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The run down of our top 10 greatest old-school bodybuilders. Some are from the golden era (1960s – 1970s), some of them were training during the silver era in bodybuilding (1940s through the 1960s). #10. Tom Platz
Thomas Steven Platz (born June 26, 1955 in Fort Sill, Oklahoma) is an American retired professional bodybuilder. His nicknames are "The Golden Eagle" and "The Quadfather" (due to his incredible quads)
Tom Platz began his competitive bodybuilding career in the 1973 Mr. Adonis competition. He competed as an amateur until he won the 1978 World Amateur Championships middleweight division. In 1978 and after completing his degree at Wayne State University, he moved to California. He arrived there with \$50 and a dream to win Mr. Olympia. For the following nine years Platz competed as a professional, aiming for Mr. Olympia. Though Platz never took first at the Olympia competition, he had a string of top ten finishes, with a third position in 1981 being his best. Platz became famous for his remarkable leg development. He developed a high-volume, high volume method of leg training, which led to his unparalleled size and definition for his time. Regardless of the time, Platz holds the mark for his best legs in bodybuilding of all time and some of the best legs in bodybuilding ever. Flex readers agree: In a "best bodyparts of the 20th century" poll, Platz was deemed to have the best quads and hamstrings of all time. Tom Platz retired from professional bodybuilding competition in 1987 and did a "Comeback" in 1995 when he was awarded Honorary Mr. America. He still promotes the sport wholeheartedly. Tom says, "I just want to give back to the sport I love which has been really great to me."
He played the part of "Body Builder" in the 1990 film Book of Love. His character portrayed the Charles Atlas-like character from those "tired of bullies kicking sand in your face and stealing your girlfriend"-type of advertisements that were in a lot of comic books for decades. Tom Platz was and is one of the most sought-after guest speakers in the world of bodybuilding, nutrition and general fitness. He was a Professor and the Director of Bodybuilding Sciences at ISSA for 14 years. Tom has a Masters in Fitness Science, Bachelors in Science Physiology and Nutrition from Wayne State University and Michigan State University, and a Masters in Business Administration from the University of California. #9. Mike Mentzer
Mike Mentzer (November 15, 1951 – June 10, 2001) was an American IFBB professional bodybuilder, businessman, philosopher, and author. Mentzer started bodybuilding when he was 12 years of age at a body weight of 95 lb (43 kg) after seeing the men on the covers of several muscle magazines. His father had bought him a set of weights and an instruction booklet. The booklet suggested that he train no more than three days a week, so Mike did just that. By age 15, his body weight had reached 165 lb (75 kg), at which point Mike could bench press 370 lb (170 kg). Mike's goal at the time was to look like his bodybuilding hero, Bill Pearl. After graduating high school, Mentzer served four years in the United States Air Force. It was during this time he started working out over three hours a day, six days a week. Mentzer started competing in local physique contests when he was 18 years old and attended his first contest in 1969. In 1971, Mentzer entered and won the Mr. Lancaster contest. In 1971 he suffered his worst defeat, placing 10th at the AAU Mr. America, which was won by Casey Viator. Mentzer considered his presence in this contest important as here that he met Viator who gave Mentzer the correct information for his trainer Arthur Jones. Due to a severe shoulder injury, he was forced to quit training from 1971 to 1974. In early 1975, however, he resumed training and returned to competition in 1975 at the Mr. America contest, placing third behind Robby Robinson and Roger Callander. Mentzer went on to win that competition the next year, in 1976. He won the 1977 North America championships in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and competed a week later at the 1977 Mr. Universe in Nimes, France, placing second to Kal Szkalak. In 1978, Mentzer won the Mr. Universe in Acapulco, Mexico with the first and only perfect 300 score. He became a professional bodybuilder after that 1978 Universe win. In late 1979, Mentzer won the heavyweight class of the Mr. Olympia, again with a perfect 300 score, but he lost in the overall to Frank Zane who was awarded the title for a third time that year. In the 1980 Mr. Olympia he placed fourth (in a tie with Boyer Coe) behind Arnold Schwarzenegger, Chris Dickerson and Frank Zane. He retired from competitive bodybuilding after that show at the age of 29. He maintained that the contest was rigged until the day he died. While he never said he thought that he should have won, he maintained that Arnold should not have, though he eventually got on good terms with Schwarzenegger. #8. Steve Reeves
