

## Bodybuilding? What's that?

Contributed by Joe Pietaro  
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Lurie gained so much ground in his first 12 months lifting weights that he made a decision to see what he could do on the stage. "At 17 I entered the Mr. New York City contest," recalled Lurie. "When the fellows got undressed in the locker room, I said to myself, 'Oh my God. What am I getting myself into?'"

"I came in last (place)," he continued. "That was the best thing that ever happened to me."

After two years of intense training, Lurie finished as the runner-up in the 1942 Junior Mr. America in Bristol, Connecticut. It was at that same show that he was named America's Most Muscular Man. "Then I went to the big show, the Mr. America," said Lurie. "But in those days there was one person that controlled the sport."

Of course, Lurie was referring to Bob Hoffman of the AAU, who had a monopoly over everyone involved. If you were not part of the Hoffman inner circle, you had to expect the outcome, no matter how wrong it may have been.

“They always kept me second,” said Lurie. “All of his men became Mr. America.”

An example of how inappropriate this was came at the 1944 show in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Lurie finished as the runner-up to one of Hoffman’s men who could not even walk without assistance.

“In those days they used a boxing ring as the stage and Steve Stanko wasn’t able to (get) to the platform because of a leg condition,” Lurie explained. “When it came time for him to pose they put the lights out and I thought it was a blackout. I was right there on the stage and I see them carrying him through the ropes and they put him on the platform.”

Stanko performed his routine before the lights went out again and he was carried off. The audience had no idea that they were cheering for the first man to be named AAU Mr. America — bodybuilding’s most prestigious title at the time - that was not able to get to the stage under his own power.

The issues with Hoffman didn’t end there. Later that same year, a photograph of Lurie appeared endorsing a product in an advertisement in Joe Weider’s “Your Physique” magazine, the precursor of “Muscle & Fitness.” Hoffman then stripped Lurie of his amateur status and considered him a professional on the pretense that he was paid for the ad.

“I didn’t get a penny for it,” said Lurie. “John Grimek, one of (Hoffman’s) number one men—he posed all the time (for ads in Hoffman’s “Strength and Health” magazine) and they never called him a professional. They had power. They had a way to do it.”

Dan Lurie went on to have an incredible career as a promoter in bodybuilding, but the Mr. America title that he richly deserved eluded him. They talk about the top unnamed Mr. Olympias like Shawn Ray, Flex Lewis and Kevin Levrone. Take it back a few decades and Lurie is the epitome of unnamed champions.

Joe Pietaro is a sportswriter that has been covering professional team sports as well as bodybuilding. He has done extensive research and articles on the 'steroids in sports' issue that has been so prevalent in today's world and has covered numerous major sporting events such as the Mr. Olympia, Arnold Classic and last three Super Bowls. Joe is the Founding Editor of MuscleSport Mag and the Editor-in-Chief of New York SportsScene magazine.