thing in the morning; however, between these times I'm always in constant contact via my phone with both athletes to get the specific feedback that I need.

Based on the feedback I'm getting and the reassessment, I might even make changes to the plan I made earlier that morning. This close to going on the Olympia stage, every minor detail counts and I'm never afraid to make changes. One thing I've always been able to do is remain calm and avoid making bad decisions out of panic. It's essential that I remain completely relaxed and methodical rather than getting caught up in the moment. Yes, there is pressure on me to deliver as the coach, but ultimately I'm experienced enough to know when things are going right or wrong and will act accordingly.

### LAST-MINUTE PREPARATIONS

Obviously, before William and Flex go backstage to prepare themselves I've given both athletes a game plan. This includes getting their "pump up" routine correct in relation to their nutrient/fluid intake and helping them get their posing correct. It's incredible how hitting the right pose for an athlete can help with their overall placing, or have a negative effect if they get this wrong. As a result, every fine detail is covered so by the time they're backstage the work has been done and it's simply a case of both athletes showcasing all of the sacrifice and dedication they've made.

### SUMMARY

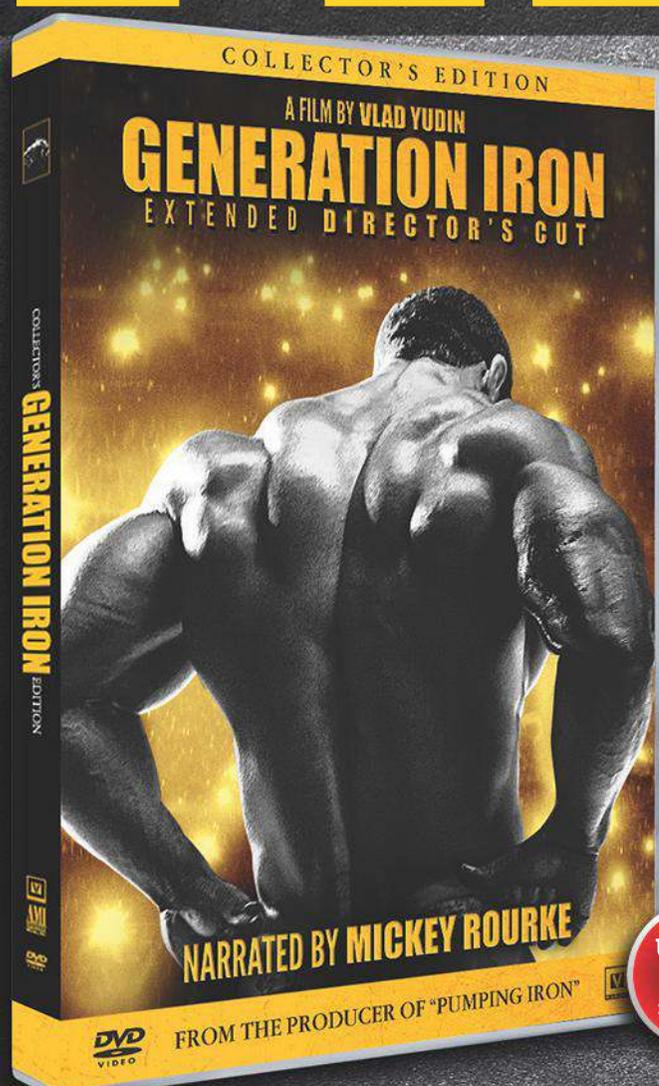
The main point I want to get across is that there's no set way that I follow blindly. The body is an amazing system full of microorganisms that respond in different ways because of the many variables that are out of our control. I constantly must assess and adjust.

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# THE TRUTH... PERIOD!

## LINEAR, UNDULATING, DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

### OPENING ARGUMENTS

**Defence:** The premise for most training models, especially those that incorporate periodization, is founded on the research of Hans Selye from the 1930s. Selye studied the effects of chronic stress on rats. He found that exposing rats to toxic levels of “noxious agents” and even swimming to exhaustion caused a systemic reaction (mainly thymus involution and adrenal hyperplasia), which he termed the stress response. He divided this stress

response into three stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion, and called it the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). The GAS model states that chronic exposure to a particular stressor may lead to an exhaustion phase in which adaptation is no longer possible. Therefore, the objective of periodization is to alter volume, intensity, and training frequency to maximize performance and reduce the odds of overtraining. Thus, GAS and periodization eventually found their way into bodybuilding training.

### Prosecution:

Contrary to what is commonly believed, there is little evidence that a periodized programme leads to greater muscle growth compared with a nonperiodized programme that includes progressive overload.

### EVIDENCE:

- Some initial research comparing periodized with nonperiodized training reported an advantage for periodized programmes, but these studies used underwater weighing and other imprecise methods to determine changes in muscle mass.
- When very precise methods of measuring muscle mass (i.e., magnetic resonance imaging) were used, there have been no differences observed in at least seven studies between periodized and non-periodized programmes measuring muscle growth.

### VERDICT:

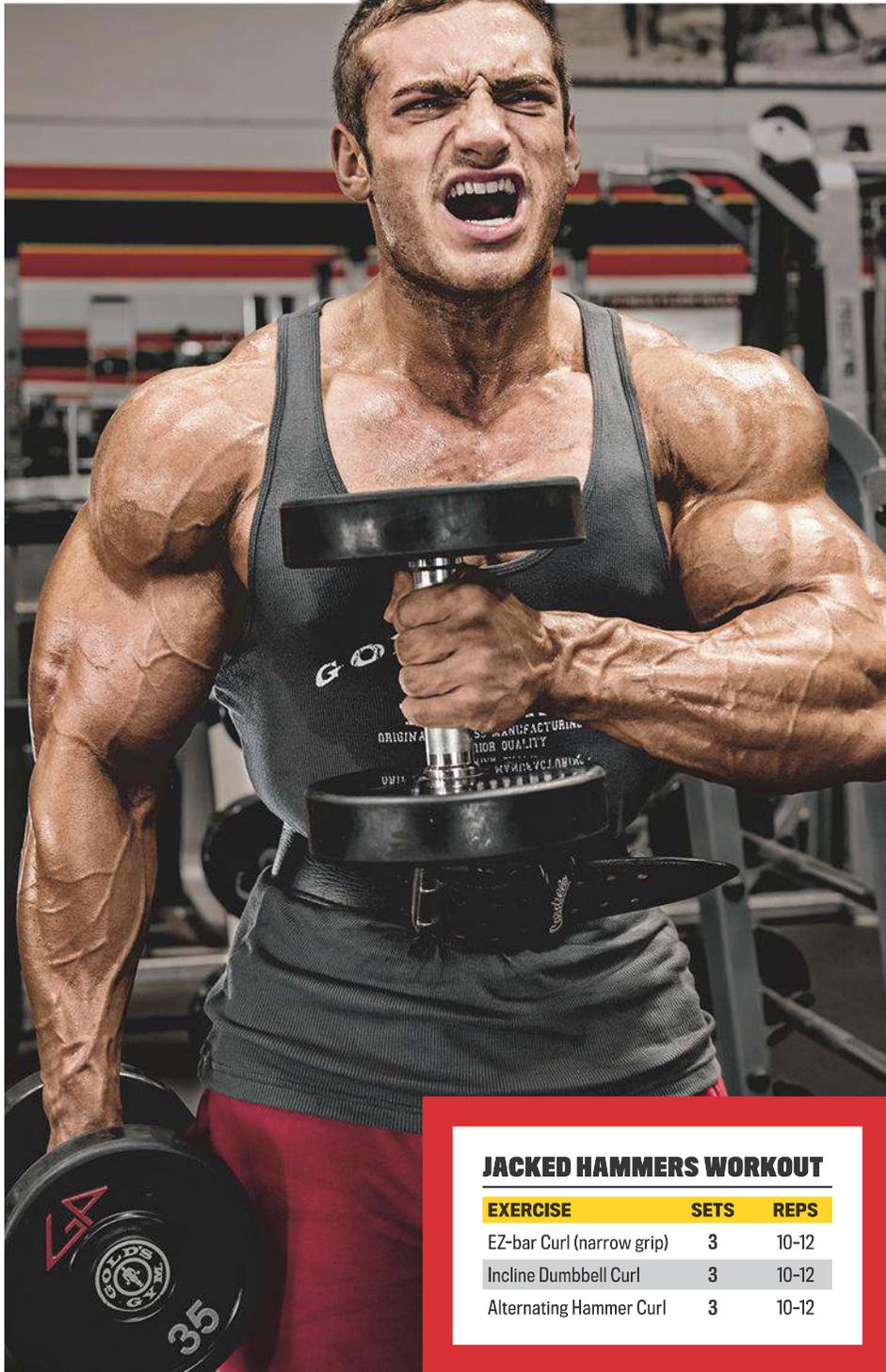
Periodization as either linear or undulating will not produce any better gains than a nonperiodized programme.

### SENTENCING:

Unlike traditional periodization based on the GAS model, HST's structure is based on principles of progressive load and the “repeated bout effect,” not stress. The repeated bout effect refers to the adaptation whereby a single bout of resistance exercise protects against muscle damage from subsequent exercise bouts. Over time, the repeated bout effect inhibits not only muscle damage but also muscle growth. The cyclical nature of HST incorporates continually increasing loads followed by a period of “strategic deconditioning” to undo some of the repeated bout effect.

# NAIL THOSE BRACHS

HAMMER THIS CRITICAL MUSCLE WITH THIS CURL



■ **WHEN PEOPLE THINK** of arms, they generally think of biceps and triceps. Well-developed forearms are equally important, however, and will either add or detract from your physique. One particularly important muscle of the forearm is the **brachioradialis**. Arguably the best exercise for building the brachioradialis is alternating dumbbell hammer curls. Starting with the dumbbells at your side with palms facing inward, curl up the right dumbbell keeping a thumb-up hand position as if holding a hammer. Then lower the weight to the starting position. As a slight variation, bring the dumbbell across your torso up to the chest as you curl it up.

**ALTERNATIVES**

Rope hammer curl using low cable.

**WHEN TO FOCUS ON THE BRACHIORADIALIS**

Hammer curls can be incorporated anywhere in your biceps workout. They work well both as a starter or finisher. One effective application of hammer curls is at the end of a set of traditional dumbbell curls as a type of dropset, simply by turning the wrist and knocking out a few additional reps.

**FORM AND FUNCTION**

The brachioradialis spans the elbow joint anteriorly, making it an elbow flexor. Its origin is on the lateral ridge on the distal end of the humerus. Its insertion is along the lateral surface at the distal end of the radius.

**JACKED HAMMERS WORKOUT**

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
EZ-bar Curl (narrow grip)	3	10-12
Incline Dumbbell Curl	3	10-12
Alternating Hammer Curl	3	10-12

PER BERNAL

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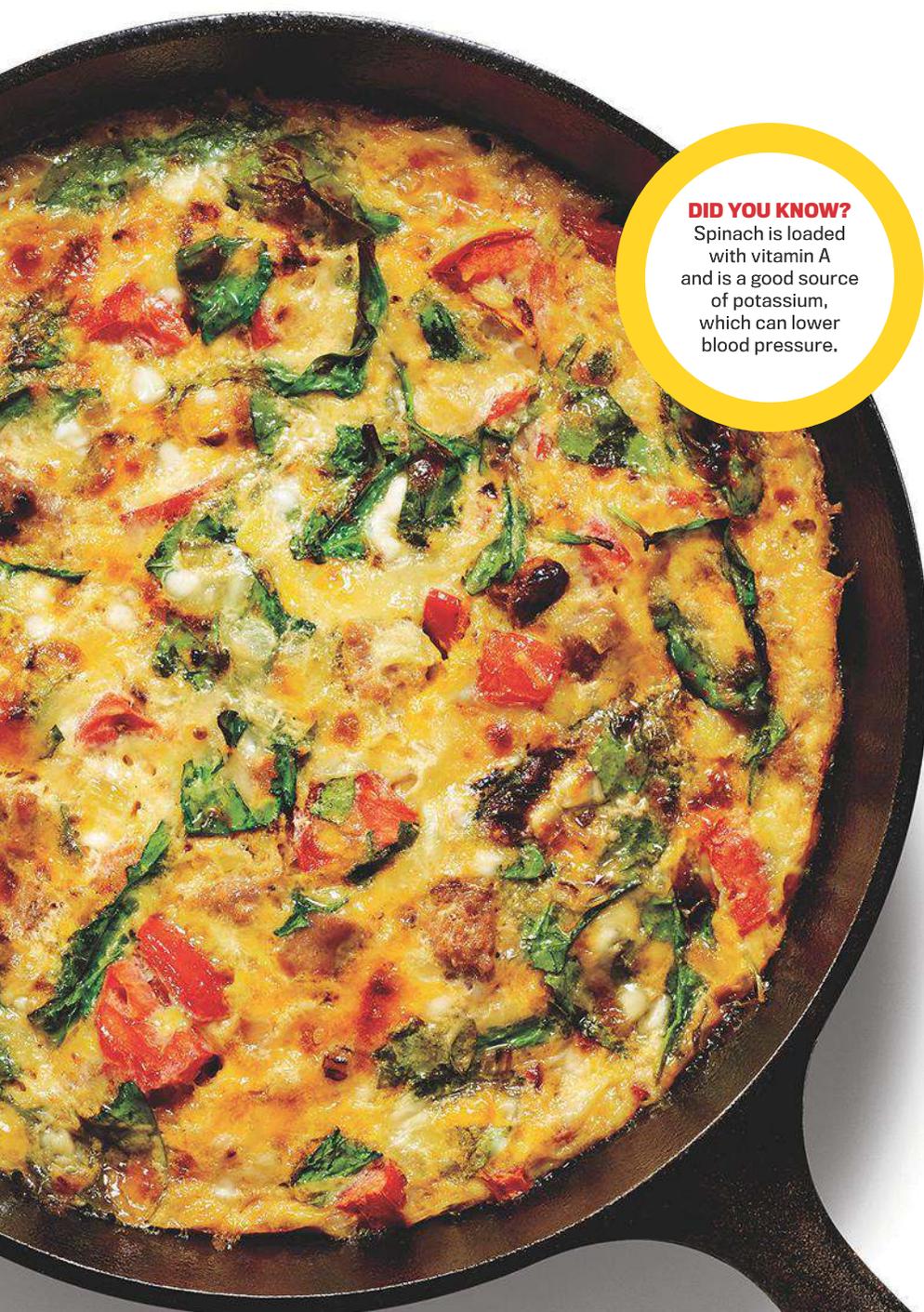


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# TURKEY SAUSAGE FRITTATA

**BECAUSE THE BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS DOESN'T COME IN A BOX**



**DID YOU KNOW?**  
Spinach is loaded with vitamin A and is a good source of potassium, which can lower blood pressure.

SERVES 2

**INGREDIENTS**

- Nonstick, nonfat cooking spray
- 75 g turkey sausage, cooked and diced
- 80 g diced onion
- 100g grated Swiss cheese
- 35 g baby spinach
- 225 g nonfat cottage cheese
- 100g diced tomatoes
- 125ml nonfat evaporated milk
- 30 g reduced-fat cheddar cheese
- 2 whole eggs
- 2 egg whites
- 1 tsp baking powder

**DIRECTIONS**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 180°C/Gas Mark 4.
- 2.** Coat a sauté pan with cooking spray and place over medium-high heat. Add sausage and onion and sauté for 3 minutes. Set aside.
- 3.** Coat a 23-cm cast iron skillet with cooking spray. Add sausage, onion, and 35 g Swiss cheese.
- 4.** In a bowl, whisk together remaining Swiss cheese with spinach, cottage cheese, tomatoes, milk, cheddar cheese, eggs, and baking powder.
- 5.** Pour egg mixture over sausage mixture, then place the pan in the oven. Bake for 45 minutes, or until a knife inserted into the

<b>487</b>	<b>27g</b>
CALORIES	CARBS
<b>47g</b>	<b>22g</b>
PROTEIN	FAT

SAM KAPLAN; FOOD STYLING BY SUZANNE LENZER

**QUICK TIP**  
Choose U-10 sea scallops. U-10 is short for "under 10." As in, it would take fewer than 10 of these to make 450 grams.

# SEARED SEA SCALLOPS

LEAN PROTEIN, HIGH FIBRE, AND ENOUGH COMPLEXITY TO SATISFY ANY PALATE

SERVES 4

## INGREDIENTS

### FOR THE PEA PUREE:

360 g peas, blanched  
240 ml chicken stock, cold  
1½ tbsp honey  
Salt and white pepper, to taste

### FOR THE WHITE BEAN SOFRITO:

6 spring onions, minced  
65 ml extra-virgin olive oil  
2 red peppers, diced small  
240 ml white wine  
150g white beans, cooked  
60 ml fresh lemon juice  
Splash chicken stock  
1½ tsp salted butter

### FOR THE SEA SCALLOPS:

2 tbsp rapeseed oil  
16 large dry sea scallops

## DIRECTIONS

### 1. PEA PUREE:

Place peas in a blender. Blend slowly and add chicken stock and honey. Blend faster and add salt and white pepper. Continue until very smooth.

### 2. WHITE BEAN SOFRITO:

In a sauté pan over medium heat, sweat spring onions in olive oil, then add peppers. Cook for 1 minute, then deglaze with wine. Add beans, lemon juice, stock, and butter.

### 3. SEA SCALLOPS:

In a large sauté pan over medium-high heat, add rapeseed oil. Once hot, add scallops; cook for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, until golden brown. Plate with soffrito and pea puree.

**568**

CALORIES

**43g**

CARBS

**38g**

PROTEIN

**24g**

FAT



# BREW HA-HA

**LIMIT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AFTER WORKOUTS TO MAINTAIN A LEAN, HEALTHY, AND STRONG BODY**

**Q**

## **DOES DRINKING ALCOHOL NEGATE THE BENEFITS OF MY WORKOUT?**

When choosing alcohol after exercise, it's important to use moderation, which in dietary terms includes one drink per day for females, and two drinks per day for males. So what counts as one drink? A 350-ml beer (at about 5% alcohol by volume, or ABV), 150 ml of wine, or 45 ml of hard liquor (80 proof).

One thing to consider is that alcohol may interfere with adequate nutrient intake and absorption. For example, beer contains some carbohydrates (about 11g per 350 ml) and small amounts of sodium and potassium, but drinking alcohol can increase urine output—or has a diuretic effect—which inhibits the amount of nutrients your body can absorb and encourages excretion of stored minerals like calcium

and magnesium.

If you do indulge, go for a lower ABV percentage (less than 4%), which may not affect your recovery as much, since the higher the alcohol percentage, the greater the negative effects it can have on performance and recovery. Also, consuming alcohol with food can help decrease feeling drunk given that food will slow the absorption of alcohol. (Alcohol is absorbed more slowly by the stomach and more rapidly by the small intestines.)

There are studies that suggest that alcohol can impair the recovery process, decrease glycogen resynthesis in the absence of carbohydrates (so consumed without food), delay rehydration, and decrease muscle protein synthesis. Excessive alcohol can also interrupt normal sleep patterns, contribute to weight gain, and lead to increased injury risk.

Kelly Pritchett, Ph.D., R.D., is an assistant professor in nutrition and exercise science and a national media spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

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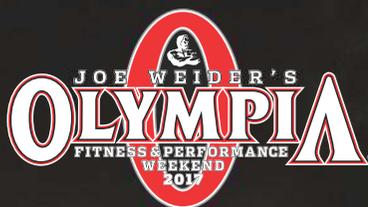
BY **JOE WUEBBEN** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **PER BERNAL**

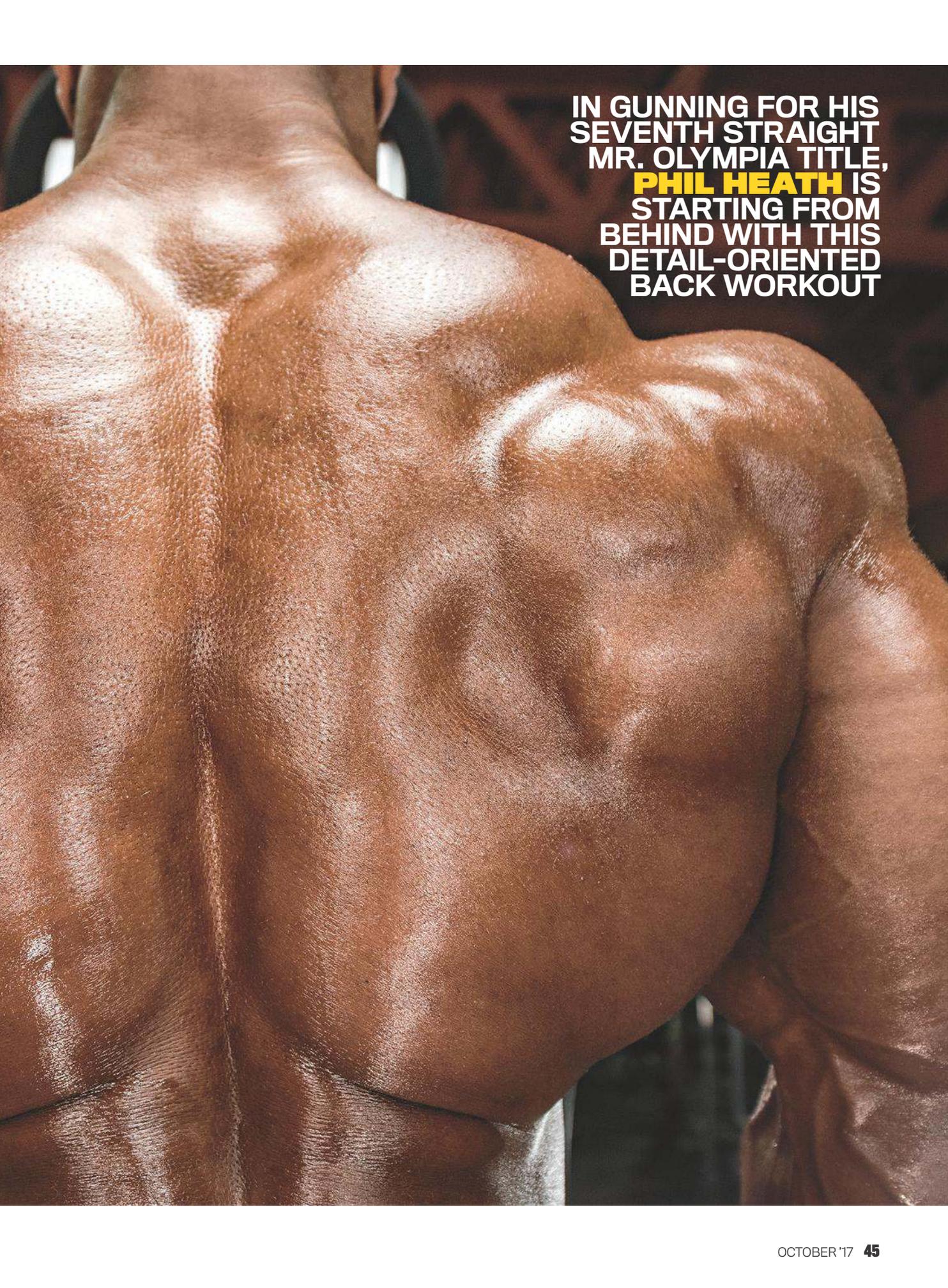
# BACK

# UP



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IN GUNNING FOR HIS SEVENTH STRAIGHT MR. OLYMPIA TITLE, **PHIL HEATH** IS STARTING FROM BEHIND WITH THIS DETAIL-ORIENTED BACK WORKOUT

# HOW DO YOU TRAIN

# THE MAN WHO HAS IT ALL?

This is the challenge now faced on an annual basis by Hany Rambod, personal trainer to six-time reigning Mr. Olympia Phil Heath. When we interviewed Rambod for this article in early June, Heath was deep into his 2017 Olympia training, roughly 3½ months out from stepping onstage to try to

win his seventh Sandow. One year ago, the Gift brought an unbeatable physique to the stage, showing noticeable improvements in both his legs and back. Which begs the question: Is it even possible to improve significantly? If not, it won't be from a lack of trying.

"The overall goal right now is just for continued refinement, because he's already got a complete physique," says Rambod. "With his back, Phil did an amazing job last year bringing in more detail, and this year he's going to continue to bring in the detail. Last year, I think, was one of the biggest jumps in the past 10 years that he's had in his back development."

Heath's training strategy last year focused on utilizing as many different angles as possible—namely with his back training, but for other muscle groups as well. The goal was to maximize the mind connection by squeezing peak contractions and maintaining constant tension through full ranges of motion, as opposed to simply throwing heavy weights around in haphazard fashion. "Sometimes in training you get into that rut of just counting reps," says Rambod. "We're trying to get away from that. We're trying to get the quality over quantity."

But with the emphasis on all the different angles last year, is there still some juice left to be squeezed from that fruit in 2017? Rambod says "yes and no." On lat days, he and Phil are going back to the well as we speak—but it's not only the 2016 well they're drawing from.

"We're still trying to get the contractions," says Rambod, "but we're also going to continue to change up angles. We're going to do things we haven't done in a while, stuff that we might have done five or eight years ago but that we haven't really focused on lately."

So how do you train the man who has it all? By covering all the bases (angles) and focusing on the details, that's how.





## SNAPSHOT: PHIL HEATH

**HEIGHT:** 175 cm

**WEIGHT:** 113 kg (contest); 125 kg (off-season)

**BIRTH DATE:** Dec. 18, 1979

**RESIDENCE:** Denver, Colorado

**NICKNAME:** The Gift

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:**

2011-16 Mr. Olympia winner; 2013 Arnold Classic Europe, 1st; 2011-12 Sheru Classic, 1st; 2008 Ironman Pro, 1st; 2006 New York Pro, 1st; 2006 Colorado Pro, 1st; 2005 USA Championships, heavyweight and overall winner

# WIDE-GRIP

# LAT PULLDOWN



## RAMBOD'S REMARKS

"Make sure you're going a little wider than shoulder width on the grip, and arch your back so that your chest is facing up toward the pulley. Use your arms like hooks and drive down with the elbows. I also recommend using wrist straps on heavier weight sets so that your forearms and biceps don't give out before your back does."





# BEHIND-THE-NECK

# LAT PULLDOWN



## RAMBOD'S REMARKS

"Don't go too heavy behind the neck; this is a finesse movement, not a brute strength movement. Use a comfortable weight that challenges you but doesn't impede proper form. The two-second pauses on the last three reps really help to amplify the contraction. When I do these with Phil, he holds the down position right behind the neck, which simulates a back double-biceps pose. You don't have to bring the bar all the way down to your upper traps—just tilt your head forward and touch just above the traps."

