

Boulevard of Broken Dreams

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By

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The stark contrast of pursuing it all, having it all and ending up with nothing.

How quickly it can happen and how far away you can stray. From a Dream to Reality both scenarios have happened and are possible.

The "Balancing Act" is what needs to be remembered.

And so it began…………..

In our late Teens, on the verge of exiting High School for the real world, no longer participating in "Team Sports" we find ourselves on the door steps of a local Gym with hopes of staying in shape for the summer parties of endless drinking and flirtatious encounters with the ladies! In a few months we begin to hear unsolicited compliments about progress being made in the gym, things like, "You been working out? When did you become a Man and get all Swollen like that? Oh wait, you're trying to be the next Arnold? You taking Steroids cause last year you didn't look like this? Uh oh, here comes Rambo!" Endless comments of validation that what we did after joining the gym had been paying off making the gym payments worthwhile. Somewhere along the way, someone suggests, "Maybe you should compete, you have the right body for it?" We politely tell them, "I'm a long way from ever stepping on a stage or shaving my body to put Oil on it like those monsters!" Oddly enough, we find ourselves at home later that day, fresh out of the shower, water still shimmering off our body, hitting some Muscle shots in the mirror while no one is looking. Funny thing is this is where we actually notice what all the fuss is about and begin to believe, "Hey, maybe I could do this or maybe I should try it?" 19 years old, feeling stronger than ever and not wanting to feel like a kid, we venture into a "Mans World" by joining the federation (NPC) and suddenly we belong to something bigger than ourselves. You notice you just stepped in the Fraternity that is Lee Haney, Mike Christian, Richie Gaspari, Kevin Levrone, Jay Cutler, Flex Wheeler and the like, pretty awesome company. We think to ourselves, "What if…? What if I were to just go for it and wind up like them?" Hell, you have to start somewhere right? Maybe up my calorie intake, put some more weight on the bar, get with a serious training partner and just go for it! Train twice a day and go talk to the guys at GNC to see what supplements I should take?

It is here that Legends are Born!

Once the Mind commits to following the Heart's desire and the Soul burns with anxiety of the next Pump, Workout and Challenge, you have set your feet on the same course as the National Champions, Mr. USA Winners and Mr. Olympia Champions before you! Failure is not an option because at this point there is nothing to lose and everything to gain. Winning is the goal but only "Progress" is attainable at first with everything else to fall in line. The biggest obstacle is "Patience" at this age that we struggle with.

No money, little time and a lot of self doubt.

How will I look in a pair of tight fitting Posing trunks in front of a huge crowd of people staring at me? I'm going to actually have to shave my Legs? I have to Pose to Music, hell I can't even Dance! I spent all summer packing on size, now I have to lose it all for a contest? Like I really want 12 people telling me how good I am or if I'm not good enough! Well, this is where the "Rubber meets the Road" as far as Dreamers and Winners are concerned. This is where you "Shit or get off the Pot" so to speak! While anyone can lift weights and be big not

everyone can get big, lose the fat and get shredded like an anatomy chart to become recognized as one of the best in the world. So you have to make a decision, one that may change the course of your life, change who you thought you were and have people treat you differently based on appearance and not character. Should you take the challenge; will you be prepared for what's to come?

Some of us give it all up for a chance to be "Somebody" but whom? The Marvel Comic Book Character/ Super Hero, the next Arnold or Rambo? Maybe Mr. California or Mr. America, even then will it fill my desires and make my cup runnith over? Where will my happiness be if I should accomplish my Goal or worse yet, where will I be if I can't? These are complex realities of every would be bodybuilder with a Dream but the select few will realize the Dream for others to pursue with caution.

In Bodybuilding as in Life, there are Pit Falls and Pot holes, you can't always take the "Good with the bad" for sometimes there's no coming back from the depths of the dark corners of our sport yet staying true to what drives you and motivates you becomes harder and harder when success comes rolling in from your hard earned rewards too! There is always someone standing there wishing you well while on the other side, there are 2 people hoping you fail or standing in line to replace you when you slip up!

The Dream:

Winning in succession with relative ease then traveling the world as a Star making money and kissing babies and building a career as one of the best! Cover Shots, Guest Posing and Interviews making you a household name in our industry with Sponsorships helping finance the Dream!

