

Competition Training Program

TODAY AN ENORMOUS number of bodybuilders are working out for two or three hours a day and dedicating themselves to building a bigger and better physique. Yet only a small percentage of these obviously motivated bodybuilders ever go on and take the next step—to Competition Training.

The barrier that has to be overcome in order to work toward competition is more mental than physical: You have to make up your mind that what you really want is to join the ranks of the competitive bodybuilders, pitting yourself against bodybuilders whom you have probably admired in the past and whose images have helped to inspire and motivate you to continue training.

BUILDING A COMPETITION PHYSIQUE

Competition is a whole other ball game. You suddenly become concerned with things like skin tone, presentation, posing routines, and, above all, learning to deal with a kind of pressure that simply does not exist in the gym and against which you may have developed no defenses.

Physically, you are not just trying to develop a massive, balanced, and defined physique. Now you must reach for total perfection, every muscle and muscle group sculpted and chiseled into its ultimate form and a body fat percentage so low that every striation and muscle separation shows itself clearly. In *Advanced Training* we talked about developing each area of each body part. When you get to Competition Training this becomes even more complex and you need to consider such details as:

Chest—upper, lower, and middle pecs, the split between the upper

and lower pecs, the inner pecs along the sternum, the outer pecs where they insert under the deltoids, chest striations, separation between the pecs and front deltoids, serratus definition.

Back—width and thickness of the latissimus dorsi, length of the lats where they insert above the waist; rhomboid and middle back detail and muscularity; the spinal erectors of the lower back; intercostal definition.

Shoulders—development and separation of all three heads of the deltoids: anterior, side, and posterior delts; mass and thickness of the trapezius muscles; separation of the traps from the back and rear delts.

Biceps—upper and lower biceps, width, length, and peak.

Triceps—development of all three heads of the triceps, thickness and length.

Forearms—development of both extensors and contractors; brachialis development at the elbow.

Waist—upper and lower ab development and definition; development of external obliques and separation between abs and obliques.

Quadriceps—mass and separation of all four heads of the quads, outer sweep, lower quad insertion at the knee; development of the adductors at the inside of the thigh.

Hamstrings—development of both heads of the leg biceps, separation between the hamstrings and quadriceps; development and striations of the glutes and separation between hamstrings and glutes.

Calves—development of the underlying soleus muscle and the gastrocnemius muscle that lies on top; calf size, length, and peak.

Think about what you need so that *you're* the one with all of this development and your competitors are trying to keep up with *you*. This involves learning what exercises work each of these areas and incorporating them into your workouts, figuring out at what angles you need to train each muscle and what intensity techniques are needed to get the development you're after. Of course, as you progress, you include more exercises as you go along and therefore more total sets, and that requires higher levels of conditioning and endurance.

You can be quite advanced in your training and not have a complete grasp of what you need to create a complete physique. I was winning the NABBA Mr. Universe title in Europe and didn't realize I needed additional calf development. I didn't know that my calves should have been the same size as my arms. When I came to America people like Joe Weider told me, "Your waist ought to be smaller. You need more serratus. Your calves should be bigger. You need to work on developing more muscularity and definition." That's when I started to get down to serious detail and weak point training, but if I had understood this earlier I wouldn't have wasted that much time, and I wouldn't have lost against Chet Yorton and Frank Zane and, who knows, I might not have lost against Sergio Oliva.

Competition Training involves more sets, more reps, an across-the-

board increase in volume of training—both in terms of what you do inside the gym with weights and the additional aerobic training outside the gym that helps supplement your overall program. This is all accomplished while you are cutting down your intake of food to the bare minimum in order to strip away as much body fat as possible. As a result, it is almost impossible to make a lot of gains in mass and strength on this kind of program, which is designed for *refinement* of the physique, not for building fundamental size and strength.

