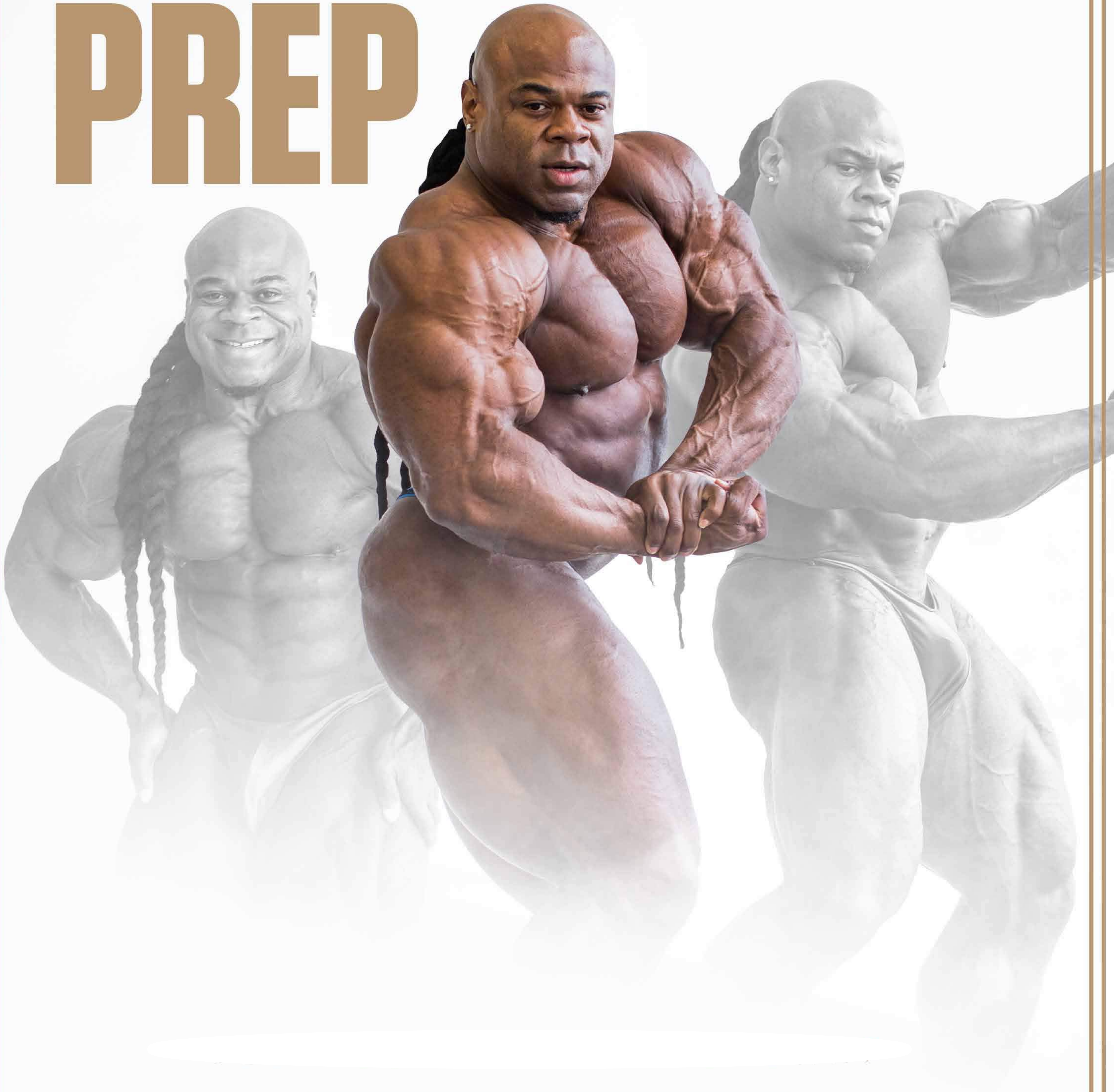


COMPETITION PREP



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PLANNING


Competition preparation is the truest way to test your mettle. During traditional training or diet, there is no end goal. Everyone in the gym has a goal, whether it be to gain significant muscle mass, build 18-inch arms, shred down and reveal a ripped back, or show off a new 8 pack. However, few gym goers will ever achieve their goals. In the absence of a set date, small sacrifices are made each day to accommodate their busy lives. You may skip a workout because it's been a stressful week and you're tired. Or maybe you are hungry, and you were unable to prep your meals? Regardless of the cause, the average person will make short term decisions that alleviate immediate problems when there is no tangible end date. The simple existence of a show date provides a compelling counter argument to the small concessions that pervade normal diet or training. This is the beauty of the competition beast.