GROOMING BY TIFFANY DANIEL S. ROBERT REIFF (BASKETBALL)



## PHIL HEATH: THE MICHAEL JORDAN OF BODYBUILDING?

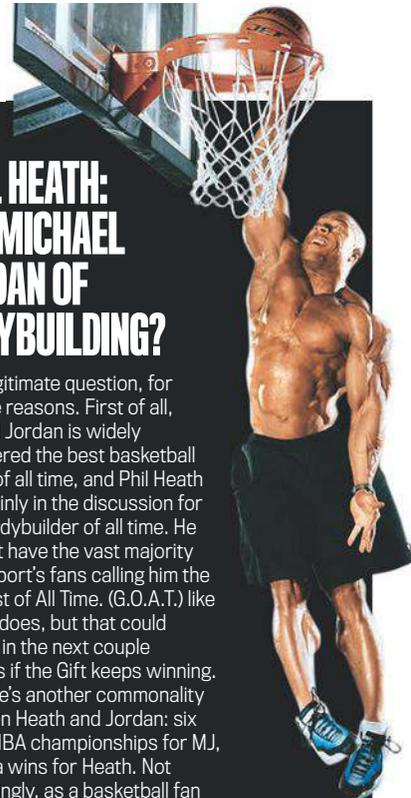
It's a legitimate question, for multiple reasons. First of all, Michael Jordan is widely considered the best basketball player of all time, and Phil Heath is certainly in the discussion for best bodybuilder of all time. He may not have the vast majority of his sport's fans calling him the Greatest of All Time (G.O.A.T.) like Jordan does, but that could change in the next couple of years if the Gift keeps winning.

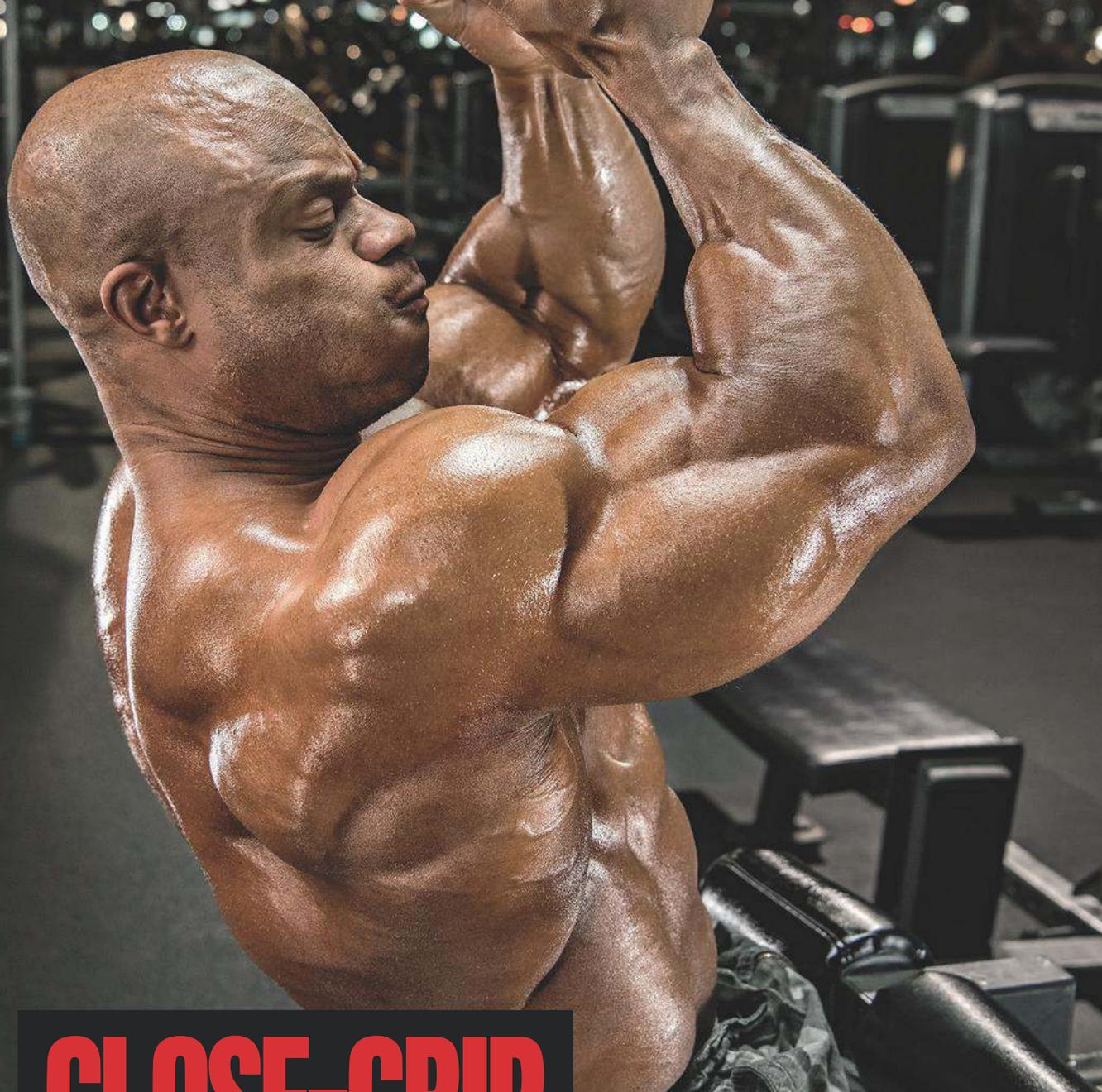
Here's another commonality between Heath and Jordan: six titles—NBA championships for MJ, Olympia wins for Heath. Not surprisingly, as a basketball fan and former Division I hoops player himself, Heath is fully aware that he's currently even with Jordan (albeit in a completely different sport) and likely soon to surpass him. His thoughts on the matter are this:

"Here's the difference: When Jordan won six, it was pretty much a wrap. There was really no more after that. [Jordan retired shortly after winning his last title in Chicago before returning and playing for the Washington Wizards years later and past his prime.] Whereas for me, I'm not quitting in my prime. I'm just now approaching it. I feel like it all depends on how I win from this day forward if I'm going to be considered as one of the best Mr. Olympias of all time, if not the best.

"My training is more dedicated to beating myself and realizing that if I do that, I'll put myself in the [G.O.A.T.] conversation. The numbers won't lie. I'm beating some incredible guys, but one thing I'm not doing is concerning myself with any other athletes, because no other athlete that I'm competing against has won more than one Mr. Olympia, so they don't know what it takes. The only people I can relate to at this point are Dorian, Arnold, Haney, and Ronnie, so I'm approaching some already legendary territory.

"I may not be like Dorian, for instance, but I need to understand what got him there—and that was a no-nonsense attitude. He knew what he was doing. Even though he got hurt, he was still able to win. I'm not trying to be like Dorian, but I'm trying to win like him. That's sort of a mind game. I've already proved I can do it. At this point it's more a matter of, am I motivated enough? How many bad days do I allow to occur during my prep? Stuff like that—that's the only thing that's going to happen. As long as I'm excited and able to go through life's challenges, nothing's going to stop this."

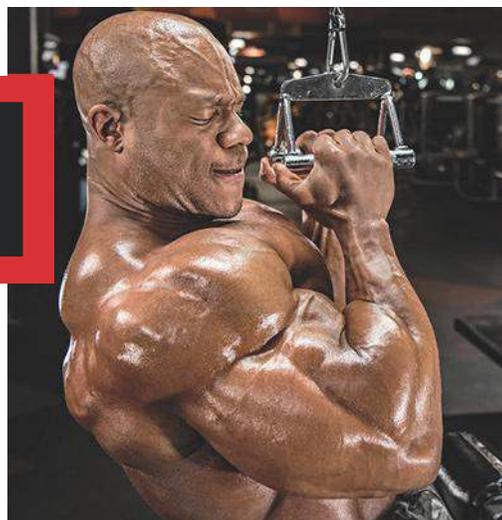




# CLOSE-GRIP

# LAT PULLDOWN

**RAMBOD'S REMARKS** "Make sure you don't end up pulling with your arms on this move—this isn't a biceps exercise. Pull with the elbows and contract your back so that as the bar is moving toward your sternum, you're bringing your elbows back and your lats contract and you're squeezing your shoulder blades together."





## HEATH'S BACK WORKOUT

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Wide-grip Lat Pulldown	4	10-15
Behind-the-neck Lat Pulldown	4	10-12*
Close-grip Lat Pulldown	3	8-10
Wide-grip Seated Cable Row	3	8-10
Barbell Bentover Row	3	8-10*
One-arm Dumbbell Row	3	6-8
Straight-arm Rope Pulldown (FST-7)	7	10-12**

Note: This workout was designed by Hany Rambod, renowned physique trainer and creator of FST-7 ([fst7.com](http://fst7.com)).

\*With a two-second pause and squeeze at peak contraction on each of the last three reps—doing this on all sets for the exercise.

\*\*Resting 30 seconds between sets, per FST-7 protocol.

## OLYMPIA TRAINING SPLIT

**DAY 1** Shoulders, biceps

**DAY 2** Legs

**DAY 3** Back

**DAY 4** Chest, triceps

**DAY 5** Off

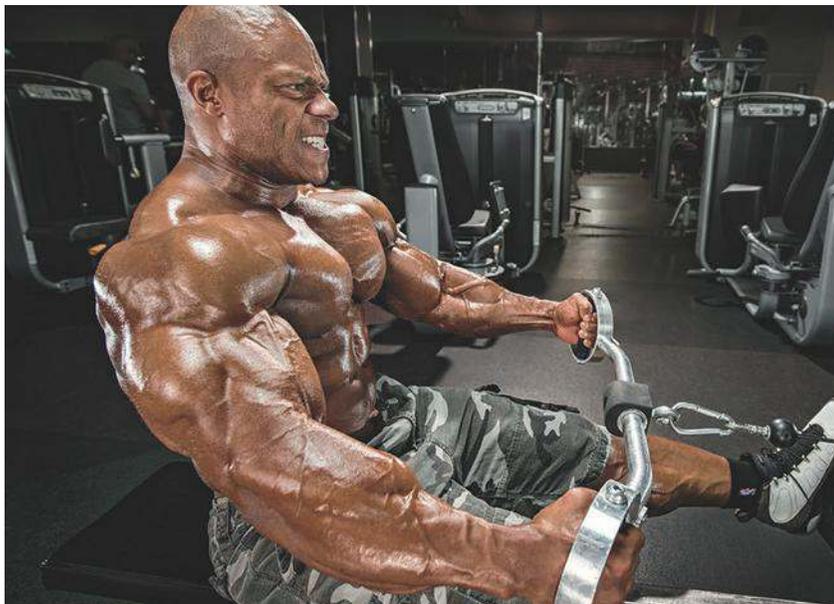
**DAY 6** Cycle repeats

"This training split is not set in stone," says Rambod, who at the time of this interview in early June was scheduled to train Heath in person the following week and start putting together his split. "Legs and shoulders are a priority for Phil right now, so I'd like to train those body parts twice a week and others just once. But I'll need to see how his body responds and make adjustments accordingly. If he's really recovering well, we could go six days on, one off. We'll see."





# WIDE-GRIP SEATED CABLE ROW



## RAMBOD'S REMARKS

"The reason you're using this wider-grip attachment is that you're changing the 'angle of attack,' so to speak, on your back. It's really important to create variation with grip widths and hand placements so that you can work from all the different angles on the back—not just the same things repetitively over and over again. You want to use not only the narrow-grip bars but also the longer bars that allow you to go wide." **FLEX**





# THE “REALITY”

**BODYBUILDING REQUIRES FAITH, AND HERE FAITH TO SPECULATE ON THE DESTINATION OF**

■ Ah, September and Las Vegas. That time of year when Sin City is dominated by exotically enhanced creatures sporting every kind of physical extreme as they, adorned by body and face paint but not a lot of clothing, present their weird and esoteric talents of

varying levels in front of a beguiled audience. But forget about Cirque du Soleil—we’re here to check out the 53rd rendition of Joe Weider’s Olympia Weekend being staged in Las Vegas from Sept. 14 to 17.

OK, the brief was to do an

Olympic preview. Well, the formal tale-of-the-tape treatment can be boring and doesn’t really hit the spot. OK, he’s 114 kg, but 114 kilos of what? There’s the alternative of collating prediction quotes from the Mr. Olympia class of 2017.



# OLYMPIA

## WE TAKE A GIANT LEAP OF THE 2017 SANDOW

BY **PETER MCGOUGH**  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **PER BERNAL**

Yeah, yawn...get ready for this repetitive quote: "This is my best prep ever, and I will be in the best shape of my life. #If I do well it's down to me. #If I don't it's down to my guru."

Time to get out my crystal ball (a consequence of an overly

ambitious leap over a bicycle crossbar), and, as in keeping with the current vogue of treating everything as a reality show (especially things that aren't real), here's that leap of faith offering a fictional account of the climax of this year's Mr. Olympia.

Check out [FLEXonline.com](http://FLEXonline.com) for all our Olympia coverage, including extended division lineups, interviews with the athletes, and updates and callout reports throughout the weekend, presented by Hi-Tech Pharmaceuticals.



Watch the finals live! Be sure to catch all



the action onstage with the [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) live webcast: **Fitness, Figure, and Classic Physique** finals, 212 and Mr. Olympia judging (Friday, Sept. 15); **Bikini, 212, and Mr. Olympia** finals (Saturday, Sept. 16). Tune in to [amazon.com/mrolympia](http://amazon.com/mrolympia) to watch.

# THE GATHERING STORM

On Thursday, Sept. 14, 2017, the Mr. Olympia contenders assembled in the Ballroom at Orleans Hotel, Las Vegas, for the press conference. All summer, the possibility of Kai Greene entering the show had ricocheted around like the marbles in Kim Jong-un's head. Greene, a three-time Mr. Olympia runner-up, hadn't competed since his appearance at the 2014 Olympia, where that infamous in-your-face confrontation with champion Phil Heath took place. Would Greene show? All 22 competitors were introduced to the audience, the final one being Phil Heath. Emcee Bob Cicherillo, who could give lessons in suspense to Alfred Hitchcock, boomed into the microphone, "And now, ladies and gentlemen, our final competitor...special invitee Kai Greene!"

The audience went nuts. I've never heard such hullabaloo since the Firehouse in Venice said it had run out of chicken breasts. A seated Phil Heath shot a rueful smile toward Dexter Jackson, who just rolled his eyes.

As the dust settled, Bob's first question was to Phil: "So your reaction to Kai competing?"

The response: "The more the merrier—isn't going to affect the outcome."

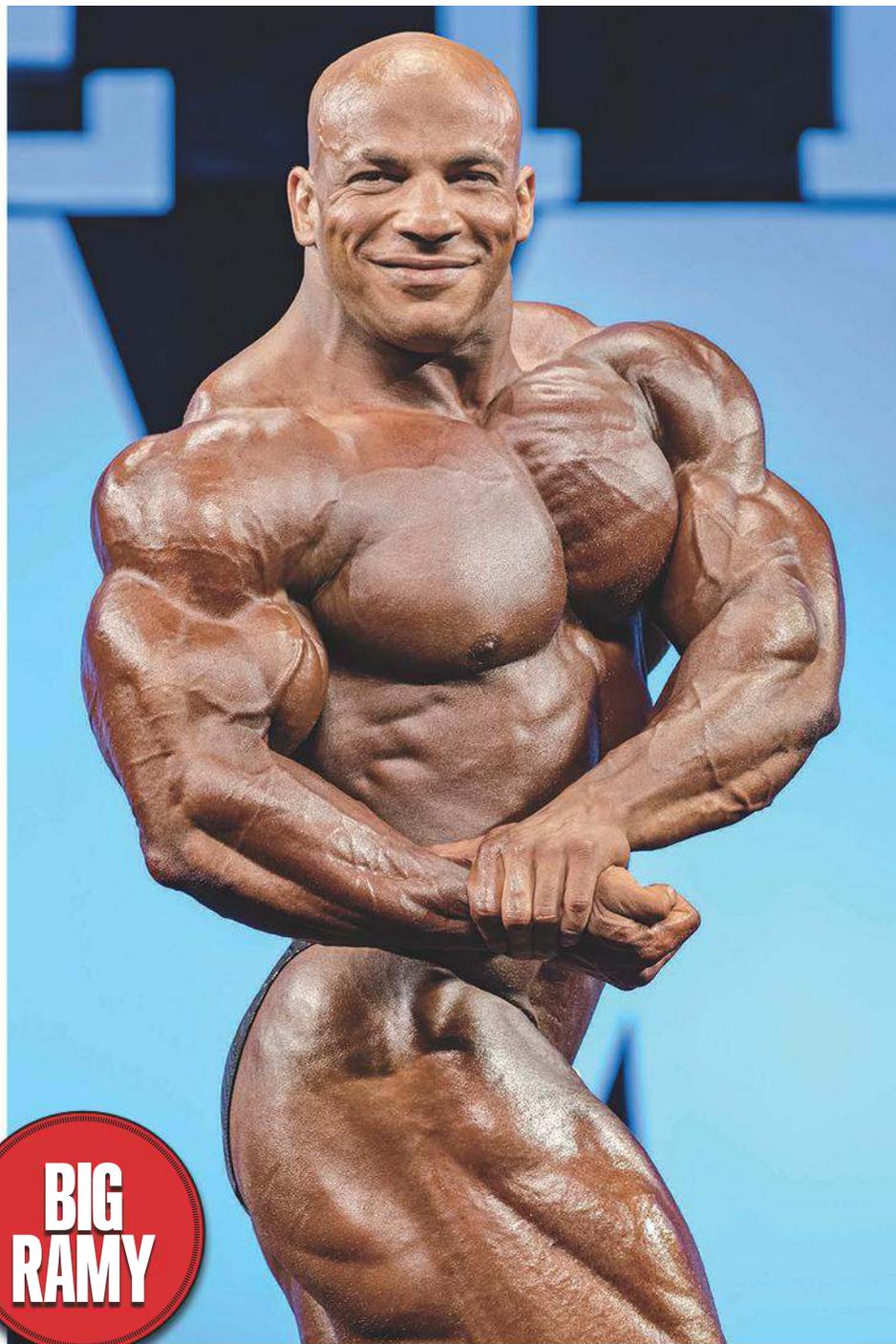
Bob to Kai: "Where you been, bro?"

With a sphinxlike smile Kai replied: "I've been busy, real busy."

Bob asked the question of Kai everyone wanted to ask: "So are you going to win this show?"

In laconic fashion Kai drawled, "You'll have to wait until Friday night [pre-judging] to begin."

In fact, after numerous questions back and forth between Kai and Phil, they both took the same view: Wait until pre-judging. The usually verbose and meandering Kai was as



talkative as a Trappist monk. Compared with the pyrotechnics at the 2014 press conference, this had all the combustion of a senior-citizen knitting circle, and certainly less needle.

After the Kai/Phil interaction, Shawn Rhoden, last year's runner-up, cracked the same joke he had a few years ago: "It's a great opportunity to take part in the Phil-and-Kai show."

Dexter Jackson guaranteed

that he would once again be flying the flag for symmetry and condition and was confident that, at his heaviest body weight ever [110 kg], he could prevail among the valley of the giants.

No longer constrained to speaking through an interpreter, Big Ramy, in a cheerful mood, stated that he would be at his sharpest ever. Which, if true, could be pretty ominous, as at the 2016 Olympia he was slightly



**PHIL  
HEATH**

## THE OLYMPIA CLASS OF 2017

As of late June the following 16 have qualified by right for the 2017 Mr. Olympia. With other contests to be decided, this list should grow.

Lionel Beyeke France	Johnnie Jackson USA
William Bonac Netherlands	Victor Martinez USA
Hadi Choopan Iran	Cedric McMillan USA
Brandon Curry USA	Sergio Oliva Jr. USA
Nathan De Asha United Kingdom	Lukas Osladil Czech Republic
Mamdouh Elssbiay Egypt	Shawn Rhoden USA
Phil Heath USA	Gerald Williams USA
Dexter Jackson USA	Roelly Winklaar Curaçao

Under the Olympia qualifying points system, here are the standings (as of late June). The top five points earners qualify for the Olympia. Juan Morel, Jon DeLaRosa, and Dallas McCarver have already stated they will skip this year's event. With more contests to take place, these standings will change.

Juan Morel 22 N/A	Dallas McCarver 12 N/A
Michael Lockett 15	Jeff Beckham 10
Jeff Beckham 13	Petar Klancir 9
Maxx Charles 12	Justin Compton 4
Jon DeLaRosa 12 N/A	

off at the pre-judging, but at the Saturday finals he sharpened up so much that if he had replicated that on the Friday, his ultimate placing might have been second rather than fourth.

The resurgent Brandon Curry was asked about the proverbial anabolic chicken reared by the Oxygen Gym in Kuwait, where he did most of his prep. Mischievously, he answered, "The chicken isn't the secret...it's their eggs." Which puts a whole new spin on what comes first, the chicken or the egg, as in Curried eggs.

So after an exhibition of hot air that would rival a balloon convention, all that really mattered was what transpired at the pre-judging, which would take place at 9 p.m. the following night.

## THE BATTLE-GROUND

For the sake of brevity, this narrative of Friday night's pre-judging will include only references to those who stood out.

William Bonac was even gnarlier than he had been in finishing fifth last year. His cuts were deeper than a Chilean miner.

Nathan De Asha from the U.K. was improved from last year, rounder and denser and as dry as a Prohibition-era taproom.

Brandon Curry walked out, and the collective gasp from the audience was so huge oxygen masks fell from the roof. He was 114 kg of striated full and

conditioned muscle.

Last year Shawn Rhoden was cut and full. This year, he seemed a few kilos heavier but just as sharp, and thicker in the chest and back where he needed to be. Obviously he had enjoyed a very productive 12 months and continues to improve.

Kai Greene walked out, and the place went as nuts as some think the man himself is. He displayed a sleek waist, while his back, chest, arms, and legs fought for space on his frame, and he was fuller and harder than a hanging judge's heart. This was his best ever look.

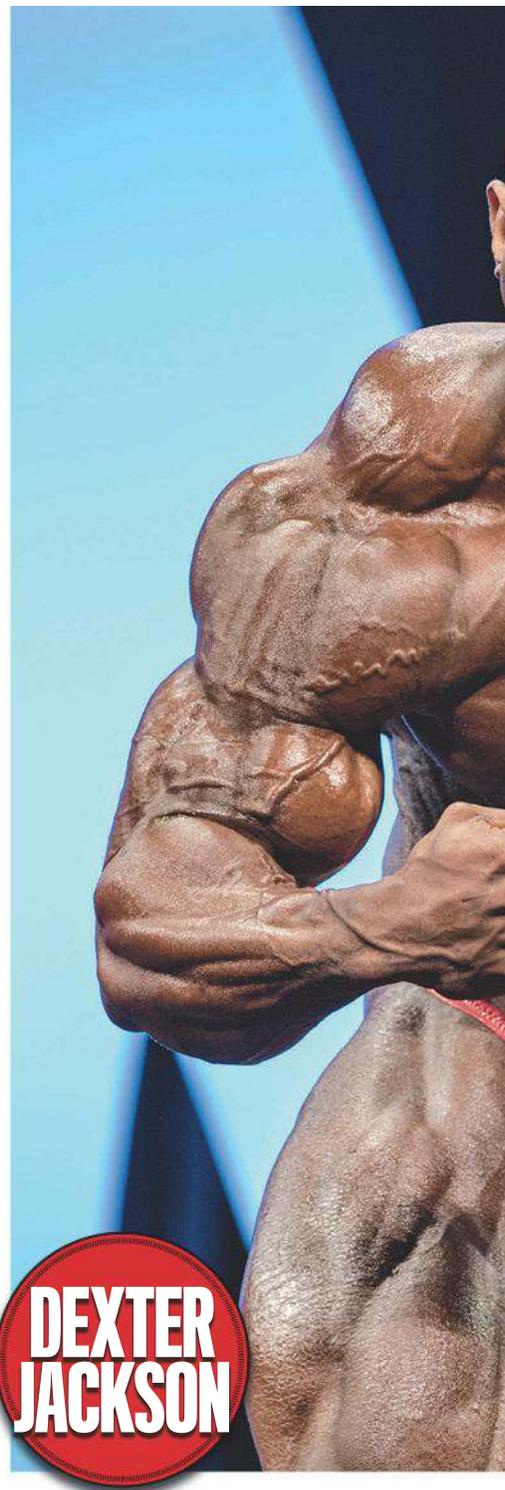
What to say about Big Ramy? He's like a Hummer competing against Volkswagens. He replicated or exceeded his Saturday night form of a year ago. He was dry and deeply separated and looked a bit more balanced, if maybe a little lighter. He was another who produced his best.

Victor Martinez was in his best shape for several years. His quads were full and cut, and his overall condition was excellent.

Cedric McMillan came out and was more conditioned (without a loss of fullness) than he's ever been. At 132 kg, he rivaled Ramy for size and hit his old-school shots with impact and vengeance. No man has ever won the Olympia at his third attempt. Tonight was Cedric's third attempt?

You can give Dexter Jackson no higher compliment than saying Dexter Jackson looked like Dexter Jackson, only bigger than 2016. He was sliced, diced, full from head to toe, and ready for war.

Sergio Oliva Jr. unleashed a combination of insane muscle and bubbling personality. At last he had made it onto the same combat field in which father won three Olympias.



## EYES ON THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

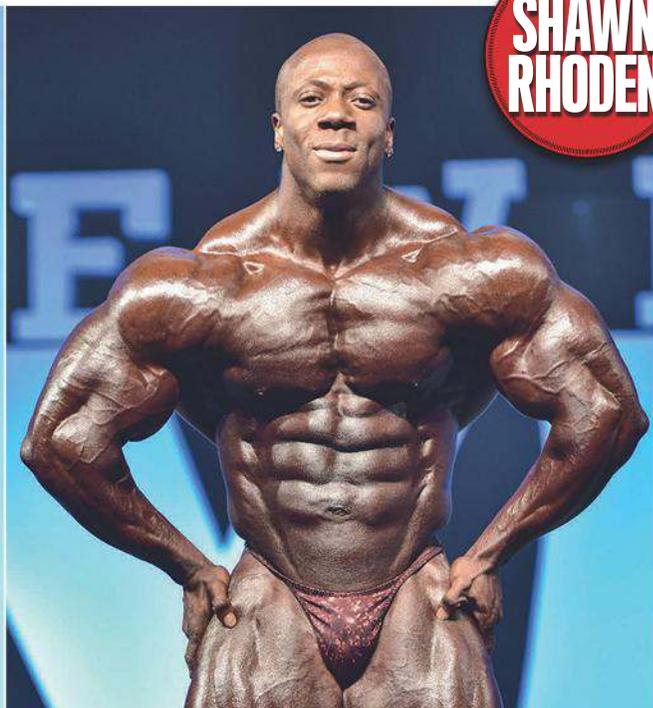
By Phil Heath

My objective this year is not only to win the Olympia but also to tie Arnold's record of seven titles. The game plan Hany Rambod and I have is somewhat "classified," but I can say that a thicker chest and back is essential. Lots of volume training will take place. Plus, rotations of different proteins and carbs to see what will produce the best balance of conditioning with

fullness. What we're envisaging will make you think the 2016 Olympia, 2010 Arnold, and 2013 Olympia were jokes! Weight will be somewhere in the 114s, which will be around 4.5 kg heavier than in years past. I feel that my muscle is maturing more, especially in the lower half, where I'll have deeper separation and harder conditioning in the glutes and hamstrings. In order to



**SHAWN  
RHODEN**



**WILLIAM  
BONAC**

do this, I will have to train harder but also eat more, which is a tougher job for me than doing two cardio sessions.

