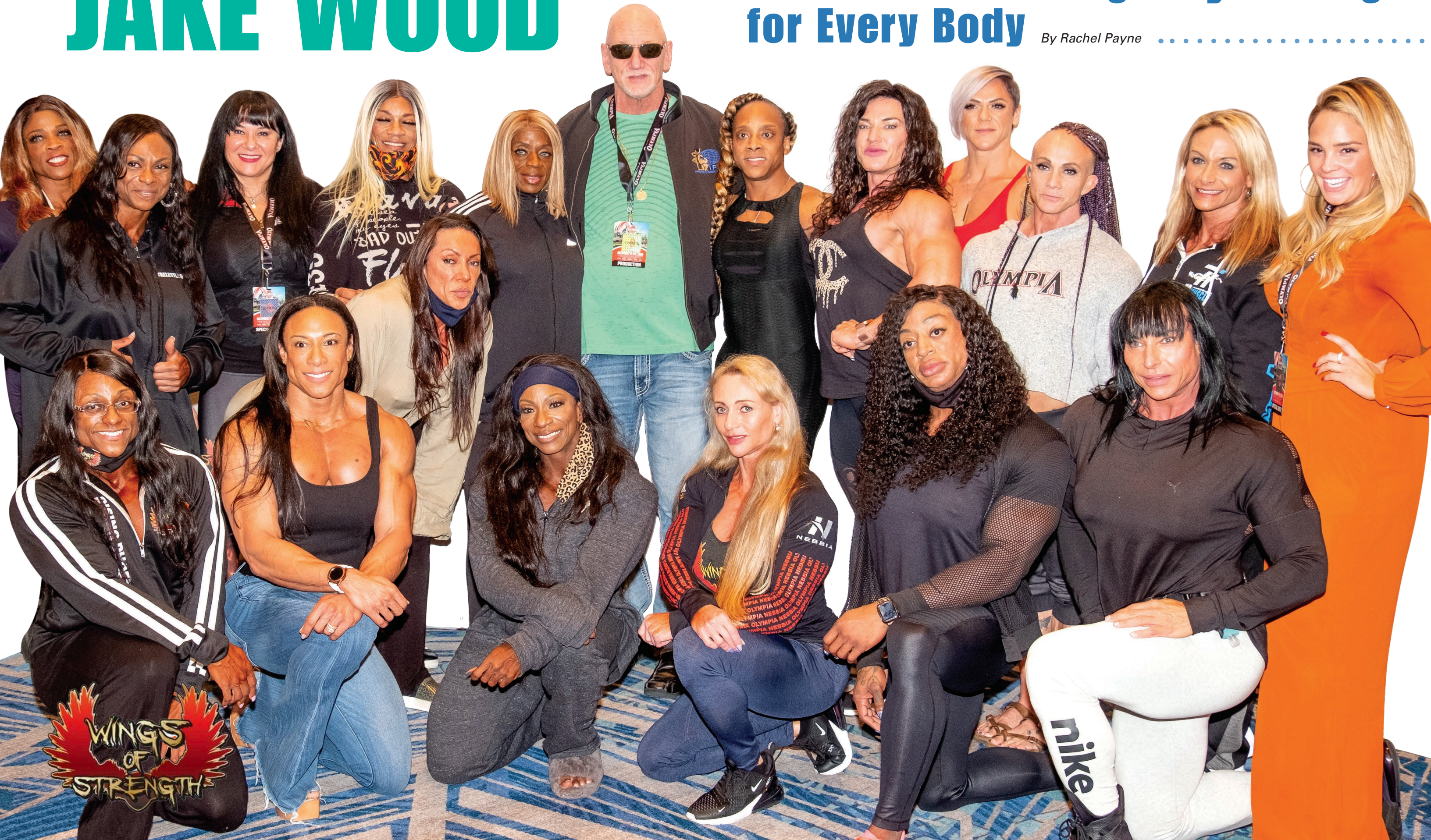


JAKE WOOD

His Vision for Making Bodybuilding for Every Body

By Rachel Payne



WINGS
OF
STRENGTH

Grow not to accept limitations, but work at the possibilities and never stop. This is the mantra that Jake Wood grew up with. This mindset is the foundation that would pave the way for the success of Jake Wood, the owner of Mr. Olympia and Wings of Strength, an American multinational bodybuilding promotions company. How exactly do you learn to work at the possibilities? Jake shares one example, “my father and I built a sailboat together and we sailed around the world many times. It never occurred to us that we couldn’t. We just knew it was possible.”

