



BIG PICTURES

Before you look forward to the 2010 Mr. Olympia, we take a look back at the greatest photos of past Olympias



A CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT

At the first Mr. Olympia, part of the grand prize was a crown that winner Larry Scott was understandably reluctant to wear. Could runner-up Harold Poole be smiling because he didn't have to wear a crown? Ben and Joe Weider flank the bodybuilders.
Photo: Unknown, 1965

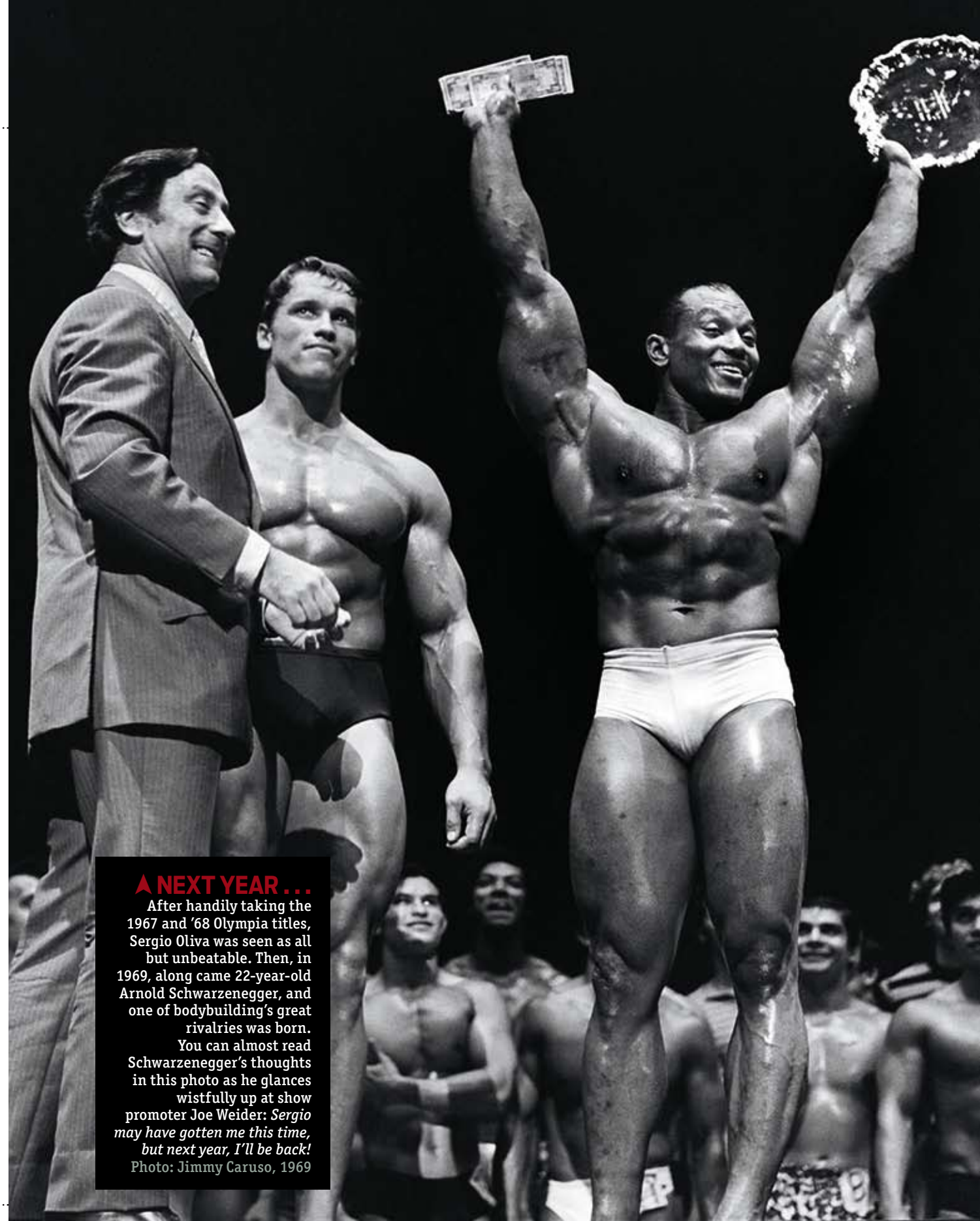
This year marks the 45th anniversary of a contest Joe Weider dreamed up one evening as he and Larry Scott were kicking back with a couple of brews, pondering bodybuilding's future. From such humble beginnings an event would be born that is recognized today as the pinnacle of bodybuilding achievement.