My confidence level is at an all-time high. I am fully aware of my abilities and am unafraid of any adversity that may present itself during this journey. My training will not just be more intense, it will have a greater sense of urgency. This is the same urgency I had when

practising basketball drills growing up, spending countless hours perfecting my craft. I'm transferring that fun-loving yet killer-instinct mindset into my training, which should yield my best look to date. I recently found some old *FLEX* and *Muscle & Fitness* mags, and seeing images of Dorian, Coleman, Arnold, and Cutler triggered something inside me that made me want to crush every

workout more than ever before.

As I train now, I do realize who I am up against, and although I'm competing against the world's best, with all due respect, it's me versus me! I'm literally starving for greatness, as this is an awesome opportunity—and by having a positive attitude, showing respect for others, I will definitely achieve a flawless victory!

**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT**  
**LIONEL BEYEKE**  
**HADI CHOOPAN**  
**BRANDON CURRY**  
**NATHAN DE ASHA**  
**JOHNNIE JACKSON**  
**VICTOR MARTINEZ**  
**CEDRIC McMILLAN**  
**SERGIO**  
**OLIVA JR.**  
**LUKAS OSLADIL**  
**GERALD WILLIAMS**  
**ROELLY**  
**WINKLAAR**

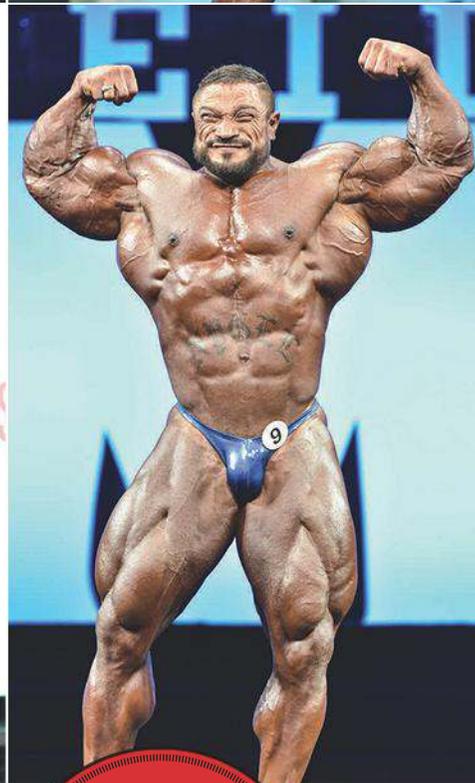
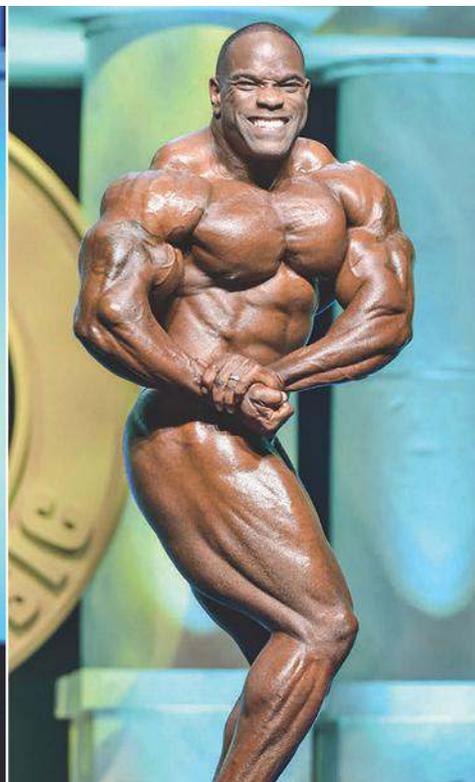
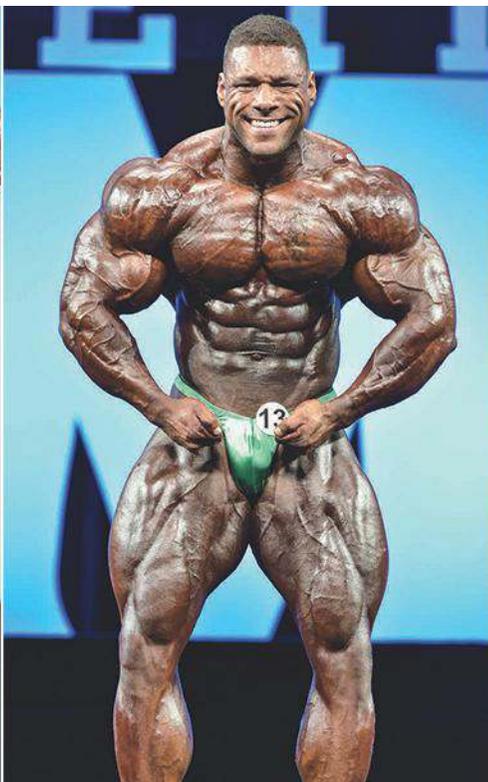


Roelly Winklaar, whose smile makes the Cheshire cat look like a miserable bastard, waltzed on carrying more muscle than a tug-of-war team. His midsection was under control, and he was full and "on."

And then it happened. Phil Heath walked out and was at least the equal of his phenomenal 2011 first Olympia win. He was sharp and dry, which enhanced his 3-D muscularity (he has detailed

muscle in places some people don't have places) even more. Looking back over his shoulder, he gave a "Yeah, baby" nod as he hit the back double biceps, and like the closing of Kim Kardashian's writing school,

IGOR KOPCEK  
 (HADI CHOOPAN)



that is all she wrote...I think. The aforementioned 12 were (unlike the paucity of such things in previous years) all in contest condition. (A statement you can get away with in a reality/fantasy

report, but a girl can dream, can't she?) OK, readers, I've taken you up to the starting line, and, sorry, but like an inept trapeze partner, I'm now going to leave you hanging. **FLEX**

To find out who swings ahead at the finals finish line on Sept. 16, get your ticket to Vegas now and stay tuned to **FLEXonline.com.**

ASUN CAPALUNGAN (GERALD WILLIAMS)



# EXTRAORDINARY LEAGUE

WITH AN EXPLOSION OF GROWTH IN JUST A FEW SHORT YEARS, THE IFBB PRO LEAGUE HAS BECOME THE GREATEST BODYBUILDING AND FITNESS FEDERATION IN THE WORLD—AND THERE'S NO BETTER PLACE TO PROVE IT THAN AT THE 2017 OLYMPIA FITNESS AND PERFORMANCE WEEKEND

BY **DAVE LEE** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **PER BERNAL**

Bodybuilding is where it began, back in 1965 when Larry Scott won the first Mr. Olympia. And bodybuilding—through its many incarnations, from the Sergio and Arnold years, to Zane, on through to Haney and Yates—is where it stayed. But 30 years later a new division added Olympia as its ultimate championship title, the Fitness Olympia in 1995. Since then, under the leadership of NPC and IFBB Pro League president Jim Manion, these divisions followed: Figure Olympia (2003); 212 Olympia (2008); Bikini Olympia (2010); Men's and Women's Physique Olympias (2013); and last year, the Classic Physique Olympia. From extreme size and condition to shape and beauty and mainstream athletic appeal, each division represents the broad spectrum of tastes in the fitness world. We celebrate this diversity with a preview of the seven division champions and challengers at the 2017 Olympia Fitness and Performance Weekend.

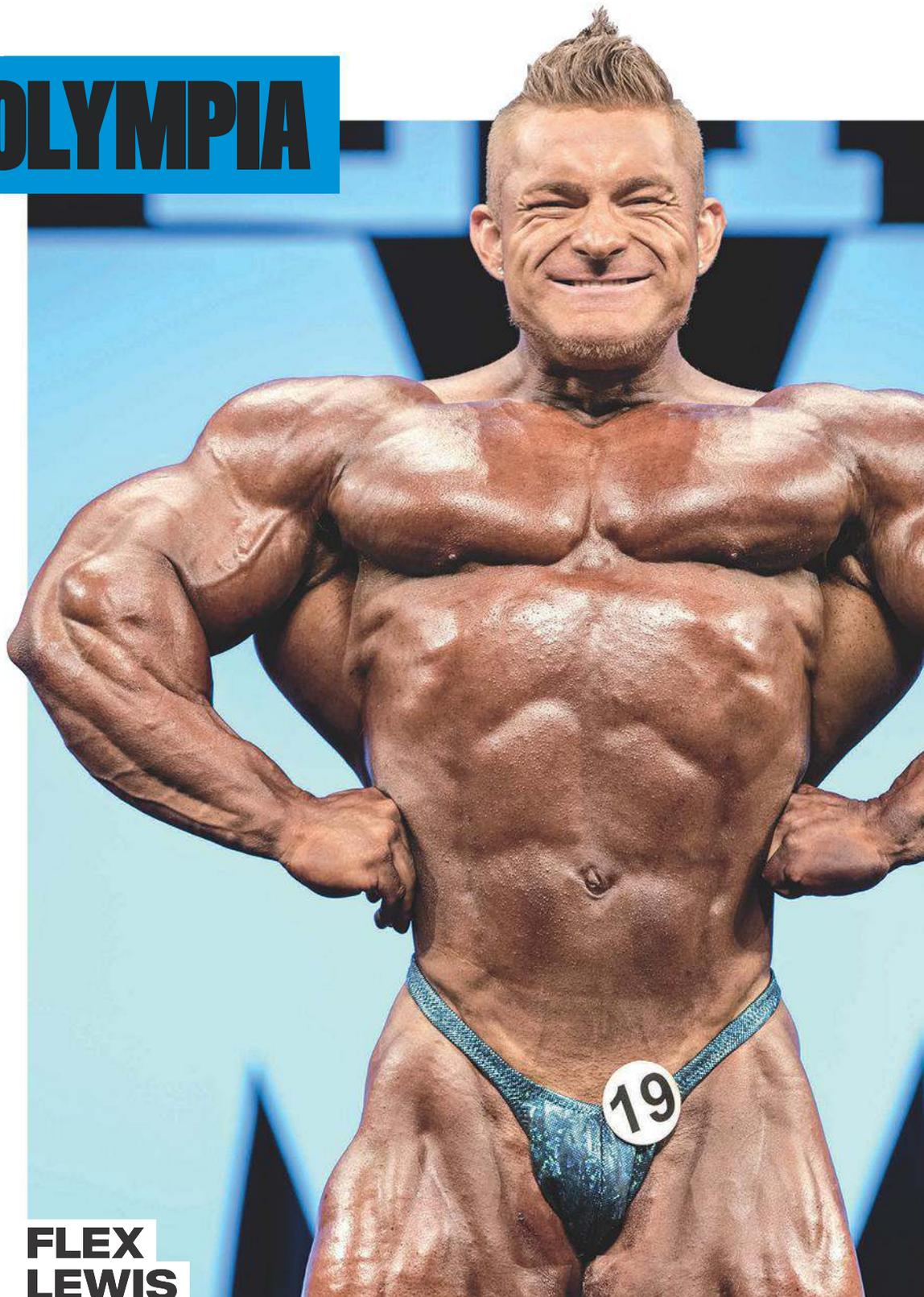




# 212 OLYMPIA

Will **Flex Lewis** remain undefeated and increase his 212 O count to six against this year's crop of challengers?

In 2011 Flex Lewis was back after taking the previous year off to make improvements to what was already one of the top three physiques in the 202 division. With a win at the Atlantic City Pro to qualify for that year's 202 Olympia, Lewis suffered a devastating loss to three-time champ Kevin English. Now, six years later, that loss was the last time Lewis has seen anything less than first place in 14 contests, including five 212 Olympias (the division limit was increased in 2012). Already the record holder for most 212 titles and Olympias, Lewis is eyeing to widen the gap with his competition, led by last year's runner-up and 2017 Arnold 212 winner Ahmad Ashkanani, longtime foes Jose Raymond, Eduardo Correa, David Henry, Hidetada Yamagishi, and others eager to dethrone the King of the 212.



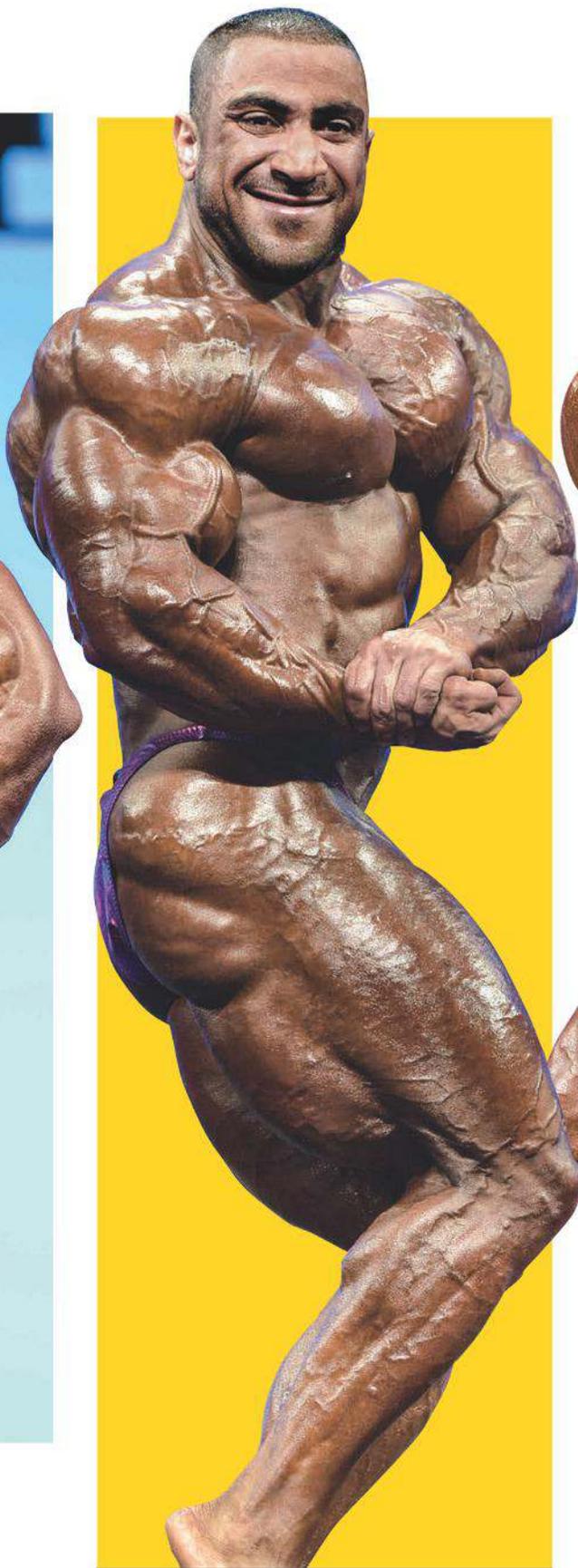
## FLEX LEWIS



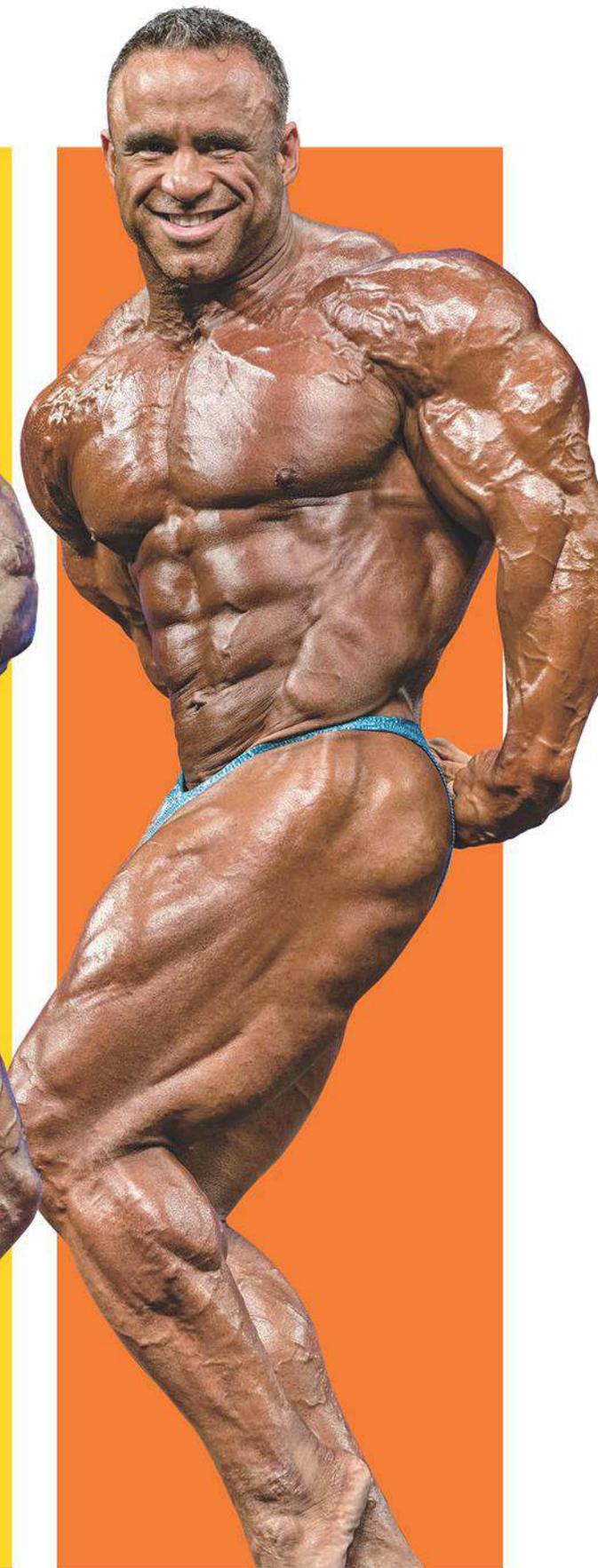
Check out **FLEXonline.com** for all of our Olympia Weekend coverage, including extended division lineups, interviews with the athletes, updates and callout reports, and results, presented by Hi-Tech Pharmaceuticals.



**WATCH THE FINALS LIVE!** Be sure to catch all the action onstage with the **amazon.com** live webcast: Fitness, Figure, and Classic Physique finals, 212 and Mr. Olympia judging (Friday, Sept. 15); Bikini, 212, and Mr. Olympia finals (Saturday, Sept. 16). Tune in to **amazon.com/mroympia** to watch.



**AHMAD  
ASHKANANI**



**JOSE  
RAYMOND**



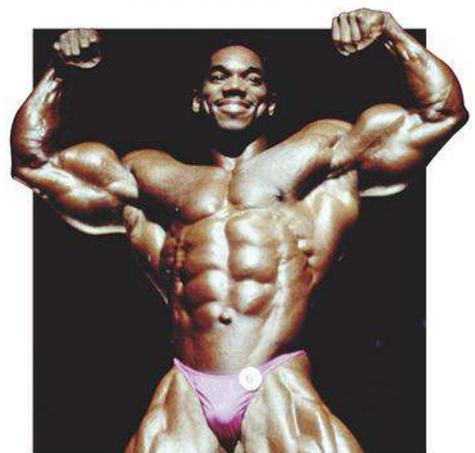
**DANNY  
HESTER**



**ARASH RAHBAR**



**SADIK HADZOVIC**



**FLEX WHEELER**

# CLASSIC PHYSIQUE OLYMPIA

Classic Physique is set for a shake-up as a **living legend** comes back for another shot at Olympia glory

OK, so with all due respect to defending champ Danny Hester, the big headline heading into the second Classic Physique Olympia is a guy who last competed in open bodybuilding at the 2003 Ironman Pro Invitational, where he placed third. Flex Wheeler, the four-time Arnold Classic champ and Mr. Olympia runner-up in 1993, 1998-99, will go for the O in a new division against a crop of both new and veteran athletes. How will he stack up against the likes of Hester, Arash Rahbar, Sadik Hadzovic, Darrem Charles, and the rest of the field?

RALPH DEHAAN (FLEX WHEELER)

# MEN'S PHYSIQUE OLYMPIA

Can anyone stop **Jeremy Buendia** from winning his fourth straight title?

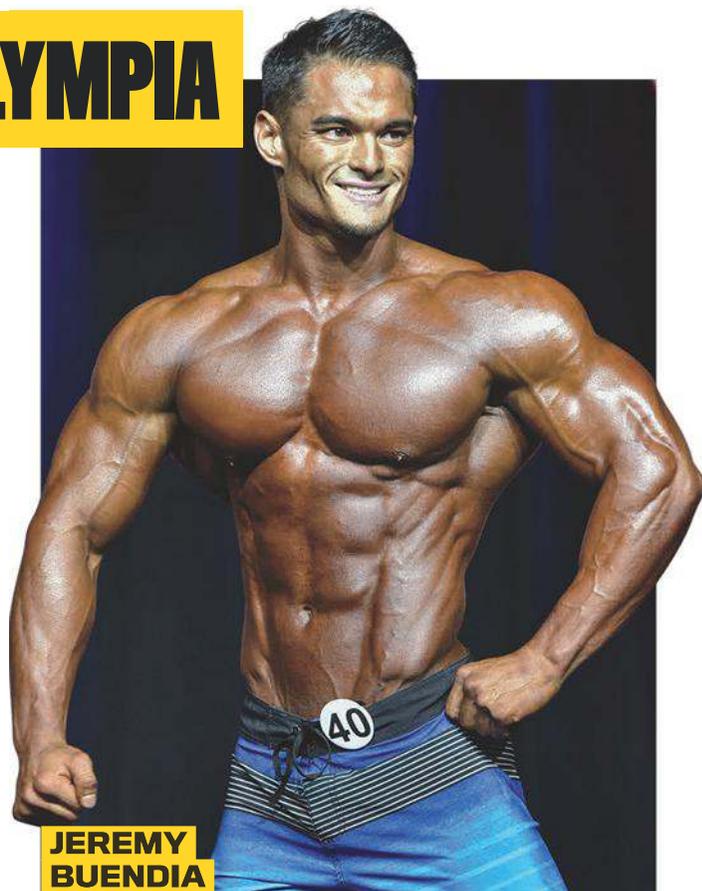
The most populated men's division at the Olympia has been won the past three years by California's Jeremy Buendia. He'll have his work cut out for him this year, with Ryan Terry, who won the Arnold Men's Physique earlier this year, and Andre Ferguson, Jeremy Potvin, Brandon Hendrickson, and the other 30 competitors who will make up what will surely be another record-breaking number at this year's Olympia Weekend.



JEREMY POTVIN



RYAN TERRY



JEREMY BUENDIA

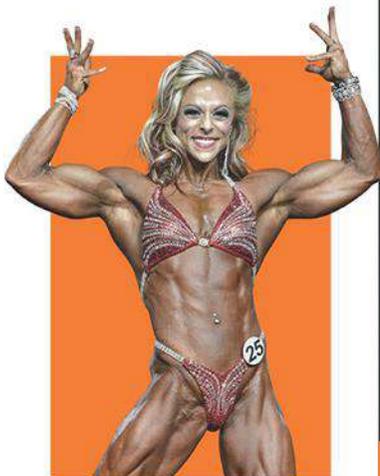
# WOMEN'S PHYSIQUE OLYMPIA

Will **Juliana Malacarne** continue her reign atop the IFBB's youngest women's division?

After placing runner-up to Dana Linn Bailey in the inaugural Women's Physique 0 in 2013, Juliana Malacarne came roaring back to turn the tables on Bailey the following year and hasn't relinquished her hold since. The three-time champ and her famous legs will have to stand up to new challenger Daniely Castilho, who won the Arnold Classic Women's Physique this past March, Danielle Reardon, Heather Grace, and other rivals if she wants to make it four in a row.



HEATHER GRACE



DANIELLE REARDON



JULIANA MALACARNE

# FITNESS OLYMPIA

In a division dominated by veteran competitors, will a **new face** rise to the challenge and establish a new pecking order?

In its 22-year history, the Fitness Olympia has had nine champions. Four of those have been repeat winners, including reigning queen Oksana Grishina. With her YouTube-viewed routines putting her over the top, Grishina has been nearly unbeatable, amassing a 13-1 record since late 2013 (her last defeat coming at the 2013 Arnold Classic Europe). We'll see if Regiane Da Silva, Whitney Jones, Bethany Wagner (who all finished behind her at this year's Fitness International), or one of the others in the weekend's smallest division can end her run.



**OKSANA  
GRISHINA**



**REGIANE DA SILVA**



**WHITNEY JONES**

# BIKINI OLYMPIA

Don't let the flowing hair, makeup, and high heels fool you: It's gonna be **all-out war** on the Bikini O stage



**COURTNEY  
KING**

Courtney King's rise to the Olympia throne began back in 2013 when she finished seventh in her debut O appearance. Not spectacular, but not bad, either. After sitting out 2014, she moved up to third in 2015. Last year, after qualifying on points, she provided the only upset of the weekend when she beat out all the pre-contest favourites—including defending three-time champ Ashley Kaltwasser—to win the big one. But the drama didn't stop there. Earlier this year, she lost the Bikini International to the woman she beat just months earlier, Angelica Teixeira. And then she lost to her again at the Arnold Australia. It's safe to say that the Bikini O just got a whole lot more interesting.



ANGELICA TEIXEIRA



INDIA PAULINO

# FIGURE OLYMPIA

**Latorya Watts, Candice Lewis, Cydney Gillon:** Will last year's top three go at it again or will another competitor crash the party?

When Latorya Watts entered the Figure International this past March to defend her title, no one would have predicted that by Saturday night, she would finish third behind nemeses Candice Lewis (first) and Cydney Gillon. After all, Lewis and Gillon were runner-up and third, respectively, when Watts clinched her second Figure Olympia last September. Things were slightly better at the Arnold Australia, where she moved ahead of Gillon but still couldn't overtake Lewis. Throw in four-time Figure O winner Nicole Wilkins, Swann Delarosa, Camala Rodriguez, Gennifer Strobo, and the rest of the talented lineup, and it's anybody's guess what will go down in Vegas this time. **FLEX**



LATORYA WATTS



CANDICE LEWIS



CYDNEY GILLON

amazon  
sports nutrition  
Presents



BY GREG MERRITT

# OLYMPIA DYNASTIES

BODYBUILDING'S GREATEST REIGNS HAVE BEEN EARNED IN ITS ULTIMATE CONTEST



Eddie Giuliani: "The king of the hill can only go down."  
Arnold Schwarzenegger:  
"Or stay up." —PUMPING IRON

**The Olympia is where legends are made.** It's also where dynasties are earned. Starting with the inaugural Mr. Olympia in 1965, 45 of the 52 contests have been won by merely eight men, all of whom have at least three O titles. These immortals spawned their own eras. As we approach the 53rd Olympia—where Phil Heath will strive to extend his run to lucky No. 7 and, in the 212 division, Flex Lewis is going for his sixth straight—we answer key questions about the ultimate validation of greatness—staying on top.

