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1st PLACE
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Chapter I

LESSONS

A Bag of Tools

*Isn't it strange that princes and kings
And clowns that caper in sawdust rings
And just plain folks like you and me
Are builders for eternity?*

*To each is given a bag of tools,
A shapeless mass and book of rules,
And each must build, ere life has flown,
A stumbling block or steppingstone.*

R. L. Sharpe

“What in the hell am I doing up here! I’ve been standing at attention for over an hour! The judges have us turning every-which-way-but-loose. The only thing that they haven’t had us do is to turn our backs to the audience, drop our posing briefs and show the cracks of our ass. Enough is enough! When am I going to learn? Forty-one years old and still letting others control my life! You would think I’d have learned something competing in these contests over the past 18 years and I have. Nothing has changed; nothing is going to change when it comes to judging physique contests.”

Those were a few of the thoughts running through my mind while standing onstage at the Victoria Palace in London, England, on Friday, September 17, 1971, for the prejudging of the Amateur and Professional N.A.B.B.A. Mr. Universe contests. The show was billed, “The Physique Contest of The Century.” Virtually every top bodybuilder in the world was competing; except Arnold Schwarzenegger, the reigning champion for the past three years.



Above: Bill waving to the audience as Chris Dickerson, 1970 A.A.U. Mr. America (far right), happily smiles and claps to show approval.

Joe Weider and Arnold Schwarzenegger had goaded me into entering the contest. Weider began by publishing articles in his fitness magazines asserting that I was afraid to compete against the current crop of bodybuilders. Arnold chimed in with similar remarks. I could understand Arnold’s desire to compete against me. It made sense that he wanted my name added to his list. I was one of the few top bodybuilders he hadn’t defeated.

Left: Possibly in the best condition of his life, at the age of 41, this photograph was taken of Pearl immediately after winning the 1971 N.A.B.B.A. Professional Mr. Universe crown in London, England.



Above: Bill reaching to shake Arnold Schwarzenegger's hand for winning the 1967 N.A.B.B.A. Amateur Mr. Universe title.

Below: Arnold Schwarzenegger and Joe Weider congratulate Bill when he was inducted into the Pioneers of Fitness Hall of Fame, in 1988.



have cared less about what Joe or Arnold had to say. However, Leo took their snide remarks more personally. With every phone call it was, "Why are you letting these guys take shots at you? Get off your dead-ass and do something about it!" With that in mind, I made it known in all major physique magazines that Bill Pearl would compete in the 1971 N.A.B.B.A. Professional Mr. Universe contest. This would definitely be the last chance for everyone to have a crack at me.

That time had come. Standing onstage being compared to Sergio Oliva, Frank Zane, Reg Park, Tony Emmott, Kassem Yazbek, Roy Duval, Chris Dickerson and approximately one hundred twenty other great physiques from around the world, the audience murmured, "Where's Arnold?"

Why hadn't he competed? It was obvious he was in top physical condition. The following weekend he entered and won his second I.F.B.B. Mr. Olympia title in Paris, France. If my memory serves, only two contestants vied for the title.

What I know for certain is that a few weeks prior to the N.A.B.B.A. Mr. Universe contest, Leo and I attended a warm-up posing exhibition given by Arnold in Santa Monica, California. Weider approached Leo to say, "What do you think?" Leo replied, "Arnold's in great shape." Weider went on, "He's going to compete in the N.A.B.B.A. Mr. Universe in a couple of weeks." Leo replied, "Pearl's going to rip him a new one."

Weider and Stern had known each other since the mid 1940s. It may have been that Joe's respect for Leo's judgment of physiques caused him to realize that Leo was serious with

his comment. Possibly Weider decided it was too much of a risk to take the chance of Arnold being beaten in a physique contest by someone nearly old enough to be his father. At that time, Arnold was under contract to Weider. His magazine touted him as, "The World's Greatest Bodybuilder." Nearly every issue featured training articles, supposedly written by Arnold, along with endorsements, for everything Weider sold. In retrospect, I believe Arnold would have competed if the decision had been left to him. He was one of the fiercest competitors I've seen on stage. His

motto should have been, “win at all cost.” With all due respect, several years later, Arnold apologized for making the 1971 N.A.B.B.A. Mr. Universe challenge. He commented that he understood the burden he had placed on me at that stage of *my* life because he had reached that stage of *his* life.