The Mr. Olympia contest (named after the brand of beer Weider and Scott were sipping that night) has consistently provided unforgettable memories. Thanks to the numerous talented photographers on hand to cover the show each fall, many of those memories have been captured for posterity and published in magazines such as FLEX and MUSCLE & FITNESS, and in recent years, posted online.

Yet, for as many memorable photos have been snapped over the decades, only a select few have stood the test of time as indelible. Whether they capture moments of onstage drama or backstage tension, or simply convey the inherent artistry of bodybuilding, these pictures deserve special recognition, as do the photographers who took them.

So, join us in looking back at 45 years of Olympia history through the lenses of Chris Lund, Art Zeller, Kevin Horton, Jimmy Caruso, Mike Neveux and others, and feel free to use these amazing shots as motivation to reach your own personal bodybuilding pinnacle.

PHOTOS: (1965-1990) COURTESY OF WEIDER HEALTH AND FITNESS



A NEXT YEAR...

After handily taking the 1967 and '68 Olympia titles, Sergio Oliva was seen as all but unbeatable. Then, in 1969, along came 22-year-old Arnold Schwarzenegger, and one of bodybuilding's great rivalries was born.

You can almost read Schwarzenegger's thoughts in this photo as he glances wistfully up at show promoter Joe Weider: *Sergio may have gotten me this time, but next year, I'll be back!*
Photo: Jimmy Caruso, 1969

BY SHAWN PERINE SENIOR WRITER

SERGIO THE GREAT

Despite losing to Schwarzenegger at this contest, the 1972 Mr. Olympia is widely regarded as Oliva's greatest showing. This photo of Oliva hitting his signature "Victory" pose is as iconic as any in bodybuilding history.