PLANNING

WHEN TO COMPETE?

The first step a competitor must do is decide what show they are going to attend. This date is the finish line and every day, meal, and workout are the steps leading up to it. If this is your first show, understand that you need much more time than you think to prepare for the show. Stage lighting is unforgiving and is designed to reveal your literal body of work. The competitions are not whether you have a good physique. Everyone who steps on stage has a good physique. The stage reveals your strengths and weaknesses, your muscle bellies, your striations, the minuscule variations, and countless other truths about your stage package.



If you have never worked out before, or have taken a year or more off, you should not consider competing this year. Instead, dedicate time to build a base of mature muscle which can be uncovered later.

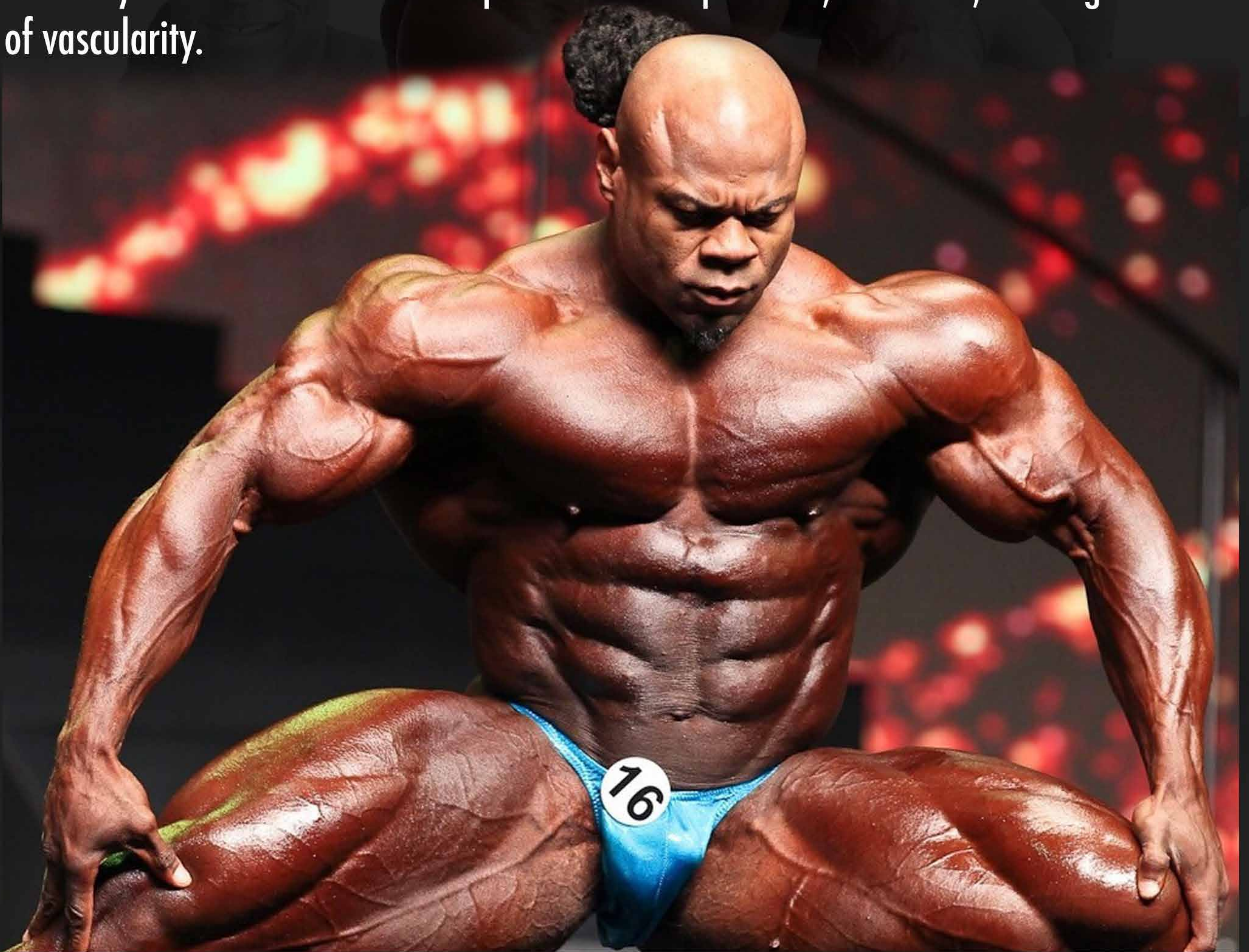
If you have been consistent in the gym and would like to see what you are truly capable of then you should pick a show at least 4 months out. Men's Bodybuilding and Women's Figure contest preps can and should take at least 16 weeks. Women's Bikini and Men's Physique competitions require less muscle mass and body fat than bodybuilding and figure, and thus may take as little as 12 weeks. Remember, the faster you try to lose weight, the more muscle you risk losing. Thus, if you are unsure if you can reach your goal by the stage date, choose a later stage date.

