

## 2x NPC Masters Nationals and IFBB Masters Over 60 World Champion

Contributed by Charles "Charlie Arms" Urrego  
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We've all heard the saying—"You can't teach an old dog new tricks"; but in the case of the older bodybuilder, the older "dogs" (guys like me) must learn the new way. In personally doing so, I have won 4 titles, never lost an age division, and I've never looked back.

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Believe it or not, I first started competing after I turned 60. While vacationing in Florida in August 2002, I was invited to The 2002 NPC Southern States Bodybuilding Championships in Ft Lauderdale, Florida by an old friend who was one of the sponsors. My wife and I took our seats just in time for the Masters Men over-60 contestants to take the stage. As we watched, my wife turned to me and said, "If you put on a pair of posing trunks right now, you could get up there and beat them all." At the time, my "1" frame held a bodyweight of 262 lbs. I lacked symmetry, I lacked definition, and I lacked proper diet. Knowing all of this, I knew I could never get on that stage looking the way my body looked to me at the moment. The last three letters of my last name, E-G-O, perfectly describes my persona. Having such a big ego, I could never allow myself to get on a bodybuilding stage unless I was in unbelievable condition.

When we came home from our vacation, my wife kept pressing the issue for me to go back next year (my 60th year) and enter the Masters over-60 division of the 2003 NPC Southern States. Hence, my metamorphosis (change) began.

I had to learn how to train like a bodybuilder, and, luckily, I'm a quick learner. I also had to learn how a competitive bodybuilder eats; that was no easy task since one of the few pleasures left in life when you're my age is eating.

In August 2003, I entered the NPC Southern States Bodybuilding Championships and I won 1st place and Overall in the Masters Men over-60 division.

After prejudging, I was backstage in the "pump-up" room when a man approached me, and asked how I spelled my last name. He wanted to know if I was going to enter the Nationals. My reply was, "What are the Nationals?" and "Who are you?" I didn't even know what the Nationals were. His name was Mickey Garces — a trainer of competitive bodybuilders. He said to me, "If you lose 10 lbs, you'll win the Masters Nationals. You'll look even bigger." At the time, my current contest weight was 230.

I came home, found out what and when the Masters Nationals were. After winning the Southern States, a qualifier for the Masters Nationals, I began my quest to win the over-60 title. I realized that if I wanted to lose weight yet, maintain my muscle size, change in my training & diet regimen was an absolute necessity. Luckily, I am fortunate enough to have a wife who prepares my six meals a day and a business that allows me to work out of my house.

With change, you must realize that one man's medicine is another man's poison. What works for me will not necessarily work for you. That's what makes this sport one of the hardest and most competitive there is. This is the only sport that enables you to "show what you know", as well as show how good you look, all just by taking off your clothes.

Also, if you're a personal trainer, you must "practice what you preach" because you're wearing your credentials...your body. Being a personal trainer is not just about some certificate you can obtain off of the internet or some 4 hour class you attend. I see a lot of personal trainers putting their clients through the same routine day in and day out. Everyone is different so they have to be trained differently. This is a topic that we'll go into at a later date.

In July 2004, I won the NPC Masters Nationals Over-60 heavyweight class & Overall. My contest weight was 219 lbs-- 11 pounds lighter than at the Southern States. I crossed over to the 50 year-old category to try to obtain my Pro card because, at the time, they weren't giving out pro cards to the 60 year olds. I placed 2nd in my weight class. Just like the Southern States, I had no real competition. I believe that the reason for this is because no one my age is willing to devote the time and effort that I put in. When the day comes that I get defeated, it will be by an individual who puts in more time and more effort than even I do.

Aside from training for the optimal body that one can produce at my current age of 63, I train for strength and endurance. I don't ever run out of steam. My training is extremely intense. This is what I am willing to do to become a World Champion and be the best over-60 competitor ever.

The day I came home from the 2004 Nationals was the day I began training for the 2005 Nationals. My goal was to go back and to obtain a Pro Card (as I had

mentioned in my interview with Bev Francis in the NPC News May/June 2005 issue).

