

The History of Bodybuilding: International and Hungarian Aspects

A testépítés története: nemzetközi és magyar vonatkozások

Petra Németh doctoral student dr. Andrea Gál docent

Doctoral School of Sport Sciences, University of Physical Education

nemeth.petra003@gmail.com, gal.andrea@tf.hu

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Abstract

Bodybuilding is a scarcely investigated cultural phenomenon in social sciences, and, in particular, historiography despite the fact that its popularity both in its competitive and leisure form has been on the rise, especially since the 1950s. Development periods of this sport are mainly identified with those iconic competitors, who were the most dominant in the given era, and held the ‘Mr. Olympia’ title as the best bodybuilders. Nevertheless, sources reflecting on the evolution of organizational background and the system of competitions are more difficult to identify. It is similarly challenging to investigate the history of female bodybuilding, which started in the 19th century, but its real beginning dates back to the 1970s. For analysing the history of international bodybuilding, mainly American sources can be relied on, but investigating the Hungarian aspects is hindered by the lack of background materials. Based on the available sources, the objective of this study is to discover the development of the bodybuilding scene, its most important events and participants, from the beginning up to the present days.

Key words: bodybuilding, historical overview, female bodybuilders, institutionalization, IFBB

Kulcsszavak: testépítés, történelmi áttekintés, női testépítők, intézményesítés, IFBB Introduction

Social scientific enquiry into bodybuilding is a true challenge, since, first of all, it needs clarification whether it can be included in the category of traditional sports, what the criteria of being a bodybuilder are, and whether those engaged in bodybuilding form a special subculture. Answering these questions could be supported by a comprehensive overview of the history of international and Hungarian bodybuilding, however, it is not easy, as the sport has developed in complicated ways with regards to its organizational background, competition categories and competitor statuses. Chronological and detailed accounts of the processes and key events of the institutionalization and development of the sport are scarce, although for decades, bodybuilding means a competitive sport and a unique lifestyle for many, and for even greater masses, it is a leisure time activity, which implies that it is worth studying the history and the development of this phenomenon from the beginning to where we are now.

As Roundtree (2005:28) wrote, “*The origin of contemporary bodybuilding culture began shortly after World War II. Bodybuilding competition, which has been the most definitive practice within the culture, would eventually evolve into a lifestyle that included a distinctive style of dress, cultural jargon, demographical residence and other patterns of social behavior, most notably, approaches to fitness and bodybuilding.*”

Modern bodybuilding can therefore be regarded as a relatively young sport discipline, which started to spread and became popular from the early 1950s, not only as a form of physical training, but as a specific lifestyle as well. Its cradle is a state in the West Coast of the United States, California, and within it, Gold’s

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Gym, with its logo depicting a muscular, well-built, weightlifting man. This symbol became an inspiration for thousands of people ever since (Figure 1.).



Figure 1. Gold's Gym logo (California)

The trend that in the following years more and more people started to engage in bodybuilding was greatly influenced by Arnold Schwarzenegger, probably the most well-known bodybuilder of all time, who was victorious at several competitions, and was crowned Mr. Olympia seven times during his career from 1965 to 1980. Following his footsteps, generations started weight training, and those who wanted to compete, also engaged in a specific lifestyle like their role model, forming a unique subculture. According to the research of the National Center for Health Statistics, in the decade between 1985 and 1995, an unprecedented number of people entered the world of gyms and weight training (Flamini, 2008). The reason for this intensive development is that, as Flamini (2008) observes, bodybuilding gives an opportunity to change one's body and ultimately, their life, even if it does not lead to competing and championships. But where do we find the roots of this sport discipline and how has it evolved into its present form?

The roots of bodybuilding and its development in the 20th century

The earliest occurrence of bodybuilding dates back to the late 19th century and can be connected to Eugene Sandow (Figure 2.), who demonstrated the art of cultivating the body by example, following the motto: "Life is movement". Sandow was born in Prussia in 1867, and he was doing weight exercise at a young age already, in order to maintain and improve his muscles, thus, by the age of 26, he achieved the figure which was considered as ideal. Owing to his success, he had many followers, and later on, he elaborated and published his training scheme in a book, which is regarded to be the first source in the professional literature dealing with bodybuilding (Fekete, 1986).