What is a sports dynasty? A period of sustained excellence, lasting at least three years. Manchester United won 13 Premiership titles and five FA Cups in 27 years of Sir Alex Ferguson's management. Tennis magician Roger Federer in 2004–07 spent 237 consecutive weeks at No. 1 and won 11 of 17 Majors. Those are easy calls. But let's also stipulate that basketball's Golden State Warriors of the past three seasons are a dynasty despite not winning consecutive NBA titles.

Or the 1990–93 Buffalo Bills, who won four straight AFC championships only to lose four Super Bowls? Nope. These questions spawn endless debates on sports talk shows. Let's stipulate that you don't have to win the ultimate title each year to maintain a dynasty, but you do need to win at least two and otherwise stay in close contention.

# What is a bodybuilding dynasty?

Since its formation in 1965, the Mr. Olympia has sorted out who's on top. So the easiest way to determine dynasties is to list O win streaks that have gone to three or more. Seven men—Sergio Oliva, Frank Zane, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Dorian Yates, Phil Heath, Lee Haney, and Ronnie Coleman—have won at least a hat trick of Mr. O's. And we can extend this to other divisions. Iris Kyle topped nine straight Ms. Olympias and 10 in total from 2004–14. Simultaneously, Adela Garcia nabbed eight Fitness Olympias over nine years. And one man, Flex Lewis, has been victorious in all five 212 Olympias, starting with its debut in 2012.

## Do you need to win the Olympia to have a bodybuilding dynasty?

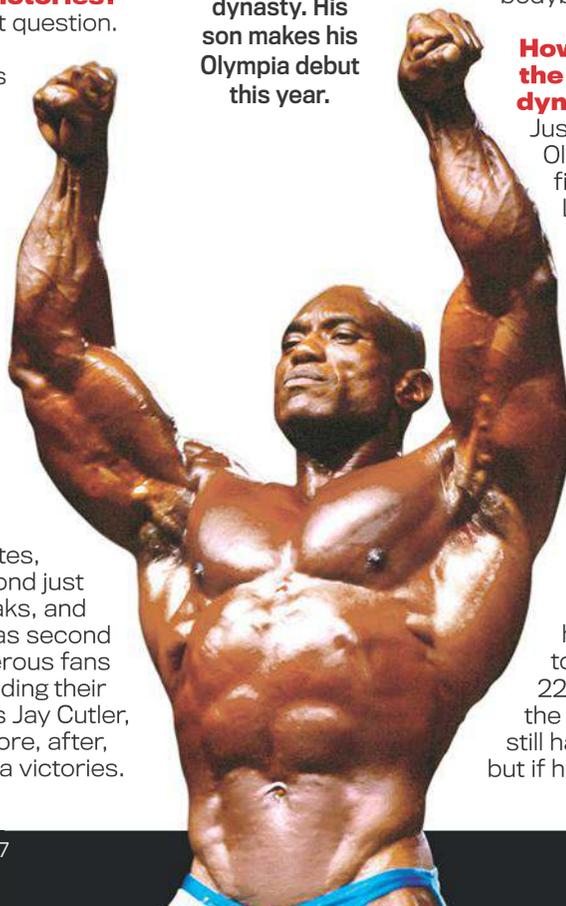
Yes. "Second best" is not a dynasty. Kai Greene was runner-up to Phil Heath thrice and then won four Arnold Classics the next year. That's remarkable, but you need multiple Sandows for dynasty status.

## But can a dynasty extend beyond Olympia victories?

This is a more difficult question. You could argue that Sergio Oliva's era was twice as long as his Mr. O triple (1967–69), because, although he lost without controversy to Schwarzenegger in 1970, he wasn't allowed to compete in 1971, and many believe he, and not Arnold, deserved the title in 1972. So he was No. 1 or, at worst, No. 2 on the planet for six years. Three bodybuilders (Schwarzenegger, Yates, and Heath) were second just before their win streaks, and another (Coleman) was second just after his, so generous fans could argue for extending their eras. And then there's Jay Cutler, who was second before, after, and during his Olympia victories.



**Sergio Oliva had the first O dynasty. His son makes his Olympia debut this year.**



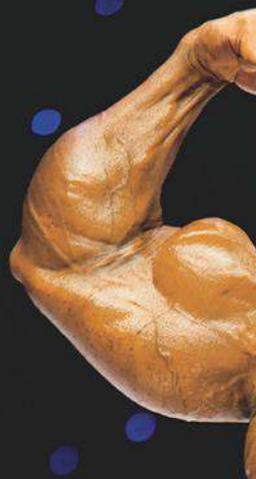
## Did Jay Cutler have a dynasty?

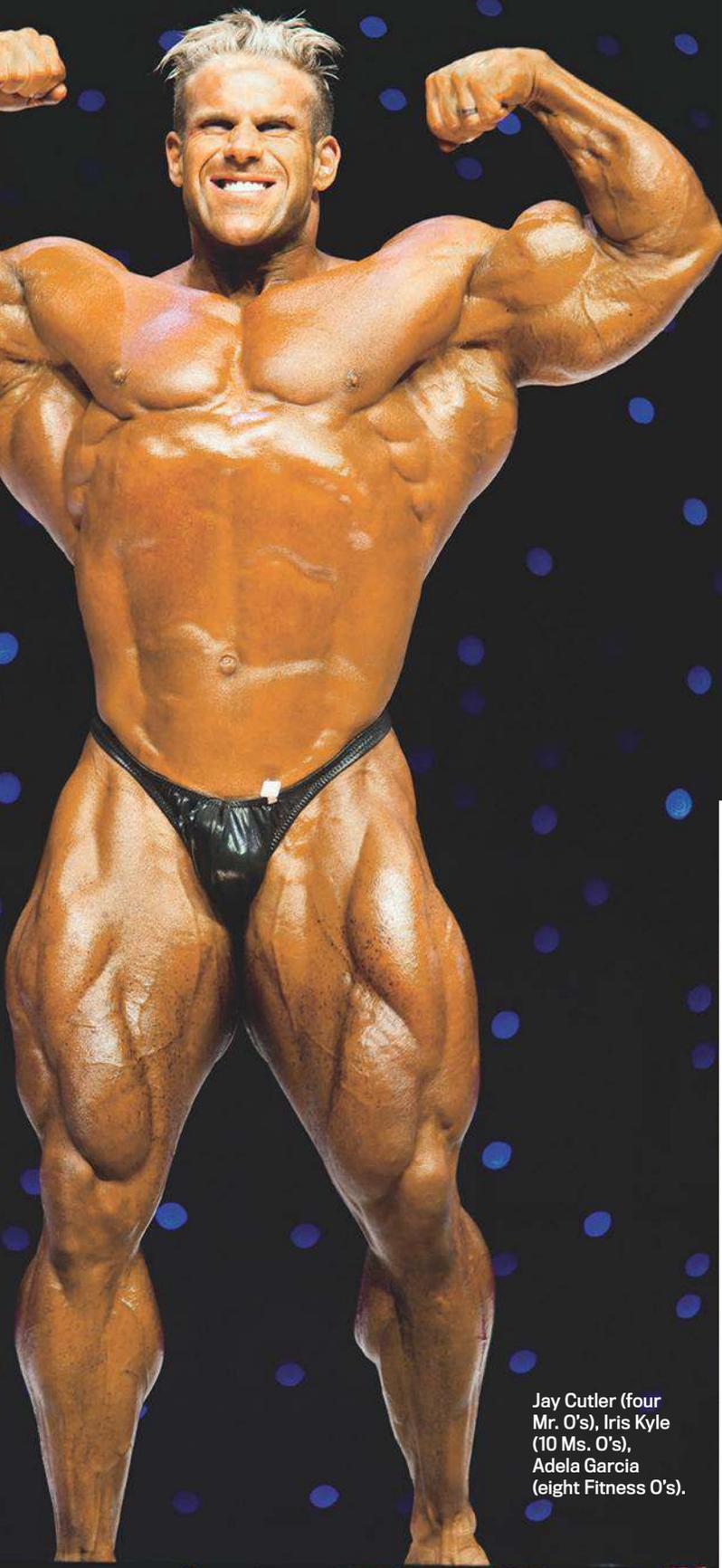
He never won three straight Sandows. Cutler's two victories in 2006–07 and his two more in 2009–10 were bridged by a silver medal finish behind Dexter Jackson in 2008. I would argue Cutler's dynasty lasted those five years. The tougher question is: Did it last even longer? He was second to Coleman in 2001 when he probably should've won, stayed out in 2002 when he likely would've won, and was runner-up to Coleman again in 2003, 2004, and 2005, and, for good measure, again, but to Heath, in 2011. Did his dynasty last from 2001 to 2011 (overlapping Coleman's and Heath's), an 11-year span when he was No. 1 or No. 2 on earth?

It's certainly debatable. Even contemplating it casts his career in a new light. With four Sandows, he ranks sixth on the Olympia win list, and yet he's the only man in bodybuilding history to stay in the top two for more than a decade. A stingy purist might insist that, because he never got three in a row, he never had a dynasty. But an argument can be made for the Cutler dynasty being bodybuilding's longest.

## How long will the Lewis dynasty last?

Just after last year's 212 Olympia victory, his fifth in a row, Flex Lewis told me six would be enough. If he wins this year, he plans to retire from the 212 division and, likely, move permanently into the open division in 2019. He's been famous a long time. I first profiled him for FLEX way back in 2004, so it's easy to forget that the Welsh Dragon is still only 33. Even if he took next year off to expand to a solid 225+, he'd be only 35 in the spring of 2019. He still has time to move up, but if he waits a couple of





Jay Cutler (four Mr. O's), Iris Kyle (10 Ms. O's), Adela Garcia (eight Fitness O's).





## CONSECUTIVE OLYMPIA WINS (3 or more)

NAME	WINS	YEARS
Lee Haney	8	1984-91
Ronnie Coleman	8	1998-05
Phil Heath	6	2011-16
Arnold Schwarzenegger	6*	1970-75
Dorian Yates	6	1992-97
Sergio Oliva	3	1967-69
Frank Zane	3	1977-79

\*Won 7th Sandow in 1980.

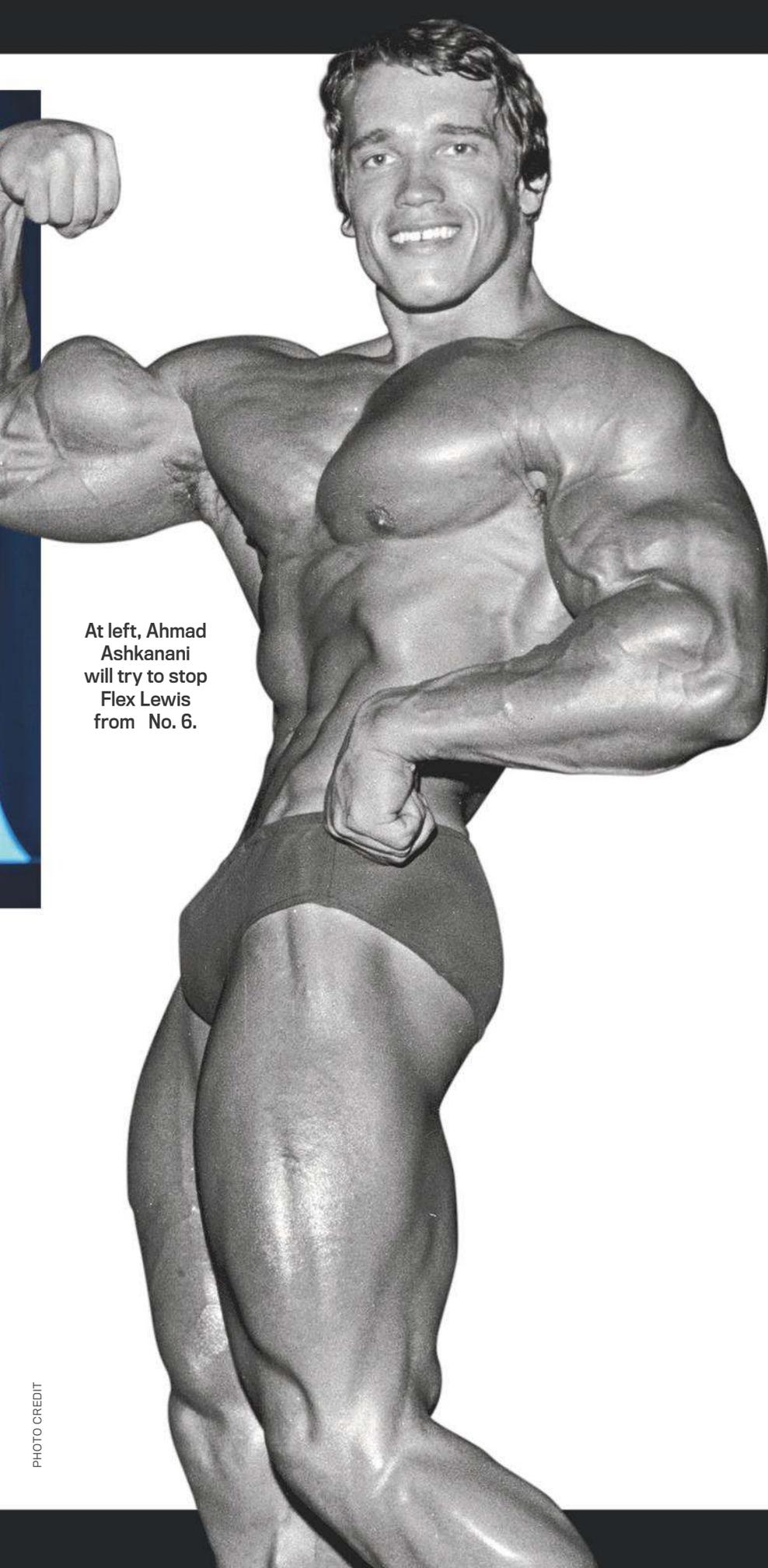
years that window will start to close. Meanwhile, he has nothing left to prove in the 212 division, in which he's undefeated.

That said, Flex reserves the right to change his mind and defend his 212 title again in 2018. Or maybe he'll be fighting to regain it. He's going to have a tremendous challenge this year in securing No. 6. In addition to the usual suspects, last year's surprise runner-up, Ahmad Ashkanani, has only gained momentum since his 212 Arnold Classic win in March, and his hang-glider lats allow him to attack the champ where he's most vulnerable—width. Whether Lewis wins or loses on Sept. 16, we'll have to wait and see what happens next.

### Which dynasty was the greatest?

There are four contenders here,





At left, Ahmad Ashkanani will try to stop Flex Lewis from No. 6.

and each has strengths. Arnold's six-year reign coincided with the first Golden Age of bodybuilding and featured, twice, the sport's ultimate rivalry: him versus Oliva. Similarly, Yates' six years coincided with the second Golden Age, which forced him to fend off multiple legends each autumn, including in a couple of debatable decisions. For sheer dominance, you can't beat Haney's record-setting eight years, but you can argue that the absence of top challengers, pre-Yates, diminishes his era. Finally, Coleman's record-tying eight-year reign had ups and downs, controversies, and a strong rival in Cutler. I rank it No. 2. In my opinion, Arnold's dynasty is the greatest, because of what it did for bodybuilding—and for Arnold himself. By the way, if Heath hauls home his seventh Sandow his era will have to be in any future discussion.

### **How long could previous dynasties have gone?**

The eras of Oliva, Zane, Coleman, and Cutler all ended with losses. In fact, all four were defeated multiple times after their reigns. Still, Oliva remains the Olympia's greatest "What If?" What if he'd continued to compete in bodybuilding's ultimate contest between his controversial 1972 loss and his middle-aged 1984 comeback? Would he have bested Arnold again? And, regardless, could he have had a second dynasty in the late '70s?

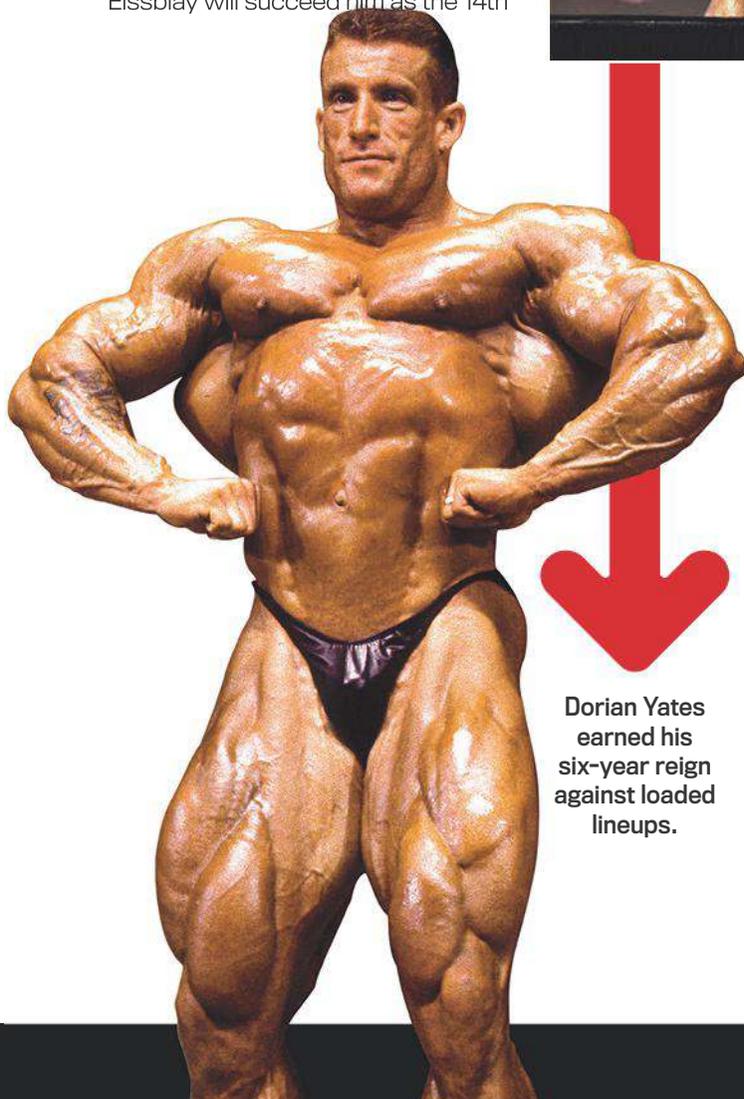
Three legends retired while on top: Haney, Yates, and Schwarzenegger. The first collided with the second. Maybe Haney could've eked out a ninth Sandow against Yates in 1992 but probably not. And he certainly would've lost to the supersized Englishman in 1993. As for Yates, he correctly stopped at six in 1997 when his body was breaking down. Coleman would've punked him the next year. Which brings us to Arnold, who announced his retirement at the 1975 Mr. Olympia at merely 28, but then returned to, controversially, claim a seventh O in 1980.

The seven other Olympias

from 1976 to 1983 were all won by men weighing south of 90. Barring some conditioning catastrophe or major injury, no one in those lineups would've beaten Arnold if he'd remained north of 104. That would've given him 14 straight Olympias and, yeah, everyone would've grown sick of the annual no-contests, but, if he went for No. 15 in 1984 against rising star Haney (and old nemesis Oliva), he would've been only 37 and favoured to extend his dynasty, though it no longer would've been a sure thing. And if he'd been, say, 114 with bigger legs and crisper cuts to meet the Haney challenge, he could've kept winning for a few years after that.

### How long will the Heath dynasty last?

We finish with the biggest question in bodybuilding today. Heath has professed that his goal is to win 10 Sandows, breaking the record of eight, held jointly by Haney and Coleman, and tacking on one more. He also predicts that Mamdouh Elssbiay will succeed him as the 14th



**Dorian Yates earned his six-year reign against loaded lineups.**

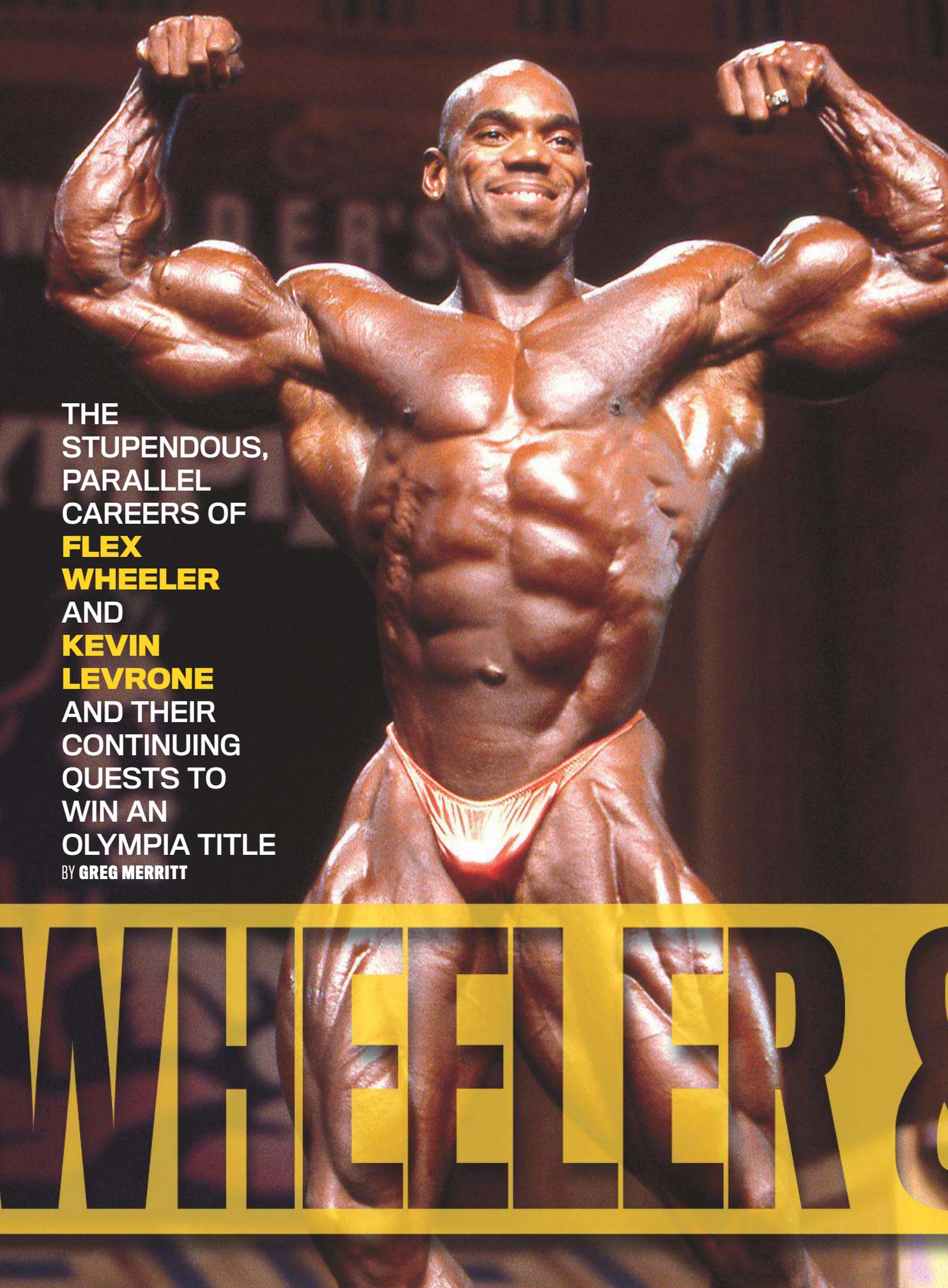
Mr. O. Despite not yet cracking the O top three, Big Ramy is already the Gift's greatest threat. Dexter Jackson and Shawn Rhoden both have to top Heath at his own "pretty but freaky" strategy of shapely size, and both are 40-something. Either could do it, but they'll need to catch Heath slipping, and time is of the essence.

Ramy turns 33 on the day of this year's Olympia finals, and he contrasts sharply with 37-year-old Heath, just as his fellow Team Oxygen member, Ashkanani, does with Lewis. This makes him especially dangerous. He's capable of overwhelming the champ with width and depth—if he can dial in enough cuts to hang with the Gift's crisp conditioning. Or maybe someone else, William Bonac or Cedric McMillan, perhaps, will find a different edge to exploit against the reigning king. How long will the Heath dynasty last? Maybe 10 years, maybe six, maybe something in between. Every Olympia will bring a new challenge as Phil Heath chases history and endeavours to accomplish the most difficult feat in bodybuilding—staying on top. **FLEX**



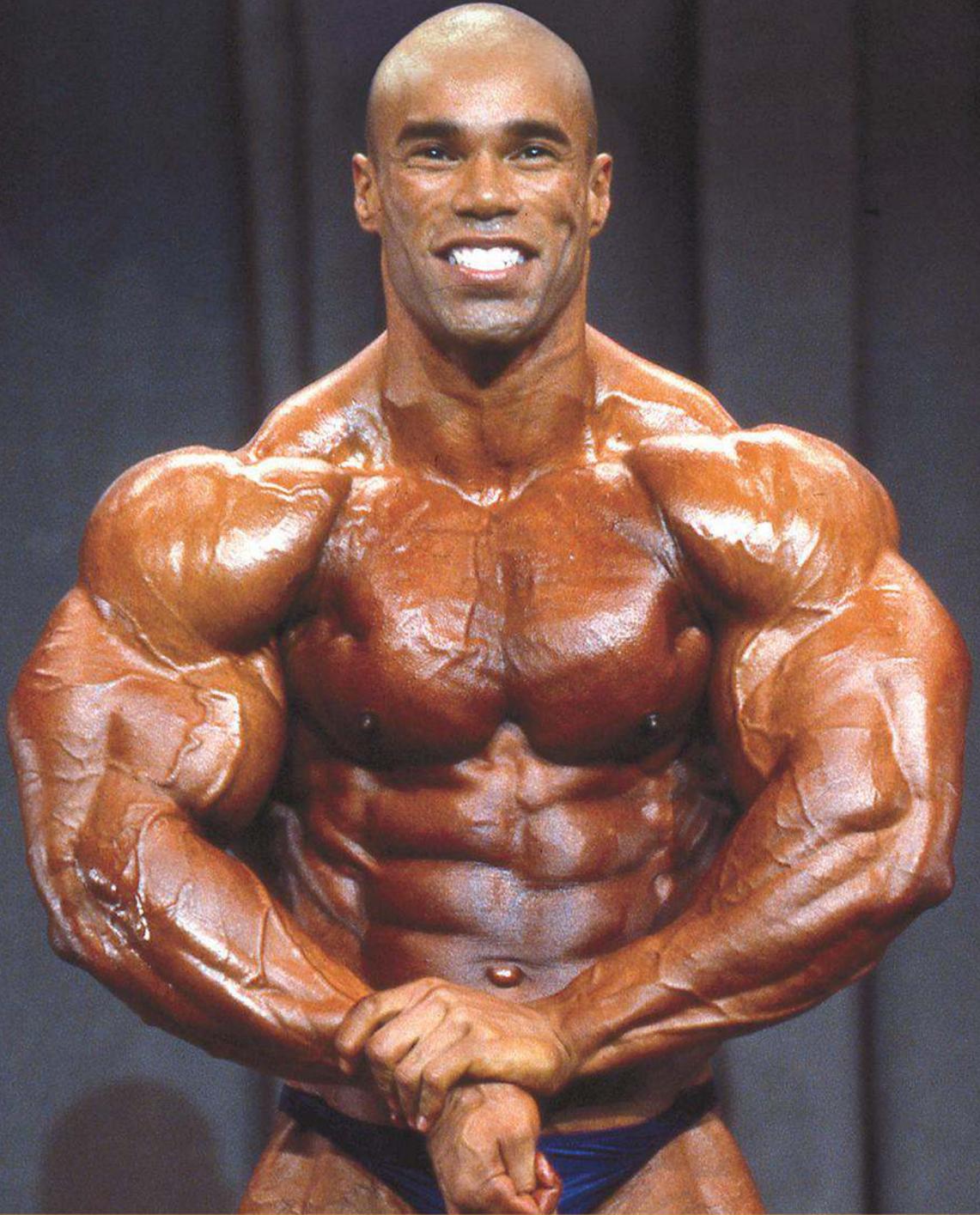
PHOTO CREDIT

Phil Heath needs to fend off Big Ramy to hold up seven fingers on Sept. 16.