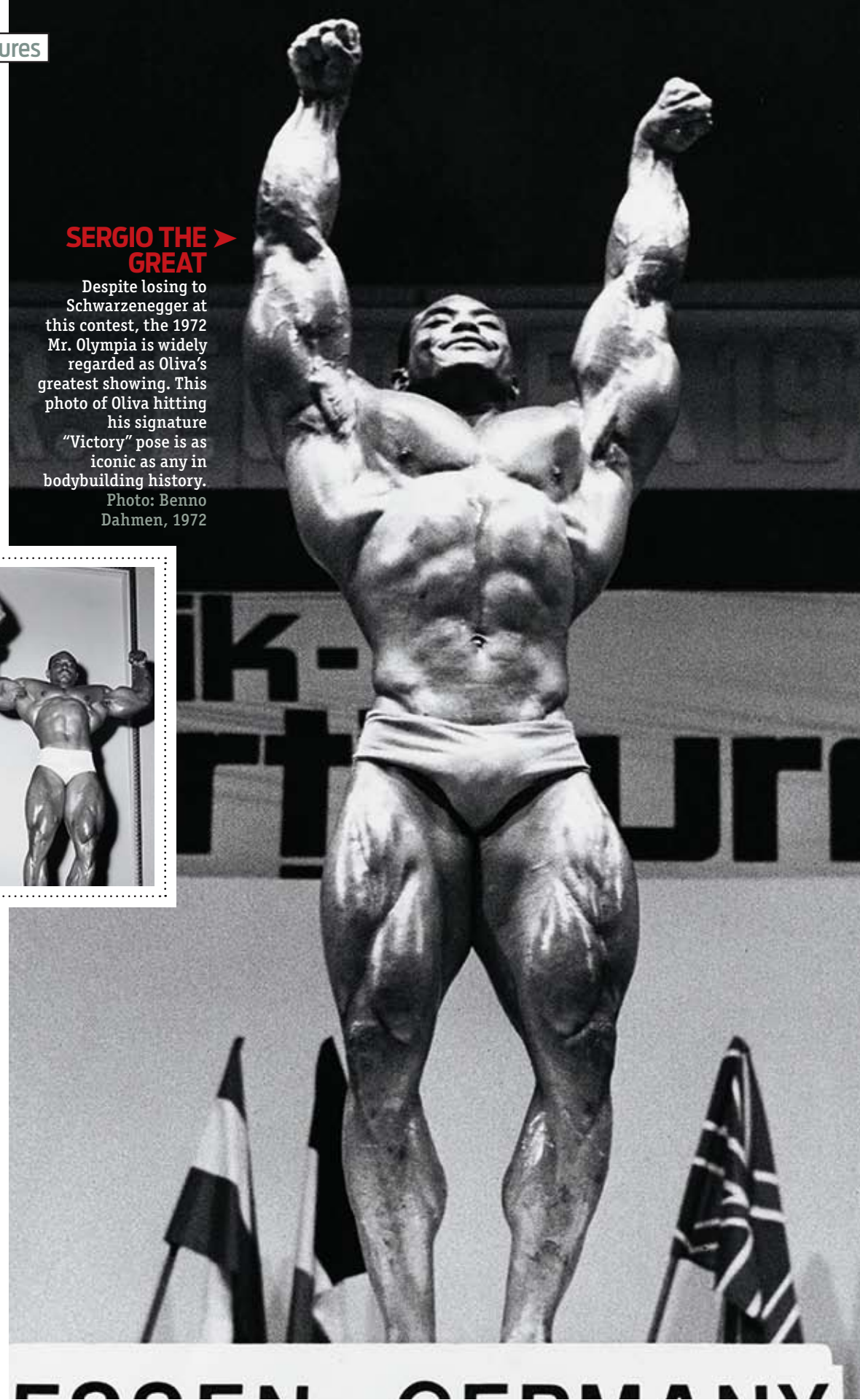
Photo: Benno Dahmen, 1972



THE EYES HAVE IT

By the year 1970, Schwarzenegger had caught up to the great Oliva, besting him at the Mr. World contest two weeks before they would go head-to-head at that year's Olympia. Still, it was anyone's show, and Schwarzenegger's concerns over battling The Myth were evident in his eyes during the posedown.

Photo: Caruso, 1970



JUMP FOR JOY

In both his 1976 and 1981 Olympia wins, Franco Columbu bounded into space, propelled by legs that routinely squatted more than 600 pounds.

Here, he's being congratulated by over-200-pound-class winner Ken Waller at a time when the open Olympia had weight divisions. Photo: Unknown, 1976



VICTORY!

After two years filling the runner-up spot, Chris Dickerson finally broke through to the top in 1982. Holding up a Churchillesque "V for victory" sign, he cupped his trophy in the other hand (he would receive his Sandow weeks later) in a shot that would become the cover of the very first issue of FLEX magazine, in April 1983. Photo: Mike Neveux, 1982