When a 13-year old boy saw a bodybuilding magazine in a bookstore that had Bill Pearl, an American legend in bodybuilding, he thought it was “the coolest thing ever!” Jake continued to follow the sport and at 15 he realized the offices of Joe Weider, the co-founder of the International Federation of BodyBuilders (IFBB) alongside his brother Ben Weider were only six miles from where he lived. Knowing that Joe and Ben were the creators of the Mr. Olympia, the Ms. Olympia and the Masters Olympia bodybuilding contests, his interest was piqued. He decided to ride his bike there and while staring at the building and the people that came and went, Jake was envisioning the possibilities of how he was going to be a part of the bodybuilding industry.

Jake had a long and prosperous career in aerospace putting his bodybuilding endeavors on the back burner. After retiring at the young age of 46, it was time to “pick up those old goals and make them work.” Jake knew he wanted to be involved in the sport. He saw his path as a promoter, but needed to develop a plan. Then, he came across an opportunity. “I heard that this guy named Tim Gardner was promoting a show called the Tampa Pro. He needed a sponsor for the Women’s Bodybuilding Division. So, I sent Tim an email and it took off from there.”

Those that are new to the sport of bodybuilding will look to more seasoned athletes for advice, often times in the form of “What I Wish I Knew.” This prompted me to ask, “What’s the funniest mistake you made in the early years and what lesson did you learn?” Jake recalled, “I thought it would be a good idea to take a handful of elite professional female bodybuilders (names withheld) dressed to the nines to go down to Hollywood Boulevard for a photo shoot... and I was wrong! The lesson learned was, the women who take two hours to dress up, only need 10 seconds or less to whip off the jewelry and heels before fists fly.”

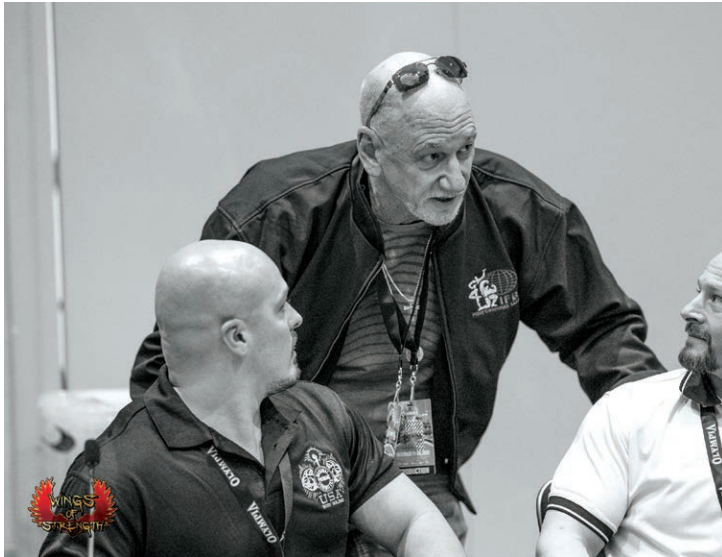
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Mr. Wood has achieved a level of success in this sport that most could never imagine. But with his mantra of “grow not to accept limits, but work at the possibilities,” Jake explains that it is his mother that always believed in him, his father showed him the ways of the world, and his kids give him the love and support that he needs today.

It’s hard to believe that it’s only been since 2011 that Jake began to focus on establishing his place in the bodybuilding industry. In 10 short years, he went from show sponsor to creating JW Media that includes the long term media brands you may know as Digital Muscle, Muscle & Fitness, Hers, and Flex. In addition, he owns Wings of Strength, a company that is a producer, promoter, and sponsor of events as well as having a media component. The growth of JW Media is evident. If he’s done this much in 10 years, imagine what the next 10 years could bring!

