



# CONTR<sup>O</sup>OVERSY

It's the 45th anniversary of Joe Weider's Mr. Olympia. Before the fireworks on September 24-25 in Las Vegas, we take a look back at some near misses and close decisions in the history of bodybuilding's greatest show.

**ONE OF COMPETITIVE BODYBUILDING'S** greatest strengths, and weaknesses, is its subjectivity. Runs aren't scored, goals aren't made and points can't be added with a kick, punch or dunk. Instead, judgments are based on a set of criteria open to individual interpretation, kind of like the U.S. Constitution. Terms such as muscularity, symmetry, proportion and presentation are used to help guide the process of determining placings, but in the end, they are little more than part of a language used to formalize aesthetic judgments.

The truth of the matter is that beauty (and beastliness) is in the eye of the beholder, and the vicissitudes of human perception are as much determinants in the outcome of bodybuilding contests as is the form of the competitors. Did Ronnie Coleman

and Lee Haney win eight Olympias apiece because they were truly the best bodybuilders on the Olympia stage in each of their eight-year reigns? Was four-time runner-up Kevin Levrone really never good enough to earn a Sandow, or might his stellar physique simply not have aligned with the prevailing winds during his peak years?

With the 2010 edition of the Mr. Olympia coming into view on the competitive horizon, it seems an appropriate time to look back at some of the more controversial decisions in the contest's 45-year history. After all, if the past is precedent, then we're bound to see future embroilments down the line, some perhaps even stemming from the 2010 rendition and some possibly even making a future version of this list.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF WEIDER HEALTH AND FITNESS; KEVIN HORTON



## 5 2007: VICTOR LOSES

The day before the 2007 Mr. Olympia, a Jay Cutler win was all but certain. After all, no Olympia winner had failed to repeat since 1983 champ Samir Bannout lost to an awesome Haney the following year. Then there were the photos of Cutler — taken shortly before the contest — that revealed he was spot on and ready to claim his title then and there.

Of course, in bodybuilding, a day is a lifetime and the vagaries of contest prep are such that ideal conditioning is as ethereal as the aurora borealis. When Cutler took the stage Friday night, it quickly became clear that a win was not quite in the bag. In fact, with top adversary Victor Martinez in his all-time best form, it seemed that Cutler would need to fight tooth and nail not to become the first man in 23 years to be a one-timer.

In the end, Cutler did get the victory, albeit by a single point — a point of contention to many, as it would turn out. In fact, all of Martinez's supporters — as well as a number of impartial observers — labeled The Dominican Dominator the "Uncrowned

Mr. Olympia" afterward. It's fair to say that an equal number of the bodybuilding faithful found Cutler's win to be valid, while admitting that he would need to improve the following year to avoid such a close call again.



PHOTOS: KEVIN HORTON

BY **SHAWN PERINE** SENIOR WRITER



## 4 1990: WHICH LEE?

Fact: Haney was *The Man*. As the reigning six-time Mr. O, he out-massed and outclassed the competition time and again with his rare combination of full muscles and tiny joints all tied up in a charismatic package. He was attempting to tie Arnold Schwarzenegger's record of seven total Olympia wins and surpass his consecutive win streak of six in a row.

Unfortunately for Haney, his 1990 form would go down as the worst of his nine Olympia appearances (he took a respectable third in his 1983 debut). Down in size and hardness from previous years, he was forced to rely on shape and presentation. While these important factors were by no means a weakness for The Totalee Awesome One, they were clear strengths for peers such as Lee Labrada, Shawn Ray and Francis Benfatto. After the day's prejudging, Labrada had built a two-point lead over Haney, to whom he'd lost a close decision the year before. Placing third in 1987, fourth in 1988 and second in 1989, it appeared that Lee the Flea (as Haney affectionately called Labrada) would finally play the role of David to the charismatic champion's Goliath at the Olympia.

Yet, when all was said and done, Haney would tie The Austrian Oak's record, leaving Labrada and his ardent supporters wondering what more the symmetrical Texan could have done.



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF WEIDER HEALTH AND FITNESS



## 3 2001: JAY DISMAYED

At the 1999 Mr. Olympia, Cutler placed 14th out of 15. The following year, he jumped six spots to 8th. But despite his impressive leap in the standings, no one could have predicted (save Cutler himself) what 2001 would hold in store for the Worcester, Massachusetts, native.