Once again, I changed my diet and training routine. I will talk about this regimen at a later date. If you do the exact same thing for every contest you compete in, you're going to look the same, and, at my age, you may not look so good. My rule of thumb is, "Often change when you train so you don't look the same".

Too many bodybuilders have been doing the same stuff for years. They walk into the gym and do the same exercises, week in and week out, month in and month out, year in and year out. They have become creatures of habit; they stay within their comfort zone.

This sport is not meant for monotony. It's truly a labor of love. A great analogy is the man in his 80's who's riddled with arthritis and who sits on his porch in his rocking chair to give his weary body a rest only after he labored in his vegetable garden for hours under the hot sun.

In July 2005, I won the NPC Masters Nationals Over-60 Heavyweight & Overall title for a second time. I crossed over into the 50 year old category in an attempt to get my pro card and I placed 3rd in my weight class.

I came home, once again, and started training for the 2006 Nationals. I realized that if I ever wanted to obtain a Pro Card competing against the 50 year olds, I would have to make changes in my training & diet regimen. So I went back to my mental drawing board.

On Sept 7, 2006 I received a phone call from an NPC Official who informed me that starting in 2006, the 60 year old overall winner at the Masters Nationals will receive a Pro Card. He explained that due to my back-to-back Nationals wins (2004 & 2005) and my display of such a well-conditioned & muscular physique for a man of over 60 years old, I was being awarded a retroactive Pro Card.

I finally got my Pro Card! So where do I go from here? There was no more Masters Olympia. I thought... am I being put out to pasture?

I found out that Steve Weinberger was promoting a contest comparable to the Masters Olympia- the Pro Masters World Championships on April 15, 2006... right in my back yard... New York City!

I proved that I was the best in the country over 60 and now I was out to prove that I was the best Over 60 in the world! I had 7 months to prepare.

In Dec 2005, I weighed 260 lbs. I figured that with all of this weight, I would chisel off all the fat on my body, keeping the muscle. What I didn't know was that I was about to hit "the wall". My wall (at my age) was my inability to lose large amounts of weight even through diet & exercise, without losing muscle size, definition & muscularity.

I began training Jan 8, 2006 for The IFBB Pro Masters World Championships. I was on the promotional flyer along with Bob Cicherillo. Flex Magazine even described me as "the 62 year old phenom". I was extremely excited by how they promoted me so I hit the gym with a vengeance. My goal was to walk on that stage and make a statement. When the contest rolled around, I didn't look the way I wanted to look. I weighed 212 lbs, coming down from 260 in only 3 months.

Five weeks out from the competition, I had weighed 234 lbs. I had stubborn fat on my hips that just wouldn't come off. I went into panic mode, changed my diet, changed my cardio, changed my weight training, and changed my days of rest. Little did I know that these changes were not for the better.

My mistake was that when I put all my weight on, I didn't figure the age factor into the equation. I never realized how hard it would be to get that fat off and still maintain my muscle size.

Needless to say, I won the Best Over-60 Award at the IFBB Pro Masters World Championships. My goal was achieved. I proved that I was the best in the World Over-60 years of age but I lost a lot of muscle and size in the process.

In this sport, they say that you have to get out of shape to get into shape. That only holds true for the younger competitors. I'm finding out that at my age I have to put on muscle weight without the fat. This means I have to stay in shape all year round.

The theme of this article is "change in the older bodybuilder".

I have a saying when I greet people who are finishing up their workouts at the gym. I ask them, "Did you make your deposit in the bank of life today? It's like a savings account. What you put in you'll be able to take out, especially for your later years." Remember, it's not how long you live, it's the quality of life you have.

Starting next month, my column will concentrate on answering your Masters Bodybuilding questions. Feel free to email me at [ibephit@optonline.net](mailto:ibephit@optonline.net) or check out my website at [www.charliearms.com](http://www.charliearms.com).

