

Behind The Muscle

HUNTER LABRADA

IFBB Pro Bodybuilder

- Son of IFBB/ Hall of Famer Lee Labrada
- Resides in Houston, Texas
- Works for Labrada Nutrition
- Personal Trainer & Coach, HunterLabrada.com & Hypertrophy.com
- Studied economics at Texas A & M
- Contributing writer for Bodybuilding.com and Labrada Nutrition

Stats:

- Weight: 235-245lbs
- Height: 5'9"
- Age: 26

Competition Highlights:

- Began as a heavyweight bodybuilder his first year and then moved up to Super Heavy in 2017.
- Hunter has placed 1st in all five shows he's competed in.
- 2018 NPC Nationals, Men's Bodybuilding, Super Heavyweight, Overall winner & earned Pro Card

Background:

Hunter started lifting so he could play football. Methodically, he made the switch from football to bodybuilding. "Over the years I've come to admire & appreciate the sport of bodybuilding, and my dad's role in it." It was an injury during football that led to the changes in training and eventually the decision to switch sports.

A couple of months after turning Pro, Hunter was kind enough to take time for me to interview him. Being the son of Lee Labrada are big shoes to fill. In a sport that's evolving, he's finding his way. With a great team of people to coach, support and encourage him, Hunter Labrada is one to watch.

What bodybuilding lessons have you learned and how have you applied them to your life?

I love this question, people always like to make allusion to sport in general. The discipline you learn in football has definitely carried over to bodybuilding, which is one of the few sports you have to stick out for an extended period of time being generally uncomfortable (it's both physically and mentally tough) to achieve the goal you've set. I feel like that carries over to any aspect of life. "Get comfortable being uncomfortable" to pursue a goal you've set; that's one of the biggest lessons I've learned in bodybuilding that carries over into all aspects of my life.

Besides your dad, is there anyone who has influenced or inspired you in your journey?

Outside of football and bodybuilding, my grandmother on my mom's side had had the biggest influence on me. She helped me learn how to manage life. In the early years of Labrada Nutrition, I spent a lot of time with her. To me, she is a saint. Rooted in her faith and very soft spoken, she instilled kindness and humility in me in a way I wouldn't have gotten from anyone else. Even now, I will still seek out her perspective on things. Another early influence would be my high school strength and conditioning coach, Steve Swanson. He insisted good form in all of my three big lifts and helped develop a solid base. He was one of those people who wasn't ok with giving anything less your best. Even when I left high school, whenever I walked into a weight room it was - the best I could



possibly do or don't even do it. On this last prep leading up to Nationals, when I earned my pro card, I had pretty close regular contact with two of today's biggest motivators, Branch Warren and Flex Lewis. Sending pictures, getting feedback, in-person evaluation, posing, from 10 weeks out til the day of show, these guys were in my corner. There are a number of great pros out there; they are who motivate me.

People don't realize how tough bodybuilding can be; do you ever get in a "slump"? And what gets you out of it?

Absolutely. As much as I'd like to think that I am a machine, it couldn't be farther from the truth. Everyday is different. There are ups and downs when it comes to training. Like everyone else, I have family & friends, responsibilities, hobbies I enjoy. Being able to balance that with my training is a challenge. I think that the cyclical ups and downs, back and forth is just part of the human experience. It's not something that's lost on bodybuilding. In a slump, I might I get down and find myself eating my feelings, or not really training hard. What typically gets me out of a slump? It basically comes down to a mindset. There may be a few days or weeks where you may not really feel like training or eating but you just got to get it done. After a while just getting it done becomes fun again and if it doesn't get fun at least you know you're getting your work done. The thing I like most about bodybuilding is the training and the process but when it comes to a slump, everyone has them and you still just have to get your work done. Like Nike says - just do it.

Tell me one of your funniest moments in bodybuilding?

About three weeks before Junior USA's, I was guest posing. We utilized the opportunity to experiment with my sodium, by drinking pickle juice before I stepped on stage just to fill

out for a pump. My coach Andrew Vu wasn't with me but suggested I drink just a little. I love spicy pickles so I thought - so I drank about 1/3 of the jar. For about the first 2 minutes my stomach was pretty decent. I got on my trunks, got oiled up, and was sitting there waiting to go on stage. I had pre-stage adrenaline going but now I also had a new feeling; my stomach was feeling off! As I started going through my routine, my girlfriend said she noticed something wasn't right from my face. From about 10 seconds in until 2-1/2 minutes later when I waved to everyone, I was gagging in my mouth and swallowing vomit. I ended up doing a lot of my routine with my back to the audience so I could hide my face, but when I was done I ran offstage to the first trash can I could find. At first everyone was really scared I had done something to mess up my electrolytes or messed around with too much diuretics but we got a good laugh knowing I had just drank some spicy pickle juice! To be honest, it wasn't really funny at the time but looking back I can laugh now.