There are three things you can say about great leaders; they are humble, they strive to bring out the best in others, and they surround themselves with a great team of people. Jake Wood is a great leader and his team is integral to building his brand. He says, “the key people, mostly in the order that I came to know them are, Jan Summers, Jessica Schmitt, Alex Sacasa, Lenda Murray, Alina Popa, Dan Solomon, Niko Pigott, Angelica Nebbia, Tamer El Guindy, Martin Carrillo, Cayden Riley, Zack Zeigler, Sofia Evangelista, Bob Cicherillo, Shawn Ray and David Baye. Not to mention our long-term partnerships with Tim and Eileen Gardner along with Jack and Ann Titone. This list isn’t comprehensive and please forgive me if I forgot someone.” While their names may not be familiar, these are the people that work tirelessly to make the athlete and audience experience memorable at many events each year, and after being at a few shows, you’ll start to recognize their familiar faces.

The Olympia event is Jake’s most recent acquisition. I was curious to know why he wanted to add this event to his portfolio. Jake’s response was so genuine and heartfelt; “First and foremost, I love the Olympia event. I regard the work of Joe Weider with the highest esteem. It’s an extraordinary honor to be part of the “O” that Mr. Weider built. I see it as my most basic responsibility to be a good or maybe even great custodian of this near fabled institution.”

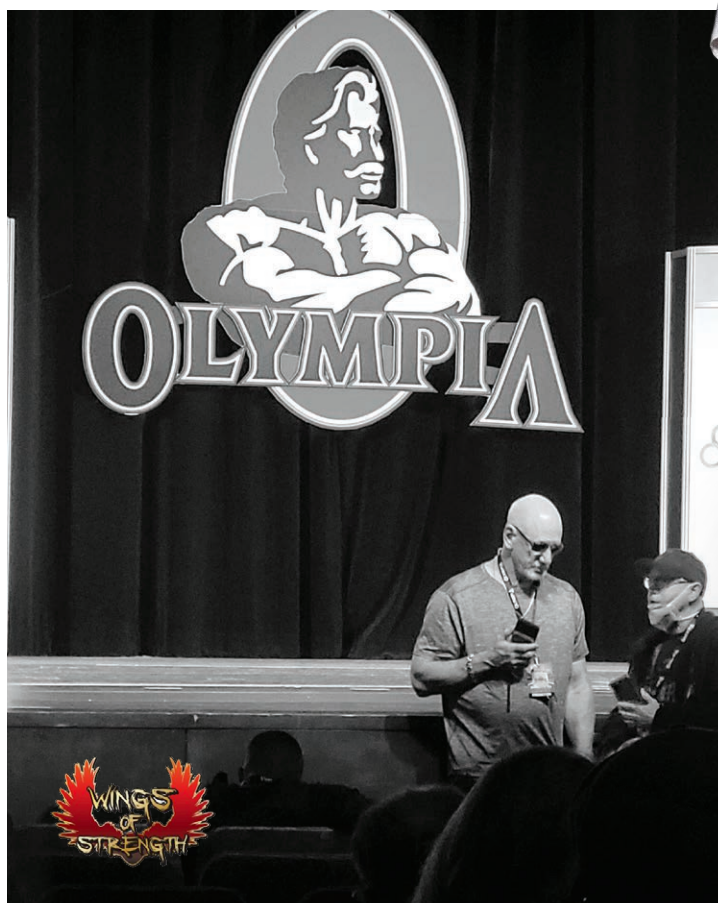




Without a doubt, the “O” is in good hands. 2020, Jake’s first year as the owner of this event, saw him working hard to plan a great event in Las Vegas. We witnessed him having to move the entire event to Orlando, Florida three weeks before it started due to Covid. This was the first time since 1991 that the event was not held in Las Vegas. While it wasn’t the event he had planned, Jake’s commitment and ability to adapt provided an amazing experience. From start to finish the Olympia ran smooth! I can’t even imagine what he’s going to do to make it better.

Jake gave me a sneak peak at his vision for the future of the Olympia for both the fans and the athletes. Jake boasted, “For the fans, I’d like to bring the fan experience and the entire Olympia, together, into one world class venue. The benefits of that I think are self-evident and were only hinted at this past year in Orlando.” Immediately, I began to imagine how I would like to see the Olympia; in an arena with large capacity and an expansive or a large-scale theater like the Zappos Theater in Vegas where even the worst seat is still a winner. Jake continued, “We’ve also discussed the idea

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Pictured from left to right:

Patricia Cañas
Jessica Schmitt
Alexandra Sacas
Jake Wood
Alina Popa
Lenda Murray
Jodie Camp

of taking the Olympia to various cities every fourth year to provide some variety, bring the event to new audiences, and to explore new or different ideas. Finding the venue that can help me make the experience the best for both the fans and the athletes is one of my goals...

