

Bodybuilding in Athens

Artists of the flesh

By MICHAEL BOOTH

Bodybuilders are artists of the flesh. Like fine craftsmen, they carefully shape their muscles into symmetrical forms pleasing to the eye.

"I'm working on a piece of art. I'm sculpting my body to make it look like I want it to appear," 23-year-old Athens body builder Gary Bolton said.

Bolton, a recent second-place finisher in the Mr. Garden State competition in Augusta, and 22-year-old Tony Roach, a fourth place finisher in the junior division of the same contest, sat amid the clanking of weights and grunts of would-be Mr. Americas last week at the Athens Fitness Center and talked their sport.

"I was kind of flabby. I weighed 216 pounds when I started, and I'm now 179 pounds," Roach said. "I guess this is my hobby. I'm here six or seven days a week for an hour or an hour and a half."

"I had a cousin who is a bodybuilder. We got to working out together and he said, 'I'll compete if you will,' so I said okay," Bolton said. "We went down to Florida last March, and he took first and I took second."

Competing in bodybuilding contests, like any other sport, demands dedication and sacrifice from the athlete. To become a flesh statue of bulging muscles means giving up heavy foods and nighttime activities that keep the athlete away from the gym.

"I eat just natural foods," said Roach; "a lot of yogurt and milk and a lot of eggs."

"You have to leave off a lot of things. Like in the past few weeks I haven't been eating like I wanted to. I like beer and pizza and spaghetti, so my moods have changed a lot," said Bolton.

A typical day's intake for a bodybuilder in preparation for competition is hardly enough to keep a small child alive, much less a mountain of flesh. Breakfast might be one egg and juice, no bread. Lunch and dinner are no more than a can of tuna or a baked chicken breast with a glass of water.

This is called carving by the bodybuilders. They are trying to take all the fat off the body so the muscles show through clearly.

In a contest, the judges are looking for the best shape, in their judgment, and the best athlete who can show off their shape.

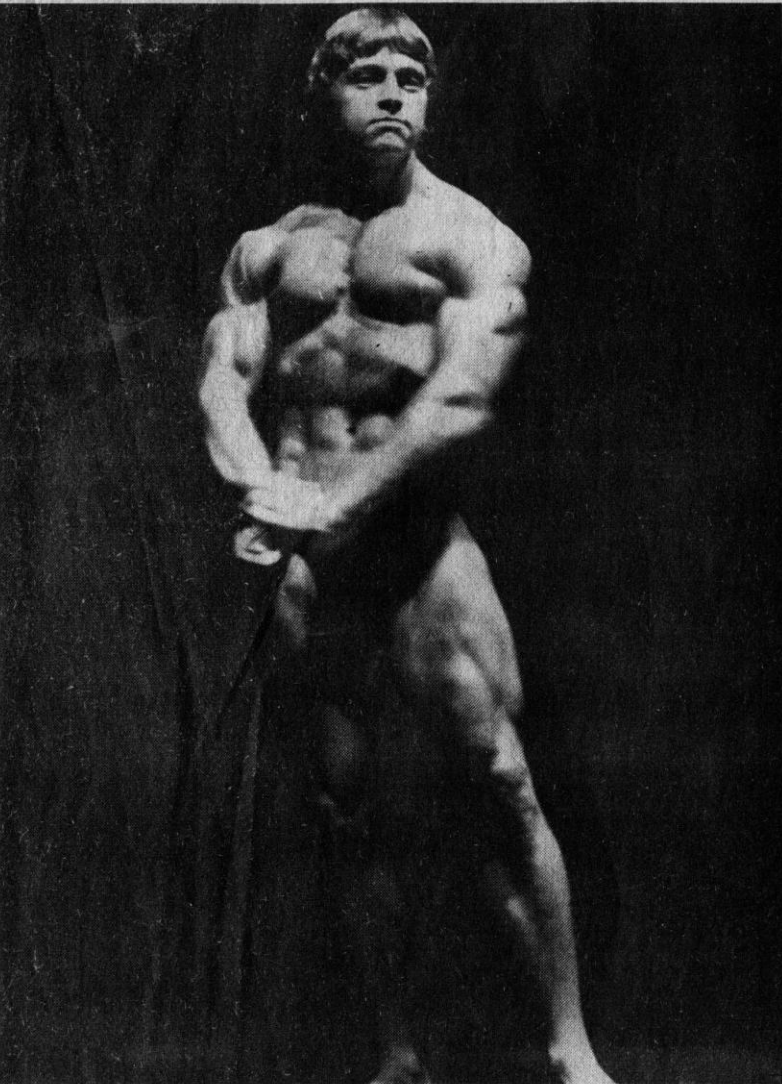
"Everything must flow together in a relaxed state," Bolton said of the judging in contest. "Everyone comes out on the stage in a line-up for the first part. Then, one at the time, they are called out on the platform for posing. It is kind of like a dance. Then all are called out again and the judges might pull three or four out of the line and pose them in a flexed position to compare them."

To make themselves as symmetrical as possible for the contests, bodybuilders work only on certain parts of the body during a workout. For example, they may work on the chest and triceps one night, the legs and back on another occasion.

But there is more than just having a symmetrical shape.

"There is a lot more to it," said Bolton. "You have to diet, learn posing, learn how to move on the platform, learn how to show confidence on the platform and even be tanned properly. You have to pay attention to all of

(continued on page 15)



Gary Bolton, Athens bodybuilder, was photographed by Alida Smith in a recent contest. "I'm working on a piece of art," Bolton says of his body.