PLANNING

▾ DESIRED STAGE BODY FAT ▸

Bodybuilding and its grand stage have evolved over the decades. Social media has allowed bodybuilding to propagate in popularity and has given birth to diverse divisions. Each division has its own rules, requirements, and recommendations.

Men's Bodybuilding and the new Classic division are arguably the most grueling male divisions. Contestants are judged on their size, symmetry, and conditioning. You must show complete striations from your quads, chest, glutes, etc. To achieve the hallmark signs of an extremely low body fat, you will need to achieve an extremely low body fat. This will reveal complete muscle separation, striations, and high levels of vascularity.



PLANNING

DESIRED STAGE BODY FAT

Men's Physique is also judged by size, symmetry, and conditioning. However, you do not want to be overly musculature. Men's Physique competitors need to have complete muscle separation with a shredded midsection. However, they wear board shorts and thus do not need feathered quads or striated glutes. Thus, Men's Physique competitors may be able to walk on stage at 5-8% body fat.

Women's Figure is a halfway point between Bikini and Bodybuilding. Contestants need some muscle separation, a good V-taper, but do not need the graininess required of Men's Bodybuilding or Women's Physique. Women's Figure competitors must come in considerably lean, preferably at 8-12% body fat.

Women's Physique is closer to Bodybuilding, but without the clear muscle size and extreme striations. Competitors should have more muscle separation than Women's Figure while avoiding the grainy look achieved by bodybuilders. A Women's Physique competitor should aim to walk on stage at 8-10% body fat.

Women's Bikini requires a muscular foundation with a focus on round glutes, but it does not require any muscle striations. Bikini competitors can have muscle separation and a conditioned core, but the overall conditioning can vary wildly. A Bikini competitor should walk on stage between 10-15% body fat.



PLANNING

DESIRED STAGE BODY FAT

Men's Physique: 5-8%

Men's Bodybuilding: 3-4%

Women's Bikini: 10-15%

Women's Physique: 8-10%

Women's Figure: 8-12%



NUTRITION

THE BASICS

Nutrition is the most important aspect of a competition prep. You cannot lose body fat without a caloric deficit. Unfortunately, your body will draw some energy from muscle during a cut and thus, you must avoid drastic reductions in calories while maintaining a favorable amount of dietary protein. To find your caloric burn you will need to use calculations that determine your Basal Metabolic Rate or BMR. This is the number of calories you burn while at rest at room temperature. Your BMR is affected by your gender, muscle mass, height, and age.

Height

Taller and heavier people typically have more surface area. Increased surface area means increased interaction with the ambient air. Thus, they will need to expend additional calories to maintain their body temperature.



Age

Your Basal Metabolic Rate decreases with age. Your BMR will decrease roughly 2% every decade.



Body Composition

Lean muscle mass burns significantly more calories than fat mass. A person with 8% body fat will therefore have a larger caloric need than a person with 25% of the same weight. Therefore, maintaining muscle mass is so important during competition prep.