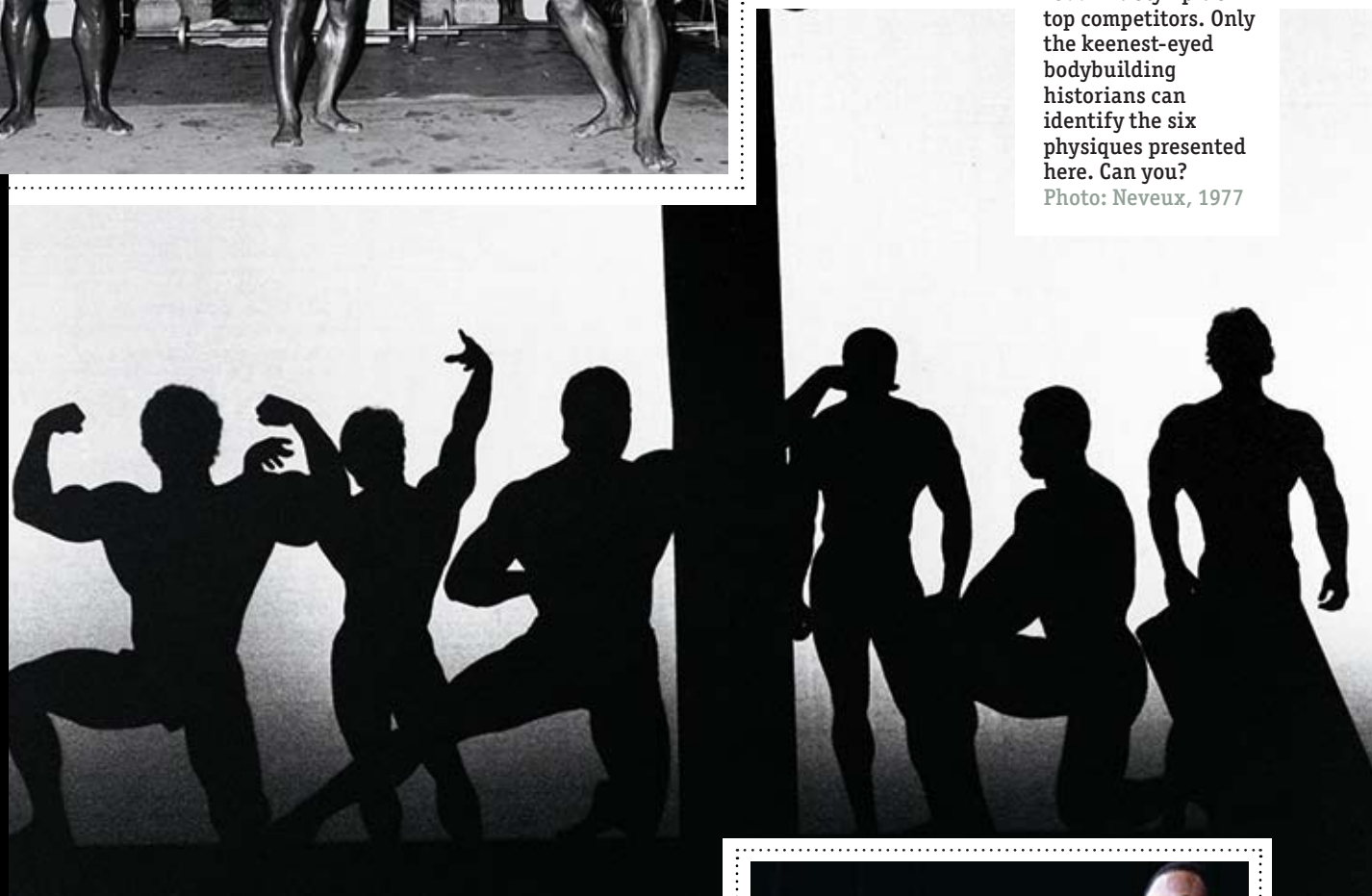


◀ **THREE KINGS**

In the early '70s, prejudgings were often held in back rooms, leaving the finals for the stage. Here, Serge Nubret, Columbu and Schwarzenegger (the contest's only competitors) hit the most-muscular shot. Photo: Art Zeller, 1973

SHADOW ▼ MEN

In what may be the most artistic photo ever taken at an Olympia, Mike Neveux captured the silhouettes of the 1977 Mr. Olympia's top competitors. Only the keenest-eyed bodybuilding historians can identify the six physiques presented here. Can you? Photo: Neveux, 1977



