

So you want to compete?

This is something about which many people have sought my advice. I am often accused of giving what someone once described as “Jekyll & Hyde” answers in relation to this subject and indeed I have been accused of having a “Jekyll & Hyde” attitude about the whole thing too, well that is probably true but it is only because I have so many people contact me with a dream of competing but few of them are anywhere near as ready to compete as they think they are. If I seem harsh in some of what I say it is simply because I would rather people know the facts, because competitive bodybuilding is harsh, and I would rather be honest than popular.

It does no good to convince someone that they are something that they are not, as when the truth comes out and that person is embarrassed to be judged when they are on stage they will feel deeply hurt and humiliated, and that's the opposite of what competing is all about. I am very proud to say that every single person that I have ever coached to show standard has come off stage with a feeling of exhilaration, achievement and new sense of self belief. These people have all flattered me many times by saying that I am their inspiration and the reason that they got in the best shape of their lives and the reason that they have a great new life. I never take any credit though, it is the athlete that does the work and does the diet so it is the athlete that gets the credit. I just have one simple rule that I ask people to remember, that is that when you get on stage you have my name on you so if you don't look in the best shape of your life then I won't let you go on stage. It's something that I learned from my coach and it has always served us both well.

So, if you think that you are tough enough please read on, don't be ashamed if you are not, 90% of bodybuilders give up before they ever get to show condition and whether they give up the day before or right here and now makes no difference to me. It's a massive journey, so if you are sure lets begin.

Let me say from the start that I am the most supportive person that you could ever meet if you are indeed of a standard that means you will be able to compete within the next year, but when people come to me thinking that they already look great and know enough then yes, my attitude certainly changes. So let me tell you a saying that I have often used.

“Tight abs on a skinny boy are like big boobs on a fat girl, nothing special!”

Ok I apologise for that being so crude but it does illustrate a crucial point. So many young men train and diet in such a way that they have a chiselled six pack all year round which means that, with a few exceptions, they never bulk up properly so they never really grow any muscles. The point is that abs are great, but if you want to be a proper bodybuilder it means nothing if you don't have the rest of the physique. I would say that abs are one of the least important body parts when it comes to competing. I wish that was not true as

I usually have the best abs on stage but I don't always win. If you want to look like this and be an underwear model then go for it, but it does not make you a bodybuilder. The UKBFF have recently introduced a new class, I can't even remember what it's called but it's basically the male version of the bikini class, so if you look like an underwear model then that would be the class for you and you can stop reading this now.

As far as women's competition goes, again please remember that you won't win a body fitness class if you have a fat, wobbly bottom. The judges are looking for people that have trained hard and dieted well and believe me there are an abundance of women that are more than happy to do that. When Nina Ross won the 2012 UKBFF body fitness British title she looked amazing, like she had been carved, that is what you need to look like, don't think that just because you attract attention in the gym and the nightclub it makes you competition class, the only thing that will do that is hard work and good diet, and like I have said, there are more women than ever these days who will do that.

So, assuming that I haven't put you off already, here are a few tips.

1. Make sure that you are a bodybuilder; I know that sounds simple and basic but believe me, the difference between looking good in the gym and competing is not just another level, it's another world.
2. Go to at least one show first. If you are not impressed by the quality then go to another one because the quality these days is higher than ever and you really do need to see what you will be up against and just how hard you will have to work to even be on stage.
3. Don't just have "all the gear and no idea". Bodybuilding isn't about being superficial, wearing the latest "Mr. Olympia" hoodie with your earphones on, how you look in the gym or how you compare to your mates; it's about you making your physique as good as it can possibly be.
4. If you get through those first three then hire yourself a coach. I mean a proper coach. I've gone on about this enough in many other places and I will do so further into this piece but it really is that important. Look, I trained for 22 years and thought I knew everything. Then I hired Eddie Abbew, who quickly made me realise that I actually knew very little and he changed a lot of things about my training and diet, without these I would never have competed, I have absolutely no doubt about that. My physique changed incredibly when I started working with Eddie and I have never sought another coach because I am still getting better even though I am only a few weeks away from my 54th birthday.
5. Most people can't do the diet – they are normal, it's the thing that separates competitive bodybuilders from gym rats. Two people that I have coached have on separate occasions described it as "being in prison". Incidentally they both went on to become regional champions shortly after saying it, so please learn from that. Your coach will tell you what and when to eat, what and when to train and even tell you when to go to bed and get up. I'm not joking, that is what a good coach will do for you and if you have never competed before it's exactly what you need. I always get very close to those that I coach as there will be

times that they will need to be carried, both mentally and physically, seriously, I have carried someone off of the gym floor after a leg workout before now and I will do it again no doubt.