NUTRITION

THE BASICS

Equations

If you know your body fat percentage, you can use the Katch-McArdle equation:

$$\text{BMR} = 370 + (21.6 \times \text{Lean Body Mass}(\text{kg}))$$

$$\text{Lean Body Mass} = (\text{Weight}(\text{kg}) \times (100 - (\text{Body Fat}))) / 100$$

If you do not know your body fat percentage, you will use the Mifflin-St. Jeor equation:

$$\text{MEN: } 10 \times \text{weight (kg)} + 6.25 \times \text{height (cm)} - 5 \times \text{age (y)} + 5$$

$$\text{WOMEN: } 10 \times \text{weight (kg)} + 6.25 \times \text{height (cm)} - 5 \times \text{age (y)} - 161$$

Creating Your Diet

STEP 1: Use one of the below equations to determine your BMR

CHOICE 1: MIFFLIN ST JEOR

$$\text{MEN: } 10 \times \text{weight (kg)} + 6.25 \times \text{height (cm)} - 5 \times \text{age (y)} + 5$$

$$\text{WOMEN: } 10 \times \text{weight (kg)} + 6.25 \times \text{height (cm)} - 5 \times \text{age (y)} - 161$$

CHOICE 2: KATCH MCARDLE: Use this if you know your body fat percentage. First use your body fat percentage to find your lean body mass.

$$\text{Lean Body Mass} = \text{Weight in kg} \times ((100 - \text{Body Fat \%}) / 100)$$

$$\text{BMR} = 370 + (21.6 \times \text{Lean Body Mass}(\text{kg}))$$

STEP 2: USE THE BELOW EQUATION

$$\text{BMR} \times 1.7 = \text{Workout 6-7 Times Per Week}$$

STEP 3 CREATE YOUR INITIAL DIET

Multiply Your TDEE by 0.8 to get your Week 1 and 2 caloric intake

Determine Your Macronutrients

$$\text{Protein in grams} = (\text{Bodyweight} \times 1.2)$$

$$\text{Fats in grams} = (\text{Calorie intake} \times 0.20) / 9$$

$$\text{Carbs: } [\text{Caloric intake} - ((\text{protein in grams} \times 4) + (\text{fats in grams} \times 9))] / 4$$

NUTRITION

THE BASICS

You should check your weight weekly. If you are losing 1 lb. per week, then keep the calories the same. If you are not losing weight, then you should decrease calories from carbs or fat 10%. If you are gaining weight, then you should decrease calories 15% and ensure that you are properly tracking and weighing your food.



NUTRITION

◀ CHEAT MEALS ▶

There is a plethora of misinformation regarding cheat meals in contest prep. Some coaches and competitors believe that you must confuse or spark your metabolism through a sudden influx of calories. They will typically recommend cheeseburgers or pizza after several days of extremely low-calorie dieting.

Eating a high fat meal will be very high in calories but will not spike your metabolism. However, refeeding on carbs may have beneficial effects. High carb meals can replenish low glycogen stores which can improve your workouts and fill out your muscles. Carbs may also increase leptin, a hormone that may increase your metabolism. Overfeeding, at least in the short term, may briefly increase your overall metabolism but it may only be enough to offset the additional calories from the meal.