THE  
STUPENDOUS,  
PARALLEL  
CAREERS OF  
**FLEX  
WHEELER**  
AND  
**KEVIN  
LEVRONE**  
AND THEIR  
CONTINUING  
QUESTS TO  
WIN AN  
OLYMPIA TITLE  
BY GREG MERRITT

# WHEELER &



# & LEVORONE



## LET'S START WITH THIS.

In the 11 Olympias between 1992 and 2002—which sported the deepest lineups of all time—they collectively finished second in seven.

Eras are named for Olympia champs, but, if ever an exception were made, 1992-02, in which together they collected 37 pro titles, it was the Wheeler-Levrone era. Flex Wheeler and Kevin Levrone—the two best bodybuilders to never win an Olympia—have traveled parallel paths that frequently crossed. And their journey continues. After Levrone's improbable Mr. O comeback last year, Wheeler is following him back to the Olympia stage this year.

## AMATEURS

It all began in 1991, when workout pants were loud and baggy, mullets were fresh, and Mark Wahlberg was still Marky Mark, leader of a Funky Bunch. The year before, Flex Wheeler had finished second among heavyweights at the Junior Nationals. Kevin Levrone did the same in 1991 while Wheeler was preparing for the USA. After Wheeler came in second at the USA, he focused on the Nationals that November. So did Levrone, a virtual unknown entering his first pro qualifier. In retrospect, so did everyone. The 1991 NPC Nationals heavyweight class ranks as the greatest bodybuilding class ever assembled. This was the top eight: Levrone, Wheeler, Paul DeMayo, Ronnie Coleman, Matt Mendenhall, Bob Cicherillo, Chris Cormier, and Edgar Fletcher.

Wheeler was peeled at 97, but he couldn't match the overwhelming roundness of Levrone, who came in at 106 (years before there was a super-heavyweight class). "I felt like I was supposed to be 'the guy,'" Wheeler said after he was again relegated to almost-but-not-quite while Levrone won the overall. "Then they started comparing me with this other guy who only placed second at the Junior Nationals." Eight bitter months later, Wheeler romped to an easy victory at the 1992 USA Championships. But by then, "this other guy" was the talk of bodybuilding. "This other guy" had already won a pro title and was preparing to make his Olympia debut.

**"I felt like I was supposed to be 'the guy.' Then they started comparing me to this other guy..."**



## ROOKIES

And what a debut. In the 1992 Mr. Olympia, rookie Levrone finished behind only 110-kg Dorian Yates, who collected his first of six Sandows. In fact, at a high-def 104, Levrone beat or tied the world's best bodybuilder in front and side shots lost, decisively, only in the two rear shots. That year, after finishing third in his pro debut, he won two contests and finished second (to Yates) in two others, establishing himself as the world's second-best bodybuilder. It was the greatest IFBB Pro League rookie season of all time.

Until Flex Wheeler topped it one year later. (Their first years still rank as No. 1 and No. 2., and will likely be surpassed only if a rookie wins the Mr. Olympia.) In 1993, Wheeler also lost only twice, finishing second both times, including his runner-up spot behind 117-kg Yates in the Olympia. ("I'll think I'll have failed if I don't get second, and I'll have done great if I get first," he averred confidently just before his Olympia debut.) But, at around 102, he won his other four contests, including the prestigious Arnold Classic, and, sweetest of all, he finished ahead of Levrone both times he faced him. (Levrone, 109 and blurry, slipped to fifth in the Mr. O.) As quickly as that, Wheeler was the world's second-best bodybuilder, heir apparent to the Olympia crown, and he had exacted revenge on "this other guy" for the Nationals stunner.



## RIVALS

Sometime in the mid-'90s, on a spring day in the early afternoon, Levrone went for a stroll. In Venice, California. Through Gold's Gym. He passed Wheeler and his workout posse without even turning their way, and all the while Wheeler coldly gazed at his chief competitor, who had suddenly, shockingly appeared there in Wheeler's workplace. Then, just after the Maryland tourist exited into another of the gym's cavernous rooms, Wheeler and his California crew grinned and scoffed at the effrontery. This was the height of the East Coast versus West Coast rap feud, and it felt like a bulletless extension of that, as if Biggie and Tupac were both at the same party but neither would acknowledge that the other was worthy of even being acknowledged.

After 1993, and for the rest of the decade, both men were fighting for the same turf, if not No. 1 then No. 2 behind Dorian Yates and then Ronnie Coleman, and it was difficult enough to fend off other challengers and still focus on each other. If they couldn't win the Sandow, it was the next best thing for bodybuilding's Biggie to best its Tupac or vice versa. Not much

was made of the raging rivalry then, because the greater focus was on who might defeat Yates and then Coleman. The answers at the Olympia were no one and no one, not until Jay Cutler did

so in 2006, three years after Levrone and Wheeler had retired.

In retrospect, the more interesting question, especially from 1993 to 2000, was: Who is the better bodybuilder—Kevin Levrone or Flex Wheeler? You could find similarities—height (175 cm), weight (102–109), long muscle bellies, relatively narrow lats. But there were also distinct differences in bone structures and body types. For much of the '90s, Levrone, "the Maryland Muscle Machine" was thicker,

**After 1993, and for the rest of the decade, both men were fighting for the same turf.**



most evident in his explosive most muscular and side chest, but Wheeler, "the Sultan of Symmetry," sported a more pleasing V-taper and better flow, best seen in his elegant front double biceps and front lat spread.

After Wheeler's rookie success, Levrone's size advantage made the difference on judges' scorecards. At the end of 1996, Levrone held a 5-2 lead in head-to-head meetings and had placed in front of Wheeler four times in a row, including the most recent Olympia and Arnold Classic. In the April 1997 FLEX, Wheeler praised almost everyone, but of Levrone he scowled, "way fucking overrated." And then he backed up his words. He closed the size gap,

exerted his shape advantage, and flipped the script, beating his rival six straight times, including his runner-up finishes at the 1998 and 1999 Olympias. But, once again, the story changed. Levrone bested Wheeler in their final two meetings, the 2000 and 2002 Olympias (Wheeler returned to the former after his kidney disease was diagnosed.) The Maryland Muscle Machine was runner-up in both of those O's, giving him four



SAMANTHA LUND



Mr. O seconds to the Sultan of Symmetry's three. But Wheeler nabbed those three while entering six fewer O's, he's won twice as many Arnold Classics (four to two), and, though he's competed in 30 fewer contests, he's collected nearly as many pro titles. Let the debate continue. Either Levrone or Wheeler is the best bodybuilder to never win a Sandow, and each was the other's greatest competition. If anything, both of them are way fucking underrated, because had they peaked in almost any other era, perhaps including our current

one, they would've won multiple Olympia titles, even if they had to outmuscle each other for them.

## RETIREES

Familiarity bred contempt, but it eventually bred respect, as well. They fought too many battles—15, starting with the 1991 Nationals and ending with the 2002 Olympia—to not appreciate the sustained physique excellence of each other. Each posed for (seemingly) the final time in 2003. In retirement, Levrone, the ultimate East Coast bodybuilder, settled in Los Angeles for a few years, pursuing an acting career, but by then Wheeler, the ultimate West Coast bodybuilder, had returned to Northern California. Once they didn't need to trade poses in duels for the same paycheck, a friendship blossomed between

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ROBERT REIFF; CHRIS LUND; PER BERNAL; CHRIS LUND

them that only grew. When Wheeler promoted his namesake NPC contest in Minnesota in 2008, Levrone was onstage, fully dressed, as an honoured guest. Sometimes as members of the media commenting on contests, sometimes as businessmen promoting products and ventures, and sometimes just because, the two iron warriors so associated with '90s bodybuilding were together again and again, smaller and smoother but smiling and joking, friends enjoying each other's presence.

## RESURRECTORS

"Do you even lift, bro?" Near the end of his Hollywood phase when he was sub-90, Levrone's answer was no. But he returned to the gym, and as the weights he hoisted grew, so did his body, and the once-fantastical idea of a comeback became increasingly plausible. Privately, he discussed it with Wheeler, who encouraged him. "If anyone can do it, it's Kevin," Wheeler said last year. "He took a lot of time off, so he's stayed healthier than most guys. I'm excited. I can't wait to see what he can do."

After 14 years away from stages and at 52 (or 51, depending on the source), Levrone entered last year's Mr. Olympia. Striking his trademark most muscular, his upper body wasn't too far away from what we remembered. His traps, delts, and arms had regained much of their density, and, as promised, his conditioning was crisp. But in other poses, he faded. And his legs just weren't there. He failed to crack the top 15. Still, it was his first contest in 5,083 days, and he was AARP-eligible, so, as Wheeler said, "I think it's really inspiring, and that's important. People need inspiration."

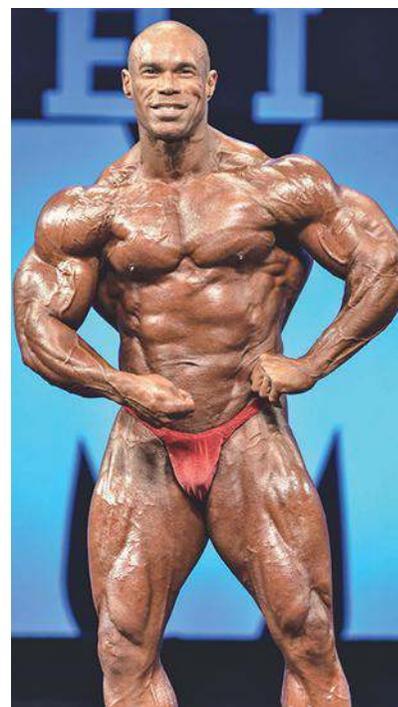
"I love Flex Wheeler. Out of everyone out there, two guys have been 100% supportive of me, Flex Wheeler and Chris Cormier," Levrone said. And as Wheeler contemplated his own return to the Olympia stage, Levrone returned the support. "Whatever he decides, I'm backing him 100%. I love and respect that guy. He has one of the most beautiful physiques ever. He's a person whom I looked up to, and I think he's incredibly awesome. I'd love to see him back onstage, and it'd be an honour to help him in any way I can."

On Sept. 15, at 52, Flex Wheeler will be competing in the Classic Physique Olympia. By necessity, with the division's weight limits, it will be a smaller version of classic Flex, but it was to his advantage that judging places a premium on shape and proportions—always his strong points. Appropriately, he'll be one year behind Levrone's appearance on the Olympia stage, just as he was 24 years ago when he finished second in the Mr. Olympia as a rookie, which may have seemed impossible—if not for the fact that "this other guy" had accomplished the same amazing feat one year prior.

"I'm not going to dwell on anything negative or where he's going to place, because it's not about that," Levrone says of Wheeler's Olympia comeback.

**After Levrone's improbable Mr. O comeback last year, Wheeler is following him back to the Olympia stage this year.**

"It's about building him up, putting him on a pedestal so he can perform and do what it is that he needs to do. Us bodybuilders from the '90s, we gotta lift each other up, and that's what it's all about. There's nothing delusional about him wanting to come back and do anything that he decides he wants to do with his body." They were once the fiercest rivals, but they're now the most loyal of friends. And if Flex Wheeler finally wins an Olympia title this year, after all those years when both of them came so very close, no one will be cheering louder than Kevin Levrone. **FLEX**



## LEVRONE'S AND WHEELER'S OLYMPIA RECORDS

YEAR	LEVRONE	WHEELER
1992	2nd	
1993	5th	2nd
1994	3rd	
1995	2nd	8th
1996	3rd	4th
1997	4th	
1998	4th	2nd
1999	4th	2nd
2000	2nd	3rd
2001	3rd	
2002	2nd	7th
2003	6th	
2016	DNP	

### WHEELER RECORD

Pro Contests **33**  
 Pro Wins **17**  
 Pro Placing Average **2.03%**  
 Olympias **7**  
 O Seconds **3**  
 O Placing Average **4%**

### LEVRONE RECORD

Pro Contests **63**  
 Pro Wins **20**  
 Pro Placing Average **2.47%\***  
 Olympias **13**  
 O Seconds **4**  
 O Placing Average **3.33%\***  
 \*Does not include 2016 Olympia.

### HEAD-TO-HEAD RECORD

Wheeler **8**      Levrone **7**

### OLYMPIA COMEBACKS

NAME	YEARS AWAY	PLACE
Lou Ferrigno	17	12th
Flex Wheeler	15	?
Kevin Levrone	13	DNP
Sergio Oliva	12	8th
Arnold Schwarzenegger	5	1st
Franco Columbu	5	1st





RALPH DEHAAN (WHEELER); CHRIS LUND (LEVRONE)

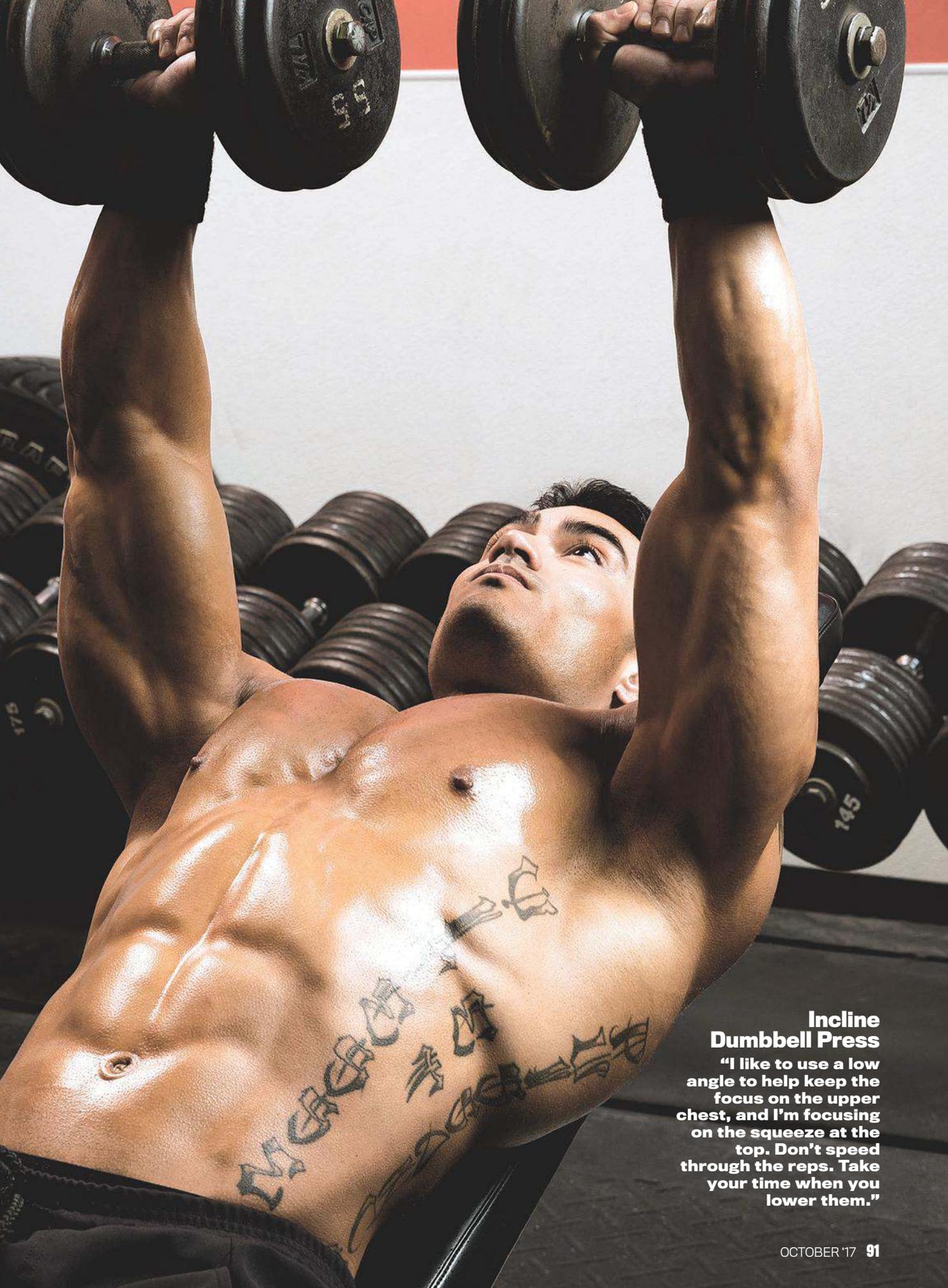
# POTVIN POWER

**JEREMY POTVIN**  
IS LOOKING TO WIN THE POT  
AT THE MEN'S PHYSIQUE  
OLYMPIA IN LAS VEGAS

BY **ROGER LOCKRIDGE**  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **IAN SPANIER**

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## **Incline Dumbbell Press**

**"I like to use a low angle to help keep the focus on the upper chest, and I'm focusing on the squeeze at the top. Don't speed through the reps. Take your time when you lower them."**

**As soon as someone in the bodybuilding industry talks about men's physique and mentions the name "Jeremy," one would guess that the athlete referenced is the reigning division champion Jeremy Buendia. However, there is another young man who shares the same first name who also hopes to be able to claim victory at the Men's Physique Olympia. San Diego's Jeremy Potvin has quickly grabbed the attention of his fellow competitors and fans, and it was thanks in part to his incredible debut on the 2016 Olympia stage where he placed third.**

"The goal for everyone is to walk away with a win," Potvin says. "After last year if I come in better and Jeremy Buendia is off, I think I can take the title. He is the champ for a reason though, so I know it will take something special."

Toward that end, Potvin is focusing on what he needs to do during his prep. "I need more fullness and better conditioning. As the shortest guy onstage I need to stand out, so if I can be the best conditioned one up there, it can help me."

One aspect that has remained the same for 2017 is that he's continued working with coach Ryan Bentson of Team Zero Gravity. "When I started working with him and he believed in my ability to do well, it lit a fire. Having that extra eye is also a game changer when you get to the Olympia level."

## From Overseas to Olympia

Potvin's love for the iron began while he was serving in the Army from 2007 to 2012.

"Lifting served as a stress reliever and took my mind off what I was doing overseas. Once I saw the changes in my body, I was addicted." He also believes his time in the service is still helping him in the IFBB. "The mentality from the service stuck with me and transferred to bodybuilding 100%. You definitely have to be disciplined regardless of the branch of

military you serve in and that holds true in bodybuilding regardless of what division you compete in."

So what made him decide to take his training to the stage? "I was working as a personal trainer and a co-worker got her pro card. She told me about a local show and how physique would be perfect for me. I did my first show in 2013 and by the end of 2014, I won my class at the Nationals and became a pro. I think it's working out."

**"WHEN I FIRST STEPPED ONSTAGE, I WAS JUST GETTING A FEEL FOR IT AND TO SEE HOW THE EXPERIENCE WAS. TO MAKE IT AS FAR AS I HAVE IS AMAZING."**

### Potvin's Chest Workout

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Incline Smith Machine Press	4	8-12
Barbell Bench Press	4	8-12
Incline Dumbbell Press	4	8-12
Incline Dumbbell Flye	4	8-12
Dumbbell Pullover	4	8-12
Incline Single Kettlebell Press	4	8-12

### Snapshot Jeremy Potvin

**Birth Date:** July 21, 1989 **Height:** 168

**Contest Weight:** 70 kg

**Residence:** San Diego, California

**Contest Highlights:** 2016 Men's Physique Olympia, 3rd; 2014 NPC Nationals men's physique class A winner (earned pro card)

**Social:** Instagram: jeremypotvin  
Facebook: Jeremy Potvin IFBB Pro

### Potvin's Training Split

**Monday** Chest **Friday** Arms

**Tuesday** Back

**Wednesday** Legs

**Thursday** Shoulders

**Saturday** Anything that he feels needs to be trained a second time





## **Incline Dumbbell Flye**

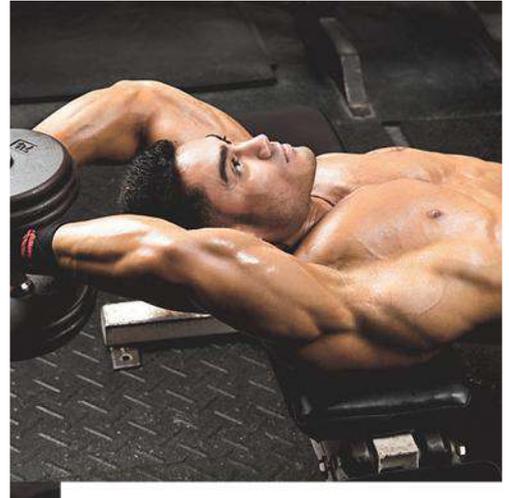
"Normally I do up the angle here. I like to have the bench in the middle of my back to open everything up. My elbows are somewhat bent, but they stay in that same position throughout the set."

## Barbell Bench Press

"I go heavy with this. It's a general gauge of how the workout will go. If I can push heavy weight here, then I know I can do the same with the rest of the lifts in my workout. I do feel it gives me the base for how I develop the chest."

**"I KNOW MANY GUYS DON'T LIKE THE BENCH PRESS, BUT FOR ME, IT SERVES MANY PURPOSES AND I LIKE DOING THEM."**

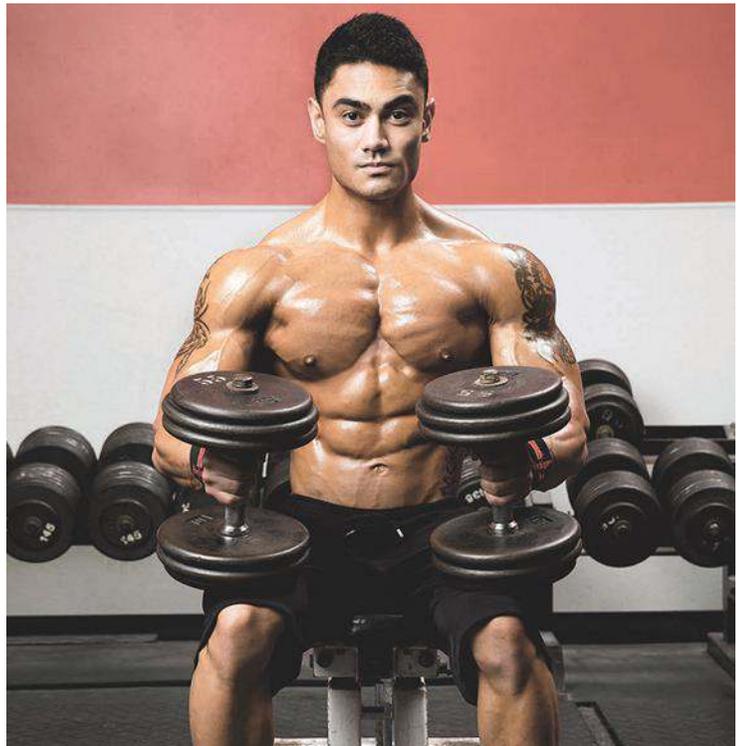


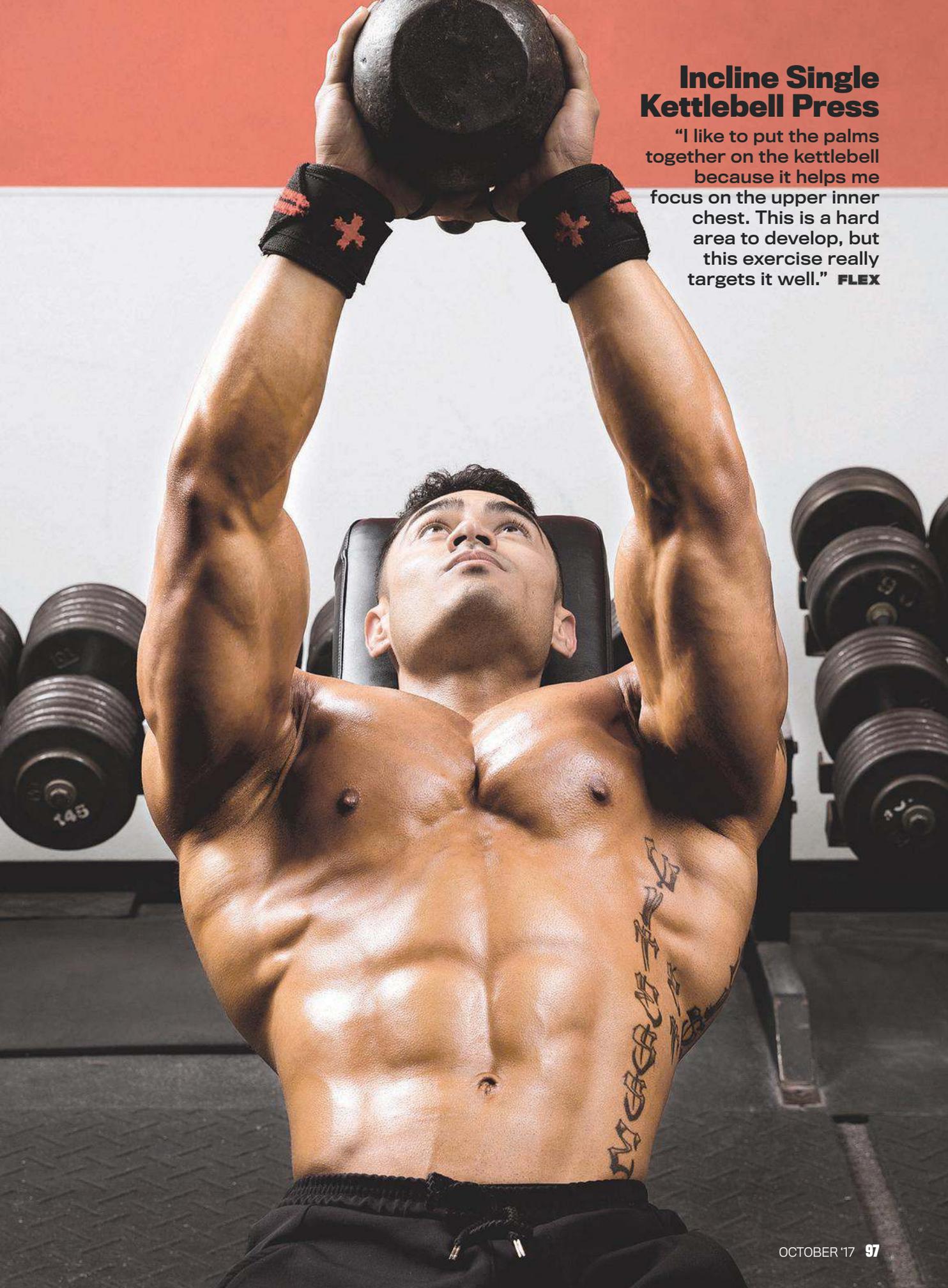


## Dumbbell Pullover

"I use this to target the upper chest, and I like the stretch. When I come up I lift the weight up to neck height and stop."