6. Finally, be realistic. I get so many people contact me telling me how they are in great shape and because they work as a PT they live in the gym and one day they will be Mr. Olympia – guess what, you won't be! When I started out my target was to win a British title and I did that, but it is just the one and I don't expect to ever win another one although I will of course keep on trying. Like I said, be realistic.

Right, if that still hasn't scared you off lets get down to the things that you need to know. It's all quite simple but there are many variables so here is a list of how to go about it.

Firstly you have to decide whether you are going to compete for a drug free organisation or for an organisation that doesn't test for drugs. The top three drug free bodies are the BNBF, the NPA and the UKDFBA. Have a look at their websites and read their list of banned substances carefully. Be warned, if you have taken anything on the list they WILL find out, they test very stringently including polygraph (lie detector) tests! People trying to cheat are caught every year and named & shamed on the federation websites, quite rightly in my opinion.

If you want to compete for a federation that doesn't test for drugs then the top ones are UKBFF, NABBA and NAC. These shows are the ones that feature the biggest guys, the women with the best physiques and have by far the highest attendance of both competitors and spectators, take from that what you will. Also note that all federations charge membership fees and some charge entry fees too, the UKBFF, which is the biggest federation of them all, actually charge you entry fees on top of your membership for regional qualifiers and then charge you again to enter the British final if you get an invite, like I said it's harsh, and in more ways than one!

When you have decided which organisation you want to compete for you can look at the different classes, each organisation is different and each have their own classes, there are a lot to choose from: - height, weight, classic, age etc. for men and a variety of classes for women, one to suit every kind of physique which is good because it encourages everyone to compete. When you have chosen your class you can then choose which show you want to do, there are many shows every season. In almost all cases you will have to do a regional qualifier, if you win that, or sometimes if you only place second, you will receive in addition to your trophy an invite to that organisation's British Final, and if you get that far then I would say that you can genuinely call yourself successful! Excited? Good, because the next step is the most important one.

Yes I know that I go on about this a lot but it is crucial. Whoever you are going to compete for I would strongly recommend that you appoint a coach to oversee your diet, training and show prep. Ok time for me to sound harsh again now but I am well known for being honest and upsetting people in the process, I won't apologise for that and I won't change no matter how precious and sensitive you are so here goes. Appoint a proper bodybuilding coach, take

your time and choose the right one because, as I have already explained, you are literally putting your life in their hands, you will see exactly what I mean when you get to the business end of a show diet. Appoint someone who has been there and done exactly what you are going to try to do, someone who has worn the t shirt out because they have done it so many times. Tell your coach your plans and if they disagree then listen to them, they know all about competing and you don't so be guided by them. **DO NOT appoint someone who has never competed but says that they can be your coach because they are a level 3 PT, because unless they have competed at the top level and have been successful (see aforementioned criteria) then they are simply not capable of coaching you to the required standard.** And never think that you can coach yourself, whatever qualifications you have, however clever you think you are and whatever you might read on the internet let me tell you now, unless you have coached yourself before and won a significant title then you are not qualified to coach anyone including yourself.

Ok rant over but I needed to make those points. Finally have a read of this special feature that I wrote ages ago, it will help.

<http://www.kevanwilson.com/Superman.pdf>

So from there on it is all in the hands of your coach, good luck, I look forward to hearing about how well you have done, I love it when I receive emails from people who have done as I have said and have achieved their ambitions. Please be one of those people!

Finally, there is one thing that you will encounter on your journey and that is the haters, we all have them, some more than others. They are haters but most of them disguise it by pretending to actually be helping you. If you listen to these people then they will mess with your head. You have one coach, do as he says and ignore the haters, whatever form they may take. For example if you are drug free they will accuse you of being on steroids, if you are not drug free they will say it's all down to the gear, if you are a woman dieting they will tell you that you are too thin, they are all completely and utterly wrong! They are just jealous, insecure people who don't have the balls to do what you are doing. Rise above the haters; prove them wrong, it's the best feeling in the world! I know, I've been there and done that and the next day I've waved my winners trophy in their faces that are green with envy. Let me just get all biblical on you to finish, well you will no doubt ask for God's guidance at some stage during your show prep or at least take his name in vain more than once.

David and Goliath, you know the story right? Well guess what, David encountered lots of enemies. If it wasn't for Goliath – David's enemy, David would never have kicked his arse and he would never ever have become King! So you know what you should do? Do as I do, thank your enemies, thank the haters, thank those people that have fuelled your burning desires. Believe it or not it's amazing how that sort of challenge can actually get our butts moving!