

Sedia Shocker; Smith Satisfaction!

Contributed by Steve Wennerstrom, Editor-at-Large
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With a total of 19 female bodybuilding contestants contributing to the record-breaking overall total of competitors in the Europa show, the women were split into two weight classes at under and over 135 pounds as the weight break-off point. The lightweight division totaled 11 contestants, with eight making up the heavyweight category.

Sedia Rolls Over Ball in Lightweight Class

The lightweight battle here in Dallas was nearly a carbon copy of the Tampa Pro Championships held just a week earlier in Florida.

Canadian Nicole Ball - the Tampa champion - Swede Klaudia Larson, and American Debbie Bramwell were fresh from a very successful effort in Tampa that qualified the trio for the Ms. Olympia. In Dallas, Ball was hoping to make it two in a row, while both Larson and Bramwell were looking to throw Ball a curve and move up to higher places.

But none of the trio from Tampa was checking their rearview mirrors for a quiet, non-descript Texan named Jennifer Sedia. Taking part in her pro debut after winning the overall title at the 2007 NPC USA (which was also held in Dallas), Sedia found herself atop the awards stand in front of a partisan hometown Texan crowd.

In a repeat of her reactions to winning the USA crown a year earlier, the 5-2, 129-pound Lubbock native stood in stunned disbelief upon being announced as the winner.

She remained stunned in the hours after the event, still digesting the reality that she had just qualified for the Ms. Olympia just six weeks away.

In winning, judges redoubled their predictions that they intended to make sweeping changes in their selections of champions. With terms such as aesthetics, sound muscular proportions, and pleasing overall looks being repeated since early in the year, Sedia obviously fit the bill at this event, even to the point of plugging Sedia into the top spot over a solid trio of bodybuilders just one week earlier.

From the singular standpoint of conditioning, Sedia did not measure up to the Tampa trio, but what she did display was a very well-balanced structural foundation that falls squarely in line with the aesthetic idea judges want to put across. They also wanted a Ms. Olympia qualifier from this contest that stood on her own as a pro contest winner. And without taking anything away from Ball, Larson and Bramwell, that's exactly what they got. For her efforts, Sedia pocketed a check for \$1,500.

Nicole collected her second paycheck in as many weeks earning \$1,000. Her overall look also fits the new trend in physique selection with clean lines, a creditable level of muscle - and in perfect proportion to her height. Weighing in at 126 ½, it remains to be seen how her look will stand at the Olympia level, but Sedia, Larson and Bramwell are all in the same boat. They make up much of what the 'new breed' is about in the IFBB's idea of the physical ideal.

Finishing third was

Klaudia Larson who actually bumped her conditioning level up a notch from her Tampa runner-up placing. A very well-detailed 126 pounds at check-in, Larson is a favorite of fans with her signature high-peaked biceps, and deeply-defined quads. Based on her performances this year, she easily qualifies as the most improved female bodybuilder this year. And she is on track to make a solid showing at the Olympia. In qualifying for the Ms. O, Larson is the first Swede (the fifth all-time) to make it to the Olympia stage since Veronica Dahlen in 1988 - 20 years ago. Her third-place finish netted Larson \$500.

In equally

exceptional condition, Debbie Bramwell claimed the fourth position and still appeared to be swooning over her Ms. Olympia invitation from the week before. At this event Bramwell easily earned the 'Best Poser' award - even though a trophy was not handed out for that effort. She will add plenty of color to the Ms. O in September, just as she did here. Bramwell's contest weight was 133 ½.

Rounding out the

top five was Italy's striking Claudia Partenza. Looking much sharper than in Tampa, weighed a solid 124 pounds, looking much like the bodybuilder she was in winning the IFBB World Amateur Championships as a lightweight a few years back. Last year at this event Partenza finished sixth in the LW class.

Sherry Smith Takes the Heavyweight Title.

Only eight contestants made up the heavyweight contingent, but Oklahoma's

Sherry Smith made short order of the group with a 152-pound package that was well-balanced and showed excellent muscular detail - especially in her quads and shoulders. A former overall winner at the IFBB North American Championships, Smith avenged the fourth place spot she took at this event a year earlier.

At the 2007 Europa Smith weighed 160 pounds, but her conditioning level was more in tune with showing the best qualities of her physique. In winning this class the 5-6 Smith earned the Europa's second Ms. Olympia qualifying spot - and she will happily make her first appearance at that premier event. Working as a firefighter/paramedic in Oklahoma City, the victory was a unanimous one in the eyes of the judges and she claimed the \$1,500 check for finishing first.

Oklahoma City made it a one-two punch in this class when Kim Perez collected the trophy and \$1,000 for second place. Weighing a solid 143 pounds, Perez showed a 'Murrayesque' upper body on her 5-5 1/2 frame. The difference in the two

Oklahomans came by way of Smith's considerably more heavily muscled legs. At a point in time when Perez brings her legs

up to the breathtaking quality of her upper body, she will be a major player at events such as the Ms. International and Ms. O. As was the case with Sherry Smith in 2006, Kim Perez earned her pro status at the IFBB North American Championships in 2005. A week earlier in Tampa, Perez

finished fourth behind the 'Tampa Trio' from the lightweight class here. In placing second, Perez earned \$1,000.

Third went to veteran Annie Riviuccio. Since turning after winning the overall NPC Nationals in 2003, Riviuccio has been a frequent entrant in pro events and had her best year in 2006 when she placed third at the Ms. Olympia. More recently, she has been off her best muscular levels, and has fallen short of the finished look she has shown so often in the past. Still, Riviuccio claimed the \$500 check for her third place finish.

Finishing fourth was Sweden's Irene Andersen in fourth. Equaling her best pro showing - a fourth place finish at the 2007 Jan Tana Classic in her pro debut - Andersen tipped the scales at a very well-conditioned 172 pounds on her 5-6 frame. One of the largest active pro competitors, Andersen was the Swedish champion in 2004.

The final top-five placing went to Austria's Jana Linke-Sippl. Like Andersen, Link-Sippl equaled her best showing as a pro matching the fifth-place showing she claimed at the 2007 Jan Tana Classic. Linke-Sippl was the event's largest competitor weighing in at a thickly muscled 175 pounds.

No Overall

Promoter Ed Pariso gave two reasons for not selecting an overall winner. First he stated that he didn't want to further dilute the prize money that had been divided by the two weight classes.

Second he mentioned that IFBB administrator wanted to make an effort to keep the time of the event to a minimum and felt that the additional moments to bring back the class winners for another judging round and posedown would not be part of the event schedule when weight classes were contested.

So the 2008 Europa has two champions - Jennifer Sedia and Sherry Smith. And both are on their way to Las Vegas and a date with the Ms. O.

PHOTO GALLERIES