Figure 2. Eugene Sandow

“Sandow was a fierce proponent of the idea, that anybody, including women, could develop a physique that was both muscular and symmetrical.” (Ballard, 1998:7). He firmly believed that high resistance (weight) training can improve everyone, which contradicted existing views. Control was a key element of his creed; he claimed that control over the spirit and the body is essential, one does not exist without the other. This all helped him establish an entirely unique fitness branch in business terms as well, founding his line of clubs, planning their equipment, and their exercise programs. This however, had social added value as well: for example, during the Second Boer War, the army of his country did not only have to rely on the natural strength of new conscripts, as they were trained according to Sandow’s training regime. Not surprisingly, the Church also took note of his achievements, since they saw the potential of moral development through the practice of physical strength, which they called Muscular Christianity. Sandow, who, because of his robust muscles, could bear the title of the strongest man in the world, had an immense impact on the social perception of the body, drawing attention to the role of health and fitness. Even so, bodybuilding was not considered to be a sport discipline, since it was not competition in the classical sense, but a kind of aesthetic contest. The great breakthrough was in 1901, when the first international competition (“The Great Competition”) was held in the Royal Albert Hall of London. This was the first time a bodybuilding contest was not organized in the shadow of another sport, as previous ones were side-events of powerlifting competitions. This event proved to be outstanding in every aspect: competitors did posing routines, and there was a written set of rules and criteria. Awarded competitors were not necessarily the

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ones with the biggest physique, as judges observed the symmetry of the body, muscle tone and definition, general health and skin quality. These criteria, along with a proportional muscle mass are also fundamentals in modern bodybuilding (Ballard, 1998).

In the following period, bodybuilding gained increasing popularity in the USA as well, mainly thanks to Bernarr MacFadden, whose oeuvre can be compared to that of Sandow. MacFadden published his own magazine entitled *Physical Culture*, and in 1903, he organized the Physical Culture Exhibition, that is, the first American bodybuilding contest. Interestingly, since female athletes also signed up for the competition, MacFadden halved the 1000 dollar prize originally nominated for the male winner, in order to honour the female winner as well. The publication of the first bodybuilding brochure (*Dynamic Tension*), and the title of “the most muscular man” belonged to Charles Atlas. *Dynamic Tension* was translated to seven languages and was sold in high numbers, underlining the growing popularity of bodybuilding. Even so, it took until 1939 to make a decision based on the initiative of the Amateur Athletic Union to organize the Mr. America bodybuilding contest every year, after the weightlifting competition. In the first year the title was won by Bert Goodrich, and then in the following two years, John Carl Grimek, who performed his routines already at an artistic level. In the next period it was the American Steve Reeves, who particularly excelled, and won the title Mr. Universe contest before moving on to acting in movies (Fekete, 1986).

1946 also marks an important date in the history of the sport, as this was the year when the International Federation of BodyBuilders was founded by Ben and Joe Weider (Fekete, 1986). IFBB then officially established the frameworks and conditions of competition, and with 134 member states it soon became the 6th largest sport organization in the world. The Federation codified the rules of a number of contests and in addition, organized Mr. Olympia, the most high profile bodybuilding competition of the time, which in 1965 already attracted about 10 000 spectators at the venue. In addition to their sport organizational activity, the Weider brothers (Figure 3.) established a monopoly in the fitness industry, dominating the fitness product lines of a number of major retail chains, all this in approximately 60 000 shops in 85 countries. They established the Weider Nutrition Company and a large clothing firm as well, covering the entire range of fitness-related products. The social and political connections of the brothers were also extensive, and with the help of these, they could gain reputation as key figures in the history of bodybuilding and fitness (Roundtree, 2005). Ben Weider was made a Member of the Order of Canada in recognition of his remarkable contribution to shaping the views of people related to healthy lifestyle (Fekete, 1986). His brother, Joe Weider was more active on the professional side; he created the so-called Weider Health and Fitness System. In 1939, at the age of 17, he published his first magazine with the title “Your Physique”¹, and launched its female version, “Shape Magazine” as well. Owing to his professionalism and devotion, Joe Weider is considered to be the father of modern bodybuilding, who firmly believed that one day bodybuilding can become an Olympic sport (Fekete, 1986).