Competition Training, along with strict diet, can often result in losing hard-won mass if you aren't careful. It is very probable that many of the top champions have actually slowed their progress in the last few years simply because of the opportunities that the rise in popularity of bodybuilding has afforded them. They participate in so many contests, exhibitions, and seminars that they spend most of their time in or close to competition shape. But, ideally, Competition Training should be a concentrated program you use for a short period in order to get ready for a specific contest, not one you stay on for extended periods or try to do too often. In the days when bodybuilders entered only a few contests a year—which tended to be clustered together at a certain time of the year—there was plenty of time for off-season training for more mass and growth. So a bodybuilder would spend much of the year doing a lot of power training and eating as much as necessary, then shift gears into a competition mode of training in order to attain the quality and refinement necessary to be competitive onstage.

But today's top amateur and pro bodybuilders have had to alter their training methods drastically, picking their contests carefully and trying never to get too much out of shape between events. I, of course, have always been a believer in choosing particular contests rather than entering everything that came along, but many professional bodybuilders exhaust themselves entering one Grand Prix after another. This strategy has its price, since staying in shape too long results in your not being able to get in super-shape at all and in its general debilitating effect on your muscle mass and strength. Instead of this approach, I recommend competing only in contests that are really important to your individual competition career. It's better to compete only once a year and win than it is to compete too often and not do that well. Still, with so many more contests being held, deciding where and when to compete is more difficult than it used to be.

But if you are a beginner or early intermediate at bodybuilding competition, you probably won't face that sort of problem until later in your career. For now, it is important simply to realize what Competition Training does and doesn't do: It does not build mass, it is not intended to make you bigger and stronger, and, in fact, can sometimes do the opposite; but what it does do is bring out the quality in the development you have created, strip away the nonessentials, and reveal the diamond-like brilliance of each facet of your musculature.

THE FEAR OF SMALLNESS

One psychological block that many bodybuilders face when they attempt Competition Training has to do with their perception of their physical size. Whatever other motive bodybuilders may have for getting into training in the first place, part of it is always the desire to get big and strong. Therefore, anything which makes them feel smaller becomes a threat. That is why many bodybuilders are made very anxious by the effects of Competition Training.

The competition physique should be as much pure lean mass as possible, with any excess body fat stripped away. As the saying goes, "You can't flex fat." But fat on your body makes you feel bigger than you actually are, and this sense of being bigger is psychologically satisfying to most bodybuilders.

A person who weighs 240 pounds with 16 percent body fat would be lean for an average man, but not for a competition bodybuilder. When he starts to train and diet for competition he alters his body composition so that ultimately he gets down to 9 percent body fat. What does this change mean in practical terms?

At 240 pounds, he was originally carrying almost 38 pounds of fat. His lean body mass was therefore around 202 pounds. At 9 percent body fat he will find himself weighing about 222 pounds, assuming he has not lost any muscle mass. So, in terms of muscle he will be the same size, but he will feel a lot smaller. And this sense of smallness affects some individuals to the extent that they find themselves psychologically unable to keep to their program.

I have been through this experience myself. When I came to America in 1968 for the IFBB Mr. Universe contest, I weighed 245 pounds. I thought I had it made. Joe Weider took one look at me and declared me the biggest bodybuilder there was. Here I was in America to show everybody how great I was—and I lost! Frank Zane took the title with his smaller but cut-to-ribbons quality physique. And that taught me a valuable lesson.

A year later, at 230 pounds, I completely dominated my competitors, winning both the NABBA and IFBB Universe contests. I had realized that sheer bulk alone was not the stuff of top champions. I didn't take off the extra fat weight in two months; it took a full year. Because I took this amount of time, I was able to get used to my new proportions, to realize that the lighter weight did not really make me smaller—my arms were still huge and so were my thighs. But all my clothes were loose around the waist, indicating a real loss of unwanted bulk. The result? By changing my body composition, I won every contest I entered.

Mass is vital to a bodybuilder's physique. But it is the shape and the quality of this mass that win contests. Seeing big numbers on a tape measure or scale, or striving for the feeling of your clothes being tight all over

your body, and not paying enough attention to stripping away fat, achieving ultimate definition and contest quality, will give you one inevitable result—you'll lose. And that I can tell you from experience.

