

Ironman Articles

1970-1974

Is Great Size Incompatible with Sharp Muscularity?

At one time, it was generally accepted that great size, “bulk”, was incompatible with sharp muscularity; physiques come in two distinct styles – the build of a man like Jack Delinger, Mr. America of 1949, or the extreme muscularity of a man like Elias Rodriguez, who took third place in the Mr. America contest of 1948 (as well as the Most Muscular Man title in the same contest) with a 14.5 inch arm. And for the benefit of anybody who doubts the accuracy of that measurement, I will add that I trained with him myself and personally measured his arms – with my own perfectly accurate tape.

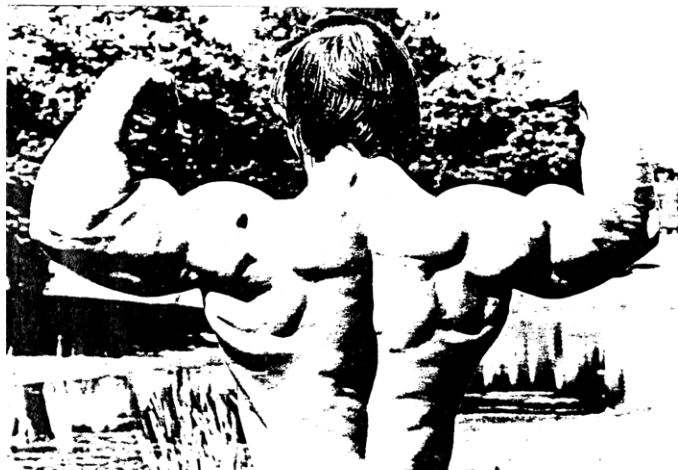
But even today, in spite of great evidence to the contrary, there are still those, including many well-known top bodybuilders, who still believe that the maximum in muscular size cannot be reached without a resulting loss in definition, which, of course, is utter nonsense. If, after looking at the pictures which form a part of this article, there are still any doubts on the subject, well then I hardly know what to add.

Look at the literally enormous upper arm of Casey Viator, current Teen Age Mr. America and Mr. U.S.A., then look at the picture of his back; both pictures were taken in Florida, on November 1st, 1970. Casey’s bodyweight was 215 pounds at a height of 5’8”. Since Casey does not believe in quoting his measurement, I do not feel free to say just how big his arms really are, but I can say that they are by far the largest muscular arms that I have ever measured, insofar as their appearance is concerned, they literally must be seen to be believed.

An arm’s appearance of size depends on several factors; the overall size of the man, the size of his head, the length of the arm, and the shape of the arm. And in Casey’s case, he has almost nothing going for him in this regard. He is huge all over, and thus his arms don’t stand out over the rest of his physique. Like John Grimek and Bill Pearl, Casey has a very large head, and especially in pictures, this tends to make his arms look smaller than they really are, since people subconsciously judge the size of an arm by comparing it to a man’s head. Casey’s arms are actually quite long as well, although they may appear short because of their tremendous bulk, and this greater than average length also tends to play down the real size of his arms; and finally, Casey’s arms are extremely thick, almost round, like John Grimek’s arms, and such size does not show in pictures.

If Casey was of average size, had an average sized head, had average length arms, and wide, flat arms like many bodybuilders, then his arms would literally defy belief; and they almost do anyway, especially when seen in the flesh.

Casey has gained exactly 17 pounds of bodyweight since the time of his sensational appearance in last June’s Mr. America contest in Los Angeles, and he has added exactly 3/4 of an inch to his already huge arms since then. Has he done so at the expense of his sensational muscularity? Well, look at the picture of his back for the answer to that question – if you can take your eyes off the picture of his arm for a moment.



The Arthur Jones Collection

At the time of the Mr. U.S.A. contest which Casey won with all of the subdivisions except best abdominals (and he took second place in best abdominals), Red Lerille, Mr. America of 1960, and one of the judges at the Mr. U.S.A. this year, remarked that Casey had obviously improved his definition since the time of the Mr. America contest two months earlier, but added that Casey “looked smaller.”

Yet, at that moment, Casey was 12 pounds heavier than he was at the time of the Mr. America contest, and his arms had gained a bit over 1/2 inch in the meantime; so he was actually larger, but to Red he looked smaller.

Why? Simply because, in Red’s mind an increase in definition always meant a loss in size; thus, since Casey was obviously more muscular, he also had to be smaller.

The above, of course, is not intended as criticism of Red, who is the possessor of a great physique, built in spite of the handicaps of less than average height and overall size, and who is one of the real experts on the subject of weight training, and a man that I am proud to consider a personal friend. It is, instead, merely intended to show that even a man such as Red, can be misled into seeing something that isn’t there; and I have been guilty of the same sort of mistake, repeatedly.

By and large, all of us see what we expect to see; or, as in this case, we see one thing and it leads us to think that we also saw (or failed to see) something else – simply because the human mind tends to relate things in groups, or pairs.

In weight-training circles, one such pair of mentally related characteristics has always been “size and smoothness,” and another has been “great definition and lack of size.”

But so long as additional weight – or “bulk” – is added in the form of an increase in muscular tissue, rather than intramuscular or subcutaneous fatty tissue, then such an increase in size will actually increase the existing degree of definition, literally must make the individual more defined.

At the time of the Mr. Teen Age America contest, a former winner of the Mr. America title asked me just how much more size (bodyweight) I thought Casey could gain without losing any of his fantastic definition, and when I replied that I thought that Casey could gain at least 20 pounds (to a bodyweight of 230 pounds, since he then weighed 210) and perhaps as much as 25 to 30 pounds, while increasing his definition, he stated that I was a fool (or words to that effect). Well, we shall see who is a fool.

“Then.” You might ask, “do I think that just anybody can get that big, while retaining good definition?”

Obviously not; in the first place, Casey has far better than average potential, in spite of the handicaps listed earlier. Second, he has the willingness to work hard enough to make such purely muscular gains. If there is any real “secret” to Casey’s success, it is just that he is willing to work much harder than almost anybody I have ever seen train.

And, having gone so far, so fast, just what does the future hold for Casey?

Who knows? Only the future will tell; but I personally think that he stands a good chance to be the first of a new breed of bodybuilders, a man that will stand out over his contemporaries in much the same way that John Grimek led the field in his day. In fact, the two have more than a little in common; both are of about the same height – they are both of the same general type of build – and both are straight to the point, frank individuals without any traces of the commonly encountered ego that spoils the character of so many bodybuilders

While it is rather common today to hear remarks to the effect that, “I don’t think Grimek was so much,” I would like to point out that I have never heard such a remark from a man that actually saw John in his prime. I did, and he, too, was almost unbelievable – and he, too, had to be seen to be appreciated.

And while it may (or may not, that being a matter of opinion) be true that Grimek has been surpassed, it is almost certain that Casey will be overshadowed at some time in the future, by somebody with an even better potential and an equal willingness to work very hard; nevertheless, it is equally true that Grimek’s name will live longer in the history of bodybuilding than that of any of his contemporaries and most if not all of his followers, because he was the first of a kind, and I personally think that the same will prove to be true of Casey.

We shall see; but when we do – remember I said so in advance. And in the meantime, what do you think of that arm now? What a shame that he had to lose all of his definition to get such size – ha!

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