¹ The magazine was given a new name later (*Muscle Builder*), and today it is called “*Muscle and Fitness*”, it is published online and can be followed in the social media as well.



Figure 3. Ben and Joe Weider

“Its worldwide presence and sponsorship of bodybuilding’s most prestigious events, coupled with the seemingly singular ability to make bodybuilders famous champions, makes the IFBB founded by the Weider brothers the only organization most bodybuilders take seriously. Being ostracized from this organization is tantamount to being drummed out of the sport.” (Roundtree, 2005:30).

“Although at that time, there were other sanctioning organizations like Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), National Amateur Bodybuilders Association (NABBA – founded by Oscar Heidenstam in 1960 in Britain), World Amateur Bodybuilding Association (WABBA), and World Bodybuilding Guild (WBBG), they all either quickly disintegrated or were simply marginalized by the domination of the IFBB in this unique and relatively unexplored, yet profitable market.” (Roundtree, 2005:28).

Nevertheless, the worldwide recognition of IFBB did not nearly match the popularity of the bodybuilder, who undoubtedly became a globally admired icon. Arnold Schwarzenegger (Figure 4.) debuted in 1965, winning the European Championship, a year later he became Mr. Europa, and then, in 1969, he was crowned amateur world champion. Later, as a professional bodybuilder, the “Austrian Oak” became Mr. Olympia seven times. Every year between 1970 and 1975, and then after a brief interruption, in 1980 again. Schwarzenegger then successfully moved on to the film industry (Fekete, 1986), and later made most of his celebrity status to be elected the Governor of California.



Figure 4. Arnold Schwarzenegger

The other outstanding figure of this period was the American Frank Zane, who won the Mr. Olympia title for three consecutive years from 1977, despite representing a completely different style from that of Schwarzenegger. While the latter is the symbol of brutal muscle mass, Zane primarily wanted to reflect proportionality and harmony with his body. As characterised by Ferenc Fekete (1986:25 – authors' translation): "*Frank Zane's body is like a piece of jewellery, which does not stand above others with its mass, but with its refinedness.*" The competitor worked out according to a training regime elaborated with mathematical precision, and claimed that a shorter, but physically and mentally more concentrated training is more effective than a series of automatically done exercises with the momentum of power. "*This is how he transformed the view on bodybuilding shifting the focus from robust muscles towards an aesthetically worked out figure*" (Fekete, 1986:25 – authors' translation). Zane was a true intellectual as well, he obtained three university degrees, and wrote a number of books, focusing on the mental and spiritual aspects of bodybuilding as well. Contrary to his contemporaries, he also paid attention to other scientific factors needed for successful bodybuilding, for example the connection between nutrition and muscle building (<https://www.fitbuilder.hu>).

By the 1980s, bodybuilding had become the 7th most popular sport globally. In 1986, more than 100 countries had national federations, and nearly 85 million Americans engaged in leisure time bodybuilding, some of them in competitive form as well. The centre of bodybuilding was California, in particular, Muscle Beach, Gold's Gym, Olympic Gym and World's Gym, where the most ambitious athletes were training and preparing for the contests.

The era gave several excellent bodybuilders to the sport, one of them was the American Lee Haney, who won the Mr. Olympia title in 1984 and could claim to be the best another seven times in the subsequent

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years (Szőke, 2019). The English Dorian Yates entered his first bodybuilding contest at the age of 21 in 1983, and amazed everybody with his outstandingly huge muscle mass, becoming the chief representative of the coming of “muscle monsters”. Nine years later, in 1992, he won his first Mr. Olympia title, and kept it all the way until 1998 (Szőke, 2019).

From the 1990s, it is primarily worth mentioning Ronnie Coleman, who is considered as a role model for many bodybuilders even until now, due to the fact that the American athlete won the Mr. Olympia title eight times, surpassing the recorder Arnold Schwarzenegger. Following his domination, it was Jay Cutler who won four out of five times between 2006 and 2010, with the exception of the 2008 victory of Dexter Jackson (Szőke, 2019).