THE ELEMENTS OF COMPETITION TRAINING

There are a number of special goals you need to set for yourself when training for competition:

1. You need to focus with even greater concentration on isolating each area of every single muscle.
2. You need to use an additional number of intensity training principles and a wider variety of exercises.
3. You need to increase the total number of sets and weights in your workout sessions.
4. You need to vary your workout pace, doing a number of supersets and trisets that drastically reduce your rest time between sets.
5. You have to make significant changes in diet. (See Contest Diet Strategies, page 748.)
6. You need to be *constantly* flexing and posing in the gym between sets.
7. You need to consider the benefits of having a training partner to help focus your energies on creating super-intense workouts. (See below.)

Analyzing and correcting your weak points becomes even more important when you are training for competition. Whereas you might previously have given weaker areas priority, now you must become a fanatic about correcting these imbalances. Of course, you have to realize that only so much can be done in a few weeks or months of training—totally correcting every weak area may take a year or two—but there are changes that can be made (bringing up the rear delts, for example, further developing the split in the leg biceps) even in such a short time that will increase your chances of doing well in competition.

DEPENDING ON YOUR TRAINING PARTNER

At no time is having a dependable training partner more important than when you are preparing to compete. As the contest approaches, every workout counts and there is no time for any letdown in training intensity. Your training partner helps to provide the extra motivation you need to diet and train hard at the same time. Of course, this relationship is a two-

way street: You have the same responsibility when it comes to helping your training partner.

If you are a beginner at competition, you would do well to train with somebody who has more experience than you do. A knowledgeable training partner, who has been through it all before, can show you a lot of shortcuts and make your contest preparation that much easier and more effective.

When I was training at World Gym for the 1980 Olympia, I trained some days with two young bodybuilders getting ready for their first competition. They were both young and extremely strong, and they were able to push me hard in our workouts. On the other hand, because of my greater experience, I was able to show them training techniques they hadn't seen before and help them with their dieting and posing. We made a really fair trade: their energy and my knowledge. And we all got better because of it.

TRAINING VOLUME

Training for competition, you need to do more sets and use more different exercises. But, as we've discussed, overtraining can be as detrimental as not training hard enough. So here is a volume of training I recommend:

Chest, Back, Thighs, Shoulders	low volume—16 to 20 sets high volume—20 to 26 sets
Biceps, Triceps, Hamstrings	low volume—12 to 16 sets high volume—16 to 20 sets
Calves	low volume—10 sets high volume—15 sets
Abdominals	low volume—3 exercises high volume—4 to 6 exercises

CHOOSING EXERCISES

In the Competition Training Program, I recommend specific exercises, as I did in the previous training program. As you will see, the number of exercises listed in the competition program far exceeds what you can or should do in any one workout. By the time you get to the competition level *you should be experienced enough to make some decisions for yourself*. But these are some of the criteria you should use in putting together an individual workout:

1. Make sure you include both mass building, power or ballistic exercises, plus isolation exercises to create quality in each body part.
2. Concentrate on using free weights for mass and strength, and use cables and machines more for isolation exercises.
3. Include exercises to hit every part of each muscle. For example:

THE TRAINING SPLIT

There are two common ways of dividing up your competition training:

2-day split

the whole body in 2 days, each body part 3 times a week

3-day split

the whole body in 3 days, each body part 2 times a week

Again, I always trained 6 days a week, Monday through Saturday, as did most of my contemporaries. If the demands of your life or your job require you to train on a different schedule, you can also keep track of your workouts as Workout #1, Workout #2, and so forth, rather than in terms of days of the week.

