Vernonia bodybuilder has near perfect season, five first places

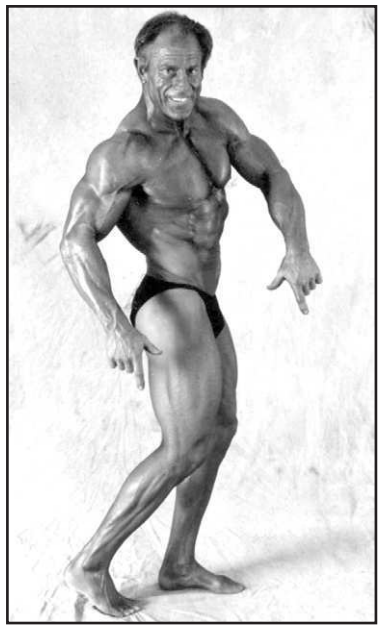
Vernonia resident Terry Fultz is a busy man. He works for Gwin Logging, owns and operates Terry's Gym and, in his spare time, is a competitive bodybuilder who just completed a nearly perfect season.

When Fultz walked onto the stage June 26, for the Oregon State Championships at Portland Tiffany Center, he weighed 174 lbs, 26 pounds less than his usual 200 pound training weight. The weight loss, which started in mid-March with body-fat reduction dieting, had nothing to do with being overweight. It was done to bring out his full muscularity by the time of the June contest.

In the sport of bodybuilding, the judges need to see muscular development without the standard blanket of fat that usually covers and insulates skeletal muscles. In bodybuilding terms, it's called "being ripped," which really means extremely defined, as one muscle group shows complete separation from another and, as the skin tightens, the vascular systems (veins and arteries) become more visible, which is known as the "road map effect" and is the unmistakable sign of a truly conditioned competitor.

The guidelines used in bodybuilding competition (also called the rules of battle) indicate to the panel of seven judges who is the Best, and, despite popular belief, the competitor with the biggest muscles is not necessarily the Best. The physique must be balanced, top to bottom, side to side, and front to back. Presentation is considered…how well does the competitor reflect or display those long hours in the gym? Lifting weights and utilizing machines to develop, sculpt and shape the physique is the training portion. The competing portion is presenting all that hard work through a series of seven mandatory poses.

During each pose, judges compare the competitors to one another and may run the athletes through the full range of body muscle flexing poses several times before placements – first, second, third and so on – are decided. Under hot stage lights and tremendous pressure, competitors are usually near exhaustion by the end of the judging round. This judging takes place in the morning; that evening, in front of thousand of fans, each competitor performs a free posing round, showing their muscularity and general condition to the judges and the audience through personally selected poses, all of which are choreographed and set to music. It is very entertaining, however, it can also be very exhausting.



Terry Fultz in one of his winning bodybuilding poses.

After completion of the free posing, also known as the Night Show Routine, all competitors from a particular class are brought back onto the stage for the judges' final assessment and presentation of awards, usually from first through fifth place. Now it's over…unless you win!

The first place winner of each class must now do battle with the first place winners of the other classes within the same category. For example: Fultz is 57 years-old, so he competes in the Over 50 class, a category that also includes the Over 40 and Over 60 classes. Now the judges determine who is the Best among the winners of each of the classes within a category for the Overall title, or Best in the Category. The battle begins with the judges lining everyone up at center stage to perform the original seven mandatory poses, again, while they compare the competitors, who are side-by-side for the first time.

The audience is very vocal at this point, cheering on their favorite! After this comparison, class winners have a brief time to free pose, trying to "out pose" each other by striking poses not within the seven mandatory poses, in an attempt to catch the eye of the judges. This is called the "pose-down." When the judges have made their decision, the master of ceremonies presents the award for Overall Champion.

Fultz won his class, then went on to win the Overall at the Oregon State Championships. It's not hard to see that the Over 40 class presents the toughest competition, as he may have to compete against someone who has just turned 40 and is 17 years younger than he is.

The age difference makes comparisons difficult, yet this season presented Fultz with a unique situation at the Northern Pacific State, a big regional contest held at Seven Feathers Casino in Canyonville on October 9. All competitors were allowed to "double enter," which meant Fultz could enter his age class in the Masters category, and he could also enter the Open Men category, which is divided by weight classes ranging from Bantam weight to the Super Heavy weights.

First, he won his age class, then captured the Overall trophy in the Masters category. However, he really made a statement by placing second in the Open Men's Middle-weight class, where he lost by only one point to a 26 year-old from California, a remarkable feat that the crowd recognized by presenting him with the only standing ovation of the entire show. That 31 year age difference indicates the perfection of Fultz's physique.

"It's really cool to beat the kids," Fultz said.

Fultz's results in other competitions this season include the following:

August 28, Northern Golds Classic, Tacoma, Washington, 1st in class and Overall Champion.

September 25, Evergreen State Championships, Wenatchee, Wash., 1st in class.

October 23, Washington State Championships, Auburn, Wash., 1st in class and Overall Champion.

So, what's next? Fultz says he will rest for awhile, then it's back to the gym, training, and proper nutrition, because the strategy for next season begins now. "

"The fun never ends," Fultz said, "I'm 57. I feel like I'm in my 30's but my back often reminds me that I'm not. So keeping things in perspective is my true challenge, avoiding injuries with a sensible approach, realizing my limitations and governing my ambition. This season was long and tiring from a competitor's standpoint."

"I had a fantastic year, but I couldn't do it alone," Fultz said, "My wife, Gail, who is also my dietician, biggest critic and biggest fan, was always there for me and twice this season I was able to coax her up on stage, where I presented her with the Overall trophy that I had just won. She earned them right along with me. Oh yeah, the crowd loved it!"

Fultz's accumulation of career points (one of those computer things) has placed him as one of the top 57 year-old amateur bodybuilders in the world (There is a man in Ireland with a few more points.).

What is his long term goal? "I want to win the Nationals when I'm 60." For now, though, "Watch out fella, next year's coming, and so am I!"

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