In the 2010s, the success of Phil Heath was unbreakable for several years. The American competitor, who used to be a talented basketball player seeking a new challenge, turning to bodybuilding. He first competed in lightweight and then middleweight, and he soon obtained the Pro Card to become Mr. Olympia seven times between 2011 and 2017 (www.philipheath.com). In this period, the IFBB elaborated the scoring system, according to which qualification to participate at the Mr. Olympia contest was not per invitation as previously, but based on the points received for the top five places at the Arnold Classic, Sheru Classic, New York Pro, the federation contests organized by IFBB, and the Mr. Olympia contest of the preceding year. At present, the most successful bodybuilders at these competitions worthy of mention are the Jamaican Shawn Rhoden, and the American Brandon Curry, Mr. Olympia of 2019 (www.notimewheystead.com).

As historical sources indicate, the top event of bodybuilding has always been the Mr. Olympia contest, but in addition to this, a number of other prestigious titles were also available, such as Mr. America, Mr. Universe, or Mr. Galaxy. The pool of competitors was also divided along the professional-amateur line, thus for example, Mr. Olympia was a title for the best athletes in the former category, and Mr. Universe was the name of the champion in the latter.² Professional athletes could receive a high income from bodybuilding, which they complemented with money raised from sponsors and revenues typically gained from operating their own fitness clubs.

Professionalism in bodybuilding was introduced by IFBB, as the only officially recognised organization to date.³ In order to become an IFBB Pro, a bodybuilder must first earn their IFBB Pro Card. A bodybuilder looking to do this must first win a regional contest in their weight class. When a bodybuilder wins or ranks highly, they earn an invite to compete at their country's National Championship for that year. The winners of each weight class at the National Championships will then go head-to-head in a separate contest, to see who gets to be the overall champion for the year. Depending on the federation, the overall champion will be offered a Pro Card. Some federations offer Pro Cards to winners of individual weight class champions. This can mean that more than one bodybuilder earns a Pro Card each year. A bodybuilder can also earn a Pro Card at the IFBB World Bodybuilding Championships.

² Another difference between the two contests was that Mr. Universe could only be won two times, whereas Mr. Olympia had no such restrictions.

³ For instance, in Hungary, there are a number of bodybuilding organizations, but only one official sport federation, IFBB.

In the United States, the National Physique Committee (NPC) is affiliated with the IFBB and awards IFBB Pro Cards to the winners of its Heavyweight and Super Heavyweight categories. There are three events held by the NPC where a bodybuilder can earn a Pro Card: The Nationals, The North American Championships, and The USA Championships (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional_bodybuilding).

At the competitions, athletes step on stage in various weight categories, however, today they do not only compete in the bodybuilding category, where seven different, mandatory poses have to be demonstrated before the judges. At Men's Physique contests, competitors strike only four poses wearing board shorts instead of the traditional swimwear (leg muscles are not even judged), and over-proportional muscles lead to point reduction. Athletes are split into categories based on their height. The newest category of men's competition is called *classic physique*. It sits between bodybuilding and men's physique. Similar to bodybuilding these include a round of mandatory poses and an individual posing round. Muscular legs are important here. Athletes are categorized based on their height, and they also have to hit a target weight too (based on the height category they fall into).

The world of bodybuilding is growing each year, getting more and more diverse as different divisions are created. In the men's groups there are a number of subcategories. Each with their own specific rules and regulations: Men's beach body; Physically challenged standing and wheelchair; Kids and teen fitness; Body quest men; Men's ink and tattoo (<https://spotmebro.com/>).

Women in a masculine and a muscular world

Presenting the history of female bodybuilding is perhaps even more challenging than that of its male counterpart, which cannot only be explained by the lack of historical sources, but by societal factors as well. "Health reform in the mid-nineteenth century combined with early feminism to promote the novel idea that exercise was healthy for women and that women's muscles could be beautiful. This was contrary to the dominant white middle-class notion of femininity as fragile and ethereal, the embodiment of which was enhanced by the custom of tightly laced corsets that continued through the turn of the century. Eugene Sandow, who is considered to be the founding father of bodybuilding, began to try to bring women into his physical culture enterprises. He promoted the idea of a femininity that included strength and exercise for all women in order to bring them good health and cure illness." (Bolin, 2001:146).