By 2001, Coleman was presumed all but unbeatable. In 1998, he came into his own, winning five of the six shows he entered, including the Mr. Olympia. In 1999 and 2000, he won all six of his shows, including two more Olympias. Earlier in '01, he showed fine form in taking the Arnold Classic — becoming the first to hold the sport's top two titles simultaneously. So it was practically a given that Coleman's dominance wasn't going to be challenged any time soon. That is until big, shredded Cutler made the scene.

Leapfrogging over precontest favorites Kevin Levrone, Shawn Ray and Chris Cormier, Cutler very nearly overtook King Coleman as well, and

in the eyes of a good many, he deserved the Sandow trophy on that day. In fact, Cutler was up by six points on the judges' scorecards after prejudging and wound up losing by just four, based on Coleman's straight firsts in rounds three and four. To date, Cutler hasn't placed lower than second in an Olympia and has won three Sandows.



PHOTOS: KEVIN HORTON



## 2 1981: FIRST ... OR FIFTH?

After Franco Columbu won the 1976 Mr. Olympia, it was all but assumed that he would return the following year to defend his title. However, a dislocated left knee, incurred while running with a refrigerator on his back during the 1977 World's Strongest Man competition, would waylay any such plans for Columbu.

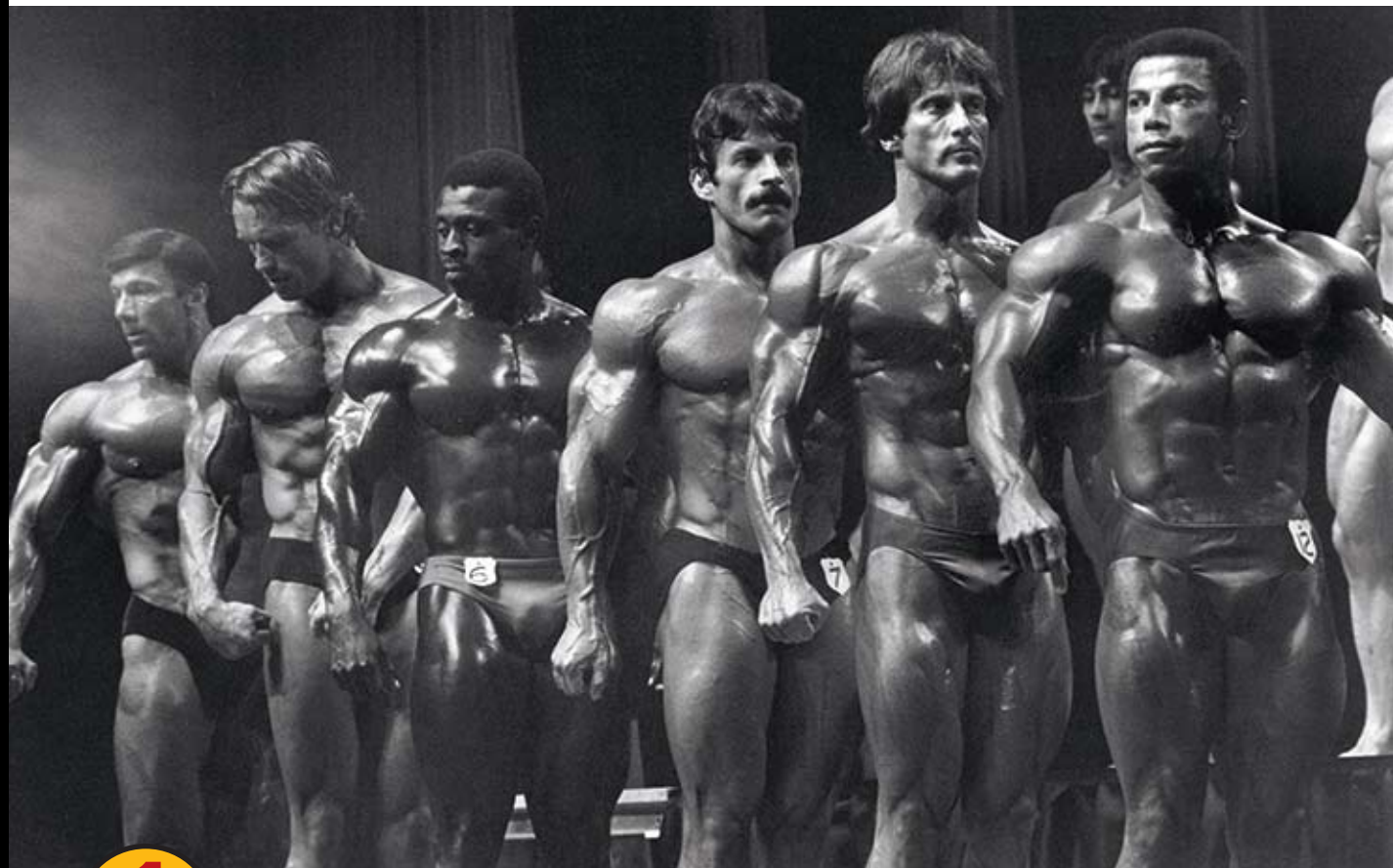
Four years later, after surgery, months of recovery and years of rehabilitation, The Sardinian Samson felt the urge to reclaim the title he prematurely forfeited. It seemed an impossible dream to anyone who witnessed the horrific accident on TV, but Columbu was a man on a mission, and so it was that he would enter the 1981 Mr. Olympia, held in Columbus, Ohio.