Stephen L. Reeves (January 21, 1926 – May 1, 2000) was an American bodybuilder and actor. At the peak of his career, he was the highest-paid actor in Europe. Bodybuilder and actor Steve Reeves claimed the titles Mr. America, Mr. World and Mr. Universe by the age of 25. He starred in 18 European films, including Hercules (1959), Hercules Unchained (1960) and The Last Days of Pompeii (1960). He wrote an exercise guide, Building the Classic Physique the Natural Way and continued to inspire future generations of bodybuilders until his death in May 2000. Bodybuilder and actor, born January 21, 1926, in Glasgow, Montana. At the age of 10, Reeves moved with his mother to Oakland, California. He became interested in bodybuilding in his teens and aspired to enter world-class competitions, a goal cut short by the outbreak of World War II later in his life. His determination persisted after the war, and in 1946, he earned the title of Mr. Pacific Coast. Within the next four years he muscled his way into the world's most acclaimed titles, including Mr. America, Mr. World, and Mr. Universe. After his success in bodybuilding competitions, Reeves enjoyed a flourishing acting career that spanned 16 years and 18 films. He was known for his starring roles in such action classics as Hercules (1959), Hercules Unchained (1960), and The Last Days of Pompeii (1960). Although offered many roles in Hollywood, he preferred to work in Europe on the sort of glitzy costume dramas that highlighted his attention-grabbing physique. In 1963, he married Aline Czarzawicz and the couple retired to Southern California in 1969. He wrote an exercise guide, Building the Classic Physique the Natural Way and continued to inspire future generations of bodybuilders until his death in May 2000. Both Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger credit Reeves as an inspiration. #7. Larry Scott
Larry Dee Scott (October 12, 1938 – March 8, 2014), nicknamed "The Legend" and "The Golden Boy," was an American IFBB professional bodybuilder. He won the inaugural 1965 Mr. Olympia competition and defended the crown at the 1966 Mr. Olympia contest before retiring. Larry Dee Scott was born in Pocatello, Idaho, to Thea Scott and machinist Wayne Scott. He began training at age 16 and, by age 20, won the Mr. Idaho competition in 1959. After moving to California, he promptly won Mr. California (1960), Mr. Pacific Coast (1961), Mr. America (1962), and Mr. Universe (1964). When Joe Weider created the IFBB's Mr. Olympia title, Scott won the first two contests in 1965 and 1966. Although Scott retired after his 1966 Olympia title, he staged a brief comeback in 1979 before retiring from competition for good in 1980. He studied electronics at the California Air College, and was known to be a devout Mormon. He was married to Rachel Scott (nee Ichikawa). The Scotts had five children: daughter Susan, and sons Erin and Nathan survived Scott. Son Derek died in a motorcycle accident in 1992, and son Michael died in 1993. #6. Lou Ferrigno
Louis Jude "Lou" (born November 9, 1951) Ferrigno is an American actor, fitness trainer/consultant, and retired professional bodybuilder. As a bodybuilder, Ferrigno won an IFBB Mr. America title and two consecutive IFBB Mr. Universe titles, and appeared in the bodybuilding documentary Pumping Iron. As an actor, he is best known for his title role in the GDS television series The Incredible Hulk and vocally reprising the role in subsequent animated and computer-generated incarnations. He has also appeared in European-produced fantasy-adventures such as Sinbad of the Seven Seas and Hercules, and as himself in the sitcom The King of Queens and the 2009 comedy I Love You, Man. After graduating from high school in 1969, Ferrigno won his first major titles, IFBB Mr. America and IFBB Mr. Universe, four years later. Early in his career he lived in Columbus and trained with Arnold Schwarzenegger. In 1974, he came in second on his first attempt at the Mr. Olympia competition. He then came third the following year, and his attempt to beat Arnold Schwarzenegger was the subject of the 1975 documentary Pumping Iron. The documentary made Ferrigno famous. These victories, however, did not provide enough for him to earn a living. His first paying job was as a \$10-an-hour sheet metal worker in a Brooklyn factory, where he worked for three years. He did not enjoy the dangerous work, and left after a friend and co-worker accidentally cut off his own hand one day. Following this, Ferrigno left the competition circuit for many years, a period that included a brief stint as a defensive lineman for the Toronto Argonauts in the Canadian Football League. He had never played football, and was cut after two games. During competition, Ferrigno at 6 ft 5 in (1.96 m) weighed 285 lb (130 kg) in 1975, and 315 lb (142 kg) in 1972. Ferrigno competed in the first annual World's Strongest Man competition in 1977, where he finished fourth in a field of eight competitors. In the early 1990s, Ferrigno returned to bodybuilding, competing for the 1992 and 1993 Mr. Olympia titles. Finishing 12th and 10th, respectively, he then turned to the 1994 Masters Olympia, where his attempt to beat Robbie Robinson and Boyer Coe was the subject of the 1996 documentary Stand Tall. After this, he retired from competition. #5. Franco Columbu