A *2-day double-split* would look like this:

WORKOUT #1	WORKOUT #2	WORKOUT #1	WORKOUT #2	WORKOUT #1	WORKOUT #2
MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT

MORNING

Chest	Shoulders	Chest	Shoulders	Chest	Shoulders
Back	Upper arms	Back	Upper arms	Back	Upper arms
	Forearms		Forearms		Forearms

EVENING

Legs		Legs		Legs	
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Calves and Abdominals in every evening workout

A *3-day double-split* would look like this:

WORKOUT #1	WORKOUT #2	WORKOUT #3	WORKOUT #1	WORKOUT #2	WORKOUT #3
MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT

MORNING

Chest	Shoulders	Thighs	Chest	Shoulders	Thighs
Back	Traps		Back	Traps	

EVENING

Forearms	Upper arms	Hamstrings	Forearms	Upper arms	Hamstrings
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Calves and Abdominals in every evening workout

Competition Exercise Program

Select the desired number of the appropriate exercises for each body part.

ABDOMINALS Begin workout with 10 minutes of Roman Chairs.

CHEST AND BACK

Deadlifts		3 sets of 10, 8, 6 reps
Superset:	Weighted Chin-Ups —behind neck	4 sets of 10 reps
Superset:	Incline Barbell Presses Bench Presses	4 sets of 15, 12, 8, 6 reps 4 sets of 15, 12, 8, 6 reps
Superset:	Chin-Ups—to front Dumbbell Flys	4 sets of 15 reps 4 sets of 10 reps
	Wide-Grip Bent-Over Barbell Rows	4 sets of 12 reps, using Stripping Method
Triset:	Machine Pullovers	4 sets of 15 reps, using Stripping Method
	Dips	4 sets, each to failure
Triset:	Cable Flys Seated Cable Rows	4 sets of 12 to 15 reps 4 sets of 10 reps, using Stripping Method
	One-Arm Cable Rows Dumbbell Pullovers	4 sets of 12 to 15 reps 4 sets of 15 reps

SHOULDERS

Triset:	Front Machine Presses Dumbbell Lateral Raises Bent-Over Lateral Raises	4 sets of 10 reps 4 sets of 10 reps 4 sets of 10 reps
Triset:	Barbell Presses, alternating front and back Cable Side Laterals	4 sets of 12 reps 4 sets of 10 reps
Triset:	Lying Incline Laterals Front Barbell Raises Seated Cable Rear Laterals Shrugs	4 sets of 10 reps 4 sets of 10 reps 4 sets of 10 reps 4 sets of 10 reps

THIGHS

Superset:	Leg Extensions Squats	5 sets of 12 reps 5 sets of 15 to 20 reps
Superset:	Front Squats Leg Curls	5 sets of 12 to 15 reps 5 sets of 12 reps
Superset:	Hack Squats Leg Curls	5 sets of 15 reps the Stripping Method
Straight-Leg Deadlifts		3 sets of 6 reps, standing on block or bench

UPPER ARMS

Superset:	Barbell Curls	4 sets, the Stripping Method
	Standing Close-Grip Triceps Extensions with bar	4 sets of 10 reps
Triset:	Barbell Preacher Bench Curls	4 sets of 10 reps
	Lying Barbell Triceps Extensions	4 sets of 10 reps
	Barbell Preacher Bench Reverse Curls	4 sets of 10 reps
Triset:	Lying Dumbbell Extensions	4 sets of 10 reps
	Incline Curls (increase incline each set)	4 sets of 10 reps
	Lying Reverse-Grip Barbell Extensions	4 sets of 10 reps
Superset:	Concentration Curls	4 sets of 15 reps, using "One-and-a-Half" Method
	Standing One-Arm Triceps Extensions	4 sets of 12 reps
Superset:	Kneeling Cable Triceps Extensions	4 sets of 12 reps
	Kneeling Cable Triceps Extensions with rope	4 sets of 12 reps

FOREARMS

Triset:	Barbell Reverse Wrist Curls	4 sets of 10 reps
	Barbell Wrist Curls	4 sets of 10 reps
	One-Arm Dumbbell Wrist Curls	4 sets of 10 reps

CALVES

(Alternate foot position: toes in, toes forward, toes out)