OH, BABY! ▶

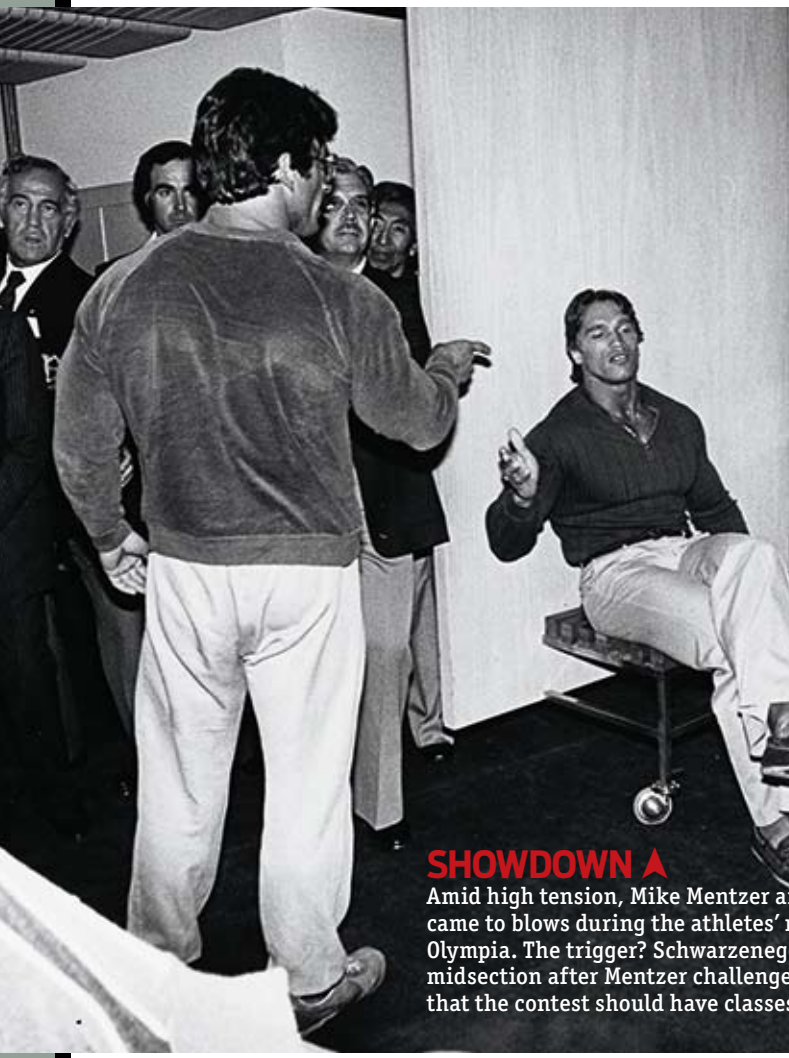
The 1984 Mr. Olympia would mark two historic events in bodybuilding: the ascension of Lee Haney to the best in the world and the return of Sergio Oliva to an IFBB stage after 12 years away. Ever-temperamental Oliva nearly stormed off of the stage upon being announced eighth, until former FLEX Editor-in-Chief and Mr. World Rick Wayne handed him his newborn son, Sergio Jr., whom the elder Myth proudly displayed to the Felt Forum audience. Photo: Zeller, 1984



PHOTOS: (TOP) ZELLER@FITNESS PUBLICATIONS, INC./ COURTESY OF WEIDER HEALTH AND FITNESS

THE KING AND US

By the time of his sixth Mr. Olympia win in 1975, Schwarzenegger was established as all but unbeatable. Here, he's flanked by Nubret, Ben Weider and Lou Ferrigno as *Pumping Iron* director George Butler films the ceremony for his now-legendary documentary. Photo: Caruso, 1975



SHOWDOWN

Amid high tension, Mike Mentzer and Schwarzenegger nearly came to blows during the athletes' meeting preceding the 1980 Olympia. The trigger? Schwarzenegger needled Mentzer about his midsection after Mentzer challenged Schwarzenegger's assertion that the contest should have classes. Photo: Neveux, 1980



IF LOOKS COULD KILL

Offstage, Lee Haney and Rich Gaspari were the best of friends, but in the heat of battle, they were warriors. Here, Haney is announced the winner of the Sandow for the fourth consecutive year, and it was the second of three years in a row that Gaspari would play bridesmaid to Haney. Fourth-place finisher Mike Christian seems to be feeling a bit more magnanimous than Gaspari. Photo: Greg Aiken, 1987



UPSET

A telling moment in Olympia history is captured here as Dickerson is announced runner-up at the 1981 Mr. Olympia, leaving Columbu the last man standing. Danny Padilla (fifth) and Roy Callender (fourth) are both leaving the stage in protest as gracious Tom Platz (third) congratulates Dickerson. Columbu's friend Jusup Wilkosz (sixth) sticks around for the final announcement. The outcome of the '81 O is arguably the most disputed in bodybuilding history. Photo: Unknown, 1981