To make the prejudging more interesting for the audience that year, one of the major competitors was so obviously bombed out of his head, he was having difficulty responding to the judges’ instructions. Sergio Oliva helped the entertainment by standing in the line-up loudly complaining that he was hungry, as his two-hour pump-up was causing him to deflate like a slow leak in the Hindenburg. To further add to the audience’s delight, Reg Park, a previous three-time winner, kept up a running word-battle with Oliva on how bad each of them thought the other looked. My main concern was getting offstage. After standing in a flexed position for over an hour, my calves had cramped so badly I wasn’t sure I could move. The cramping began during the comparison portion of the prejudging and we still had the overall posing and final comparisons to go through.

Before competition began, an incident occurred that might have had a slight difference in the outcome of the contest. A young Belgian boy, about eleven years old, had been brought backstage, to see and possibly meet some of the contestants. The father nudged the boy, his autograph book in hand, toward Sergio. BIG MISTAKE! The moment the boy got into his space, Sergio shouted something like, “Get the hell out of here! I don’t have time for autographs! See me after the show!” The outburst shocked the father and son to the point where you could actually see dismay on their faces.

Regaining his composure, the father began pushing the boy toward me. The boy walked over, his head down, autograph book at arm’s length, afraid to make eye contact. Having seen the crest fallen look on the child’s face, I signed my name and then picked him up and placed him on my shoulder as he flexed his skinny arm while his father snapped a photograph.

The next time I saw his father, he was looking at me while sitting at the judge’s table with a smile on his face, nodding his head up-and-down, mouthing the word, “Yes--yes--yes.”

The following day, Cecil Peck, the Master of Ceremonies, announced Bill Pearl as the overall winner of the 23rd annual N.A.B.B.A. Professional Mr. Universe contest. The audience



Above: Sergio Oliva onstage at the 1971 N.A.B.B.A. Professional Mr. Universe contest.

Below: Bill Pearl with a young Belgium fan, Chris Vandebroele, backstage at the prejudging of the 1971 N.A.B.B.A. Professional Mr. Universe.



down. My competitive bodybuilding career had gone full circle from being elated at winning the 1953 A.A.U. Mr. America contest to wanting to forget the 1971 N.A.B.B.A. Mr. Universe contest. Competitive bodybuilding had changed into a sport that I no longer wanted to be a part of. With growing disappointment, I had watched the sport of fitness become a drug-based, dog-eat-dog business. I was one of the few competitors onstage that day that wasn't taking any form of anabolic steroids.

Below is an article written by George Coates for *Iron Man* magazine in early 1971

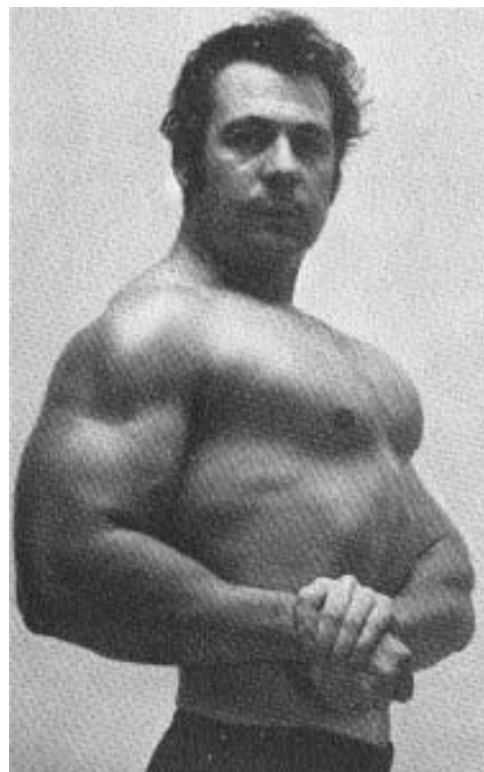
**WHY BILL PEARL IS ENTERING
THE N.A.B.B.A. Mr. UNIVERSE
By George Coates**

Bill Pearl is almost 41 years old. He has once again decided to enter N.A.B.B.A.'s famed Mr. Universe Contest to be held as usual in London in September. I'm sure many people are wondering why. Why should this man who has been at the top longer than any other physique star lay his hard-earned reputation as the world's best-built man on the line against fellows half his age?