For the athletes, working on better equity in the pay between the classes is at the top of my list.” I asked him, what does gender parity in the Olympia prize money look like in terms of equal pay? The answer will surprise you. If you exclude one particular division, the women of our sport get paid more than men across the board, at the Olympia. If you remove the Mr. Olympia, you will see that Ms Olympia gets a total of \$95,000 vs Men’s 212 Division which gets \$90,000, Women’s Physique receives at total of \$80,000 vs Men’s Classic Physique at \$50,000, Women’s Figure wins a total of \$95,000 vs Men’s Physique which totals \$61,000, and Fitness and Bikini each receive \$95,000. This realization makes the mission, not just parity between women and men, but parity among divisions as well. Jake explains, “Certainly, the way to do this is not to bring down the Mr. Olympia prize money, but to bring the other divisions up. Increased ticket sales and sponsorships will help, but I’d like to broaden the Olympia to



create a complete living experience for the direct attendees and an opportunity for people around the globe to join in. This in turn, will devise a more expansive audience that sponsors will want access to.” When we see parity between men and women and across the divisions, I believe it will trickle down to the qualifying pro events. As they say, it starts at the top. Jake is committed to the process, knowing it will take time to leave his mark on the sport of bodybuilding. But if anyone can make it happen, Jake Wood is up for the task. He goes on to say, “I have long said the phrase ‘bodybuilding for every body’. This not only means for men and women, but also for people of all body types. Not everybody has the same genetic makeup to fit into just one division, with one set of aesthetic principles. There must be enough divisions, for example, like the Wellness division, in order to develop that expansive audience that I’m talking about. People everywhere want to know what to do to build the best physique they can with the specific genetic tools they were given at birth and we need to show them.” When speaking of the possibilities and opportunities that lie ahead, Jake’s passion and excitement is infectious. Jake is making a positive impact and his vision for the future of bodybuilding has us hopeful for what’s to come.



2021 CONTEST CALENDAR



- 04.10.2021** Fit Body Fusion presents NPC Mel Chancey REDCON1 Champion Muscle Classic – TAMPA, FLORIDA
- 06.18–20.2021** NPC Enchanted Isle Classic National Qualifier
NPC Worldwide Flex Appeal Miami World Caribbean Championships PRO Qualifier
Wings of Strength & Fit Body Fusion presents IFBB Professional League Yamamoto Nutrition Puerto Rico PRO – NASSAU BAHAMAS
- 07.2–3.2021** NPC Chicago Extravaganza National Qualifier
NPC Worldwide Ms International Women Bodybuilding PRO Qualifier
Fit Body Fusion presents IFBB Professional League Wings of Strength Chicago PRO – TINLEY PARK, ILLINIOS
- 08.6–7.2021** NPC Tampa Extravaganza National Qualifier
Wings of Strength & Fit Body Fusion presents IFBB Professional League Yamamoto Nutrition Cup Tampa PRO – TAMPA, FLORIDA
- 09.25.2021** Wings of Strength IFBB Professional League San Antonio PRO
NPC San Antonio Extravaganza National Qualifier – SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
- 10.23.2021** NPC Hurricane Bay Championships National Qualifier
Wings of Strength & Fit Body Fusion presents IFBB Professional League Hot Spot Tanning Hurricane PRO – ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA
- 10.31.2021** Fit Body Fusion presents NPC Flex Appeal Miami Puerto Rico Championships National Qualifier – BAYAMON, PUERTO RICO
- 11.13–14.2021** NPC Worldwide Wings of Strength Romania Muscle Fest PRO Qualifier
Mens Mentis presents IFBB Professional League Wings of Strength Romania Muscle Fest PRO – BUCHAREST, ROMANIA
- 12.04.2021** NPC Atlantic Coast Championships National Qualifier
Wings of Strength presents IFBB Professional League Fit Body Fusion Atlantic Coast PRO – FT. LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA
- TBD:** IFBB Professional League Wings of Strength Rising Phoenix Women’s Bodybuilding World Championship
IFBB Professional League Wings of Strength Arizona Women’s PRO
NPC Arizona Women’s Extravaganza National Qualifier – PHOENIX, ARIZONA