

Tips From The Pros

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My competition journey began in a different way than many. I had no knowledge of the sport or a desire to participate in it. During the tail end of my military career, a fellow NCO continued to tell me I should do shows like his wife was doing. At this time, I was training for the NFL combine which was in 2014. I was a trainer at Gold's Gym in Louisville, KY and the general manager knew Brent Jones, promoter for the NPC Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Muscle Bodybuilding shows. Being insistent, he brought Brent to the gym, and I was asked to see my abs. He told me to compete, even though I told him I had the combine 2 weeks prior to his show. Yes, I did the show as a men's physique competitor.

Four years later, I earned a pro card. I coached myself for my first 4 shows and won two 1st place and an overall title. Three national appearances, finishing 9th, 4th and 2nd (pro card) and the Overall Classic Physique Winner at the NPC Lee Haney Games, right before turning Pro. Every prep, I got better at working on weaknesses and gaining more confidence in what I knew would help me. Cardio was harder each prep as new tissue accumulated meant in order to reveal it, I'd have to do what I hadn't done before with training.

My advice for competitors:

1st timers/newer amateurs: Invest in education specific to your body. Meaning learn yourself. Take enough mental and physical notes to ensure you're progressing. Be comfortable with the wins you WON'T get. Not everyone can obtain immediate success and the sport is subjective.

National level competitors: Be honest with yourself and have honest people around you. Don't chase a weight class because it may be "easier" to turn pro. If your body looks better at a class where you won't be the biggest guy, so be it. If you nail all factors and remember it's art - not size, you'll get rewarded eventually. And don't compete so much! If you're nationally qualified and have been on the cusp of turning pro, only compete once or twice that year (National shows only). Take that extra time and money into the gym to be ready for the important show.

For all seeking to turn Pro: If you aren't turning pro as a Heavyweight or top end light heavy, you're not going to jump

right in the pro ranks and be successful. You're going to have work to do. So do all of that work now to make the transition a bit smoother once you enter the IFBB ranks. Because once you do, you're at the bottom once again anyway.

The sport of bodybuilding is a grind like no other. It takes more time for your work to translate to the stage than most other sports. An off season for traditional athletes can be seen immediately once the season starts. But for those in this sport, it's taken some 10+ years. This is simply because it's subjective. It's not who scores the most points, wins by knockout or anything like that. Genetics is the beginning and end, and in between the hard work and dedication to other factors must be molded. Judges respect those who actually work on the areas of critique. It shows that you're more likely to represent the Pro title well and continue to do so until you succeed, which helps promote the sport in a better light.



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