

Ladies of the Eighties - Michelle Ivers-Brent

Contributed by Steve Wennerstrom, IFBB Women's Historian
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It is a rare breed of woman who can trace her bodybuilding career as far back as the 80's these days. In fact it's a short list that gets shorter with each passing year of those who competed two decades ago. Calling these special women 'a rare breed' might even be slighting them.....they are more like rare jewels. And among these rare jewels, are a few who still toil to this day - training, dieting, and most impressively, competing. Those are the rarest of the rare.

One member of this pioneering group who has managed to weather the

storms of change - in a sport that has turned itself inside-out with ongoing changes - is Michelle Ivers-Brent. And as one of the longest lasting amateurs in the United States, she has seen a myriad of competitors come and go. Meanwhile she remains.

Still as enthusiastic about bodybuilding as she was in her initial contest experiences 23 years ago when she placed first at the 1985 Monterey Sports Festival in her native California, Ivers-Brent can look back on countless memories and recall events ranging from local, state, regional, national and international - all of which have left her with a uniquely impressive amateur career.

"I guess the question I get asked most is if I'm frustrated that I haven't made it to the pro ranks," says Michelle. "But honestly, it isn't something I lose sleep over. I've been athletic all my life, so I've enjoyed keeping myself in the muscular condition I've always had."

A Physical Education major at Sacramento State where she earned her Bachelor of Science degree, Ivers-Brent got started in bodybuilding innocently enough when a girlfriend suggested she go to a sports club with her to train.

"Around the same time, I saw a bodybuilder named Tom Sims who competed in the Northern California area," recalls Michelle. "He looked great and it turned out that both he and his wife Sally competed in mixed pairs events. Well, the more I was around people who had the muscular look, the more I was getting hooked. Susan Roberts (who won the 1983 California and both the USA and Nationals lightweight titles in 1983) was a top competitor in my area (I lived in Salinas at the time), and Cory Everson were women who I was impressed with in those days. In 1984 Cory had just won the Nationals and Ms. Olympia and she was in all the magazines. By 1985 I decided to enter my first contest, and I've pretty much been at it ever since."

Being at it "pretty much ever since" is an understatement. Ivers-Brent has a contest resume that includes entries at various levels in almost every year since she began.

"I did take time off in 1987," laughs Michelle. "I gave birth to my son Kyle that year. He has grown up watching me compete. The time has really flown by since then. Now he's 21 and just returned from a 15 month tour in Iraq. I'm very proud of him."

Ivers-Brent resumed her competitive efforts in 1988 competing twice. Then, in 1989 she entered the NPC USA for the

first

time placing third in the middleweight class. A year later she entered the NPC Nationals placing fourth - again as a middleweight.

But it was in 1991 where she began a string of entries at the IFBB North American Championships that anyone will be hard-pressed to match..... and certainly not willingly. You see, Ivers-Brent finished second that year. And she finished second again in 1992. She added another runner-up finish in 1994 event. At that point she stepped aside from entering the North American Championships until 2004 when, that year, she placed fourth. But in 2006 she was back and once again she finished second. And second again in 2007, and unmercifully, second in 2008.

"I've entered that contest seven times and finished second six times," says Michelle with more than an air of astonishment. "It's hard to grasp that reality when you really think about it."

Hard to grasp indeed - Ivers should be presented with the unofficial 'IFBB North American Championships Bridesmaid' award for showing undying perseverance, patience, passion, and determination in the face of a remarkable set of circumstances.

But it is just the above-mentioned qualities that have driven Ivers-Brent onward through a career of contest entries that would send most mere mortals into a room with padded walls. Not Ivers-Brent, however.

"Sure," admits Michelle. "I'd love nothing more than to reach the pro level before I decide to quit competing. But I see myself as a true athlete. I've always loved the challenge of self-improvement. And I've been very lucky to avoid injuries that could have kept me from continuing. So I keep going."

And keep going she should.

"I'm 51 now and at the NPC Masters Nationals I feel I was in the best shape I've ever been," says Michelle matter-of-factly. "When I look at the condition that Betty Pariso, Lisa Aukland and Robin Parker have carried into their 50's, it just motivates me that much more to keep competing. But hey, I love bodybuilding, what more can I say?"

There is little question Ivers-Brent holds a strong affinity for the sport, and her remembrances are understandably countless. That tends to happen when you've been around a while.

