

Chasing the Shadow

Contributed by Brian Bullman
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Dorian Yates and I have been friends over the last few years, judging shows and hanging out. However, the effect he has had on my bodybuilding goes back all the way to the 1980's, 1989 to be exact, when Dorian came to Limerick Ireland to guest pose at a Provincial Bodybuilding Championships. Back then I was 11 years old, in the pump up room, doing some push-ups before I went out on stage to pose. "Eye of the tiger" was the song and I nailed it!! But in the pump up room was Dorian, getting ready to do his guest spot, looking over at me smiling and shaking his head. I remember it like yesterday, well maybe more like last month, but I remember pretty well. He was the biggest thing I had ever seen, and little did I know that he would go on to become a 6 time Mr. Olympia. His attitude and training philosophy always inspired me, more so than his physique.

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Monday, July 7th 21:00hrs my plane slams with a huge thud onto the runway at Birmingham International, but then again what do I expect from a flight I only paid €10 for!! The rain was spitting down in bucket loads. I would be forgiven for thinking I was landing in some equatorial country during the monsoon season, but no, I was in England in the middle of the summer. Then again I wasn't in the UK for the good of my health, I was there to train, and train in the world's most hardcore arena... Dorian Yates's Temple Gym! After checking into my hotel, no less than 50 yards from the gym, I text Dorian leaving him know I had landed and was checked in safe n sound. He replied "Get some rest mate, you'll need it." I decided to go out and do some reconnaissance; get my bearings in order to make sure I would not be late for my workout the following morning. With that in mind, I got a late night meal into me and hit the sack. It was 08:00 so I decided to get up and get some food into me, after all, what use would I be training in the most hardcore gym on the planet with an empty stomach? I somehow managed to miss the HUGE Starbucks sign at the corner of Temple Street, and hit some local coffee shop instead. I made the trek down this

dirty alley where there was this little red door leading down a stairway to Temple Gym. Upon entering this dungeon, which was responsible for producing one of the greatest bodybuilders of all time, one cannot help but inhale the hardcore atmosphere that it exudes. The wall at the bottom of the stairway is adorned with a half dozen gold Sandow medals. The walls are covered with pictures of every IFBB pro that has visited along with the covers of every magazine Dorian graced; no fancy frames, just some laminate and some blue tack!! It is truly a no frills kind of place and one can't help but get the impression that you have to either train hard or F@#k off home.

That being said it was time to get ready as Dorian had followed me down the stairs, and when he's in the gym there is NO messing about. It was chest day for me and cardio for Dorian, so we worked it around so that he was there when needed for the heavy max set to muscle failure. I began my workout by doing my usual rotator exercises, making sure the joint is well warmed and ready for the pounding I was about to give it. I then went on to do 3 sets of dumbbell flies getting some blood into the chest before hitting the bench press. 2 warm up sets mixed with a lot of dynamic stretching and I was ready to throw some weight on. 3 plates and I banged out 10 easy reps. Dorian grunted "That's too light, you need to go heavier," so we added another 5kg each side, took a little bit of a breather and then it was time to rock and roll. From the moment I sat on the bench, I visualized myself moving the weight with massive pecs. Visualization is a psychological tool I often use in my work out. It helps me to narrow my focus to the job at hand, which was to build some serious pecs by moving some serious weight. And to have a 6 time Mr. Olympia in my corner, made the whole ordeal that more serious. After all, Dorian does not mess about, especially when it comes to training. He lifted the 150kg bar off to me and shouted, "Let's do this Bullman!" I forced out 6 solid reps before we racked the bar, and got the seal of approval from Dorian when he said, "You're a strong little leprechaun, aren't ya!" with that cheeky smirk on his face. I then loaded up the hammer incline machine, 4 plates each side. The whole essence of Temple Gym had become so infectious that it had had a profound effect on my workout. I was finally in a gym where I felt like I was home, no frills or spills, just hardcore training. Workouts fueled through pure manic aggression, the attitude I had used for so many workouts down through the years, and never more so than this year, training on a broken foot for the biggest contest of my life. And now fully recovered I could enjoy the full benefits of the whole experience of training in Temple Gym. I sat into the Hammer machine, telling myself, "This is it, 6 reps Bullman, that's it!" (I had only ever managed 4 unassisted previously). Yates hollers, "Come on Bullman, this is it, your set, strong reps!" I banged out 8 solid reps, taking the negative real slow and exploding out for the positive. Dorian is an advocate of super strict reps, which I am learning is the one common denominator between all of the IFBB superstars I have trained with: Shawn Ray, Kevin Levrone, Frank Richards, Richard Jones. All are advocates of super strict form, with the weight being secondary. After my workout I sat in a restaurant contemplating what I had learned and what it had meant to me to have trained with Dorian and in his backyard (Dorian and I had already done legs together in my home town gym in Limerick Ireland). I love training with guys like Dorian, Shawn and other elite bodybuilders. They have a love for the iron that only true bodybuilders can understand and feel at ease during the workouts. That's not to say that the workouts are not hard, because they have been some of the toughest I have ever had, and I use the experiences to fuel my workouts when training alone.

That night I went to Dorian's house, or rather he collected me in his DB9, yes the car James Bond drives, which was awesome! We ate some Jamaican food and sat down to watch Mark Dugdale's new DVD, A Week In The Dungeon, which was one of the best bodybuilding films I had ever seen. After the video we spoke about how bodybuilding was changing over the last few years. In the 90's which, many consider the golden age of bodybuilding, there were numerous stars in the sport, many of whom gave Dorian a run for his money: Flex Wheeler, Shawn Ray, and Kevin Levrone. Today, however you have a few guys at the top, most of who are exactly where they deserve to be, some fighting for the top spots and others making up the numbers. The conditioning in modern bodybuilding is less than that of the golden era, but the mass has gone through the roof. So have the ideals of the perfect bodybuilding physique changed? Dorian remarked "I think it has become more about the money and less about the sport" which was also the general opinion during our discussion. That's why Dorian never did the Arnold. He said, "It would have cut into my time dramatically six months out of the year, when I could be training for the Olympia and that's all that mattered to me."