Franco Columbu (born August 7, 1941) is an Italian actor, former champion bodybuilder and World's Strongest Man competitor. Columbu was born in Ollola, Sardinia (Italy). Starting out his athletic career as a bodybuilder, Columbu progressed into the sport of Olympic Weightlifting, powerlifting and later bodybuilding, winning the title of Mr. Olympia in 1976 and 1981. At 164 centimeters (5 ft 5 in) in height, Columbu is shorter than most of his bodybuilding competitors, but that did not prevent him from achieving widespread success. In 1977, Columbu competed in the first World's Strongest Man competition and was in fifth place in total points during the competition; a remarkable outing, considering that Franco weighed much less than all his competitors. Then came the refrigerator race, which called for a downhill race in which a heavy, bulky, unwieldy refrigerator is strapped to the racer's back. While ahead, Franco stumbled, and was shown on national television collapsing with a grotesquely dislocated leg. This ended his participation in the World's Strongest Man contest (in the end, he finished in fifth place). After a court settlement, he received a reported \$1 million in compensation for his injury. After Arnold Schwarzenegger's comeback victory in the 1980 Mr. Olympia, Franco followed suit and won the 1981 Mr. Olympia. Columbu is a longtime friend of Schwarzenegger, whom he met in Munich in 1965 and against whom he competed in several international-level bodybuilding competitions. For the Mr. Olympia competitions however, he competed in the under 200 lb (90.7 kg) category, whereas Schwarzenegger was in the over 200 lb category. The final champion was determined by a pose down between the two class winners. The IFBB has since abandoned weight classes. Arnold and Franco were inseparable during the early to mid-1970s and were training partners. Columbu served as the best man at the wedding of Schwarzenegger and Maria Shriver in 1986. Columbu and Schwarzenegger had been encouraged to come to America by bodybuilding guru Joe Weider in 1969; Weider sponsored them with an \$80/week stipend and the two European bodybuilders began a bricklaying and patio business called European Brick Works in 1969, according to a report in The New York Times. From the time he arrived in America in 1969, Franco Columbu was considered one of the world's strongest men. He held a number of powerlifting and Olympic weightlifting world records. He also performed a strongman act in which he disdainly blew up a hot water bottle by inflating it orally, lifted vehicle onstage (while someone else was changing a tire) and deadlifted over 320 kg (700 lbs) for category. He designed a comprehensive workout for men in 1988. #4. Sergio Oliva
Sergio Oliva (July 4, 1941 – November 12, 2012) was a bodybuilder known as "The Myth". This sobriquet was arguably given to him by bodybuilder/writer Rick Wayne but Oliva himself has doubted this claim. Supposedly Wayne had begun calling Oliva "The Myth" Twenty-year-old world class weightlifter Sergio Oliva knew that the occasion of the 1961 Pan Am Games in Kingston, Jamaica might be his last best chance to escape the confines of Castro-controlled Cuba. With speed of foot nearly on par with his strength Sergio sprinted for the nearby American consulate. He and the entire Cuban weightlifting team, who immediately followed his lead, were granted political asylum, and more significantly, their freedom. From Jamaica Sergio emigrated to the United States; first to Miami, where he performed odd jobs ranging from TV repair to unloading trucks. Then, in 1963, he made his way north to Chicago. It was at Chicago's Duncan YMCA that the weightlifter was introduced to the sport of bodybuilding by top local bodybuilder (and future Mr. America) Bob Gajda. Gajda recognized the young man's incredible physical potential and took him under his wing. As predicted, Sergio's muscles ballooned immediately under the unique stresses of a bodybuilding regimen. He took to bodybuilding as an eagle to soaring and by the end of the year had won his first title, Mr. Young Chicagoland. Within no time Sergio's physique, and reputation, grew to the point where he was being mentioned in the same breath with names like Scott, Sipes and Pearl by those in the know. Yet despite the overwhelming physical superiority he brought to the stage in those early years, the uber-Cuban found actually winning titles within the Amateur Athletic Union to be incredibly painful. Indeed, it was his inability to take the AAU's most coveted title, Mr. America, against very un-uber competition, that drove him into the open arms of the IFBB and a quest to become for the greatest bodybuilder of all time. #3. Frank Zane