"In 1889 Bernarr MacFadden began to publish the periodical *Physical Culture* in the United States, and his second issue contained his first articles on women's health and exercise. (...) He founded the first women's magazine, *Women's Physical Development*, in 1900, and changed the name in 1903 to *Beauty and Health: Women's Physical Development*. In addition, MacFadden may have been the first, to sponsor a women's physique competition, a precursor of women's bodybuilding competitions." (Bolin, 2001:146)

Nevertheless, the masculine nature of the sport undoubtedly marginalized women, who wanted to shape their bodies to be hypermuscular, as it contradicted the traditional concept of femininity. Moreover, in the cradle of bodybuilding, the United States, it was in the 1960s when the social perception of women's sport came to the agenda in the public discourse. From the critical approaches, the most well-known one is the theory of Eleonor Metheny (1965), a physical education teacher, according to which sports can be divided into three categories based on their characteristics. The first group constituted sports that were not appropriate for women, the second one included neutral sports in this regard, while the third contained the ones that were accepted as perfectly suitable for women. Sports that were regarded as unacceptable involve

direct physical contact between opponents, imply long-term and continuous physical strain, and in these, heavy weight objects need to be moved. Bodybuilding, along with weightlifting clearly belong to this latter category. Social perceptions have not changed much with the passage of time, since, as Roussel-Griffet, (2000:130) puts it, “*No other sport so embodies the tensions and contradictions between femininity, strength, and muscularity than female bodybuilding.*”

“*In the 1970s health clubs and spas enticed women by offering aerobics classes, selling fashionable athletic attire, and provided color-coordinated locker rooms with amenities such as blow dryers and curling irons. These gyms became part of the history of bodybuilding as the sport moved into the scientific and contemporary pavilions of nutrition and training.*” (Bolin, 2001:147) At the same time, modern bodybuilding competitions for women began as a derivative of men’s bodybuilding.

Female competitors became involved in bodybuilding organizations, and although in 1980 Doris Barilleaux founded the American Federation of Women Bodybuilders, later it ceased to operate (Bolin, 2001).

Through the 1980s and 1990s bodybuilding continued to grow as a big business. The first Miss (now Ms.) Olympia contest was held in 1980 and set the standard for women’s international and professional titles that continues today.

Female competitors have, over time, achieved degrees of muscularity, symmetry, and definition believed to be impossible for women. As Bolin (2001:148) wrote “*Nevertheless, since its beginnings, women bodybuilders have debated the issue of muscularity versus femininity.*”



Figure 5. Rachel McLish, the first Ms. Olympia

“Between 1980 and 1989, the sport of bodybuilding as epitomized in the Ms. Olympia contest deferred to society’s view of femininity.” The judges selected athletic, slim and graceful women, such as Rachel MacLish and Cory Everson, as opposed to the more muscular competitors such as Bev Francis. The debate

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over the direction the sport would take was resolved with the retirement of Cory Everson from competition in 1989.

In the 1990s, organizers of the Ms. Olympia competition changed the rules and opened it to any female pro bodybuilder. In 1992, a series of controversial rules were added to prohibit contestants whose physiques were considered too large or unfeminine. These rules were dropped a few years later. Therefore, female competitors with extreme muscle mass returned to the scene. *“This trend for increasing muscle mass is illustrated in the increasing body weights of the competitors, in 1983 the average weight of the Ms. Olympia contenders was 121 pounds, while in 1997 it was 155 pounds.”* (Bolin, 2001:150). The American Kim Chizevsky, who claimed the title in 1996 and continued to hold it through 1998 was one of the famous representative of this breed of female bodybuilders. (Bolin, 2001)

The Ms. Olympia contest of 1999 was nearly cancelled after the original promotor dropped out, citing the lack of advance ticket sales. (Choueiri, 2019). Although in the following period a number of changes were made in the competition, for example scoring became public and for five years female athletes competed in two weight categories to increase the number of those interested, from 2005, the original one-weight category setup was reinstalled. After 2010, the popularity of the event decreased, thus, 2014 saw the last Ms. Olympia so far, the American Iris Kyle (Choueiri, 2019).