Although his upper body was better than ever, the accident clearly took a toll on his ability to train his legs and they showed

the effect. Compounding Columbu's troubles were three men — Tom Platz, Roy Callender and Danny Padilla — all of whom came in the shape of their lives, and a fourth — Chris Dickerson — who was in his usual stellar form.

When Padilla was announced in fifth place, the booing began — and it continued as Callender was announced fourth; Platz, third; Dickerson, second; and Columbu, the winner. As it turned out, five different judges had five different winners, with Columbu having the highest average placing among all the judges. This was little consolation to those who placed below him and to the fans who believed the outcome was somehow impacted by the contest's promoter, Schwarzenegger, who had been embroiled in his own controversy just a year earlier.

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# 1 1980: ARNOLD VS. EVERYONE

Mention the 1980 Mr. Olympia to anyone with more than a passing interest in bodybuilding and you're sure to elicit a spirited explanation of how either a) Schwarzenegger deserved to win, or b) almost anyone other than Schwarzenegger deserved to win. Regardless of their position, though, few lack a strong opinion regarding the outcome of the most controversial of Mr. Olympia competitions.

By 1980, Schwarzenegger was considered an ex-bodybuilder. In the years since his 1975 Olympia win (a record sixth at the time), he had taken to acting and was preparing for his first starring role in a big-budget Hollywood film, *Conan the Barbarian*. So when he flew to Sydney, Australia, with the 1980 Mr. Olympia competitors, few questioned his story that he was going as a color commentator for *CBS Sports*.

Shortly after arriving in Sydney, however, word got out that Schwarzenegger was actually making his comeback. Tension began to rise among many of the other competitors, most notably at the athletes meeting, during which Schwarzenegger argued, alone, for classes. At its most heated, the meeting nearly became a melee, as Mike Mentzer got in Schwarzenegger's face during a particularly intense exchange.

Once onstage, Schwarzenegger showed a physique that some would say was just 80% of his best form and, as such, his opponents felt their apprehension over facing a prime Oak subside. Still, if his body wasn't at its best, his psyche was running on overdrive as he fought for every angle, every moment in the spot-

light and every advantage he could imagine, even creating a distraction by having best bud Columbu onstage to towel him off while he hit a few shots for the Sydney Opera House audience.

As is a matter of record now, Schwarzenegger would be named the 1980 Mr. Olympia winner, with Dickerson placing second; Frank Zane, third; Boyer Coe, fourth; and precontest favorite Mentzer, fifth. A case could be made that Schwarzenegger, being the tallest and largest man onstage that day, had enough of the old firepower to hold off the new crew. Then again, one could argue that with his underdeveloped thighs and lackluster shoulders and triceps, he should have placed anywhere from second to fifth, if not even lower.