**"I WANT TO SHOW PEOPLE THAT IF YOU HAVE A DREAM AND IF YOU STAY TRUE TO YOURSELF AND TAKE RISKS, YOU CAN REACH YOUR GOALS AND GET WHAT YOU WANT. I'M PROOF OF THIS."**





## Incline Single Kettlebell Press

"I like to put the palms together on the kettlebell because it helps me focus on the upper inner chest. This is a hard area to develop, but this exercise really targets it well." **FLEX**

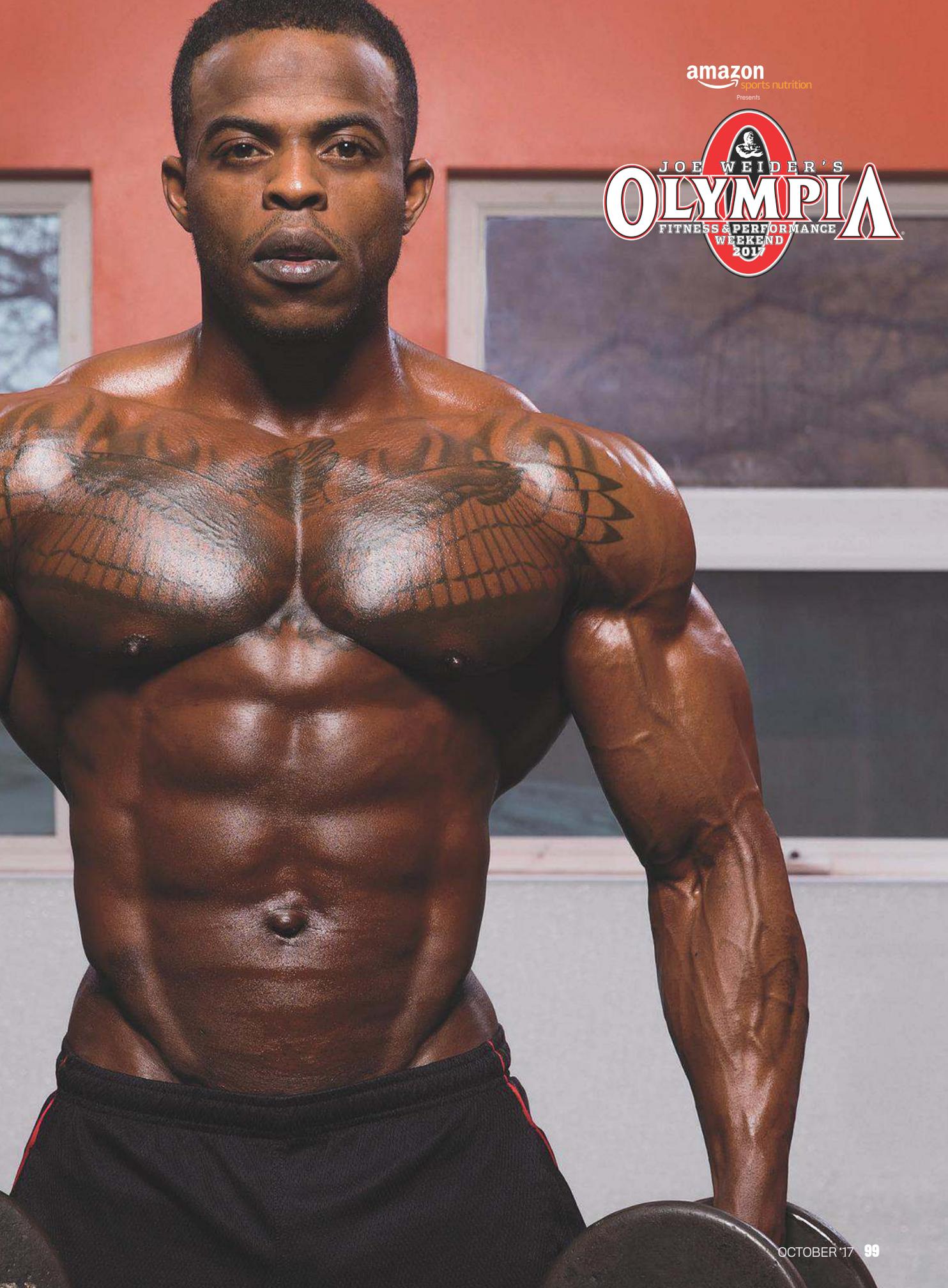
# AWESOME ANDRE

**ANDRE FERGUSON** HAS WON THREE OUT OF HIS LAST FOUR SHOWS. NOW HE PUSHES FOR ONE MORE VICTORY AT THE MEN'S PHYSIQUE OLYMPIA. BY **ROGER LOCKRIDGE** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **IAN SPANIER**



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FITNESS & PERFORMANCE  
WEEKEND  
2017





you watch an athlete over the course of his career, you can see how he changes not only physically but also mentally. Andre Ferguson says that if you saw him at his first contest and told him he would eventually place in the top five at the Men's Physique Olympia, he would have been surprised. "The Olympia is the biggest stage in the sport," Ferguson says. "So to be in the top five, I'd have said you were crazy."

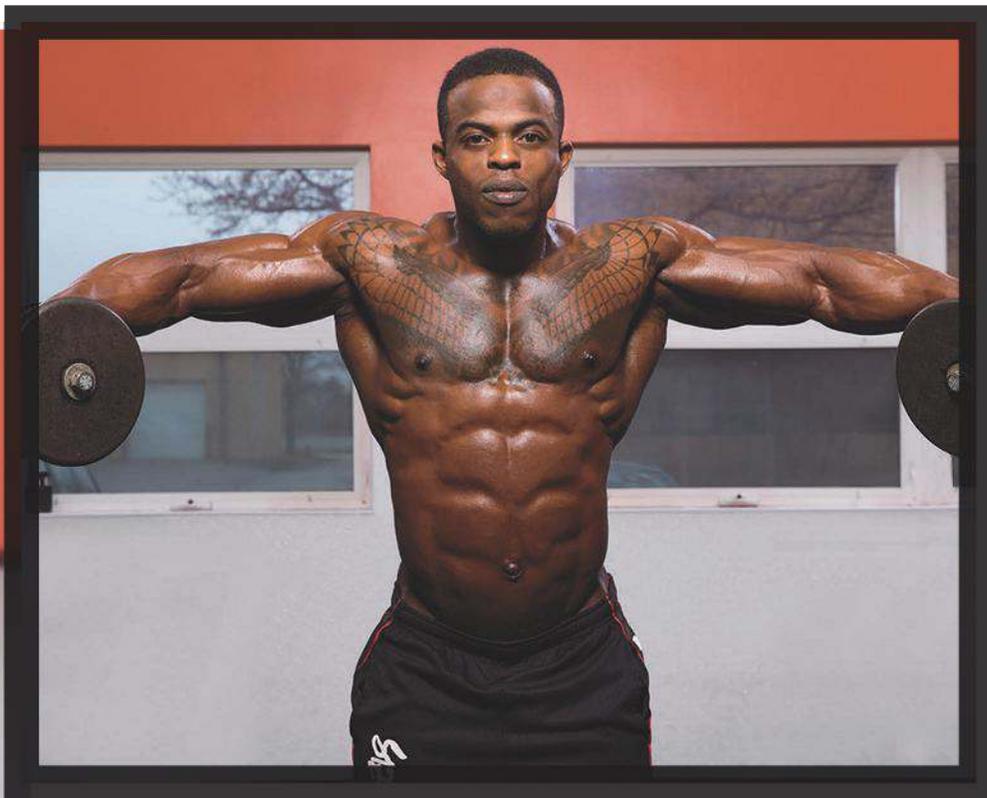
Fast-forward to the 2016 Olympia Weekend, where that exact scenario would happen.

His thought process revealed how he had evolved as a competitor: "I was happy, but I was looking at those guys and immediately thinking about how I need to improve, because now I know I can win this."

So what does he feel he has to do to climb up the ranks in Las Vegas for 2017? "I need to be a little better conditioned and come in drier," Ferguson says. "I think I have the muscle

and individual body parts, but conditioning is where they got me. This year I plan on handling that, and if I do, I believe I can win it."

That's a belief that is shared by his coach, Omar Ventura, who he feels has been a big help. "He really believes in me and knows everything about my body since I started, so we work great together," Ferguson says. "If you're thinking about competing, don't hire the local gym guy. Hire a pro who has worked with others with good results. They get paid for a reason, and it's worth the investment."



**“IF YOU FOCUS ON MOVING THE MUSCLE, YOU’RE GETTING MORE STIMULATION THAN TRYING TO MOVE WEIGHT.”**

### ▲ **LATERAL RAISE**

“I normally do them standing, but the seated version is cool, too, because your legs can’t be involved. When I get to the top I twist my little fingers up to hit the insertion of the side head. I stop a little before parallel to keep the traps out of it.”

### ▲ **ALTERNATING FRONT RAISE**

“Alternating allows me to focus on each side. I’m just trying to feel these on the way up. I want to feel the front delts contract.”



## CONFUSING CONFIDENCE FOR COCKINESS

While some people who've heard him and read his quotes feel he might be cocky, talking to Ferguson directly shows that he's simply confident in his ability to compete like any other athlete: "What am I supposed to say when someone asks me about this, that I want to be second? I compete to win just like them. I won three shows last year, placed top five at the Olympia, and won three shows so far this year. Why should I not be confident in my abilities? There were those who thought I was all talk when I started, but now that they've seen me do well, they just say, 'Well, he knew all along, didn't he?'"

### FERGUSON'S SHOULDER WORKOUT

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Plate-loaded Shoulder Press Machine	6	15-20
Alternating Front Raise	4	10
Lateral Raise	6	8-15
Machine Lateral Raise	6	10-15
Rear Lateral Raise	6	12-15
Standing Barbell Face-pull	3	15
superset with Seated Barbell Face-pull	3	15
Seated Reverse Pulldown Face-pull	3	15

### FERGUSON'S TRAINING SPLIT

**MONDAY** Chest and Shoulders

**TUESDAY** Lower Back

**WEDNESDAY** Shoulders

**THURSDAY** Legs

**FRIDAY** Upper Back and Rear Delts

**SATURDAY** Full Upper-Body Circuit

**SUNDAY** Rest

### SNAPSHOT: ANDRE FERGUSON

**BIRTH DATE:** Oct. 9, 1984

**HEIGHT:** 175 cm

**CONTEST WEIGHT:** 84 kg

**RESIDENCE:** Long Island, New York

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:** 2017: Toronto Pro Supershow men's physique, 1st; New York Pro men's physique, 1st; Hawaii Pro men's physique, 1st; 2016: Tampa Pro men's physique, 1st; Karina Nascimento Pro men's physique, 1st; Baltimore Grand Prix men's physique, 1st; Men's Physique Olympia, 5th

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** Instagram: luckylibra213  
Snapchat: luckylibra213  
Twitter: luckylibra213



GROOMING BY LUDIE SENATUS FOR ZENOBIA

**"I DON'T NORMALLY TIME REST BETWEEN SETS. WHEN I FEEL LIKE I'M READY, I GO, BUT IT'S PROBABLY AROUND 45 SECONDS OR SO."**



## **REAR LATERAL RAISE**

"Little fingers out here just like the lateral raise. I come up until I feel the rear delts work, then I go back down." **FLEX**



# The Conqueror's

# BACK

**WILLIAM BONAC** IS READY TO STEP ONTO THE MR. OLYMPIA STAGE FOR ANOTHER SHOT AT THE BIGGEST TITLE OF ALL. WHEN HE TURNS AROUND, HE'LL REVEAL A BACK LOCKED AND LOADED FOR BATTLE, THANKS TO THIS WORKOUT.

BY **MICHAEL BERG, N.S.C.A.-C.P.T.** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **IAN SPANIER**







Phil Heath. Shawn Rhoden. Dexter Jackson. Mamdouh “Big Ramy” Elssbiay.

Those are the four athletes who stood between William Bonac and his ultimate ambition last September—the Mr. Olympia title, the most coveted trophy in bodybuilding. It’s the contest that mints legends.

And while they are big names all, with a six-time defending champ at the very top of the list, they all also have one key thing in common. They’re human. They sweat, they bleed, they have their own moments of doubt, and all of them to a man, whether they like to admit it or not, can be beaten on any given day.

Bonac knows this. It’s what keeps him grinding six days per week in the industrial-grey gym near his small but comfortable home base in Amsterdam. The 35-year-old Ghana native, with the ever-present help of trainer Neil Hill and his Yoda 3 Training (Y3T) system, is ready to take on all comers, planning to enter a few solid kilos heavier than last year’s 104 (at a height of 170 cm), with additional improvements.

The Conqueror’s focal point? “My condition,” he says succinctly. “I will be in better shape—full and hard.”

He will also have an even better back, a body part he’s improved tremendously already as he climbed the Olympia ranks, from 15th in his 2014 debut to eighth in 2015 to that aforementioned fifth.

The “3” in Y3T refers to the weekly progression, with the first week anchored by heavy compound exercises of six to 10 reps each, the second a mix of compound and isolation exercises for eight to 12 reps using moderate weights, and the third 14- to 30-plus-rep sets of compound and isolation moves performed at high intensities. “I do two warmup ‘pumping’ sets and three working sets per exercise,” Bonac says, “improvising from Neil’s system a bit with my own ideas now and then, based on how I feel on that day.”

Within that framework, here are the back exercises Bonac leans on to build a back strong enough to carry a Sandow.



### REVERSE-GRIP LAT PULLDOWN (NOT PICTURED)

To warm up, Bonac adds a twist to a basic movement, turning his palms toward him with a shoulder-width grip on the bar as he settles down onto the seat. Flipping the grip actually increases your mechanical advantage, making the movement slightly easier, while also engaging the lower lats. With elbows out, back straight, chest out, and lats stretched, he pulls down until the centre of the bar touches down to his thick upper chest, then slowly returns along the same path.

Moving into the meat of the set, he assumes a rhythmic cadence, breathing in at the top, air hissing back out as the bar comes in contact with his body. Two or three sets in the 70-kilo to 116-kilo range, and he’s ready to segue into the first working move.



### FRONT LAT PULLDOWN (NOT PICTURED)

Bonac doesn’t have to move far—in fact, he just needs to adjust his grip for standard lat pull downs to the front, turning his palms away and grabbing the outer downward-angled part of the long bar. “I stay on the same machine for the first three exercises to save time,” he explains. “I end up being able to do more [overall] during the workout because of that.”

Here, he’ll do two “pump” sets of 15-plus reps, then get into three working sets, maxing out the weight stack at 136 kilos. Form here is paramount—his feet are flat on the floor, knees firmly under the supports, core tight with his lower back in its natural arch, and elbows to the sides. As he pulls—thinking of his arms more as “hooks” than a prime mover—Bonac focuses on the deep contraction throughout his lats and upper back to bring the bar down, keeping it close so it just clears his face on the ascent and descent.

## THE Y3T SYSTEM

**Week 1:** Heavy (6-10 reps) compound exercises

**Week 2:** Moderate (8-12 reps) compound and isolation exercises

**Week 3:** High-rep (14-30+ reps) and high-intensity compound and isolation exercises

Repeat for two more cycles, then take a week off for recovery before starting over at Week 1. Bonac does one or two “pumping” sets and two or three working sets of each exercise in his session, modifying the working reps week to week as shown above, although he’ll deviate from the exact parameters based on his own assessments and strength levels in any particular workout.

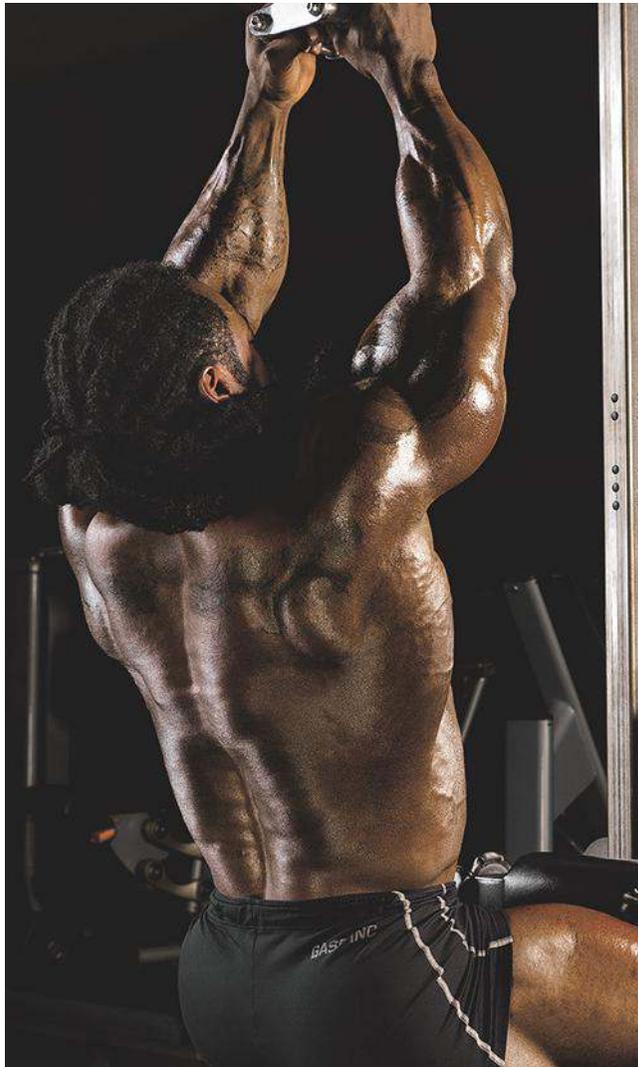
# 3

## CLOSE-GRIP LAT PULLDOWN

For the third move in his opening trifecta, Bonac switches to a V-style attachment, which tends to bring in more of the middle back muscles into this lat-centric exercise.

Although the closer grip can make it tempting to lean back during each rep, Bonac remains upright—his goal isn't to turn the pulldown into more of a seated row, which comes later on. Sticking to the Y3T protocol, he'll do five sets—two pump sets and three working sets.

The rep manipulation from week to week, as devised by Hill, ensures an ever-varied stimulus, meaning even if Bonac doesn't shuffle his exercise selection greatly, he'll still be slamming his back in a different way each workout. While the six- to 10-rep range up to the machine's max of 136 kg helps build strength and muscle density, the higher-rep sets that range from 12 all the way up to 30 or more enhance endurance and etch in detail, as each muscle fibre is pressed to its limits.



## BONAC'S BACK WORKOUT

EXERCISE	SETS*	REPS (WK. 1)	REPS (WK. 2)	REPS (WK. 3)
Reverse-grip Lat Pulldown	3	6-10	8-12	14-30+
Front Lat Pulldown	3	6-10	8-12	14-30+
Close-grip Lat Pulldown	3	6-10	8-12	14-30+
Wide-grip Pullup	4-5	12-16	12-16	12-16
One-arm Dumbbell Row	3	6-10	8-12	14-30+
Low-back Extension	3-5	15+	15+	15+
Straight-arm Rope Pulldown	2-3	6-10	8-12	14-30+
Seated Cable Row	2-3	6-10	8-12	14-30+

\*Plus 1-2 "pump" sets of 15+ reps preceding the working sets.

## BONAC'S TRAINING SPLIT

**Monday**  
Back and biceps

**Tuesday**  
Chest and triceps

**Wednesday**  
Quads and hamstrings

**Thursday**  
Shoulders, traps, and calves

**Friday**  
Back

**Saturday**  
Rest

**Sunday:**  
"Bonus" Day  
Shoulders, hams, or arms



20	kg	4.5
30	kg	6.8
40	kg	8.8
50	kg	11.0
60	kg	13.2
70	kg	15.4
80	kg	17.6
90	kg	19.8
100	kg	22.0
110	kg	24.2
120	kg	26.4
130	kg	28.6
140	kg	30.8
150	kg	33.0



# 4

## WIDE-GRIP PULLUP

The pullup is the ultimate test of mettle when it comes to back training—even more so when you're hoisting up a 107-kg physique, plus an additional 20 to 25 kilograms of additional plates strapped to your waist.

"I'll do four or five sets of these, aiming for 12 to 16 reps per set," Bonac says. He aims for piston-smooth reps, with a deep, dead hang at the bottom and pulling himself all the way up so that his face reaches the level of the bar at the top. (Notice his arms forming a perfect 90-degree angle at the apex of his rep, with his upper arms parallel to the floor and elbows flared directly to each side—that's how you maximize the muscle tension on each and every rep.)

Here, as with all his back exercises, Bonac eschews extra intensity techniques, such as partials and dropsets. "For back I don't, and if I do then it's because the weight is light, because that's the heaviest the equipment goes," he explains. "The reason why I don't want to use additional techniques is because, in most instances, my forearms will eventually do more work than my back, which isn't the goal."

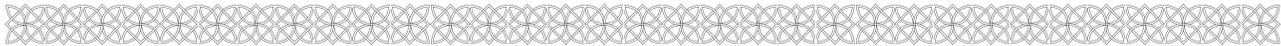


# 5

## ONE-ARM DUMBBELL ROW

Bonac next takes up residence on a flat bench next to the dumbbell rack for one-arm rows—four to five sets in all, pyramiding up over that span to the 60-kilo dumbbells. "The gym has 83-kilo dumbbells, but if we go that high, the movement wouldn't be perfect," he says, the "we" being training partner Candrick Fluonia, who has been training with Bonac on and off since 2008.

To start, Bonac places one knee and that same-side hand on the bench, his other foot placed alongside on the floor. He holds the dumbbell at full extension, elbow straight and his shoulder shifted down. From here, he engages the lats, traps, rhomboids, teres major, and other major movers of the midback as he bends his elbow and brings the dumbbell straight up toward his flank, rotating the scapula inward toward his spine as the weight rises. Once his upper arm reaches a point parallel with his torso, he squeezes, then returns down the same pathway. After anywhere from eight to 16 reps (depending on the week), he'll switch arms.



