

Ironman Articles

1970-1974

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“Speaking of Pump” or “One Arm Problem Solved”

When I saw Franco Colombu for the first time, at the Mr. Olympia contest in New York in 1969, I was strongly reminded of the dolls that children used to make out of a potato, with toothpicks for arms and legs. The extreme bulk of his shoulder girdle literally dwarfed the arms; while the arms were actually quite large for a man of his height, they appeared far too small when compared to his shoulders and chest.

Later, at the time of the Mr. America contest in Los Angeles, last June, I met and talked with Franco at length, and he freely admitted that a lack of proportionate arm size was his greatest physical shortcoming.

About five months later, at home in DeLand, Florida, it came to pass that I was afforded an opportunity to attempt to do something in the direction of helping Franco with his arm problem. And on the night of November 24, 1970, things started to happen.

In front of witnesses, I personally measured Franco’s arms – with a perfectly accurate, paper-thin tape, which was there, and then compared with a steel tape in order to assure total accuracy. Measurements were made with the arms “cold” – at right angles to the bone, on the first flex.

Then in a period of approximately twenty minutes, Franco performed a total of ten sets for his arms; five sets on a Nautilus Curling machine and five sets on a Nautilus Triceps machine, alternately, almost nonstop, with every set being carried to the point of failure following a maximum possible effort, and with several people urging Franco on to ever-greater efforts.



The Arthur Jones Collection

Then we measured his arms again, “pumped.” And I could hardly believe the results indicated by the tape; his arms were pumped a full one and five sixteenths inches ($1 \frac{5}{16}$ ”), by far the greatest degree of pump that I had ever measured.

Several hours later, near midnight, Franco called me from the motel where he was staying “... Arthur bring the tape, my arms are still over 18”.”

I didn't go, but it took me half an hour to talk him out of it.

The following day, the “cold” measurement of his arms was three eighths of an inch ($\frac{3}{8}$ ”) larger than it had been twenty-four hours earlier. Still pumped? Actual growth? Simply swollen? I don't know, but they were certainly larger than they had been.

Since Franco was returning to California early the following day and since we wanted to get some pictures, I agreed to let him try to pump his arms again; actually, that soon after such a hard workout, I was quite surprised by the results. Little, or actually no, degree of pump was what I was really expecting. But the actual results? Well, judge for yourself from the photo above.

First look at the photo of the literally enormous arm of Casey Viator, who, beyond any question of doubt, has the largest appearing muscular arms in the world, by far.

Casey is four inches taller than Franco, and on this day he weighted 41 pounds more than Franco, and his upper arms (measured “cold” in both cases) were exactly two and three eighths inches ($2 \frac{3}{8}$ ”) larger than Franco's; yet, in this picture it is obvious that Franco had pumped his arms very close to the size of Casey's.

And just how much did they pump on this occasion?

You simply wouldn't believe it, but Franco doesn't look quite so much like a potato with toothpicks for arms any longer either. And in any case, we are shipping him an arm machine this week.

Scratch one arm problem.