Frank Zane (born June 28, 1942 in Kingston, Pennsylvania) is an American former professional bodybuilder and teacher. Zane is a three-time Mr. Olympia (1977 to 1979). His reign represented a shift in emphasis from mass to aesthetics. Zane's proportionate physique featured the second thinnest waistline of all the Mr. Olympians (after Sergio Oliva), with his wide shoulders making for a distinctive V-taper. His abdominal muscles were considered by some bodybuilders to be the best in bodybuilding history. He stood at 5'9" and had a self-declared competition weight of 198 pounds when he won Mr Olympia (He weighed over 200 lbs when he competed in the 1960s). Zane is one of only three people who have beaten Arnold Schwarzenegger in a bodybuilding contest (1968 Mr. Universe in Miami, FL) and one of the very few Mr. Olympia winners under 200 pounds. Overall, he competed for over 20 years (retiring after the 1983 Mr Olympia contest) and won Mr America, Mr Universe, Mr World and Mr Olympia during his illustrious career. He has written many courses and books about bodybuilding. In 1994, Zane was inducted into the 1st annual Joe Weider Hall of Fame. He received the Arnold Schwarzenegger lifetime achievement award at the 2003 Arnold Classic for his dedication and longtime support of the sport. He was given the nickname "The Chemist" due to his Bachelor of Science degree and, as he puts it, "Back in the day I took a lot of supplements and tons of amino acids. Still do. But back then it was pretty unusual. That's how I got the nickname The Chemist." There was also a perception that his nickname was given because he was very scientific in reaching his peak on the exact day of competition, year after year. In 1985, Frank and his wife Christine owned and operated Zane Haven in Palm Springs, CA where they conducted one-on-one sessions with clients who wished to possess a symmetrical physique. Today, the Zanes live in San Diego, CA and his learning center is now called Zane Experience. In 2005, Frank Zane played the role of Arnold Schwarzenegger as the consulting producer in the movie "See Arnold Run." As of 2006, Zane currently runs his own website, appears at seminars and book signings. In 2011 Frank Zane appeared in the documentary Challenging Impossibility the weightlifting odyssey of spiritual teacher and peace advocate Sri Chinmoy. The film was an Official Selection of the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival. Frank was in attendance. #2. Serge Nubret
Serge Nubret (October 6, 1938 – April 19, 2011) was a French professional bodybuilder, bodybuilding federation leader, movie actor and author. Serge was awarded many bodybuilding titles, including IFBB Mr. Europe, Tall NABBA Mr. Universe and WBBG Pro. Mr. World. All were amazed and perplexed when he started to talk about his intention to become a world champion after only 2 years of training. Living up to his words, in 1960 he joined the International Federation of Bodybuilders, and was declared World's Most Muscular Man in Montreal. From this day forward, this exceptional athlete kept improving, winning the most prestigious titles including NABBA Mr. Universe in 1976 (London), WBBG Pro. Mr. World and Mr. Olympus in 1977 (New York) and another World champion title in 1981 (Geneva). In 1983, 23 years after his first world class achievement, further demonstrating his lifetime dedication, he became the WABBA World Champion in Rome, winning his fifth major title. In 2003, Serge Nubret offered a stunning last show to his public during the World championships in France (Gravelines). He was 65 years old. Additionally to being recognized by experts, peers and fans as a reference in the bodybuilding field, Serge Nubret has also dedicated himself to development and promotion of Bodybuilding. He became the head of the France and Europe IFBB bodybuilding federation from 1970 to 1975. He is also the founder of the WABBA since 1976 with one objective in mind: ensuring that affiliated athletes receive the best support via representing organisms. The cinema could not miss out on such a character. Thus, Serge Nubret featured in 25 movies including Arrivano i titani with Giuliano Gemma (1961) César et Rosalie with Romy Schneider and Yves Montand (1972) and The Professional with Jean-Paul Belmondo (1981). Serge Nubret remains one of the most significant figure and for lots of bodybuilders, he represents the out-of-the-box aesthetic reference. His legacy is well alive, witnessing the Golden Age of bodybuilding when balance and harmony were keys to all achievements. Nubret is best known in the bodybuilding documentary Pumping Iron where he competed as a last-minute entry against (eventual seven time world champion) Arnold Schwarzenegger for the title of Mr. Olympia in 1975. While he looked fantastic, Serge finished second in the Tall Man category to Schwarzenegger, while Lou Ferrigno finished third. He was known for his excellent chest development, which would scare off fellow contestants. The documentary film Pumping Iron follows the events occurring before the Mr. Olympia 1975—the preparation for the competition as well as its final phase. For contract reasons, his part is comparatively brief; and, apparently, certain scenes containing him could not be put in the movie. These episodes are discussed further in his autobiography. In the 1980s, Serge appeared regularly in 60 episodes of the television series Breakfast Included, with Pierre Mondy and Marie-Christine Barrault, in which he played a role that mirrored his real life as a bodybuilder/ gym owner in Paris. #1. Arnold Schwarzenegger
