

PACO BAUTISTA: Wheels From Hell

Contributed by John Romano
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CONGRATS TO PACO on his FIRST IFBB PRO SHOW WIN in SANTA SUZANNA SPAIN

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A Little History

The post-Arnold modern era left us with Tom Platz. He had the most insane Quads bodybuilding had ever seen, and it would be literally years before anyone would come along and challenge the original leg freak. Indeed, greater bodybuilders in better condition came along and pushed Platz out of the opera house, but not before he left his indelible mark. It would be decades before anyone would surpass Platz's insane wheels. Then the '90s rolled around and a new breed of monster erupted.

We were first awed by a couple of kids from Massachusetts named Paul "Quadzilla" DeMayo and Mike Matterazzo. The former presented the bodybuilding world with a pair of thighs that finally gave Platz a run for his money, but no cigar. The latter did beat the Iron Eagle below the knee. Matterazzo showed us all what calves should look like. Today, there are at least 50 guys with calves to rival the great Tom Platz, but no one can unseat the ruler of that which lies below the knee. Matterazzo has, and always will have, the sickest calves on the planet. When he dies, they should hack those things off and keep them in a big jar in some laboratory somewhere for future generations to look at and marvel at their sheer size and composition. I doubt the human race will ever see anything like that again.

Then something changed. The war escalated and Dorian Yates threw down the gauntlet by being the first to hit the stage tipping the scales the other side of 250. He indeed had incredible legs; huge to be sure, but they were not in the Platz realm. He had great calves too, but Matterazzo was still in a class by himself in that

department. Since Dorian raised the bar to over 250, more and more bodybuilders got their shit together and pushed it even higher. Lou Ferrigno hit the stage the last year he competed at 318- shredded! Body parts were growing, condition was getting better and better, but no one had toppled Tom Platz from the high thigh throne, and Matterazzo's calves were bulls compared to anyone else's.

Yet, leg freaks still gestated, giving us Jimmy Quinn with vascularity down his legs on par with a detailed road map of Chicago. Eddie Robinson's legs could scare a kid into tears, and Roger Stuart's wheels were so insane they made his top half look like it belonged on a little kid. Andreas Munzer died with cross striated quads so intricately detailed they looked like a stone carving. Tom Prince came along with the sickest hamstrings- holy shit, from the side? You've got to be kidding me, what is that shit? His hams go with Matterazzo's calves. Flex Wheeler gave new meaning to the term "sweep," and Chris Cormier has incredible upper thigh separation and wicked glute/ham tie-ins.

Then Jay Cutler stomped on stage at 5-foot-9 and 270-something with a complete set of wheels that made the audience gasp. Today, he has the best legs in the world. But, Tom Platz still rules. Jay is a total freak. He's one big huge cut-up, gigantic fuckin' freak. If you pulled him all apart, you have all these big gigantic fuckin' freaky body parts, but they all go together. You couldn't pull Tom Platz's legs off Godzilla; his quads stuck out way in front of him when he walked, clanked together, flopped around and just looked alarming, to say the least. On his frame, Platz's quads made him look so much like a cartoon character that one was actually made of him.

There are a couple of guys floating around out there who have the potential to knock Platz off the thigh pedestal; Branch Warren comes to mind. In fact, I dubbed him "the next Tom Platz." But, he ain't there yet. Is Platz still the supreme leader of the leg freaks? Let's put it this way: No modern pantheon of leg freaks would be complete without Tom Platz, but he's going to have to move over because Paco Bautista just kicked his ass.

Striations, Fissures and Seams

"Holy fuckin' shit." That was all I could say when I first saw Paco at the Night of Champions in New York City. He was a freak right off for his condition. The rest of the show fuckin' sucked, so to say Paco made everyone else look smooth doesn't give him his due. There are few bodybuilders, if any, this side of Gaspari and Yates, who could have stood next to Paco Bautista on that particular night. A gnat would starve to death on what was left between his skin and his muscle. All gone, nothing in there, nada. Just a thin film of skin stretched over bare striations, fissures, rucks and seams. And, while I wouldn't be the first to say he has faults, he does have

them. His back, his chest... it's all over the Web. Whatever.