## SNAPSHOT: WILLIAM BONAC

**Birth Date:** May 18, 1982

**Birthplace:** Ghana

**Current Residence:**

Amsterdam

**Height:** 170 cm

**Weight:** 107 kg

**Sponsors:** Weider/AMI, USN  
(Ultimate Sports Nutrition, U.K.),  
Physique Global, MNX Sportswear  
**Contest Highlights:** 2016: Nordic Pro, 1st;  
Prague Pro, 1st; 2015: Nordic Pro, 1st;  
Dayana Cadeau Pro, 1st;

2014: Golden State Pro, 1st;  
Russia Grand Prix, 1st  
**Instagram:** @william\_bonac  
**Facebook:** @WilliamBonacOfficial

# 6

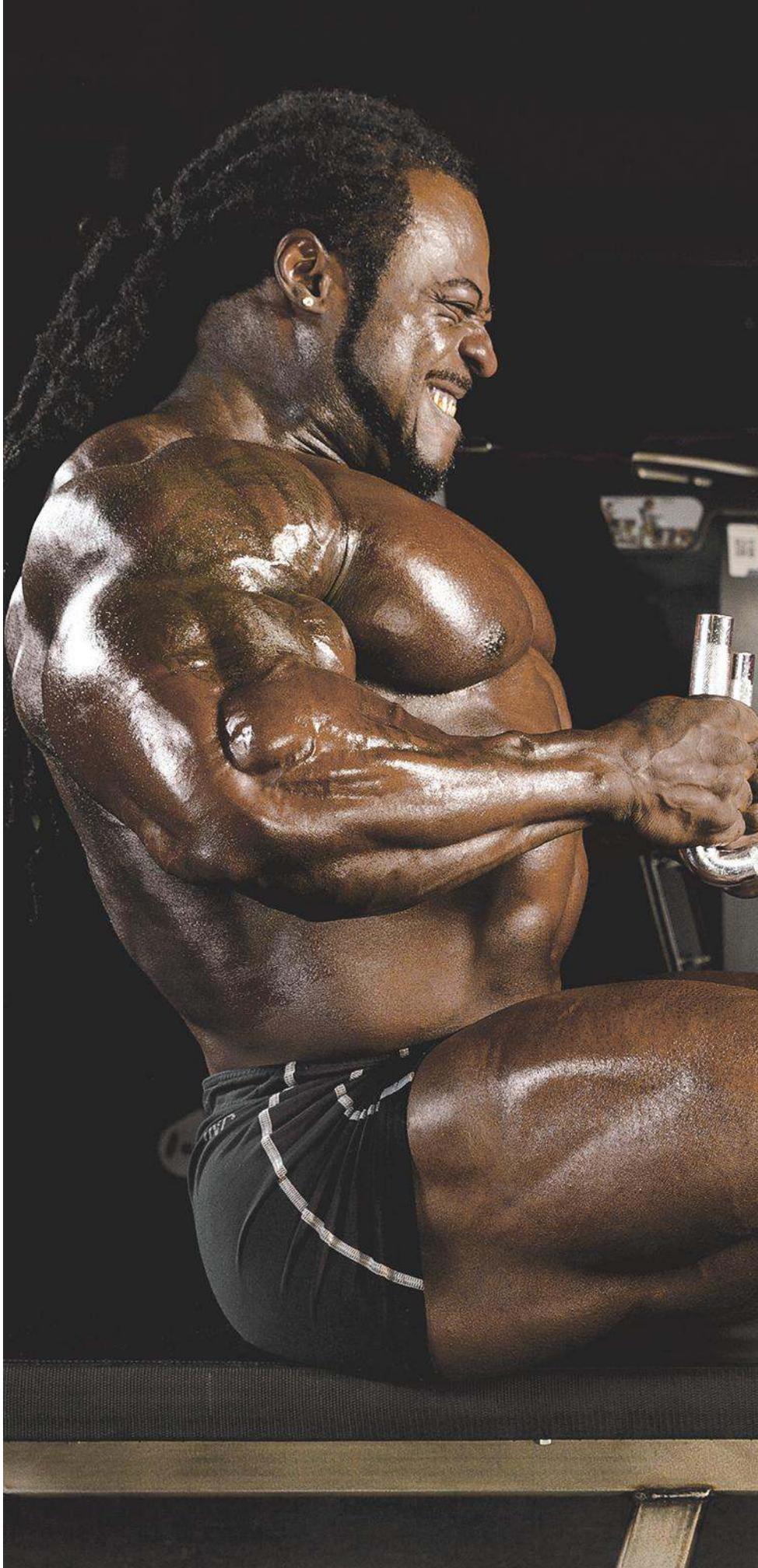
## LOW-BACK EXTENSION (NOT PICTURED)

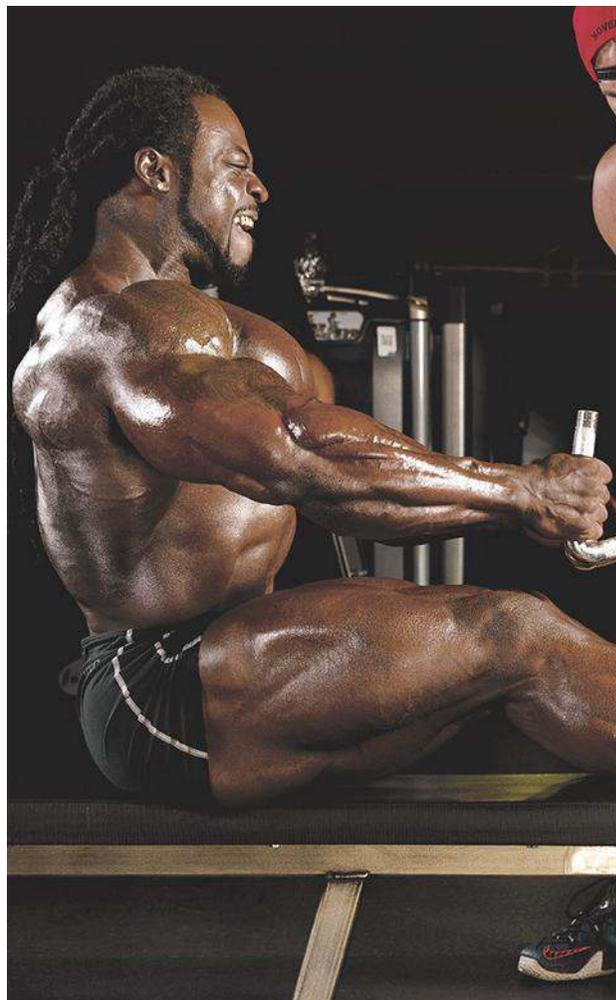
The remaining three movements—back extensions, straight-arm pulldowns, and seated cable rows—can unfold in any order. Bonac performs extensions standard-style, centering his ankles behind the pads so his feet are firmly on the platform. With his body a plank from head to heels, his hands folded over his chest, he hinges at the hips to lower his torso as far as he can. From that bottommost position, he flexes through his erector spinae and glutes to lift his body back up into a straight position, repeating for anywhere from 15 to 30 reps or more.

# 7

## STRAIGHT-ARM ROPE PULLDOWN (NOT PICTURED)

This cable exercise puts constant tension on the lats, serving as a potent burnout for a muscle group that's already aced from the barrage that has come before. Bonac stands in front of a high cable pulley and grasps the rope attachment with a neutral grip at the knots, elbows straight but not locked out. With knees soft and leaning slightly forward at the waist, arms parallel to the floor, Bonac flexes his wide lats as he "pulls" the rope down toward the floor until the ends reach his quads. Holding that peak contraction for a brief one count, he raises his arms along the same path until they are just above parallel to the floor, making sure to stop before the weight stack touches down and initiating the next rep.





## 8 SEATED CABLE ROW

Attaching a V-handle to the seated row cable machine, the reigning 2016 Prague Pro champ sits upright on the bench, facing the weight stack, feet against the foot platform with his knees slightly bent, grasping the handles with both hands. In the starting position, his torso is upright and his arms are fully extended. Keeping his elbows in close to the sides of his body—no easy feat with wings as wide as Bonac’s—he strongly pulls the handle by bending his arms and squeezing his shoulder blades together until the handle contacts his midsection. After a one-second squeeze, he returns under control to the start position, not letting the stack touch down between reps to maintain continuous tension.

After four to five sets of seated rows, his Friday back workout is (finally) a wrap. While it may seem like a lot of sets and reps to the uninitiated observer, it’s all part of the game plan to improve a body part that was once considered one of his weaknesses and now has rallied significantly. “Back will always be a focal point for me, even though I have improved it a lot in a few years’ time,” he says. “I still need to work hard to maintain it and to develop it to its max potential.” **FLEX**



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WEEKEND  
2017

A close-up photograph of a person's legs, wearing bright red sneakers, positioned on a gym machine. The machine has a dark, diamond-plate metal surface. The person's legs are muscular and appear to be in the middle of a workout. The background shows other gym equipment, including a weight stack and a pulley system.

BY **JOE WUEBBEN** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **IAN SPANIER**

# A LEG UP ON THE O

TO CLAIM WHAT HE FEELS IS WITHIN HIS REACH—A MR. OLYMPIA TITLE—**SHAWN “FLEXATRON” RHODEN** IS POUNDING AWAY AT HIS QUADS AND HAMSTRINGS

**■ What's that sound you hear?** That's Shawn Rhoden quickly making his way up the Mr. Olympia leaderboard. In 2011, he placed 11th in his Vegas debut. The next year, he jumped all the way up to third, then fell back to fourth in 2013. He regrouped and finished third again in both '14 and '15, and then last year he made the small step up to Olympia runner-up, placing behind you-know-who.

In 2017, most (if not all) bodybuilding pundits expect the now 42-year-old Rhoden, the man dubbed "Flexatron," to at best hold on to that second-place spot; Phil Heath just looks that unbeatable right now. But in sports, we've come to learn that no man is invincible. And in bodybuilding, the quickest way to the top is through the bottom—the bottom part of the physique, that is, the legs.

If Rhoden is to do the seemingly impossible and knock off Heath, it will be in large part because of the following four lower-body exercises: three for the quads, one for the hamstrings. In 2016, "the Gift" came to the stage with a new and improved, shiny set of wheels. Perhaps it's Flexatron's turn in 2017 to wow everyone with his legs.

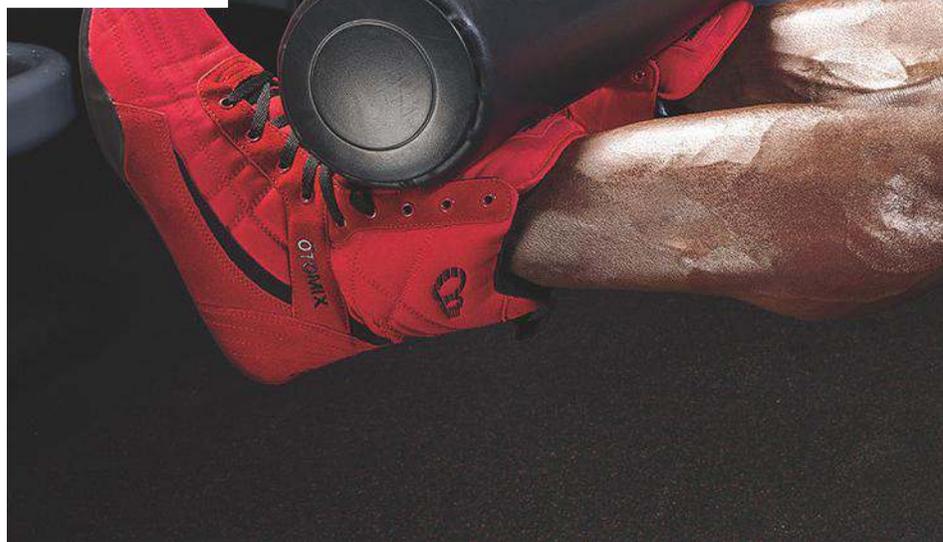
What's that sound you hear now? That's Shawn Rhoden banging out rep after rep on leg day. Clang!

## RHODEN'S OLYMPIA TRAINING SPLIT

<b>Sunday</b> Chest	<b>Tuesday</b> Shoulders	<b>Friday</b> Hamstrings
<b>Monday</b> Back	<b>Wednesday</b> Quads	<b>Saturday</b> Off
	<b>Thursday</b> Arms	

## RHODEN'S LEG WORKOUTS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
<b>Quads</b>		
Leg Extension	5-6	25
Leg Press	5	15-25
Smith Machine Squat	4-5	15-25
Vertical Leg Press	4-5	15-25
Walking Lunge	2	Length of gym floor and back
<b>Hamstrings</b>		
Lying Leg Curl	5	20-25
Seated Leg Curl	5	25
Stiff-leg Deadlift	4	15-25
Standing One-leg Curl	4-5	15-25



## SNAPSHOT SHAWN RHODEN

**Height** // 175 cm

**Weight** // 109 kg (contest); 118 kg (off-season)

**Birth Date** // April 2, 1975

**Residence** // Marina Del

Rey, California

**Nickname** // Flexatron

**Career Highlights** // 2016 Mr. Olympia, 2nd; 2012, 2014 San Marion Pro, 1st; 2012 Tampa Pro, 1st; 2012 Europa Super

Show, 1st; 2012 British Grand Prix, 1st; 2012 Arnold Classic Europe, 1st; 2009 North American Championships, heavyweight and overall winner (earned pro card)



## LEG PRESS

**Execution** Sit on a leg press machine and place your feet hip- to shoulder-width apart on the foot platform above you. Press the weight up to where your knees are extended but not locked out, then release the machine's safety latches. Lower the weight under control until your knees form 90-degree angles or slightly less, then push the weight back up explosively to the start position, again without locking out your knees at the top.

**Rhoden's Way** As with all his multijoint leg exercises, Rhoden goes as heavy as possible for relatively high reps (typically 15-plus), while always keeping the movements under control and using strict form.

## LEG EXTENSION

**Execution** Adjust the seat of a leg extension machine so that your lower back is flat against the seatback and your knees line up with the machine's axis of rotation. Begin with your legs bent 90 degrees and the weight lifted a few centimetres off the stack. Contract your quads to straighten your legs until your knees are extended but just short of full lockout. Squeeze your quads at the top, then return to the start position.

**Rhoden's Way** Rhoden does leg extensions one leg at a time. In either case (unilateral or both legs), he prefers to do extensions first in his workout to pre-exhaust the quads before his multijoint lifts.



# FIGHTIN' WORDS

Like the man he's trying to knock off (six-time Mr. Olympia Phil Heath), Shawn Rhoden isn't one to hold back his true feelings. Here's a quick rundown of Flexatron's recent comments regarding the Gift.

## Liking His Chances

"Is Phil beatable? You can quote me on this. I don't think Phil won the last three Olympias. As far as Phil being beatable, the answer is 100% yes."

## PC No Longer

"I'm at the point where I just don't give a shit anymore about being politically correct. The past few Olympias... there's nothing that said this guy's going to be hard to beat. I feel at this last Olympia [2016] that I beat him."

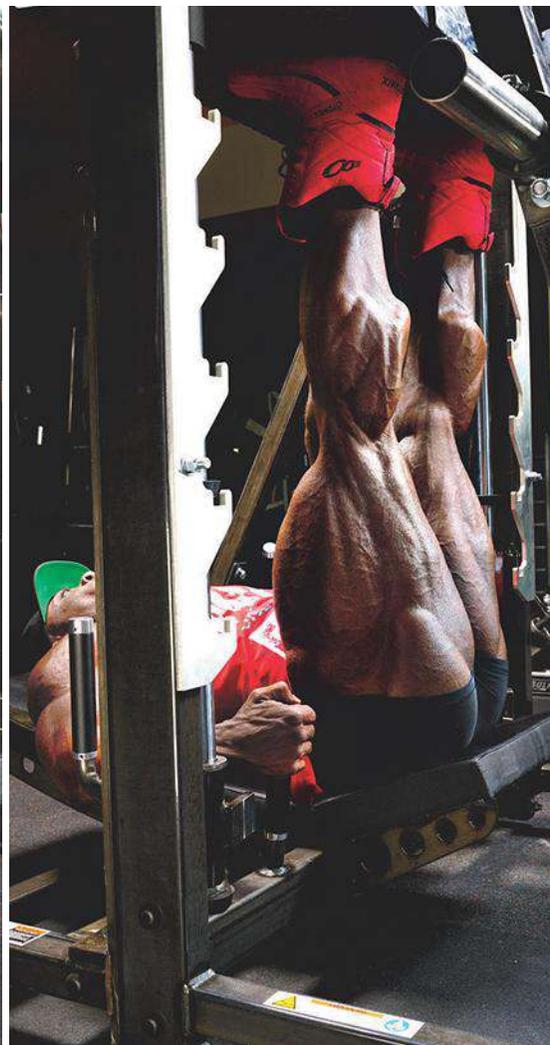
## Fueling the Fire

"I want to prove all the critics wrong who didn't believe I'd make it to where I am now, much less to be this close to the title. I used every little bit of that doubt as motivation. In my second year at the Olympia, 2012, Phil said I wasn't a threat...now I know he's looking over his shoulder, trying to figure out, 'Man, this guy just keeps coming—what can I do to slow him down?' The answer is, nothing." **FLEX**

## VERTICAL LEG PRESS

**Execution** Load plates onto a vertical leg press machine (if your gym has one), and lie faceup on the pad. Adjust your body position so that your hips are directly below the weight, then place your feet hip- to shoulder-width apart on the platform. Grasp the handles at your sides and make sure your shoulders and the back of your head are in contact with the pad. Press the weight up, unlock the safety latches, and bend your knees and hips to slowly lower the weight down. When your thighs reach your torso (and you can no longer lower down any farther), extend your knees and hips to forcefully press the weight back up without locking out your knees in the top position.

**Rhoden's Way** If you don't have a vertical leg press machine available at your gym, do machine hack squats instead. Rhoden has been known to do all variations of squat—including hack squats, barbell squats, Smith machine squats.



## LYING LEG CURL

**Execution** Adjust a lying leg curl machine so the roller pad fits on the backs of your ankles. Lie facedown and grasp the handles. Start with your legs straight and the weight lifted a few centimetres off the stack. Contract your hamstrings to bend your knees and curl the roller pad up toward your glutes. Squeeze your hamstrings for a count at the top, then slowly lower to the start position.

**Rhoden's Way** Flexatron incorporates all varieties of leg curls in his training—seated leg curls, standing one-leg curls, etc.—to make sure he's hitting his hamstrings from all angles to maximize development.

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WEEKEND  
2017





# THE BIG BOG CONTENDER

**IS MAMDOUH "BIG RAMY" ELSSBIAY THE NO. 1 THREAT TO MR. OLYMPIA PHIL HEATH? WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT TO FIND OUT. IN THE MEANTIME, HERE'S A LOOK BACK AT THE WORKOUTS OF BODYBUILDING'S ULTIMATE MASS MONSTER.**

COMPILED BY **TEAM FLEX**



He was the “next big thing” the moment he shook the stage at 130 kg and won his pro card at the 2012 Amateur Olympia. Still, with the show in Kuwait, it wasn’t until his pro debut at the 2013 IFBB New York Pro (a stage famous for supporting freaks), that Mamdouh Elssbiay said hello to the worldwide bodybuilding community as Big Ramy. That year, he placed eighth in his first Mr. Olympia (also his second pro contest). He moved up to seventh in 2014, fifth in 2015, and fourth last year.

Always the biggest bodybuilder onstage, Elssbiay has been hard at work consistently adding other ingredients to his mass stew, such as separation, detail, and that jumping-to-life muscle that all Mr. Olympias have possessed through the years. During a guest-posing stint earlier this May at IFBB Pro League president Jim Manion’s Pittsburgh Pro, we got a sneak peek at the results of his day-in, day-out toils in the gym. Looking harder than he has in the past at that juncture, Elssbiay raised eyebrows in the mock posedown with Heath, Dexter Jackson, and others. As he went back to his home base, Oxygen Gym in Kuwait City, and donned the oversized sweats he typically wears as he pressed, curled, squatted, and rowed his way to this September’s Mr. Olympia, FLEX compiled the best of Big Ramy’s workouts to examine the training that just might land the Beast from the Middle East membership in bodybuilding’s most exclusive club.



# BIG RAMY'S CHEST TEST

JANUARY 2016

BY GREG MERRITT

## WHY DOES ELSSBIAY DO INCLINE FLYES FIRST IN HIS CHEST ROUTINE?

To pre-exhaust his upper chest. By doing an isolation exercise (incline flyes) before a compound exercise (Smith machine incline presses) focused on the same area (upper chest), the 2015 Arnold Classic Brazil champ's upper pectorals are already tiring before he moves on to the presses. Doing this assures that his pecs will fail before his front delts and triceps can take over. Of course, it also means he can't hoist as much iron in the presses as he could otherwise, but it's much more important to Elssbiay that each rep of both the flyes and the presses is targeting his upper chest. He needs to maximize muscle there in order to keep it in line with its neighbors: his colossal delts and traps. Upper-chest pre-exhausting is the perfect one-two combination to launch his workout.

## Elssbiay's Chest Workout

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	WEIGHT
Incline Dumbbell Flye	3	10	27-50
Smith Machine Incline Press	3	10	127-150
Barbell Bench Press	3	10	143-166
Hammer Strength Decline Press	3	10	68-127
Machine Flye	3	10	68-82

# The World's Biggest Shoulders

SEPTEMBER 2016

BY MICHAEL BERG, N.S.C.A.-C.P.T.

## RULE NO. 1 MANIPULATE YOUR SET, REP, AND WEIGHT SCHEME TO AVOID PLATEAUIING.

For seated dumbbell presses, as well as any other shoulder press he may perform, Elssbiay goes "heavy" in the sense of a mere mortal—he can max out the available dumbbells on the

typical gym's rack. But for the typical workout, he'll opt for moderate weights that he can do for at least 6 clean reps, and end up with up to 15 reps depending on where he is in his progression.

Speaking of, that progression is key—over the course of five weeks, his rep ranges (and concurrent weight selection) gradually change from 12 to 15 to 10 to 12 to 6 to 8 for shoulders, as well as his back, chest, and legs; returning to the 12 to 15 range for the sixth week. It's generally three to four sets per exercise, enough to squeeze as much benefit as possible from the move without overtraining.

This approach is designed to avoid stagnation, nimbly keeping him from falling into a rut.

Muscles, after all, respond to new stimuli, so a steady diet week after week of the same reps, weights, and exercises is sure to backfire over the long term.

## Elssbiay's Shoulder Workout

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Seated Dumbbell Press	3-4	8-12
Lateral Raise	3-4	10-12
Rear Lateral Raise	3-4	10-12
Shrug	3-4	8-12

# GUNNING FOR THE O

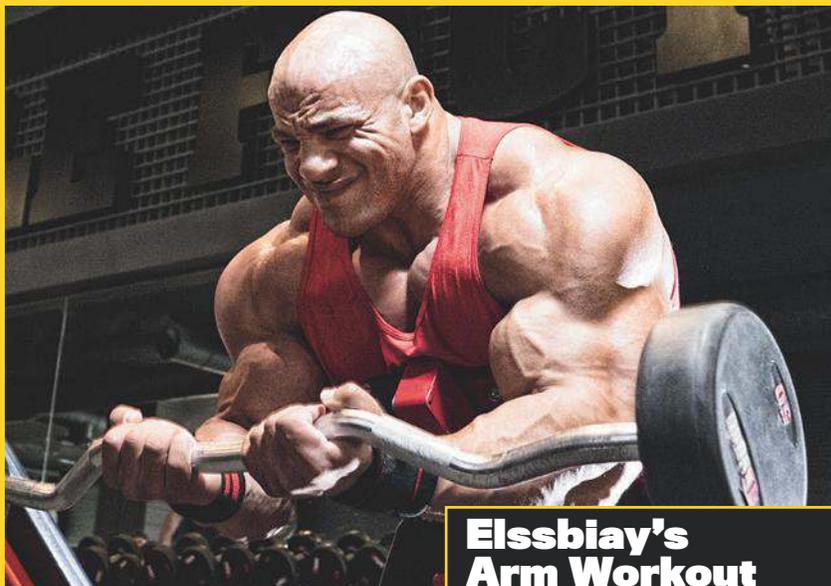
SEPTEMBER 2015 BY GREG MERRITT

## INCLINE EZ-BAR CURL

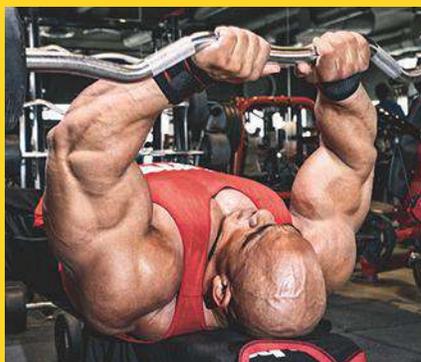
For your third biceps exercise, you're once again holding an EZ-bar, which means that once again your thumbs are higher than your little fingers, targeting the long heads of your outer biceps. However, unlike the standing EZ-bar curls, you take a narrow grip and you position yourself facedown on an incline bench. Lying takes your legs out of the lift, thus removing any sway. Your upper arms stay locked in place, perpendicular to Oxygen's floor, and you get such an intense peak contraction on every rep that even only 23 kg feels like three times as much. It's not about how much you lift; it's about how much you look like you can lift.

## LYING TRICEPS EXTENSION

Your reputation for favouring machines over free weights is well-deserved, but, in the heart of today's arm routine, three out of four consecutive exercises are performed with a cambered barbell. This is No. 3, and it's your only free-weight triceps lift—the skull crusher. Once again, you're not out to set any strength records (or crush your skull). Your trainer hands you a 41-kg EZ-bar for your first set and a 50-kilo for your final two sets. You take a narrow grip and let the bar drop to just above your forehead before powering it back up for a brief lockout on every rep. "It's important to keep a steady pace going," you tell the curious journalist. "I don't want to rest long at contractions, because I want to keep tension on the triceps."



## Elssbiay's Arm Workout



EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Preacher Machine Curl	4	10-15
Rope Pushdown	4	10-15
EZ-bar Curl	3	10-15
Seated Cable Triceps Extension	3	10-15
Incline EZ-bar Curl	3	10-15
Lying Triceps Extension	3	10-15
One-arm Machine Curl	3	10-15
Underhand Pushdown	3	10-15

ALEX ARDENTI



PER BERNAL



PER BERNAL



PER BERNAL

## Elssbiay's Training Split

SUNDAY

**LEGS**

MONDAY

**CHEST**

TUESDAY

**OFF**

WEDNESDAY

**BACK**

THURSDAY

**ARMS**

FRIDAY

**OFF**

SATURDAY

**SHOULDERS**

## Snapshot: Mamdouh "Big Ramy" Elssbiay

**Birth Date**

Sept. 16, 1984

**Birthplace**

Cairo, Egypt

**Current**

**Residence**

Kuwait City, Kuwait

**Height** 178 cm

**Weight**

144 kg  
(off-season),  
130 kg (contest)

**Contest**

**Highlights**

2016 Kuwait Pro, 1st;  
2015 Arnold Classic  
Brazil, 1st; 2013-14  
New York Pro, 1st;  
2012 IFBB Amateur  
Olympia, super-  
heavyweight and  
overall champ

**Online** Instagram

@big\_ramy;

Snapchat @big\_ramy1



# Taking It Superslow

SEPTEMBER 2014

BY ANITA NIKOLICH

**HACK SQUAT** Elssbiay always begins his workout with barbell squats or hack squats. The hack squat provides very little tension at the top or bottom position; the maximum resistance occurs in the middle of the range of motion. It's an excellent machine on which to test out MTUT (Menace Time Under Tension) by yourself, because the machine will catch the weight if the lift goes awry. After a few warmup sets done at a quick pace (never bouncing off the bottom—a bad habit you often see on the hack squat), he gets to work with (Dennis) James' MTUT. He unhooks the safety latch, squats down below parallel, pauses for three seconds at the bottom, then spends the next 30 seconds coming back up as James is yelling, "Slow it down! Slow it down!" The first few reps are no problem, but by the eighth one, Elssbiay is grimacing and needs help with the safety. During this particular workout, James allows him only 60 seconds of rest before the next set. He gives us a few tips as Elssbiay is lifting: "When you're coming up, focus on using the glutes and hams, lean back into the machine, never lock your knees at the top."