Before I left the house, Dorian asked me if I wanted a picture taken with his six Sandow trophies, of course like any true bodybuilding fan, I jumped at the opportunity. I stood back holding one statuette and posed for my picture, as Dorian took the photo he commented with a big grin "Brian, when you go back to Cali, you can tell Shawn, you came just as close to the Sandow as he did" That being said I was thrown back into the Aston Martin and brought back to my hotel and told, "Get some rest, we are doing back tomorrow."

Wednesday morning I was up bright and early as usual, and this time I made it to Starbucks for coffee before my workout. I was in the gym and ready to train. I was given a pre workout supplement, Dorian's own NOX, and to say it gets you psyched would be an understatement of biblical proportions. I was pumped up after our 15 or minutes of stretching, which has become the norm now as a means of injury prevention. The workout began with that infamous pull over machine. Dorian said, "You're a little short for it mate so just use the elbows, keep your arse in the seat and focus on flexing those lats." I did what I was told and I was already starting to get an amazing pump. Last set to failure, I sat in and psyched myself, which was unusual for this exercise, after all I always used pullovers as kind of a warm up movement. I struggled for 6 reps, until Dorian yelled, "2 more Bullman! 2 fuckin more! Come on!" With a tip from my "training partner" I squeezed them out, barely. Next exercise, we moved onto the hammer strength reverse pulldown. Dorian went first, illustrating how it was to be done. "The chest never leaves the pad, pull with your lats, not your arms, and hold it at the bottom for a second and slowly leave the weight up." My turn, so we stripped off some weight and in I went, pulling down fast, squeezing for that second and releasing slowly. The feeling in the muscle was something I was not used to. I was under the impression I trained hard, but lifting heavy and moving fast is nothing, this is what it was all about. My final set, not even two plates a side, and I was forcing out 8 reps, pulling down with every ounce of energy I had, while Dorian yelled instructions. "Squeeze, that's it! Keep the chest on the fuckin pad Bullman!" I got my 8 reps, I wasn't getting 9!!! "that's how you work your lats properly mate" remarked Dorian "that's why your little mate never beat me at the Olympia, from the back it was all over" I replied in nothing short of whisper "I don't know about that, I think he had you in '94" With that being said I ran out of the reach of Yates as he swung for me with a grin I read as, "you cheeky little f@#ker" We moved on to the next exercise, bent over rows. "No need to warm up mate." I understood that if I wasn't warmed up and ready by now, then I never would be. The same principle applied to every exercise; one or two sets to allow the body to adjust to the new movement, and then BAAAAMMMM, hit it with the all out set to failure. Super strict form is the key, stretch and squeeze, a familiar phrase I had heard so many times from training with Shawn Ray. The bar was loaded with one and half plates, I hit out 12 reps, my torso making a 60 degree angle at the hips, and the only movement was pulling the bar up into my lower abdomen, holding that fully contracted position for that split second. Dorian loaded up the bar 3 plates

each side and hit out 8 super strict reps, stretching squeezing with every repetition. Bodybuilders just don't train like that anymore. The feeling you get is amazing; the muscles are truly buzzed, blood is gorging into them like there is no tomorrow, you suddenly have the feeling that your back is as wide as a barn door. My turn again, two plates each side, lightweight. "Lets go mate, this is it, 8 reps come on lets do this," growled Dorian. My back was truly shagged, I felt like I had gone through a good tackling session with the Munster Rugby squad (The World's Number 1 Rugby Club).

But the workout was not over yet by any means. It was back to the other side of the gym and we were to bang out a couple sets of pull downs. The weight was of no consequence, we just wanted to stretch and squeeze for each and every rep. On the contraction Dorian instructed, "Imagine you are onstage and hitting that back double biceps, visualize how you are gonna look, now release slowly." We did two or three sets, I honestly cannot remember. I started to get a little blurry towards the end of the workout. "Do you deadlift Bullman?" Dorian asked. I replied, "Yea, but not since I broke the foot." "Well let's go and do some then," he said. Not wanting to look like a bloody sissy in front of a man who was way, way older than I, former six time MR. Olympia or not, I didn't care, I was up for it. I wasn't traveling to another country to get schooled by anyone. We ventured to the power rack and did one set with a single plate each side, just to get the movement right. Then the bar was loaded. Dorian went first, 4 plates. The deadlifts were like stiff leg, apart from the fact that we didn't keep our legs stiff. However, we did not allow the bar to touch the floor and went down to about half way between the knee and ankle for each rep. Dorian got 6 easy reps and from the way he was training you would be forgiven for thinking he had a contest coming up. I took hold of the bar, except I had only 3 plates, got to 5 reps, "One more!" yelled Dorian. 6 reps, "Again!" 7 reps and I finished with 8. Suddenly the room became all hazy and I needed to lay down. I had gotten sick a few times in the gym, but never from a back workout, and I wasn't about to let that happen now. I fought just as hard not to get sick as I did during the workout. Once I had my breath back it was time to eat, thank God!!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SS7H3-6PDNw>

That was my final workout in Temple Gym before I made the trip home, but one thing is for certain, it will not be my last. Some bodybuilders might make the pilgrimage to the Mecca, but only the true warriors of the Iron game will dare to run the gauntlet at The Temple!!

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