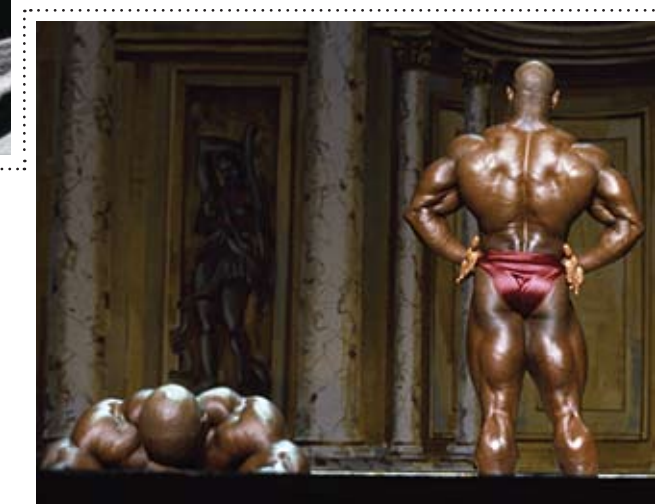
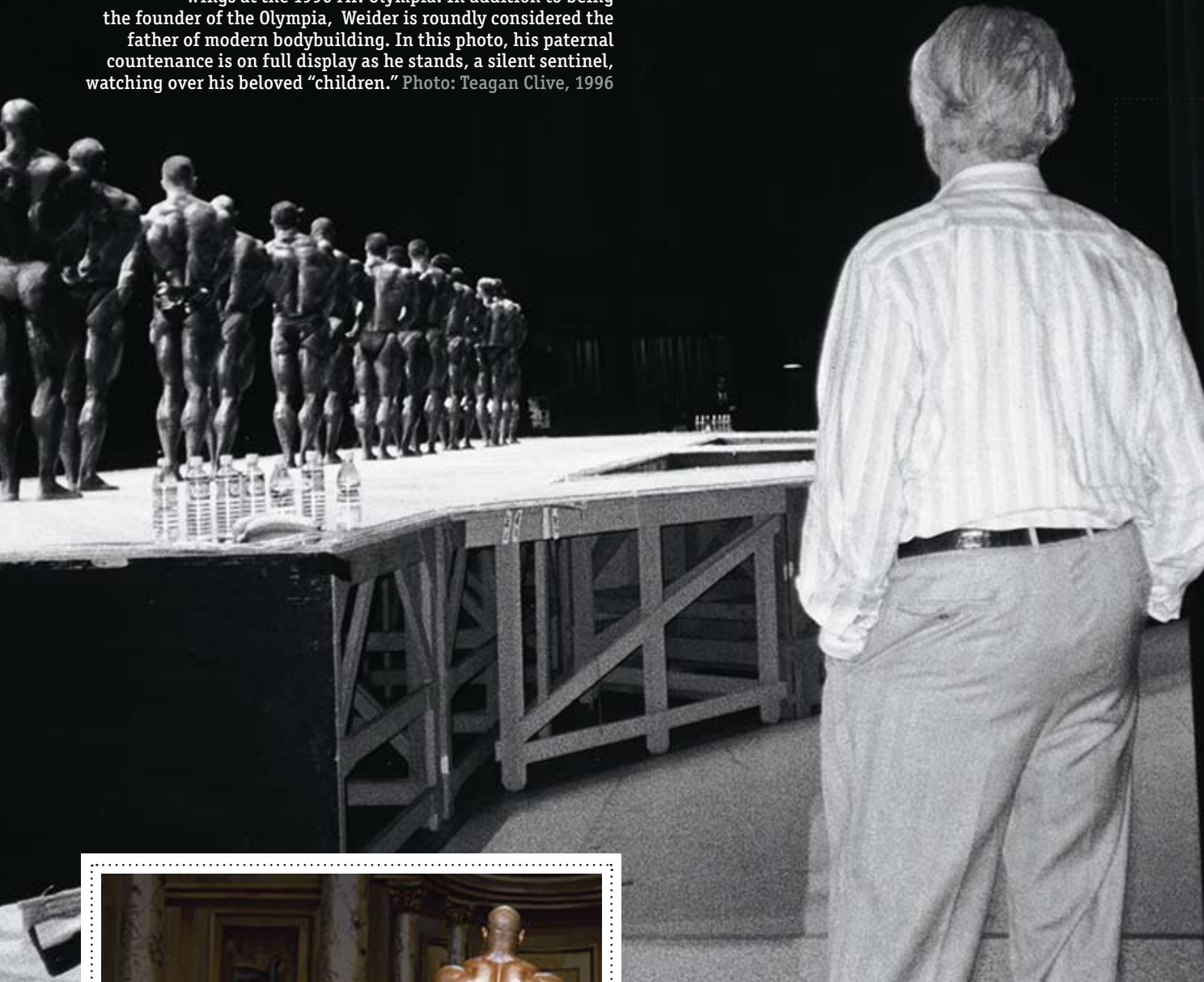
BEST FOR LAST