What do you enjoy doing outside the gym?

Outside of the gym, I'm into firearms and sport shooting. I've built several AR15's for myself and family members and recently presented both my dad and my coach custom Glocks that I had done for them for the national championship win. I also like diesel trucks and lifted trucks. I have a girlfriend and a daughter that's 3-1/2 years old going on 20, LOL. She is a true blessing. I have an 8 year old pit bull and my girlfriend has a doberman; they are two peas in a pod - inseparable and pretty funny to watch.

How have things changed, since turning pro?

Since earning my pro card, my schedule is busier than ever. I'm traveling 3-4 times a month, to 5-6 different countries for trips, engagements or appearances. Right now I'm working on keeping up with the responsibilities of new sponsorships and the obligations involved with them from a travel and time standpoint, including doing content for them. I not only want to satisfy the requirements of my sponsorships, but I want to exceed them. Any company I am with, is one that I truly believe in and want to help elevate. That's BIG for me, taking care of those that take care of you. I am so very blessed to be in a position to be able to say I love doing what I do for a living and in the long run, my hope is that all of these things will lead me to having a full blown career.

What is the biggest misconception you see amongst clients?

The biggest misconception I see for the uneducated competitor is that there is no magic pill or shortcut. They want to put on 25lbs in the off season or want to win a pro card that in my opinion is 2-3 years off. You have to have a blunt talk with them. People see me, but they don't see the eight years of hard work I've put in. I always tell people, especially for bodybuilders, to be a good professional bodybuilder it's at least 10 years. It's a simple time thing and that's with good genetics, that's not pissing in the wind when you're in the gym, and barring any major catastrophic injury or major life issue that would keep you out of the gym for an extended period of time.

Tell us about your new sponsorships?

My newest sponsorship is a bodybuilding clothing brand called GASP. Their sister company is Better Bodies which has clothing for women and men's physique athletes. I have also signed on with Joe Bennett who runs a website called Hypertrophycoach.com where we offer training, keep up with daily training logs, and upload regular video footage giving biomechanical cues on how to actually train correctly. Beyond just providing training programs, we want to show the mechanics of what you are doing and give cues that really cement those points home.

What is your ultimate goal?

My passion lies in the gym but I have two main goals; win the Olympia title and for people to say I was a good human being before they say how good of a bodybuilder I am/was.



What message do you want to share with our readers?

First, whatever you choose to do, not just in physique sports but in anything and everything you do, do it to the best of your ability. Even when you don't want to, even when you're tired or even when you don't feel like it or even when you have a million other things you'd rather be doing. Do everything to the best of your ability A) you owe it to yourself and B) someone's always watching. Set the example of what I consider to be excellence. Excellent meaning you are doing Your best. You are being excellent at what you are trying to do. Second, surround yourself with those people who demand excellence from you and then demand it from those people. It's like one of those cliches - you are the sum total of the five people you spend the most time with or you can't soar with eagles if you hang with chickens. You are what you surround yourself with, so surround yourself with people who'll bring out the best in you and expect to do the same for them. Expect them to call you out when you're not being excellent, expect them to call you out when you're not giving your best effort, not just in the gym or when you're eating, but in life in general. These are the kinds of people that should be in your life. These are the people that are going to make you better.

9 things you didn't know about Hunter Labrada:

1. **Cheat meal?** Sushi or burgers
2. **Music to listen to during training?** Metal; Parkway Drive, AllThat Remains, Architect
3. **Body part to train?** Legs
4. **How long is your prep?** It's 16 weeks, but I stay sub 10% body fat almost year round
5. **How much and what type cardio do you do?** Never more than 30 minutes, intervals on the stairs, never more than 1x per day
6. **How much time do you spend posing?** 15-20 min per day in prep; off season I need to do more
7. **Quote?** "Win the day"
8. **Book?** Eragon series
9. **Movie?** Batman trilogy