Arnold Alois Schwarzenegger is an Austrian-born American actor, model, producer, director, activist, businessman, investor, writer, philanthropist, former professional bodybuilder, and politician. Schwarzenegger is considered among the most important figures in the history of bodybuilding, and his legacy is commemorated in the Arnold Classic annual bodybuilding competition. Schwarzenegger has remained a prominent face in the bodybuilding sport long after his retirement, in part because of his ownership of gymns and fitness magazines. He has presided over numerous contests and awards shows. For many years, he wrote a monthly column for the bodybuilding magazines Muscle & Fitness and Flex. Shortly after being elected Governor, he was appointed executive editor of both magazines, in a largely symbolic capacity. The magazines agreed to donate \$250,000 a year to the Governor's various physical fitness initiatives. When the deal, including the contract that gave Schwarzenegger at least \$1 million a year, was made public in 2005, many criticized it as being a conflict of interest since the governor's office made decisions concerning regulation of dietary supplements in California. Consequently, Schwarzenegger relinquished the executive editor role in 2005. American Media Inc., which owns Muscle & Fitness and Flex, announced in March 2013 that Schwarzenegger had accepted their renewed offer to be executive editor of the magazines. The magazine MuscleMag International has a monthly two-page article on him, and refers to him as "The King". One of the first competitions he won was the Junior Mr. Europe contest in 1965. He won Mr. Europe the following year, at age 19. He would go on to compete in, and win, many bodybuilding contests. His bodybuilding victories included five Mr. Universe (4 – NABBA [England], 1 – IFBB [USA]) wins, and seven Mr. Olympia wins, a record which would stand until Lee Haney won his eighth consecutive Mr. Olympia title in 1991. Schwarzenegger continues to work out even today. When asked about his personal training during the 2011 Arnold Classic he said that he was still working out a half an hour with weights every day. Competition Weight: 235 lb (107 kg) (top 250 lb (113 kg)) Off Season Weight: 255 lb (116 kg) (top 260 lb (118 kg)) Bodybuilding is not just a sport or a hobby. It is also a form of art that has a glorious and fascinating history. But how familiar are you with the golden era of bodybuilding? How did it transform and get transformed by culture, science, and media throughout the decades? Who were the legendary bodybuilders who dominated the sport and inspired millions of fans and followers? In this series of articles, we will explore these questions and more, as we take you on a journey through bodybuilding history. We will uncover the secrets and stories behind the most remarkable physiques ever created, from the ancient times to the modern trends. In this second article, we will focus on the most acclaimed period of bodybuilding, from the 1960s to the 1980s. This period is known as the Golden Era of bodybuilding (following on from the Ancient, Bronze & Silver Eras). We will see how bodybuilding achieved new levels of popularity and prestige, thanks to the impact of magazines, movies, and competitions. We will also meet the icons of bodybuilding, such as Larry Scott, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Frank Zane, Lee Haney, Cory Everson and many others, who broke the records and standards for the sport. Are you ready to experience the glory days of the aesthetic physique? Then read on and discover how the Golden Era of bodybuilding changed the sport and the aesthetic reference. The 1960s: The Golden Age of bodybuilding when balance and harmony were keys to all achievements. Nubret is best known in the bodybuilding documentary Pumping Iron where he competed as a last-minute entry against (eventual seven time world champion) Arnold Schwarzenegger for the title of Mr. Olympia in 1975. While he looked fantastic, Serge finished second in the Tall Man category to Schwarzenegger, while Lou Ferrigno finished third. He was known for his excellent chest development, which would scare off fellow contestants. The documentary film Pumping Iron follows the events occurring before the Mr. Olympia 1975—the preparation for the competition as well as its final phase. For contract reasons, his part is comparatively brief; and, apparently, certain scenes containing him could not be put in the movie. These episodes are discussed further in his autobiography. In the 1980s, Serge appeared regularly in 60 episodes of the television series Breakfast Included, with Pierre Mondy and Marie-Christine Barrault, in which he played a role that mirrored his real life as a bodybuilder/ gym owner in Paris. #1. Arnold Schwarzenegger
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