Figure 6. Iris Kyle, 10-time Ms. Olympia

For female contestants, in addition to bodybuilding, there are other categories, such as Physique, Figure and Bikini Fitness, within which divisions are drawn according to height (Probert, 2009). *“Physique class uses the same judging criteria as for men’s bodybuilding: symmetry, proportion and mass. The figure class has less emphasis on muscle mass and more emphasis on symmetry and proportion. The fitness class has judging criteria more closely akin modelling such as grace and balance of movement.”* (Ballard, 1998:10)

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Bodybuilding in Hungary

The starting point of organized bodybuilding in Hungary was in 1968, when a power-lifting competition and a bodybuilding exhibition were organized in the Ice Theatre of Budapest. The former event was won by László Tasnádi, who later, in 1972 also reached the top in bodybuilding. The idea of the contest came from the magazine Magyar Ifjúság (Hungarian Youth), which also published a regular section with training plans, entitled “Steel Muscle Club”. In this period, bodybuilders transformed basements and laundry rooms into gyms so that they could train, and although Budapest was regarded to be the centre, the first gym was opened in the city of Szeged. The idols of Hungarian bodybuilders were international stars, but we can mention Mickey Hargitay (born as Miklós), who migrated to the USA after 1945, became a bodybuilder and in 1955, he won the Mr. Universe title.⁴

In Budapest, next year’s competition in 1969 was organized by the club Zrínyi Nyomda SE, where a bodybuilding department had been established earlier. However, the true take-off in the development of the sport came in 1970, when Külker Sport Club and Spartacus Sport Club opened their gyms, the former under the leadership of Péter Langermann, and the latter lead by István Bitter and Ferenc Fekete, what is more, the first official bodybuilding contest was organized (1st Hungarian Bodybuilding Championship). At the event, two champions were declared, János Bakóczy (below 173 cm) and István Bitter (above 173 cm). The latter is regarded to be the first truly successful bodybuilder, since, after he committed to the sport at the age of 19, in addition to his nine domestic titles, in 1977 he won a European bronze medal and was ranked 7th in the world at the European and World Championship in Nimes (Fekete, 1986).

In the 1970s, competitions were organized in three height categories, László Tasnádi, István Remprekt and Tibor Nagy were the most prolific contenders. The organization of clubs and gyms was supervised by the two Fuglovits brothers, and their guidance brought success to Károly Micza, Péter Kiss, József Határi, Attila Fási and Sándor Béki (Fekete, 1986).

Thanks to the improving results, by the middle of the decade, bodybuilding became a fairly popular sport, primarily viewed as leisure sport (mass sport). In 1975 the first junior championship was organized, so that the younger generation could participate, ensuring the grassroots level of the sport (Fekete, 1986). In the 1980s, leisure time bodybuilding was still often pursued in garages transformed into gyms in the housing projects of the cities.

In the period marked by the political and economic transition, on 16 December, 1989, the Hungarian Bodybuilding and Powerlifting Federation was established. The first professional magazine was published in 1990 entitled Body and Power, it was the official magazine of the Federation. In 1996 it was relaunched with the title Body Classic, and its last edition was published as Body and Fitness in 1998 (Szőke, 2019).

With regards to organizational background, the Hungarian Bodybuilding and Fitness Federation has existed since 1970, it operated as an association until 1989, when it became a federation. Another important year was 1993, when bodybuilding and powerlifting separated from one another.

⁴ Source: <https://mult-kor.hu/> Retrieved: 03 04.2020

In the 1980s and 1990s, most of the champions came from Spartacus Sport Club, such as József Varga, Péter Szűcs, Károly Kiss, Attila Deme, Zoltán Kiss, István Huber, István Simon, István Vajas and Tibor Nagy (Fekete, 1986).

During this period, the best Hungarian competitors were also successful on the international stage. First of all, Jenő Kiss has to be mentioned, who is the only Hungarian to ever win the Mr. Universe title, which he won in 1996. A few years earlier, in 1991, he was IFBB amateur world champion, and in 1998, after the German Grand Prix, he started his professional career. Jenő Kiss could become a role model for other bodybuilders, because of the muscle mass he built up with hard work, and his results as well (www.shop.builder.hu).