## Elssbiay's Leg Workout

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Hack Squat*	3	6-8
Leg Press**	3	8
Leg Extension	3	10-15
Lying Leg Curl*	3-4	8
Single Leg Curl	3	10

\*20 to 30 seconds up, 5 seconds down

\*\*30 to 40 seconds up, 5 seconds down

# THE IRON HULK

SEPTEMBER 2015

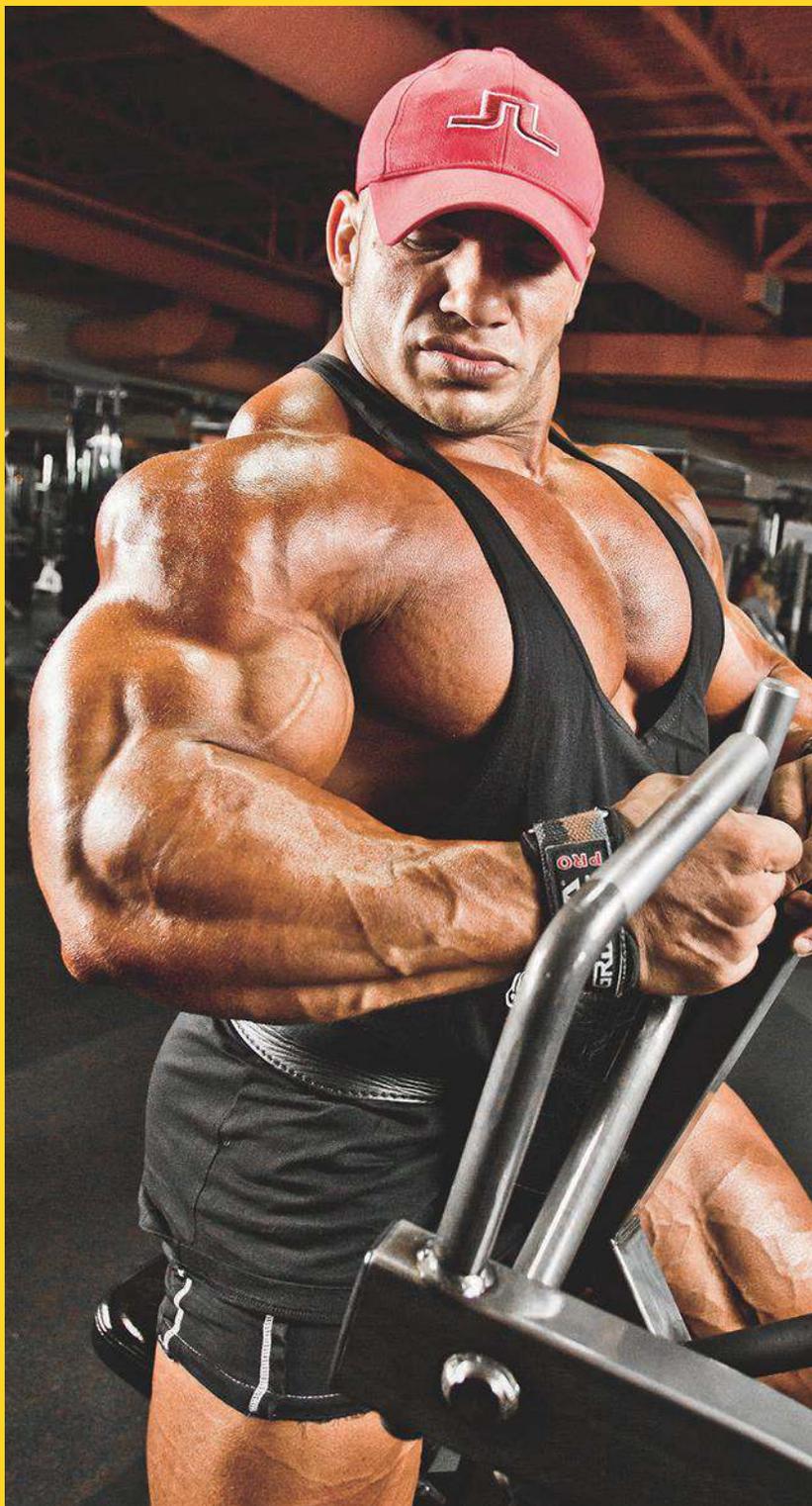
BY GREG MERRITT

**WHY** Big Ramy constructed one of the most Broddingnagian backs ever beheld with more machine rows than free-weight rows. Yes, barbells and dumbbells provide more freedom of movement than most machines, but mechanical contraptions also have a couple of key advantages over bells. First, sitting against a machine's chest pad locks you in place, so you can't sway and distribute stress from your lats to your spinal erectors. Second, you're usually able to get a stronger (and longer) contraction with a machine. Finally, Elssbiay often selects an iso-lateral machine (meaning the two arms move independently). This allows him to find a slightly different pace and range of motion for each arm; or he can work each side independently, doing the reps of a set for his right side and then the reps for his left side.

**HOW** "I'll do these either one arm or two arm," he says. "It just depends on how I feel and what else I do in my back routine. But I like them both ways equally." If he does two-arm rows, he'll often stand, so he can pull the handles a little lower into his sides. If he does one-arm rows, he'll place the leg opposite from the rowing arm forward. "I want a strong base, so I stay steady," he says. In either case, he keeps his chest against the support pad throughout each rep and gets maximum stretches and contractions. As with most machine exercises, he tends to hold contractions for a second, though he usually can't do this on his final reps when fighting fatigue. He goes for four or five sets of 8 to 15 reps.

**WHEN** He starts his back routine with pulldowns. After that, machine rows could come at any time in the workout. Often two or three of a routine's five back exercises are machine rows of varying types.

**VARIATION** Most machines allow you to choose myriad styles of grips. Usually, Big Ramy prefers a parallel (palms facing the centre axis) grip or nearly parallel grip. Depending on the machine, you may be able to choose from a panoply of grips: wide, medium, narrow, parallel, underhand, or overhand. Each will stress your upper-back muscles in a slightly different way. **FLEX**



## Elssbiay's Back Workout

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Lat Pulldown	4-5	8-15
Barbell Row	4-5	8-15
Close-grip Pulldown	4-5	8-15
Iso-lateral Machine Row	4-5	8-1

# FLEX YOUR TRIPS

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**AT 500 REPS OF INTENSIVE  
TORTURE, IS THIS THE WORLD'S  
CRAZIEST ARM ROUTINE?  
NO—IT'S JUST THE WARMUP.**

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BY **MICHAEL BERG, N.S.C.A.-C.P.T.** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **IAN SPANIER**



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# OLYMPIA CHAMPIONS TEND TO BEND THE BOUNDS OF "NORMAL."

Whether it's Arnold Schwarzenegger's famous Venice-forged high-volume style, Dorian Yates' blood-and-guts workouts that redefined what it means to reach total muscle annihilation, or Ronnie Coleman—well, just about anything Ronnie did in the blazing environs of dusty MetroFlex in Arlington, Texas—those who have won the ultimate bodybuilding title shrug off extremes.

So it goes with the five-time reigning 212 Olympia champ, Flex Lewis. The well-travelled Lewis is known as a gregarious ambassador of the sport, logging enough frequent flyer miles to perhaps buy his own airline. And he's also known for a relentlessness in the gym that borders on...well, it's not normal.

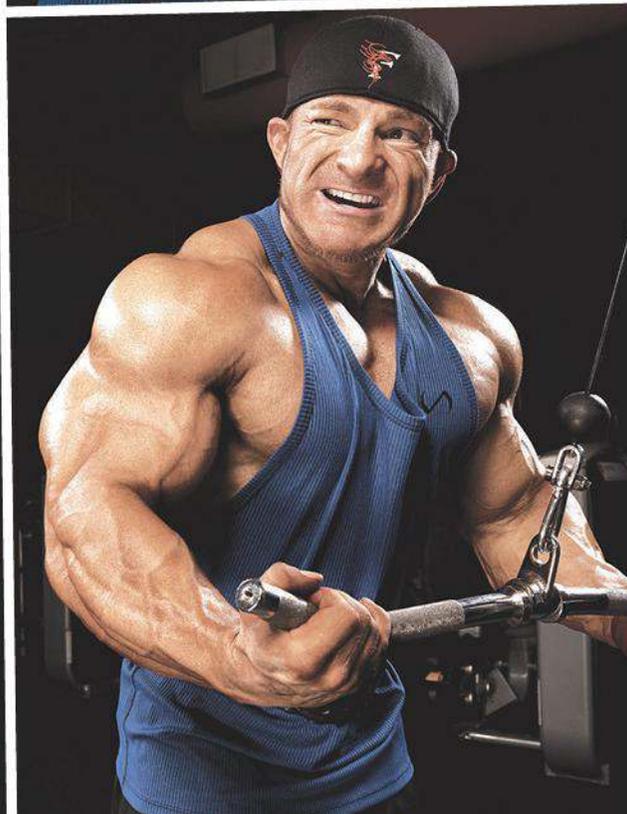
Take his triceps routine of years past as but one example. In fact, let's let the 33-year-old Welshman tell the tale of his 100-rep-per-set triceps warmup routine.

## THE CENTURY MARK

"In days of old, people saw me doing these 100-rep sets for my triceps—five cable exercises that I did back to back for 20 reps each," Lewis says. "I kinda became known for them. I'd do them three to four times and then go into the rest of my regular triceps workout."

While the exact moves involved aren't set in stone, he'd often begin with a rope pushdown, setting up a rope on one side of a cable crossover apparatus.





# CLASSIC TRICEPS WORKOUT

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Circuit		
Rope Pushdown	3-4	20
V-bar Pushdown	3-4	20
Straight-bar Pushdown	3-4	20
Reverse-grip Pushdown	3-4	20
Overhead Rope Extension	3-4	20
Standard Pyramiding Sets		
Seated Overhead EZ-bar Extension	3	10-15
Close-grip Smith Machine Press	3	10-15
Pushdown or Triceps Dip Machine	3	10-15

"I make sure my elbows are close to my body," he says. "The form itself is not sloppy, it's controlled, so the triceps never have the opportunity to rest. At the top, my hands come up close to my face for a longer stretch, without letting the weight stack touch down—I envision it as if I'm doing a skull crusher but standing up—and I turn out the ends of the rope at the bottom at lockout."

After 20 reps, he switches to the V-bar pushdown, taking only about 10 seconds to

switch between exercises, and gets right back into his reps. "With these...actually, with all five moves...I focus on the stretch just as much as I do the contraction. I'm trying to pull as much blood as I can into the muscle."

### **PRESSING FORTH**

The third exercise is either a straight or EZ-bar pushdown, which Lewis sometimes has preset on the other side of the crossover apparatus for the sake of speed. As with every move,

he has a plan of attack when choosing what weight level he uses—in general, enough to be a challenge but not quite heavy enough to elicit failure at 20 reps. "On the first exercise, you pick a weight that you could probably do for 25 or so reps," he instructs. "So you're almost failing, but then you go to a different angle."

Rest throughout is kept to a minimum, just long enough to go from one handle to the next in between exercises. In between



circuits, he'll rest only as long as it takes his training partner to finish his round.

That doesn't mean, however, that you shouldn't pause midset if you need to. "If you hit failure," he says, "you can use rest-pause, holding for just a couple of seconds to let your muscles partially recover before continuing.

"By the last exercise," he adds with a devilish smirk, "your muscles are screaming when you get to 10 to 15—but you have to do 20 reps, I don't care how long it takes."

## ROARING ENGINE

Using the short, straight bar attachment, Lewis then flips his grip for underhand pushdowns for 20 reps, followed by the final exercise in the sequence, overhead rope extensions.

"On extensions, I'm really focusing on the stretch, and I never lock out on that," he explains. "My visualization on that last exercise is like a piston in a car, so it's a consistent motion and speed, not too fast, not too slow, but a lot faster than the other sets

because there's so much blood in that muscle at that moment. Picture it as if you're stretching the muscle, then punching it out."

Just once through the gauntlet would be enough for most. Lewis, however, would continue the assault for up to four total rounds, to the point where he could barely bend his elbows. "By the last set of rope extensions, there's already an ungodly amount of blood in the muscle, the fascia is screaming at its limits, the arms are swelled way beyond their normal size—and you still have a lot more triceps work to do."

## JUST THE BEGINNING

Yes, it's true: That was only his warmup. Lewis then proceeds to three exercises performed more traditionally, three sets of 10 to 15 reps, pyramiding up the weight from set to set.

"I don't go into the gym with a set workout or exercises in mind, I'll mix it up," he says. "Maybe a seated EZ-bar or dumbbell extension, a close-



## SNAPSHOT: JAMES "FLEX" LEWIS

**BIRTH DATE** Nov. 15, 1983

**BIRTHPLACE** Swansea

**CURRENT RESIDENCE**  
Parkland, Florida

**HEIGHT** 165 cm

**WEIGHT** 96 kg (contest); 104-109 kg (off-season)

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS** 2016: Korean Grand Prix 212, 1st; Olympia 212, 1st; 2015: Korean Grand Prix 212, 1st; Olympia 212, 1st; 2014: Korean Pro 212, 1st; Prague Pro 212, 1st; Arnold Classic 212, 1st; San Marino Pro 212, 1st; Olympia 2012, 1st; 2013 Olympia 212, 1st; Prague Pro 212, 1st; 2012: Olympia 212, 1st; British Grand Prix 212, 1st; Prague Pro 212, 1st

**SPONSORS** Weider/AMI, BSN

**ONLINE** [flexlewis.net/flexextraordinary.com](http://flexlewis.net/flexextraordinary.com); Twitter @Flex\_Lewis



A photograph of two men in a gym. On the left, a man in a red t-shirt with a circular logo that says 'EXTRAORDINARY' and 'EST. 19...' is looking towards the right. On the right, a man in a blue tank top and a black baseball cap is performing a cable exercise, pulling a handle towards his chest. He has a very muscular physique and is smiling slightly. The background is dark and out of focus, showing gym equipment.

Longtime trainer Neil Hill makes sure Lewis stays on point to defend his 212 Olympia title this month.

grip bench, a heavy pushdown, a dip machine. I'm going heavier, but I'm always getting at least 10 reps. To me, I need to have a good working set of 10. If you get to 8, you know you can force out the next two, or you have a spotter there to get that extra two."

## BATTLE READY

In the months leading up to Olympia Weekend, Lewis was mainly hunkered down in what he refers to as his "base camp"—a 1000- square-metre warehouse where he has his business offices and a private, envy-inducing 500- square-metre gym

stocked with all the tools he needs to keep his 165-cm, 104-kg off-season physique in prime condition.

"It's not open to the public, there are no other members but me, so I have no distractions," he says of the iron oasis. "Here, I can focus on my job, and that is to defend the 212 title."

In the past, Lewis has contemplated the idea of moving up to the open class at some point, allowing his body to grow without restriction instead of whittling down so much muscle as he gets under the class weight limit. Yet, at

this moment, anything beyond his attempt at an unprecedented fifth title defense at Orleans Arena Sept. 15-16 is firmly not in his mind.

"If my coach [Neil Hill] had his way, of course I'd be doing open class," he admits. "But my focus is the 212, and 212 only. I only have eyes for that now. I have a fighter's mentality, I only focus on the next task at hand. That approach doesn't set you up for failure, and it doesn't put any pressure on you. I know what I can control in the 212 class, and that is going out this year and, God willing, it goes according to plan and I defend that title." **FLEX**



A perfect back double biceps pose shows legs, glutes, the torso, delts, and arms.

# GUNNING FOR GLORY

**WHY THE BACK DOUBLE BICEPS POSE IS ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN YOUR ARMS, AND HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY MAKE THE SWITCH FROM BIKINI TO FIGURE COMPETITION**



**STEVE WEINBERGER**

**Q** AT PRO AND AMATEUR CONTESTS, YOU SEE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE FRONT AND BACK DOUBLE BICEPS POSE.

**WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON ERRORS IN DOING THESE POSES THAT CAN IMPACT HOW YOU APPEAR TO THE JUDGING PANEL?**

There are many errors that can be made in every pose, but one of the most common in the front and back double biceps poses is not flexing the legs.

That may sound odd, considering the name of the pose. However, just because the pose is called a “double biceps,” this does not mean that the lower body is not important. Every pose involves the whole body, and the legs are just as important as the upper body.

Other common errors in executing a showstopping front double biceps is the positioning of the arms—guys will bend their elbow too much or too little, which affects how the muscle responds. In addition, you want the height of the elbows up and out to the sides when in full flexion. I also see competitors leaving their gut distended, hunching their shoulders, and not picking up their chest.

In the back double biceps, though, the most common error—apart from forgetting to flex the hamstrings and glutes during it—is not opening up the back to its full width. As in the front double biceps, the arms must be held in the correct position to best show off the biceps, triceps, and shoulders.

Posing is an art and a skill that needs to be correctly practised over many hours, prior to every contest.



Juliana Malacarne shows her creativity with this signature pose.

**WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST ONSTAGE MISTAKES TO AVOID IN MAKING THE SWITCH?**

When making the switch from bikini to figure, I don't think athletes always give their physiques enough time to train to add the additional muscle that is needed to be successful in figure. They also tend to come in too lean, rather than working to keep their muscle bellies full and round. Those are the two areas I'd suggest focusing on.

**Q FOR THE POSING ROUTINE IN WOMEN'S PHYSIQUE, DO I NEED TO INCLUDE ALL OF THE MANDATORY POSES? IF SO, IS THERE ROOM FOR CREATIVITY IN HOW I DO THEM?**

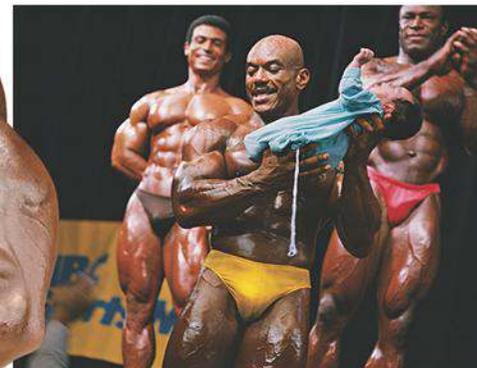
During the pre-judging, I would include all the mandatory poses but definitely start and end with poses that are most complementary to your physique. Creativity is encouraged in women's physique, since the NPC does not specify how each pose is done. I would go to local shows or watch some of the top NPC and IFBB competitors in online videos to provide you with ideas on posing in this division.

However, be careful, because you want to find a style that fits your personality and that you feel comfortable with. It's always a good idea to get someone to videotape your routine so you can watch and critique it before your competition.



SANDY WILLIAMSON

**Q I'M AN AMATEUR BIKINI COMPETITOR WHO WANTS TO TRY MY HAND AT FIGURE.**



# OLYMPIA RETURN AFTER 33 YEARS

■ **MANY WILL THINK** that Dexter Jackson, via making his Olympia debut back in 1999, is the veteran of this year's scrap for the 2017 Sandow. But a fellow competitor beats Dexter's debut by 15 years. We're talking Sergio Oliva Jr., who first appeared on the Olympia stage back in 1984. Read on, grasshopper.

Sergio Oliva (father of Sergio Jr.), with much fanfare, entered the 1984 Olympia stage at the Felt Forum in Madison Garden, New York. The return of the 43-year-old three-time Mr. Olympia (1967-69) was the biggest Olympia story line. Sergio had abandoned the IFBB after his controversial loss to Arnold

Schwarzenegger at the 1972 Olympia. There followed years of rancor among Sergio, the IFBB, and Joe and Ben Weider, and the tale of how he returned to IFBB climes had more twists and turns than Gypsy Rose Lee's hips. On the night of the contest, Sergio finished eighth to a cacophony of booing from his

expectant fans, and his countenance took on a rueful expression. In the run-up he had intimated that he would maybe not get a fair shake, and now with his race run, spurred on by his hot-blooded nature, many felt he would make some sort of protest. He walked forward and asked for the microphone.

Picking up on the mood, Rick Wayne (legendary competitor, writer, and editor in chief of FLEX from 1984-87) leaped into action. He went toward Sergio's wife, Arleen, who was holding 2-week-old Sergio Jr. Rick picked up the newborn and handed him to Sergio, who lovingly clasped his son and said, "No matter what happens tonight, eighth, 17th, or 20th, I'll forever be the Myth. And I hold in my arms Sergio Jr., the next Myth."

And so Sergio Oliva Jr. made his O debut, and at 2 weeks old remains the youngest ever to appear on that venerated stage.

FROM LEFT: PER BERNAL; COURTESY OF WEIDER HEALTH & FITNESS

# NO "O" ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND?

IN 53 RENDITIONS OF THE MR. OLYMPIA, NO ONE HAS WON THE OLYMPIA AT HIS THIRD ATTEMPT. THIS LIST SHOWS HOW MANY ATTEMPTS IT TOOK EACH OF THE 13 OLYMPIA CHAMPS TO WIN THE SPORT'S TOP PRIZE.

CHAMPION	YEAR OF ATTEMPT	FIRST WIN
LARRY SCOTT	1965	First
SERGIO OLIVA	1967	Second
ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER	1970	Second
FRANCO COLUMBU	1976	Fifth
FRANK ZANE	1977	Fifth
CHRIS DICKERSON	1982	Fourth
SAMIR BANNOUT	1983	Fourth
LEE HANEY	1984	Second
DORIAN YATES	1992	Second
RONNIE COLEMAN	1998	Sixth
JAY CUTLER	2006	Seventh
DEXTER JACKSON	2008	Ninth
PHIL HEATH	2011	Fourth

COMPETITOR	ATTEMPTS
Lionel Beyeke	Third
William Bonac	Fourth
Brandon Curry	Fifth
Nathan De Asha	Second
Big Ramy	Fifth
Phil Heath	10th
Dexter Jackson	18th
Johnnie Jackson	13th
Cedric McMillan	Third
Sergio Oliva Jr.	First
Lukas Osladil	Second
Shawn Rhoden	Seventh
Gerald Williams	First
Roelly Winklaar	Seventh

Of this year's lineup, two guys will be competing in their third Olympia: Lionel Beyeke and the enigmatic Cedric McMillan. The latter did qualify for the 2015 Olympia but withdrew just before pre-judging. For this year's Mr. O entrants, the following chart shows the number of Mr. Olympia attempts their 2017 participation represents. (At press time there were still several Olympia-qualifying contests scheduled to take place.)



## WHEELER ROLLS AGAIN

Back in 1993 Flex Wheeler, 27, was hotter than Joan of Arc's tootsies. Having won his pro card at the 1992 USAs, he won his first four pro contests in 1993 and finished second in the Olympia to the WTF physique of Dorian Yates. Indeed, many thought he presented the best physique of all time in winning the 1993 Arnold Classic. This humble (I have a lot to be humble about) scribe quickly dubbed him the Sultan of Symmetry, based on the unique contours and density of his musculature. Later in his career he was dogged by kidney problems—after the 2003 Ironman, when he finished third, he was hospitalized in serious condition. He had nine surgeries in 11 weeks, nearly slipped off this mortal coil a couple of times, and received a new kidney. And thus the all-time great was done and dusted... supposedly. Cue 2016 and the introduction of the Classic Physique class. How good can he be on Sept. 15? He reckons he can be 90% of his 1993 Arnold form. He can come in around 215 pounds, one pound heavier than when he won that '93 Arnold. He says, "I'm just one of the guys competing for the Classic Physique title; it's not the Flex Wheeler show. Fifteen years after my last appearance at the Olympia, I'm back on that stage. I've already won."

## I CRAMP DORIAN'S STYLE

► Dorian Yates nearly didn't make it onstage to win his first Olympia in 1992, and it was all my fault. Sixty minutes before the pre-judging, Yates was crippled by an excruciating thigh cramp. He could hardly bend his legs to sit. His camp sought out an anti-cramp compound. Once the magic elixir had been taken, he recovered quickly and went on to win the first of six Olympias. He later blamed me for the incident. The previous night I had visited him in his hotel room—I had visited the other competitors to check out their physiques. Dorian asked who I thought was best? I said, "Shawn Ray...but he won't beat you." However, he decided to increase his water-depletion protocol, which is how he came to say hello to Mr. Cramp.



PER BERNAL (2); CHRIS LUND (DORIAN YATES)

# BADELL VS. CURRY

**BADELL'S LONG PATH TO THE OLYMPIA TOP THREE OFFERS HOPE FOR CURRY**

■ **GUSTAVO BADELL** wasn't a late bloomer. He peaked at 31 or 32, right on schedule. He was a late riser. In the seventh year of an unnoticed career, and having finished 24th out of 25th in his only previous Olympia, he soared to third in the 2004 O, behind only

Ronnie Coleman and Jay Cutler, and he repeated that feat in 2005. He did it by emphasizing classical proportions coupled with enough size to not be overwhelmed. It's a formula Brandon Curry followed this year, his eighth as a pro, as he came in bigger and crisper but

still shapely and won the Arnold Classic Australia and the New Zealand Pro. Based on 2017 so far, Curry, 34, who didn't place in his last three Olympias, is another late riser. Badell could offer a paradigm for how to soar even higher.

## BADELL

## CURRY

HEIGHT  
**173**

WEIGHT  
**111**

PRO YEARS  
**13**

PRO CONTESTS  
**38**

PRO WINS  
**3**

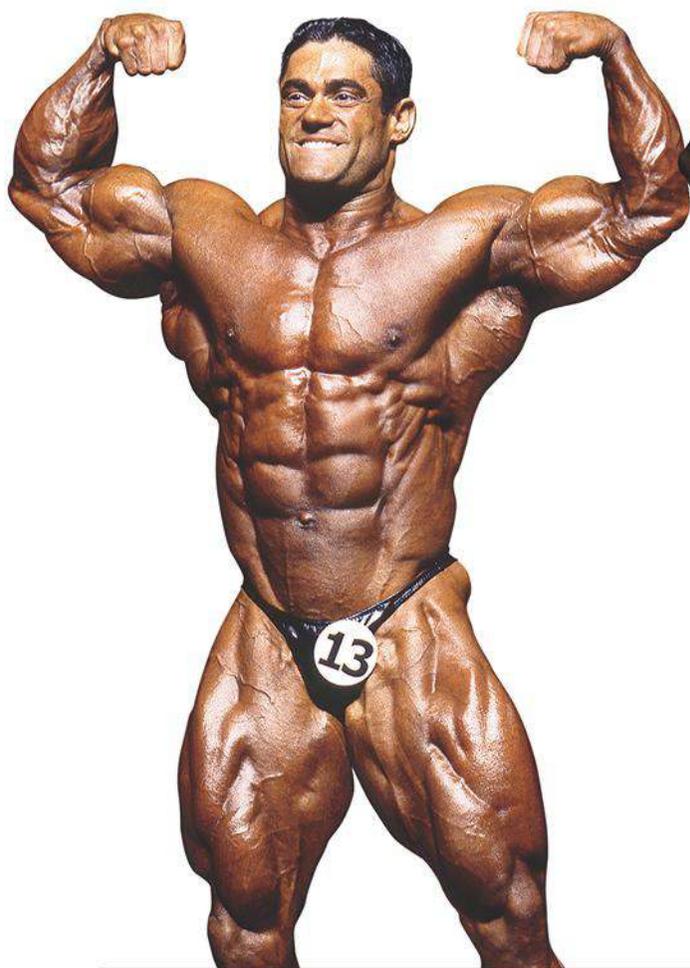
HEIGHT  
**173**

WEIGHT  
**111**

PRO YEARS  
**8**

PRO CONTESTS  
**33**

PRO WINS  
**4**



CHRIS LUND; GARY PHILLIPS

## BADELL

**STRENGTHS**

Abs, symmetry

**BEST POSE**

Side triceps

**WEAKNESSES**

Chest, conditioning

**WORST POSE**

Most muscular

## CURRY

**STRENGTHS**

Arms, back

**BEST POSE**

Front double biceps

**WEAKNESSES**

Legs, conditioning

**WORST POSE**

Abs and thighs





### UNEXPECTED

■ In 2008, Dexter Jackson, who admitted that he thought the Olympia was “never in the cards” for him, joined Ronnie Coleman as the only man to hold the Mr. Olympia and Arnold Classic titles in the same calendar year. Since starting his IFBB Pro League career in 1999, Jackson has the record for most wins (28), most Mr. Olympia appearances (17), and most Arnold Classic titles (5). As the 47-year-old steps on the Orleans Arena stage for his 18th run at the Sandow this September, will he set a record for the oldest Mr. Olympia of all time?



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