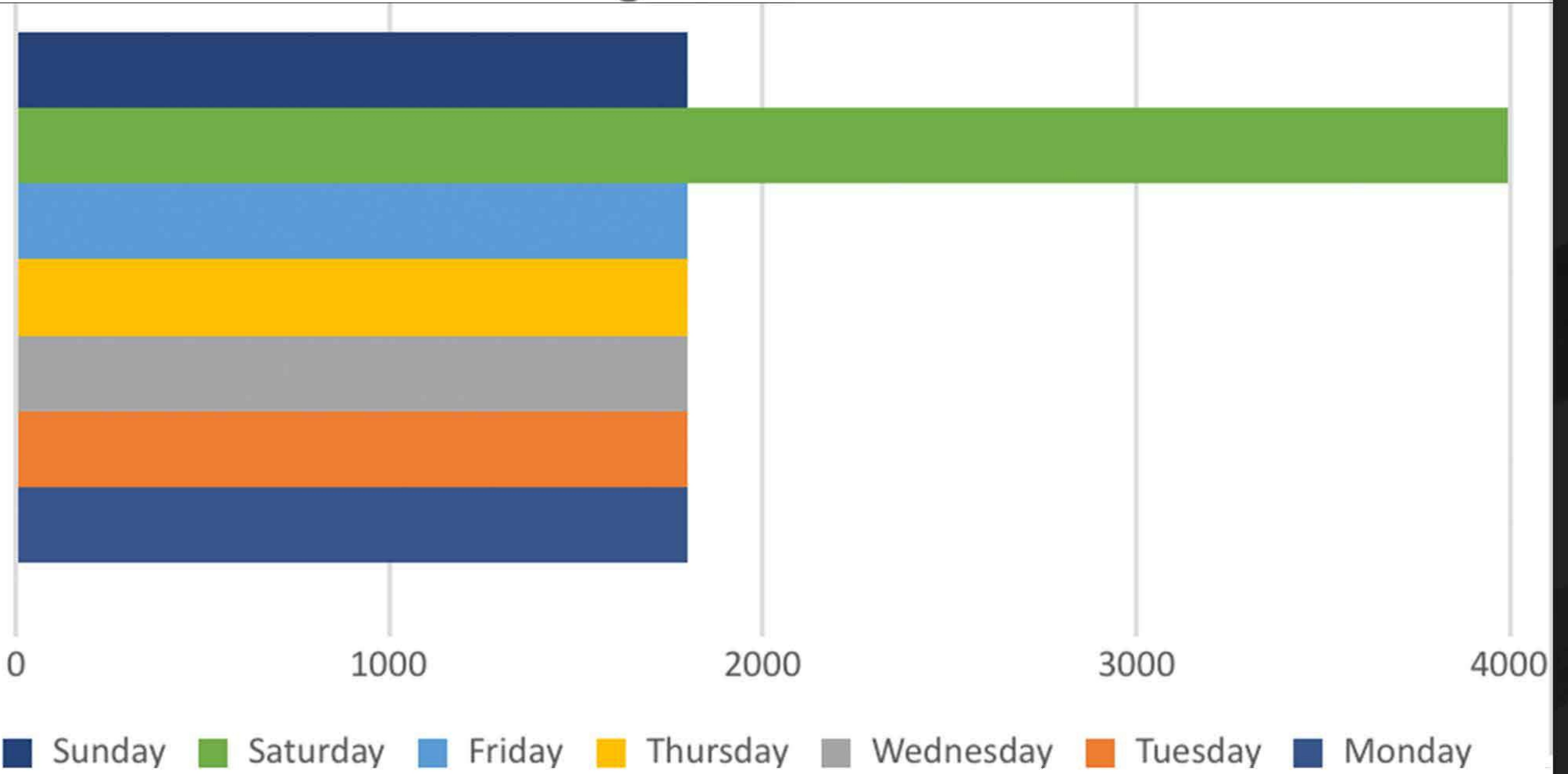
Overall, a high fat meal may feed your cravings, but it will not spike your metabolism. If you are starving all week and binge eating on the weekend, try increasing your weekly calories. This will average to the same weekly caloric intake while improving overall workouts and mood.