Donkey Calf Raises	5 sets of 15 reps
Standing Calf Raises	5 sets of 10 reps, as heavy as possible
Seated Calf Raises	5 sets of 15 reps
Front Calf Raises	5 sets of 15 reps
Leg Press Calf Raises	4 sets of 12 reps
Standing One-Leg Calf Raises	4 sets of 12 reps
Donkey Calf Raises	4 sets of 12 reps

ABDOMINALS

(One cycle is 4 to 6 exercises, no rest between exercises)

Crunches	30 reps
Reverse Crunches	30 reps
Twists	50 reps each side
Seated Leg Tucks	30 reps
Vertical Bench Crunches	30 reps
Hyperextensions (lower back)	15 reps
Twisting Crunches	30 reps
Hanging Reverse Crunches	15 reps
Bent-Over Twists	50 reps each side
Machine Crunches	15 reps

INDIVIDUALIZING THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Once you get to the competition level, you have to put together a workout program that is suited to you as an individual. Because each individual has different strengths and weaknesses, there is no way I can give one routine that is perfect for everyone. I can outline general approaches, show you how to change your program so that you burn more calories, create more muscularity and definition—but it is you who must look in the mirror and determine where your weakness lies, whether it be in upper, lower, or middle pec development, biceps, triceps, or lat width.

Suppose your lower lats are not developing quite the way you want them to. It would make sense for you to add about 4 extra sets for lower lats. But 4 sets in addition to everything else you are doing would probably be too much, so you could eliminate one set each of exercises like Close-Grip and Wide-Grip Chin-Ups, Seated Rows, and T-Bar Rows. You would still do these exercises, but with fewer sets of each, so the overall demand of your total workout would remain about the same.

The program outlined here lists specific exercises, but if you are more experienced and have a clear perception of your weaker areas, then you should consult the exercise sections to find which movements are best for correcting the problems and make whatever alterations in your training routine you feel necessary.

All the top bodybuilders go through this process. I know when Franco and I used to train together I would do extra sets for certain areas and Franco would do extra for others. For instance, Franco had trouble getting his thighs really ripped, so he would do additional sets of an exercise like Front Squats on a Smith machine to help define his quadriceps. I didn't have this problem, so I would work harder on shoulders, triceps, abs, or whatever else I felt needed it the most. You can be sure that the bodybuilders who followed us in competition, such as Lee Haney, Dorian Yates, Shawn Ray, and Flex Wheeler, go through the same process.

As you make adjustments in your training, just be certain that you don't create new weaknesses trying to correct old ones. You must continue to give the rest of your body sufficient attention even while you work to correct problem areas.

MUSCLE SEPARATION

I talked earlier about the need for quality, and one aspect of physical development that is most important to achieving quality is muscle separation. Muscle separation is a level of muscularity that goes far beyond simple definition. Training and diet can give you good definition, but it

takes something more to become the walking anatomy chart that will win competitions.

The quality physique must show clear separation between each muscle group. For example, when you do a rear double-biceps shot, the borders between the biceps and triceps, shoulder, traps, and upper and lower back should leap out at the judges. Each individual muscle group itself should show clear internal distinctions: the two heads of the biceps, the three heads of the triceps. And each head should be further patterned with visible striations of individual bundles of muscle fiber.

Total muscle separation is the result of training each muscle so thoroughly that every plane, contour, and aspect is brought out and fully revealed once you have lowered your body fat sufficiently. To achieve this requires many different exercises for each muscle and a lot of sets and reps. But it takes specific technique as well:

1. It is necessary to totally isolate each muscle and then each specific area of every muscle in order to engage every fiber possible, thereby creating clear separation between each muscle and major body part. This is done by knowing exactly how each exercise affects the muscles and putting together a program that sculpts the body exactly as you intend.

2. The utmost muscle separation cannot be achieved without strictness of movement involving concentrated effort through the entire range of motion of the exercise, so that every engaged fiber is subjected to the maximum amount of stress. Any sloppiness of execution will defeat your purpose.