Take the NPC USA in 1996 for example. It's been a dozen years ago, but ask Michelle about her competitive experience at that event. She made the decision to move up to the heavyweight class that year. As luck would have it, that division was jammed with quality competitors. There were 19 contestants in the heavyweight category and Michelle was competing in uncharted waters having only been a heavyweight once in her competitive career (and that being a local event in 1985) to that point in time. So, when she placed a distant 14th, she was disappointed, but at the same time she was shocked into the

reality of just how difficult moving up a weight class could be, to say nothing of how good so many women were.

How difficult? Well, the winner that year was Heather Foster, followed closely by Iris Kyle. Third was Betty Pariso and fourth was Brenda Raganot. And the quality didn't end there. Eighth went to Theresa Nabors (now Theresa Paschal who recently won the 2008 IFBB North American overall). The ninth spot was claimed by Robin Parker, while Lora Ottenad checked in at 11th! Each of the above mentioned competitors have reached the IFBB pro ranks while winning major events at the NPC national level during their collective careers.

Although Ivers-Brent pre-dates Annie Riviuccio by a few years, Riviuccio is another in the same mold as what we can affectionately call 'blue collar bodybuilders'. Competing from 1988 to 2003 as an amateur before she finally won the overall NPC Nationals crown, Riviuccio never once complained about her slow move to the pro ranks. But once she was there, her competitive career was revitalized and she has since finished as high as third at the Ms. Olympia, and her career is now in its 20th year.

In addition to her ample involvement in competitions over the years, Ivers-Brent also became a gym owner in 1995 operating Bayside Fitness in Seaside, California, for five years.

Michelle remarried in 2004 to Bill Brent - who she proudly states has been a rock of Gibraltar and an ardent supporter of all her career desires.

Currently Michelle has no plans to retire from competitions and is looking at moving up to the heavyweight class in 2009 when she has her sights set on entering the NPC Masters Nationals once again.

So after a career that has included her entry in unlikely local events such as the Tidal Wave Classic, to her seven North American entries, nine trips to the NPC Nationals, six entries in the NPC USA, and four tries at the NPC Masters Nationals (an event where she has never placed lower than third in her class), Michelle Ivers-Brent will enter her 24th year of getting herself ready to show the bodybuilding world she still packs a muscular wallop.

Meanwhile, Michelle has undertaken the creation of a protein cookie business called Michelle's Magic Morsels where she will tell you to "Try a morsel, get a muscle, enjoy the taste!" To learn more about her new biz click on: www.michellesmagicmorsels.com . Or try her website at: www.michellesmajesticmuscle.com.

Contest History

Monterey Sports Festival	1985	1st Med & Overall
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Santa Cruz
Classic

1985 6th HW

San Jose
Superbowl

1986 1st MW & Overall

NPC Northern California

1986 1st MW

NPC California
1986 1st MW

NPC Nationals
1986 16th LW

NPC Los Angeles

1988 2nd MW

Russ Warner Classic
Overall

1988 1st MW &

NPC USA

1989 3rd MW

NPC Nationals
1990 4th MW

NPC Tidal Wave Classic

1991 1st MW & Overall

IFBB North American
1991 2nd MW

IFBB North American
1992 2nd MW

NPC Nationals
1992 8th MW

NPC USA
1993 6th MW

IFBB North American
1994 2nd MW

NPC USA
1996 14th HW

NPC Nationals
1996 4th HW

NPC USA 1997 4th MW

NPC Steel Rose 1997 2nd HW

NPC Nationals
1997 6th HW & 4th
Mixed Pairs

NPC Nationals
1998 3rd MW

NPC Nationals
1999 2nd MW

NPC Nationals
2000 6th HW

NPC Ironmaiden 2000 2nd HW

NPC USA
2001 4th MW

NPC San Jose
2003 1st MW &
Overall

NPC USA 2003 6th
MW

NPC Nationals
2003 11th HW

NPC San Francisco
2004 1st MW &
Overall

NPC Excalibur
2004 2nd HW

IFBB North Americans 2004 4th MW

NPC Masters Nationals
2005 2nd LtHW

NPC Masters Nationals
2006 2nd LtHW

IFBB North Americans
2006 2nd LtHW

NPC Masters Nationals
2007 3rd LtHW

IFBB North American
2007 2nd LtHW

NPC Masters Nationals
2008 3rd LtHW

IFBB North American
2008 2nd LtHW