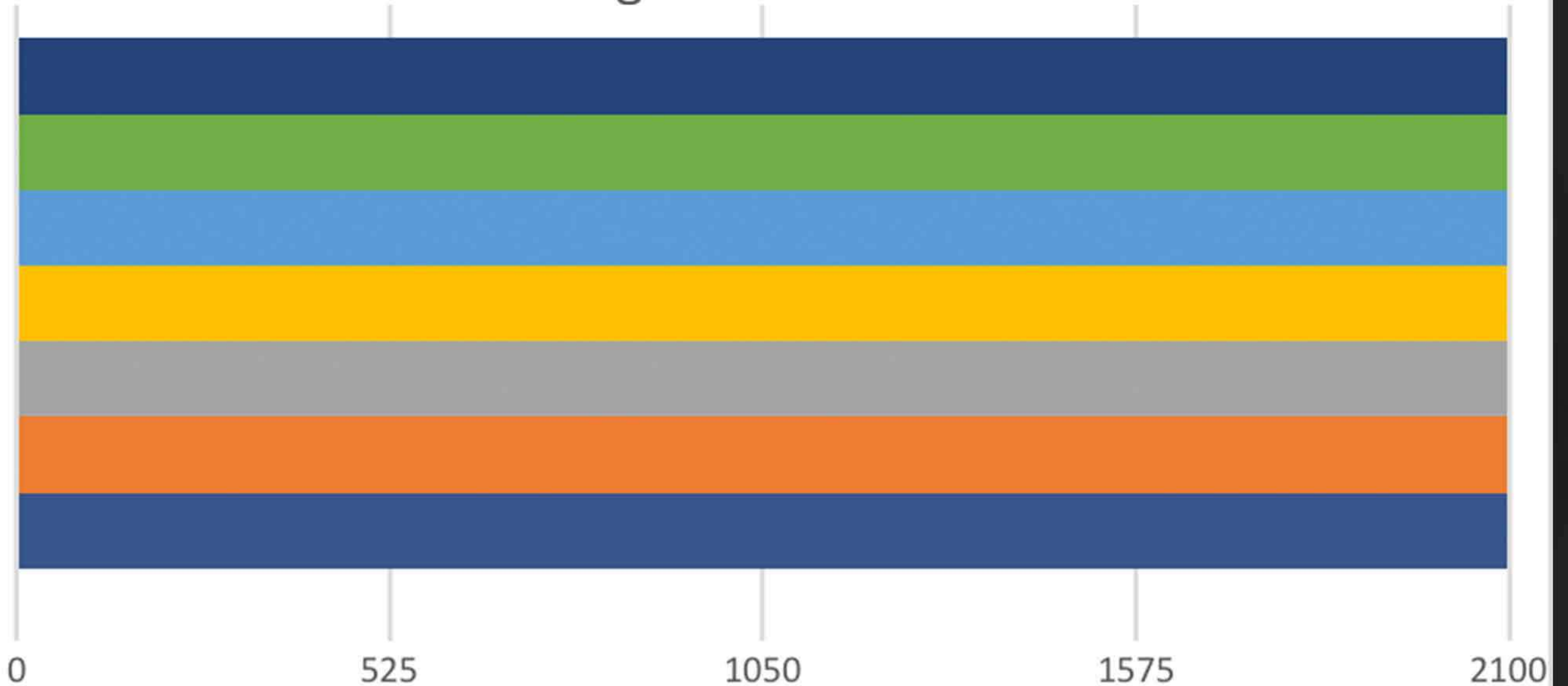
NUTRITION

◀ CHEAT MEALS ▶

Cheat Meal Week
Average Calories= 2114



Normal Weekly Calories
Average Calories= 2100



TRAINING

The training for competition prep is focused on two aspects: muscle retention and fat burning. Therefore, your training should focus on appropriate weight lifting volume and caloric burn.



The equation for volume is as follows: weight x sets x reps. Competitors should focus on training with relatively heavy weight in a combination of sets and reps to maintain as much muscle mass as possible. A competitor can vary their rep range as they see fit but should adjust their weight accordingly.



TRAINING

There are several options to increase calorie burn during exercise. The most common choice is to reduce rest periods. Reducing rest periods helps to keep your heart rate elevated, thereby increasing overall caloric burn.



A less popular option to increase calorie burn is cardio acceleration. Instead of resting in between sets, the competitor performs a cardio exercise to keep the heart rate elevated. Some options are: step ups, jumping jacks, jump ropes, or burpees. This is a great option to use if weight loss has stalled without further lowering calories.



POSING

Bodybuilding, as the name implies, focuses on your ability to sculpt and mold your body. You will spend the next several months dedicating everything you have towards carving out your best physique. However, the best physique cannot win if you do not pose properly.

Bodybuilding is a subjective sport that is scored on what the judges see. They do not judge your Instagram posts, your hard work, or your passion for the sport. They sit in front of the stage and judge what you show them. Therefore, you would be remiss not to master your posing routine.



You should practice your posing daily. Each league and division have separate rules, so make sure you completely review them well in advance. You will be under tough scrutiny, bright lights, and become nervous on stage. Work until your posing routine is as natural as breathing.

Stage presence is key! You should remain tight on stage during your entire performance. If you are on stage, even if you are not in currently posing, you should keep your abs tight. Remember that the judges are below the stage and in the center, so your poses should highlight your best features, so they may see them.