Unless you perform an isolation exercise in a totally strict manner, you will not be working the narrow and specific area for which the exercise was designed. When doing a Front Dumbbell Raise to get deltoid-pectoral separation, for example, if you swing the weight up instead of making the muscle do all the work you will not bring out the full shape of the muscles, nor will you get the kind of separation you are after. If you want to work a certain area, you have to do the movement strictly enough so that you feel the effort exactly where you want it.

3. Obviously, whatever separation you achieve will not show if the muscle is covered with body fat. So proper diet resulting in low body fat is also an important factor in achieving spectacular muscle separation.

MUSCULARITY AND DEFINITION: ANALYZING YOUR PROGRESS

Ultimately, you are judged in bodybuilding competition based on how you look—a combination of what your physique looks like and how you present it. As we've discussed, there are other ways you can keep track of your progress, but these can be problematical. For example, at the 1980 (AAU)

Mr. America contest Ray Mentzer showed up to compete for a spot on the American team going to the World Amateur Bodybuilding Championships. For several months prior to the contest he had been going for body composition testing every three weeks. He came into the competition seemingly confident of victory because his last test had indicated that his body fat was below 4 percent.

Despite the results of the testing procedure, he failed in his bid to win a place on the Universe team because—in my opinion—he looked smooth onstage. He lacked cuts and muscularity. He had failed to realize that how much he weighed, what his physical measurements were, or what his body composition testing had revealed had nothing directly to do with what bodybuilding competition is all about.

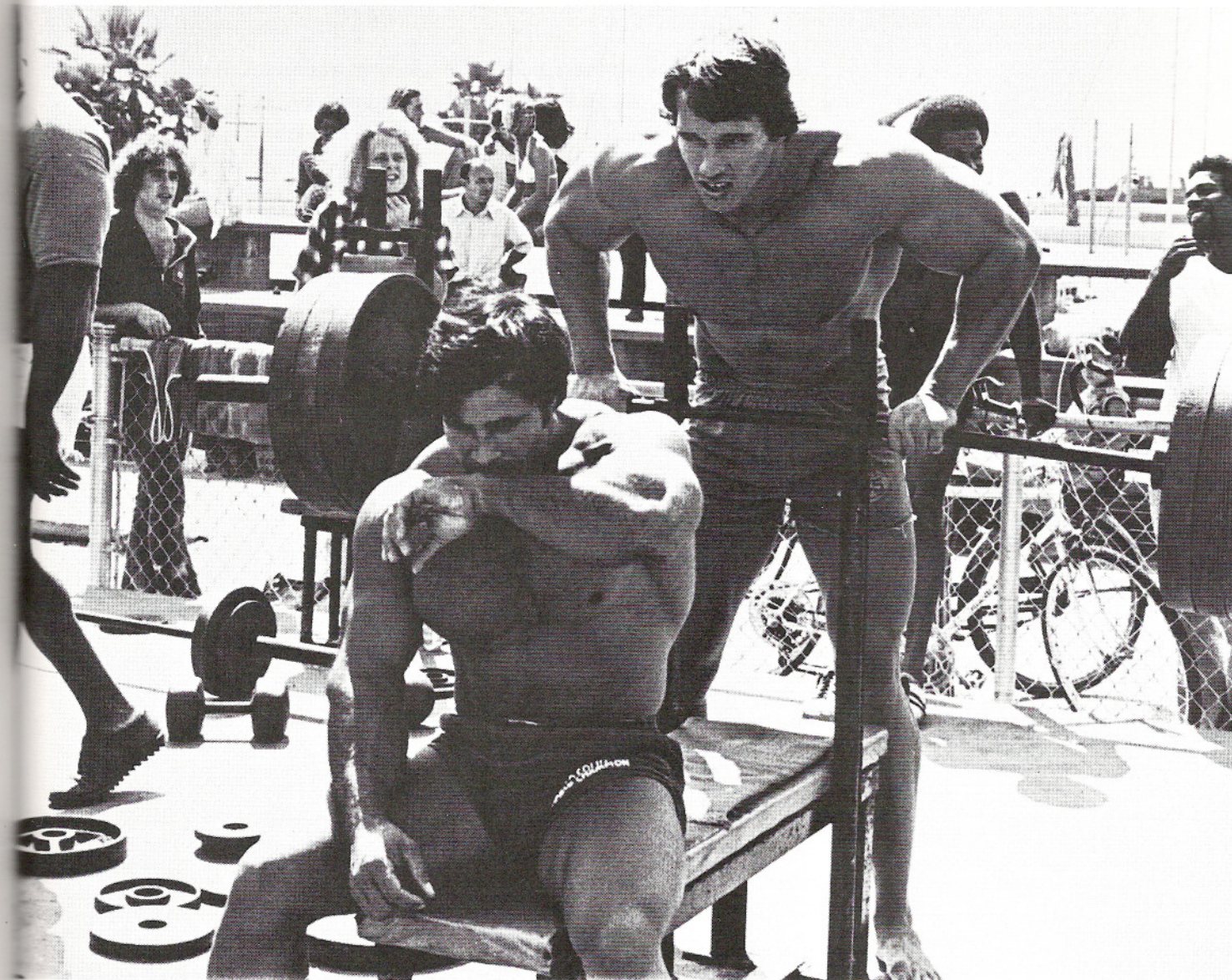
The only real way to know whether or not you are in shape is by how you look. After all, the judges are not going to use underwater weighing, a tape measure, or any other device to make their decision. They are going to go by what they see. And you have to do the same thing.

