

2008 NPC Men's Nationals Wrapup!

Contributed by Dave Palumbo
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This year's NPC Nationals was the largest field in the competition's 26-year history. It was also one of the deepest lineups in both the men's and women's show. While most of the weekend included laughs and good cheer, the Steve Stone memorial tribute was perhaps the most memorable and touching part of the entire show.

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BANTAMWEIGHTS:

Scott Foster dominated this class from start to finish with a unique combination of size, symmetry and conditioning. In a class ruled by 145lb bodybuilders, when one manages to show up with a total package, decisions are easy. Bleu Taylor finished in 2nd, while Fernando Abaco placed 3rd, Andre Hill 4th, and Daniel Stephenson 5th.

LIGHTWEIGHTS:

Former NPC Team Universe Overall Champion, Marvin Ward, moved up a weightclass and ruled the day with one of the smallest waist I've ever witnessed on a male competitor. Even though he's only 5'2", his incredible muscularity made him look like giant in a line-up of mere mortal men. Even NPC President Jim Manion mentioned that he thought Ward would be a serious

threat in the Pro Under-202 Class.

Leonardo Pacheco (2nd), Travis Rogers (3rd), and Kelly Bautista (4th) rounded out this top-ranked class.

WELTERWEIGHTS:

Arguably one of the deepest and most competitive classes in the entire show, this one boiled down to a 1-point decision between 2 men-Jocelyn Jean and JB Bartlett. In the end, it was Jean's tiny waist and round muscle bellies that pushed him over the edge.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS:

2007 NPC Nationals MW runner-up Guy Cisternino had his work cut out for him when he stepped onstage next to the 26" waist of Ronald Torres (4th) of McAllen, TX and the X-frame of Kam Gallman (2nd).

While Torres possessed a little more muscle and Gallman had superior structure, the wily Cisternino out-classed them both with mind-boggling conditioning (the best in the show), a perfect tan, and a professional-level presentation. This victory just goes to show that sometimes it's the "details" that matter most!

Jeff Cook's thickly muscled physique landed him in 3rd.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT:

What was penned as one of the most anticipated rematches in recent memory turned out to be one of the worst classes in the entire contest. Last year's light heavyweight runner-up, Peter Putnam, edged out 2nd place finisher, Al Auguste and surprise of the contest, Chulsey Graham (3rd). This class should have been a cake-walk for Putnam; however, he showed up with a terrible tan and less than stellar glute/hamstring conditioning. Despite these pitfalls, he still proved to be the best in the class on this night and was rewarded with the pro card he's been seeking for the last 2 years.

Auguste, who finished a controversial 2nd to Putnam at the 2007 USA Championships, just didn't do what was necessary to jump ahead of Putnam and take home the grand prize. Chulsey Graham, while displaying the best conditioning in the class, lacked the polish and poise on this night to move on to the pro ranks; however, look for him to be a serious threat in future contests.

HEAVYWEIGHTS:

USA runner-up Mike Liberatore fulfilled his destiny on this night by taking home unanimous 1st place votes and a new IFBB Pro Card. Liberatore's symmetrical 5'7" physique, jam-packed with oodles of ripped separated muscle, was just too much for 2nd place finisher Mark Alvisi to deal with on this night. Alvisi, who at the weigh-in looked to be a real threat to win this class, smoothed out over the next 24 hours leading up to the prejudging and left the door wide open for Liberatore to steal the class. While Liberatore was the hero of the day, Alvisi is surely a national champ-in-the-waiting.

Former Teen National Champ Jason Huh surprised many in attendance with his thickly muscled arms, delts, pecs, and quads en route to a 3rd place finish (only 1 point behind Alvisi). Mark my word, watch out for this guy in the future!

SUPER HEAVYWEIGHTS:

USA Super Heavyweight Champ, Ed Nunn, was challenged by perennial bride's maid, Grigori Atoyán, in this less-than-stellar super heavyweight class; however, there was never a doubt in the judge's mind as they awarded Nunn with straight 1st place votes. When all was said and done, Nunn proved he's the real deal and that he'll be a force to be reckoned with in the pro ranks of the IFBB. Atoyán will have to lay low till next year where he'll get 3 more chances to snag that pro card he's been trying so desperately to secure.

23-year old Stephen Kucló surprised the lineup by bringing significantly more muscle and was rewarded with 3rd place. Super freak Trey Brewer finished in 4th and 6'2", 266lb, Malcolm Marshall, who might have been the most underrated bodybuilder of the class, finished in 5th.

OVERALL:

The overall came down to a two-man show between heavyweight champ, Mike Liberatore and super heavyweight champ Ed Nunn. While Liberatore might have had slightly more polish and muscle density, Nunn's genetically superior X-frame put the contest out of reach in the judge's mind. Look for Nunn to enter his first pro show at the 2009 Ironman Pro 8 short weeks from today. With any luck, we could see Nunn posing on an Olympia stage come next September.

FULL CONTEST PHOTO GALLERY

VIDEO FINALS WRAPUP