For his final, record-breaking eighth Olympia win (beating Schwarzenegger's seven), Haney came in at an impressive 252 pounds, and he needed every bit of that dense mass to overcome Dorian Yates — the first opponent to match Haney in both stature and sheer size. It was the end of one reign and the beginning of another — Yates returned the following year and put his own iron grip on the Sandow (taking six) until his retirement following the 1997 Olympia. Photo: Chris Lund, 1991



PROUD PAPA ▶

This poignant shot captured Joe Weider in the theater wings at the 1996 Mr. Olympia. In addition to being the founder of the Olympia, Weider is roundly considered the father of modern bodybuilding. In this photo, his paternal countenance is on full display as he stands, a silent sentinel, watching over his beloved "children." Photo: Teagan Clive, 1996



◀ **SAY WHAT?**

Photographer Chris Lund was in perfect position to catch a telling moment, this time at the 1999 Olympia, where a shocked Ronnie Coleman defeated a dismayed and perplexed Flex Wheeler. In case you can't tell, that's Coleman on the floor and Wheeler with his back to the camera. Photo: Lund, 1999



◀ **KING COLEMAN**

In what would be his last Olympia win, Coleman took advantage of the short-lived trend of using props in posing routines. As he vied for his record-tying (with Haney) eighth Sandow, Coleman lit up the stage in a red velvet cape and suitably ornamental crown.