Of course, it helps to have some basis for comparison. It is easier to measure the difference between two things than it is to analyze a thing by itself. One good way to do this is to take photos periodically and compare how you look now with how you looked then. Another way is to stand alongside another bodybuilder in the gym, hit some poses, and see exactly how you stack up.

But the ultimate test is when you are actually onstage and either win or lose. That is why it is sometimes necessary to enter several contests before you can really judge your progress. How well you do from one contest to another can tell you very clearly whether or not your training methods are working.

In the short term, though, it is your mirror that will be your most honest critic—if you allow it to be. Body composition testing doesn't tell you anything about your muscle separation; the tape measure cannot analyze your muscularity and definition; and you cannot judge the proportion and balance of your physique by stepping on a scale. But looking into a mirror and seeing only what you want to see is not the way to become a champion. You have to see things as they are, no better and no worse.

Also remember to keep your training diary so you will have an accurate record of your progress. When I was training for the 1980 Olympia, I had Franco shoot photos of me every week, which I studied very carefully to see how hard, defined, and muscular I was becoming. Between the photos, my own ability to look at myself in the mirror, and Franco's insightful comments, I knew all the time just how fast I was making progress and was able to arrive in Australia in shape to win my seventh Olympia title.



Franco and me on Venice Beach

OUTDOOR TRAINING

I have always enjoyed training outdoors in good weather. Training in the sun helps to give you a healthy look, tighter skin, and a good tan. Since the early Muscle Beach days, bodybuilders have taken advantage of sunny weather and trained outdoors.

You can certainly begin exercising outdoors right from the first day you start Basic Training, but outdoor training is most valuable prior to competition because of the finished look it helps to give the physique. When Franco and I trained on Venice Beach, we would work out, go lie on the beach for a while, and then return to the weight pit for more lifting. My tan became much deeper this way, and I benefited from training before an audience because it helped to get me ready for the pressures of appearing onstage in a hall full of people.

When you train outdoors I advocate a slower workout, but with very heavy weights. This can give you a nice break from your normal competition training and is another way of surprising and shocking the body.

Not everybody has a California beach right down the street, but when I lived in Austria and then later in Munich, my friends and I would often go out to a local lake and spend the entire day training outdoors. You can go to a park, a recreation area, or even somebody's backyard and enjoy outdoor training yourself.