The debate over the outcome of the 1980 Mr. Olympia contest carries on to this day, 30 years later, in gyms and on bodybuilding forums across the Web. And although Schwarzenegger's win may remain a matter of dispute, one thing for certain is that this contest remains the most controversial in Mr. Olympia history. **FLEX**



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF WEIDER HEALTH AND FITNESS

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On September 23-26, Ultimate Nutrition presents the 2010 Joe Weider's Olympia Weekend brought to you by GNC in Las Vegas, Nevada, for what promises to be the biggest and best rendition ever! For the 45th anniversary of the Olympia extravaganza, a sixth O crown has been added to the major events — this year, bikini joins men's and women's bodybuilding, figure, fitness and the 202 Showdown. For more information and updates, go to [mrolympia.com](http://mrolympia.com)!

» MR. OLYMPIA

QUALIFIED COMPETITORS

|                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Melvin Anthony Jr. | United States      |
| Jay Cutler         | United States      |
| Toney Freeman      | United States      |
| Kai Greene         | United States      |
| Phil Heath         | United States      |
| Dexter Jackson     | United States      |
| Victor Martinez    | Dominican Republic |
| Robert Piotrkowicz | Poland             |
| Craig Richardson   | United States      |
| Ronny Rockel       | Germany            |
| Branch Warren      | United States      |
| Roelly Winklaar    | Netherlands        |
| Hidetada Yamagishi | Japan              |



TOTAL PRIZE MONEY  
**\$600,000**

» MS. OLYMPIA

QUALIFIED COMPETITORS

|                       |               |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Heather Armbrust      | United States |
| Lisa Aukland          | United States |
| Dayana Cadeau         | Canada        |
| Iris Kyle             | United States |
| Debi Laszewski        | United States |
| Zoa Linsey            | Canada        |
| Yaxeni Oriquen-Garcia | Venezuela     |
| Betty Pariso          | United States |



TOTAL PRIZE MONEY  
**\$60,000**

» BIKINI OLYMPIA

QUALIFIED COMPETITORS

|                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Sonia Gonzales     | United States |
| Amanda Latona      | United States |
| Monique Minton     | United States |
| Khanh Nguyen       | United States |
| Natalie Pennington | United States |

TOTAL PRIZE MONEY  
**\$10,000**

» 202 SHOWDOWN

QUALIFIED COMPETITORS

|                      |               |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Ahmad Ahmad          | Sweden        |
| Bola Ojex            | Nigeria       |
| Rashid "Roc" Shabazz | United States |

TOTAL PRIZE MONEY  
**\$20,000**

» FITNESS OLYMPIA

QUALIFIED COMPETITORS

|                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| Myriam Capes     | Canada         |
| Nicole Duncan    | United States  |
| Tina Durkin      | United States  |
| Adela Garcia     | United States  |
| Tracey Greenwood | United States  |
| Oksana Grishina  | Russia         |
| Tanji Johnson    | United States  |
| Julie Palmer     | United States  |
| Yenny Polanco    | United States  |
| Camala Rodriguez | United States  |
| Kizzy Vaines     | United Kingdom |
| Bethany Wagner   | United States  |
| Trish Warren     | United States  |



TOTAL PRIZE MONEY  
**\$60,000**

» FIGURE OLYMPIA

QUALIFIED COMPETITORS

|                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Gina Aliotti       | United States |
| Teresa Anthony     | United States |
| Huong Arcinas      | United States |
| Cheryl Brown       | United States |
| Krissy Chin        | United States |
| Heather Mae French | United States |
| Amy Fry            | United States |
| JulieAnn Kulla     | United States |
| Patricia Mello     | Brazil        |
| Amy O'Neil         | United States |
| Larissa Reis       | Brazil        |
| Kristal Richardson | United States |
| Felicia Romero     | United States |
| Rosa-Maria Romero  | Australia     |
| Mindi Smith        | United States |
| Erin Stern         | United States |
| Gennifer Strobo    | United States |
| Kristi Tauti       | United States |
| Nicole Wilkins-Lee | United States |



TOTAL PRIZE MONEY  
**\$60,000**

For a full listing of events, go to [mrolympia.com](http://mrolympia.com).

PHOTOS: KEVIN HORTON