There are many reasons. Bill, like a lot of other people, loves the sport he has done so well at for over 20 years. He hates to see the game being abused in any shape or form. He is particularly appalled at the methods certain top physique men are resorting to in their quest for greater muscle size. Bill has a 14-year-old son and he swears if his boy has to take drugs and do some of the other crazy things these physique men are doing, he would sooner his boy never touched a barbell.

We all know that so many young men have radically changed the course of their lives, always for the worse, through the use (or should I say OVERUSE) of tissue-building drugs. Rumour has it that some men in the weight game have actually died as a result of taking these drugs. Bill wants to do all in his power to rid the weight game of DIANABOL and its counterparts. These drugs have their part in medicine, but they are NOT needed by ANYONE who desires to be healthy, fit and strong through the use of barbells!

Another reason that Bill has decided to enter this, his final contest, is due to the fact that for years he has silently endured ridicule and uncouth comments by a certain magazine with "the trainer of champions" at the helm. For years this magazine would provoke people like Bill, Reg Park and the one and only John Grimek by running "polls" to supposedly determine who was the world's greatest bodybuilder. In the final ratings, all three would appear way down



Above: George Coates in the early 1960s. George and Bill have been friends since the start of Bill's bodybuilding career. He was a contributing author for a number of physique magazines.

their list. It got to be quite ridiculous! They would be rating men who would look like boys standing next to this trio of giants way up on their top ten, or top twenty, or whatever.

Last year things came to a head when an article was published attributed to Arnold Schwarzenegger, hurling rather unwarranted remarks at certain top liners, most of these being aimed at Bill Pearl in particular. I know Arnold Schwarzenegger. He would never write an article of that nature. He is a nice young man with a fantastic physique, currently associated with an organization that took similar advantages of Reg Park many years ago. In fact, Arnold and Earl Maynard (Mr. "U" of 1964) were visiting Leo Stern and me about six weeks ago, and believe me, big Arnold has nothing but the utmost respect and admiration for Bill Pearl. Being the gentleman he is however, Arnold would not comment.

Bill knows the only way he can compete fairly against anyone will be on neutral ground with fair and impartial judging. In other words, the N.A.B.B.A. Mr. Universe Contest!

Late last year, Bill and Leo Stern embarked on a one-year plan to prepare Bill and have him in the greatest shape of his life to compete in London. They had spared no efforts in this their final and most important undertaking. Every two weeks Bill and Leo get together and I feel deeply honoured to be allowed the privilege of attending most of these meetings, as the three of us will be associates in producing many magazine articles in the future.

To say Bill looks fantastic right now would be a gross understatement. As I write, the annual Mr. California Contest to be held in Los Angeles is only three days away. Bill is the guest poser in what may be his last public appearance in the United States. Most of the drug users will be in the audience and I will state here and now Bill will shock them right out of their seats.

Leo took some pictures of him last weekend and he is in unbelievable condition. You will be seeing some of these pictures soon. After the Mr. Universe Contest is over Bill and Leo will be disclosing some of the methods Bill has used to attain this fantastic condition. One or two phases of Bill's preparation for the Mr. Universe contest are closely guarded secrets and will be told after the great event.

Bill and Leo both hope all the top liners enter this year to decide once and for all the question, "Who is undeniably the greatest of the modern day bodybuilders?" I know one thing for sure and so does Bill, they don't play favourites in London. You have to be the best man there or you don't win. People like Oscar Heidenstam, Bert Loveday, Colin Sheard, Hal Wrigley and the rest of the judging panel are the most knowledgeable in the world.

I sincerely hope Bill Pearl can do it! I personally hope he can bump off

the very best of the drug users and anyone else on the scene besides.

While the rest of the bodybuilding world awaits with bated breath what could prove to be the greatest ever N.A.B.B.A. Mr. Universe contest, Bill Pearl will be training with a vengeance and a quest. The quest being to put the game back on its feet where it belongs. To show everyone connected with the game that it's possible to attain the physique they desire without resorting to the dangerous practice of using drugs. In this writer's humble opinion, it's not only dangerous, it's absolute madness. Bill Pearl will be using the sane and sensible methods he has always believed in with one or two innovations, which will be made public at a later date. I hope all readers of this magazine will join me in wishing Bill Pearl success in his final venture as a physique contestant.