Everyone has faults, some of them almost as big as those running through Paco's quads. But, come on, have you ever seen anything like this? Check him out on the leg extension; his various hugely over- developed quad muscles are folded

over on themselves. I was at the photo shoot and watched it happen. I couldn't believe it. As his leg extended, one of the muscles inside his quads- I think it was the sartorius, I couldn't really tell, everything was so tangled up- started to come up alongside the vastus medialis (tear drop muscle) and fold over on it, leaving a crease between the two into which he could holster a Glock. Unbelievable.

Now, look at him from the side. On stage, his glutes were striated; so were his quads, and his hamstrings were a mass of cables that reached on down into his calves. It looked like some one had hacked him up with a razor blade. To what, or to whom, does Paco owe his freak status? Well, genetics, for sure. Paco says his father had very strong legs and he was sure he passed that on to him as evinced by his futbol (soccer)-playing ability. By the time Paco was in his early teens he was playing on the regional level. That may not sound like a big deal by American standards, but when you think that every single Latin male walking plays soccer, perhaps you can see the significance. Soccer players are notorious for their overstuffed thighs. High-end soccer is perhaps the world's most grueling sport; it's constant sprinting. Ever see a sprinter's legs? See what I'm getting at? So, add to that the genetic predisposition for big legs and Paco could probably have done some damage if he missed the ball and hit number 37 by mistake.

At 16, Paco saw the movie Conan and found bodybuilding by chasing down information on Arnold. He thought bodybuilding looked pretty cool and found his way into Anaques Gym and started cocking around with the weights. Juan Marco, the owner was watching Paco and immediately realized two things. First, this kid had amazing genetic potential, and second, he didn't know what the fuck he was doing. They got to talking and the next day they started out building Paco Bautista.

"El Es Diferente"

During the photo shoot, Juan Marco was telling me about how Paco trains. Marco is ever the Spaniard; as robust as a canon, yet with an affluent air about him. He spoke perfect Castilian in a deep and rumbled voice with an obvious strain that suggested he may have once been karate chopped in the neck. But, he used it to his advantage with an impassioned account of Paco's grueling six-hour days in the gym and his assiduous attention to his diet, all the time gesturing heavily with his monstrous hands. "He trains like Dorian- very high intensity- but, Paco does more sets, perhaps four or five."

"And he's in the gym five or six hours a day?" I asked. "Isn't that a bit much?"

"No," replied the Spaniard, "El es diferente."

Indeed, Paco is different. To give you his leg training routine is not to give you the prescription to attain his legs. I seriously doubt you are ever going to see those legs on anyone other than Paco, but if you really want to toss your frijoles on leg day, see if you can get through Paco's routine.

First he stretches and warms up for a bit on the bike, then super-sets leg extensions with lying leg curls for five sets of each. He'll start the first set at over 20 reps and grind out no fewer than six reps on his last set; then he might go into some forced reps or negatives, whatever the mood.

He then does five sets of squats following the same rep range. He'll occasionally do a personal best- deep squat- and so far his record stands at 320 kilos (704 pounds).

From squats, it's over to leg presses for another five sets doing 15 to 25 reps each set.

Then five sets of stiff-leg deadlifts 15-25 reps to failure.

Paco waits a couple of days to train his calves. He feels that devoting a specific time to them rather than sticking them in at the end of legs gives him better intensity for calves. Who's going to say he's wrong? He does five sets each of standing and seated calf raises, reaching at least 25 reps before failure sets in. And that's it.

By placing third at the NOC, Paco has qualified for the Olympia. I just got off the phone with him; he's back home in Barcelona and training for the O with only one thing on his mind. It's going to be cool to see him go up against the best. Some of them are definitely going to wish he stayed home. If you want to contact Paco, you can catch him on his website: www.pacobautista.com.