

Female Bodybuilding Secrets

Women are strong. Of course this has always been fact, but until recent years women have been applauded for their beauty, rather than their brawn. Thankfully, today's modern culture encourages women to focus on their personal strength. For this reason, the popularity of female bodybuilding has reached an all-time high. But just how high are these athletes able to go?

Bodybuilding is a sport that combines weight lifting with a balanced diet and adequate rest. Although primarily designed as a "man's" sport, women began to take up bodybuilding in the 1980s and soon, female bodybuilding competitions could be found around the globe.

The modern female bodybuilding phenomenon began with woman by the name of Lisa Lyon. Ms Lyon was a graduate of UCLA, and a student of the Japanese martial arts called 'Kendo.' Her physique resembled that of a dancer: graceful and slender, the type of body that would be scorned by some of today's hardcore female bodybuilders. At that time, however, female bodybuilding athletes were quite satisfied with acrobats' physiques.

Lisa Lyon attracted the attention of Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was the world's most famous bodybuilding icon. Lyon entered the first World Women's Bodybuilding Championship with Arnold's encouragement, and she won the competition. Following in Lisa's footsteps, a young female bodybuilder named Rachel McLish won the first International Federation of Bodybuilders' (IFBB) "Miss Olympia" competition in 1980. With movie star good looks and the narrow-waisted, rippled body of the IFBB's ideal female bodybuilder, McLish became the quintessential female athlete.

The next female muscle to take the sport by storm was Bev Francis. Her 24-inch thighs, buffed pecs and planed abdomen changed the world of female bodybuilding forever, and catapulted the sport into the crisis it faces today. Bev Francis was bigger, bulkier and more muscular than other female bodybuilding athletes of her time. Francis' physical appearance set a new trend in female bodybuilding, and other athletes began striving to achieve the same level of physique.

In the 1990s, television brought the Ms. Olympia competition into the world's homes. Viewer response to these muscular women ranged awe and admiration to shock and even disgust. In answer to the overwhelmingly negative fan reaction, the IFBB set a "new" standard in female bodybuilding, reverting to the standards of the McLish era. This new faction of female bodybuilding was known as a "fitness competition".

Compared to hardcore female bodybuilding, these fitness competitions could be considered to be "light" bodybuilding. The athletes were fit and toned, but did not possess the muscle bulk. Many athletes, however, were offended by this controversial reversal. Feminist organizations as well as women in bodybuilding, power lifting and strength-training circles were offended and angered by the decision. Their criticisms were sharply geared toward the increase in magazine spreads featuring "fitness athletes" wearing lingerie and swimsuits. Women's bodybuilding had become a man's sport.

Despite the controversy, the new type of female bodybuilding competition continued to garner positive viewers' responses. Most believe that the reason for the increased popularity was simply because the women were nice to look at # from a male perspective. This was the beginning of an unfortunate era in the history of women's fitness.

Although one would like to think that in this generation of universal acceptance, women would be free to exercise and compete as they wish. Unfortunately, however, there are groups that continue to determine what is an "appropriate" level of fitness for women to achieve. Perhaps the future will re-open the competition doors for women who wish to build the bulk and ripped muscles that they are most capable of achieving.

Gone are the days when women were considered to be the "weaker sex". Female bodybuilding is a way of life for women who wish to experience the highest levels of personal strength and, often, optimal spirit. Provided, of course, the sporting world allows them to reach their potential.