

## Blast From the Past: Chris Porter - She Was Quadrific

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Chris Porter was part of those colorful days in the early growth of women's bodybuilding, contributing 140 pounds of muscle mass that few had attained at her diminutive height of 5-2 ½. In fact, on the many occasions when fans and followers of female bodybuilding had no other women to compare an outstanding newcomer, personalities (or better yet the physiques) on the men's side of the sport filled the bill.

So, when Chris Porter came along with her impressively developed physique, and a set of quads that confounded the imagination, the immediate comparisons were made with the likes of Tom Platz (whose quads also confounded the imagination).

To be fair, Porter had somewhat of a head start with her quad development due to a keen interest in competitive speedskating from age 11, and until 17 as an active indoor short track competitor in Southern California. So, in reality she had spent a lifetime unwittingly training her quads for a bodybuilding audience who would soon wildly embrace them.

When I first wrote a feature article 'Quadrasonic Quads' on Porter in the August, 1985, issue of Women's Physique World magazine, she had already competed three times in the Southern California area. But that first trio of contests was more than enough exposure to introduce this budding phenom to the bodybuilding world.

Unfortunately, Chris Porter would compete only one more time after those three local events - an entire bodybuilding career summed up in just four trips to the stage. But what an impression she left behind in that quartet of competitions.

Chris Porter was 24 when she first entertained thoughts of venturing into competitive bodybuilding. But it was only after she met former pro bodybuilder Tony Emmott at an Adam & Eve Health Spa in 1983 that she took the final steps of contest prep and dieting to enter a contest. On March 31, 1984, Porter entered her first contest - the NPC Orange County Muscle Classic - where she placed fifth in a heavyweight class won by Diana Dennis.

"That was a tough initiation into competitive bodybuilding," recalls Porter of her first contest effort. "Diana (Dennis) was already well-known and headed for the pro ranks. She was amazing."

But Porter caught on quickly and a few months later she moved up to a second-place finish at the 1984 Saddleback Valley Classic behind another national-level competitor - Loraine Gari. By the end of the year Porter tacked on her first (and only, as it turned out) victory at the 1984 Superbowl of Bodybuilding winning the heavyweight class and defeating highly touted Peggy Bertelsen of Montana in the process. Promoter Wally Boyko elected not to vote an overall winner at that event, but as Porter remembers, "I was honored to win my class. The lightweight (Marsha Radford) and middleweight (Michele Thomas) had just won their classes at the Nationals. So I thought I was in pretty good company".

Indeed, she was.

Her victory at the Superbowl of Bodybuilding qualified her for the 1985 NPC Nationals - held that year in Detroit, Michigan - an event that would bring her to a rematch with friendly rival Diana Dennis.

As it turned out the Orange County duo flexed their collective ways to a one-two finish among the heavyweights with Dennis capturing the overall and Porter finishing second.

Laughed Porter at the time, "We must have looked like Mutt and Jeff competing against each other side-by-side. Diana was at least four

inches taller, and had beautiful bodylines and great stage presence. I was a lot thicker muscularly than Diana, and probably looked blocky by comparison, but I got a great response from the audience."

Porter got a great response from the judges as well. Among those in the giant heavyweight field of 32 contestants, Porter topped several notables including future pros Cathey Palyo, Sue Ann McKean, Dorothy Herndon, Tonya Knight, Janice Graser, Margo Allen, and Audrey Harris. She also out-flexed Washington's Elaine Craig (today's Emerald Cup promoter), and Linda Wood-Hoyte (now an IFBB/NPC judge).

"The Nationals were insane in those days," says Porter. "Backstage was like riding the subway at rush hour!" She wasn't exaggerating. The 1985 NPC Nationals (which featured four weight classes at the time), with 19 lightweights, 19 middleweights, 31 light-heavyweights, and 32 heavyweights - featured a total of 101 contestants. Just getting a good look from the judging panel was something of an accomplishment, as can be seen by those who Porter managed to defeat.

But as often happens, life stepped in and took Porter down a different road after that Nationals experience. That event would be Porter's last. She soon cut her ties with Tony Emmott and no longer worked at Needham's Gym in Anaheim where she had trained during her competitive run. By 1987 she was married and two years later gave birth to a daughter, Amanda, who is now almost 19 and has become a national class Irish folk dancer (a la Michael Flatley). Divorced not long after Amanda was born, Porter became a working 'single mom'. Having already graduated from Cal State Fullerton, she opted to go back to school for post-grad work.

Today, Chris Porter no longer carries the startling quads and densely-muscled physique from her bodybuilding days, but she still trains consistently, hikes, and is a striking beauty at 48 years of age. Further, she could easily hold her own in any Masters Figure competition (a thought she hasn't totally ruled out).

"It's funny," says Porter. "That competition bug still bites once in a while. I guess it never goes away completely, and you always retain the curiosity about what kind of shape you can get yourself into."

In the meantime, Porter continues to work in the private investigation industry - a job that has been ongoing for several years - and has recently become involved in

representing a nutritional supplement company as a representative.

As a card-carrying member of bodybuilding's 'Ladies of the 80's', Chris Porter was one of the best....and one who will always keep us guessing as to what could have been if she had stuck around until the 90's.