Figure 6. Jenő Kiss, Hungarian champion

The 1990s also brought fame for Johnny Lantos, who was multiple Hungarian champion. As the silver medallist at the 1992 World Championship, he obtained a Pro Card, and in 2004, he won the European Championship hosted in Hungary. Besides his results, he was also internationally known for his poses performed at an artistic level, from which the most memorable one was at the 2004 European Championship, when, striking the rear pose, his muscle fibres were literally waving in his calf. The former champion currently owns the Johnny Lantos Fitness Gym in Budapest (www.shop.builder.hu).

In the 2000s, bodybuilding, thanks to the outstanding group of competitors, became well-known and attractive for leisure sport enthusiasts as well, making way for the opening of several fitness gyms. In these, men and later, women as well were working on building their muscles still under the cult photographs of Arnold Schwarzenegger. Some wanted to create the ideal body for themselves, while others were specifically preparing for competitions, for which they had to engage in a special lifestyle, with particular attention to nutrition, regular, scientifically elaborated training routines and proper rest. These all became necessary to achieve success, as for example Béla Kathi did, who became a key personality in the sport and made great contribution to its promotion. Kathi started his career as a powerlifter, and then moved on to

achieve outstanding results in bodybuilding. At present, he is a gym-chain owner and creator and is involved in gym equipment distribution (www.shop.builder.hu).

One of the outstanding figures of the 2010s is Dániel Tóth, who is regarded to be one of the bodybuilders with the greatest muscle mass in Hungary. He has achieved remarkable international results, for example, in 2012 he became 3rd at the Arnold Classic, thereby obtaining the Pro Card. The other most prolific competitor of present day is Péter Molnár, who claimed the title of IFBB Champion of the Year (www.shop.builder.hu). With regards to the organization of events, the Hungarian Championship and the Hungarian Cup are held on an annual basis. The latter (usually held in spring) qualifies competitors to the European Championship, whereas the former qualifies the best ones to the World Championship.

Based on the 2020 data, there are altogether 200 Hungarian competitors registered at IFBB as the only officially recognized federation, 120 female and 80 male competitors.⁵ Competitions organized in Hungary follow the regulations of the International Federation. In female contests, the category of bodybuilding was removed and competitors with the greatest muscle mass perform in the Women's Physique category. Out of the official categories, the most popular one is still Bikini Fitness, where, although the ladies have well-worked muscles, a feminine figure is preferred.

In Hungary, we know little about the internationally successful female bodybuilding athletes, which is also due to the lack of media appearances. Even so, the name of Gabriella Szikszay must be mentioned, who became amateur world champion in 1991 and was the first Hungarian woman to qualify and participate at the Ms. Olympia contest, where she was ranked No.16.

Conclusion

Besides the lack of relevant literature, the difficulties of the historical overview of bodybuilding lie in the fact that those involved in this sport discipline have always formed a unique and relatively closed subculture, with limited access to outsiders. In the recent years, bodybuilding as a sport has gone through historical development, and by today, it is closely connected to the fitness industry, as the federations show changing tendencies in the creation of competition categories since the 2000s. Instead of the almost superhuman 'muscle giants', those competitors are preferred, who have built a well worked, proportionally, but not extremely muscular male or female body or body part (e.g. upper body) with the help of weight training. These competitors, following the demands of consumer society, target and promote a body image that is achievable for everyone. That is why it can happen that for those willing to engage in this sport it is not clear which direction to follow, since border lines are not precisely set between the different categories. As a result of this, building the body is much more about the achievement of the ideal body as prescribed by the health and beauty industry, rather than about commitment to bodybuilding as a sport and a specific way of life. Therefore, bodybuilders representing the 'old school' still form a unique subculture, which is perceived positively due to their extreme training workload and special lifestyle, or negatively, because of their looks and activities that are so different from the majority of society.

⁵ These data were provided in an interview with László Berkes, head of the bodybuilding department of the Hungarian Bodybuilding and Fitness Federation.

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