THE FINAL STRETCH

The last week of competition prep is the most important and stressful for the entire process. People will often try many unverified tips and tricks that they've gleaned from friends and the internet to help them really dial in. If you are not where you want to be at the beginning of peak week, and need to lean on tricks, you may want to consider choosing a later show date.

There are three topics everyone considers while going into peak week: carbs, salt, and water.



THE FINAL STRETCH

CARB UP

Competitors systematically decrease their carb intake in the weeks leading up to the show. The week prior to the show, contestants should perform a complete carb depletion. This means dropping the carbs as low as possible, while slightly increasing fat intake to avoid a substantial drop in calories. The goal here is not to burn extra pounds of fat, but to prepare for a significant carb up. This carb depletion will allow your muscles to take in considerably more carbohydrates during your carb up. These carbs attract water and will help fill out your muscles, granting you round and full muscle bellies.



After one week of carb depletion, you should begin carbing up. 1-2 days before the show you will do an entire full body, light workout. Your goal is not to cause muscle damage, only to burn away the last bit of stored carbs in your muscles.

If you go too heavy or try too hard, you may cause inflammation that can obscure your definition on show day. Immediately after your carb depletion workout, you will begin your carb up.



THE FINAL STRETCH

CARB UP

If this is your first carb up, be very moderate in your intake. Eat every two hours and constantly monitor your physique's changes. If you go too high, you risk "spilling over" and ruining your conditioning. Avoid high fiber carbs and keep fat to less than 20 grams. Write down every meal so that you can adjust your approach for each carb up.



THE FINAL STRETCH

WATER

It makes sense that if you want to look “dry” and shredded, that you need to cut water. However, many competitors enter peak week with several pounds of fat to lose and mislabel it as water. Competitors also believe that cutting water will remove the water beneath the skin only. Unfortunately, our bodies always struggle to maintain homeostasis. If you cut water, your body will draw water evenly from intra and extracellular water. This means that you will decrease water under the skin and water within your muscles! You will also be unable to truly fill out your muscles, increase vascularity, or get a good pump back stage!



THE FINAL STRETCH

SALT

As previously stated, competitors often look for tricks pushed by some gurus to help them succeed. Sometimes, competitors will try to manipulate their sodium intake under the assumption that salt makes them bloated. Therefore, a sudden reduction in sodium will make them look shredded (or at least not bloated). Sometimes competitors will salt load and then cut sodium, hoping their body is tricked into expelling all the water in its system.

Unfortunately, decreasing sodium from the diet does not necessarily decrease sodium levels in the blood. Sodium concentration is tightly regulated by your kidneys. If you decrease sodium intake, your kidneys will help reabsorb more sodium to keep levels stable. This decrease in sodium will also cause a marked decrease in blood pressure, decreasing vascularity.

Decreased sodium will also increase levels of the hormone Aldosterone. This hormone effects excretion of water and sodium. Increased levels of Aldosterone will cause you to retain water and push it into your subcutaneous skin layers, making you appear soft. The exact OPPOSITE of what you set out to do!

Many people will compete and feel they either looked better one week out or they needed to carb up more. Competitors will often have their post-show cheat meal and wake up looking better than they did on stage! This is because they've reintroduced water and salt into their system, allowing them to fill out and increase vascularity!

SHOW TIME

Back stage will be one of the most hectic and exciting experiences, particularly if this is your first show. Here is a short list of what you need on show day:

- Resistance Bands/Backstage Weights
- Food (carb up meals, fatty and sugary candy (Peanut Butter Cups, Kit Kats, Snickers, etc.)
- Spray or Spread on tan (all competitors must tan- this allows your definition to show under the lights)
- Numbers- This is how the judges will know who you are on stage



SHOW TIME

1. **Morning:** Your show day should start with a fatty protein source and carb source. You'll need to continue eating every two hours.
 2. **Two hours before pre-judging:** Try to have a relatively high carb, moderate protein, moderate fat, and salty meal. This will help improve vascularity.
 3. **Fifteen minutes before showtime:** Begin a circuit style light pump up. Keep a close eye of when you should be on stage. You want to be full but not exhausted because you will be posing on stage for a while!
 4. **Five minutes before showtime:** Have two Reese's or one Snickers.
- Repeat steps 2-4 before finals!

That's it! You've worked hard and given your mind, body, and soul to making your thoughts become things. The hard work is done. Now is the time to savor your victory.

