

MASTERS ATHLETES

WADE WILBURN

Masters Bodybuilding, Tennessee

Like many young athletes, Wade Wilburn played football growing up. But, after seeing Mike Mentzer on the cover of a magazine, he chose to focus on the sport of bodybuilding. Having been skinny and picked on as a young teen, he turned to his passion and made bodybuilding a way of life.

Winning an award at 15 in a small in-house competition in Knoxville, Tennessee was enough to motivate Wade to continue to compete for the next few years. He took a break from competition from 1986-1994 and finally stepped back on stage at the 1994 NPC JanTana Classic. He won the heavy-weight division but eventually lost in a pose down with Yohnnie Shambourger, who went on to turn pro.

Bodybuilding kept Wade on a healthy path. However, in 2000, he went back to school and unfortunately distanced himself from the gym. Finding himself in a bad place, he made a decision to make a change and went back to the gym he used to train at. Wade successfully began building a personal training business. A friend encouraged him to compete again, showing him an ad for the 2009 Hard Body HydroxyCut Challenge. He received a call informing him that he was the overall winner of the contest and had won the \$100,000 prize. Wade said, "All of Tennessee could hear me hoot and holler! It is the most accomplished win I've ever had."



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There is no doubt that bodybuilding has helped his personal training business. In January of 2019, Wade had bilateral hip replacements. Allen Sizemore, NPC chairman of Tennessee and co-promoter of the Nashville Night of Champions, asked, "Do you think you'll ever compete again?" Wade didn't miss a beat telling him, "I'm going to do your show in 10 months!" He did, winning the Bodybuilding Masters 40+ category, placing 2nd in the Bodybuilding 50+ category, and being awarded the Inspiration Award for his comeback after surgery. While it was probably his last competition, Wade says he will continue to share his knowledge and live vicariously through his clients.

He chose a lifestyle, went through numerous ups and downs, but at the end of the day Wade learned that living a healthy lifestyle makes him feel vibrant, training is his addiction, and making yourself a priority is priceless.