The Nightmare:

Struggling to stay in the game because you have no support group, no money, no identity and little success or publicity. Solid meals are replaced with snacks and fast food while training takes a back seat to trying to make ends meet yet you still compete in reverse doing the same thing and expecting a different result.

Two different circumstances with vastly different outcomes that both started with a likeminded Dream.

The Dream has a Brick Wall of "Positive" reinforcement of continuing to keep the dream alive with good workout partners, supportive friends and understanding family members. The questionable start has been replaced with love and support which in turn becomes Victories and Success. A constant reminder of not being alone in this world to figure it all out on our own, as well as a guiding parameter of balance meaning there is more to life than eating sleeping and training. Celebration of Friendships, Birthdays, Holiday's and Family time are a delicate balancing act of not losing one's self to themselves in a selfish game of "ME, ME & More ME!"

Act II of the Nightmare, takes one on a slow path of self destruction first falling short of the "Expectation" early on and then giving into the temptation theory of "more is better," faster, harder, bigger and now with a sense of "Pace" that will lead to the Crash and Burn effect sooner rather than later. One day waking up in the car in front of the gym parking lot, wondering how you got evicted from the Apartment, kicked out of mom and dad's home and behind on Gym Membership payments, Suddenly, the call to "Sling some Drugs" for fast cash or a fire sale of all worldly possessions is nipping at your urge to stay in the game. The phone is ringing from friends you've borrowed money from and they want it back yet you fail to answer or acknowledge them with a call back. A puff off a Joint is offered by the local gym rat coupled with a few Beers and some pain killers sounds good about now and you rationalize their effects on your training the next day by not over indulging the first time but soon it becomes a regular meeting of broken spirits and lost souls.

The Dream faded when the car got repossessed and your girlfriend split with your training partner months ago. Posing in the mirror from time to time is but a faded memory not to mention the thought of competing again so this is where the bright idea of moving to Las Vegas to get work and live cheap pops into your head. Foolishly, you convince your buddy to venture into Sin City to see what opportunities are there under the guise of great gyms, affordable living and cheap food, not to mention 3 Time Mr. Olympia trains out there!

It's been a few years since you actually competed and even longer since you attempted to get in shape. You're smoking now and bouncing at Gentlemen's Club making cash money that doesn't last long because you're popping Pain Killers from that bad rotator cuff and ACL injury you never fixed from back in the day. Oddly enough, your still well versed on who's on top in the sport and talking shit about those who are not without ever considering your lost dream of yesterdays gone by.

The Boulevard of Broken Dreams is what you call the sport, as you've been consumed by the idea that Politics and Jealousy is what terminated your career because you had the smallest waist and biggest arms but the magazines

wouldn't promote you for fear you would Rule the World and Weider would have to pay you the big bucks! Instead, you left on your own terms and created a better life that you could control in spite of your AA Meetings, DUI Appointments and Pain Killer addiction.

While life can be full of twists and turns, not everyone winds up down and out but without a "Constructive" plan of how you are going to get from Point A to Z, your Dream can become your Nightmare if not properly thought out with the right support group and vision for what's best for you.

The Champ is here!

From Local Bodybuilder to Mr. America and ultimately Mr. Olympia the road for sure is Long and winding with ups and downs. A big "Target" on his back with Bows and Arrows pointed at his every move, with the enemy shaking his hand and patting him on the back daily, he must struggle to stay ahead of the competition. The weight of the title is burdensome, the responsibility of representing the sport overwhelming. Who's whom, what's what?

Moving through a sea of flesh, flash bulbs in his face and hands groping at his body, Mr. Olympia has it no less harder than those who have tried and failed. The duty to show up in shape, be cheerful to strangers and answer every question with an emotion the fans can relate to drains the champ daily. Life in a Fishbowl has now become his reality and people are eager to see him screw up in the face of his hard earned success.

To say one position is harder to live up to is to say, "Walk a Mile in my shoes" however hard that maybe for either scenario, the Boulevard of Broken Dreams can shape you or remind you of what path you're on or should chose to stay away from.

There will be sleepless nights for sure whether successful or not, what you do with them is up to you and therein lies the difference between the World's Best and the Consumate Dreamer.