Photo: Kevin Horton, 2005



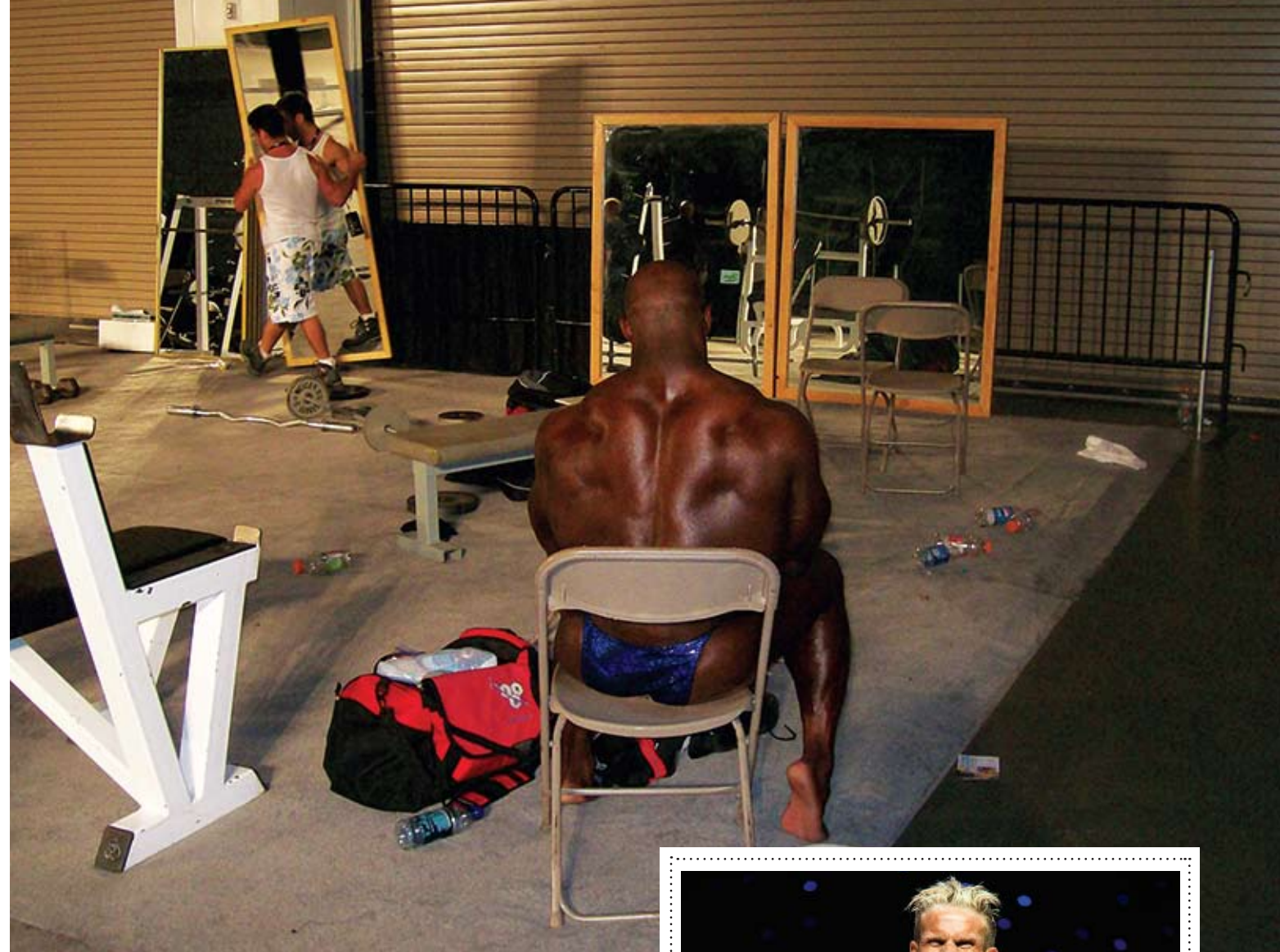
◀ **LEGENDS, ALL**

Former FLEX Editor-in-Chief Peter McGough had the idea to unite all nine Olympia winners onstage with Joe Weider and, as was hoped, it was a great moment waiting to be photographed.
Photo: Lund, 1995

NO UPSET ▶

Even Coleman himself believed he was about to be dethroned by Jay Cutler, as evidenced by his "second" finger sign. When Iron Jay was announced runner-up, pandemonium ensued. It would be Coleman's most controversial win of his eight title runs, and a bitter disappointment for Cutler.

Photo: Lund, 2001



I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE ▲

Far from the dominant force he was during his unstoppable eight-year Olympia-winning run, Ronnie Coleman returned to the sport's grandest stage for a final farewell in 2007. After placing fourth and announcing his retirement to a standing ovation, the man many consider the greatest bodybuilder in history was left alone with his thoughts. Sitting backstage long after competitors and fans had left Orleans Arena, Coleman lingered as the maintenance crew cleaned up around him. "I don't want to leave," a teary-eyed Coleman told FLEX Senior Writer Greg Merritt. "I just want to soak it up and sit backstage at the Olympia this one last time." Photo: Allan Donnelly, 2007

◀ **A NEW HOPE**

By 2006, bodybuilding had long grown accustomed to Coleman being named Mr. Olympia each fall. So, when emcee Bob Cicherillo announced Cutler winner of the 2006 O, Orleans Arena erupted in a cacophony of shock and glee. Not the least gleeful was sixth-place finisher Gustavo Badell, who saw Coleman's dethroning as a chance for all pro bodybuilders to fulfill their dream of one day ascending to the Olympia throne.

Photo: Lund, 2006



A TITLE RECLAIMED ▶

In the show's 44-year history, no one had ever regained the Sandow after losing it the previous year — until now. Amid rumors that he was washed up, Cutler — with his all-time best combination of size and condition, particularly in his legs — crushed the competition in the deepest Mr. O lineup in recent years, claiming title number three and putting himself in the history books.

Photo: Horton, 2009 FLEX

