



Take That!

Gustavo Badell Went From Third-Tier to Top-Level Pro and Thumbed His Nose at the Skeptics

by David Young

If you were going to hand out a trophy for the Most Improved Bodybuilder of 2004, it would have to go to Gustavo Badell. A few years ago I was having lunch with friends who were also IFBB pro bodybuilders, and Gustavo's name came up. The guy has a great physique, I said. He just needs to get his conditioning down and work on bringing up a few lagging bodyparts. "No, David," one man argued, "the guy will never be a top contender. He placed 13th at the IRON MAN Pro and 24th at the Olympia." I kept quiet, but I knew I was right.

Well, guys, I hate to say I told you so. Actually, that's not true. I don't mind saying it at all. I told you Gus-

tavo had the stuff. With the help of Milos Sarcev and a nice sponsorship contract with MuscleTech, Gustavo turned his entire bodybuilding career around and thumbed his nose at the skeptics. I've always said that you should never judge bodybuilders by their past showings. A person can look the same for years and then make some changes in diet, training and/or attitude, and presto. He or she is like a whole different person.

By now everyone with access to the Internet knows that Gustavo placed third at the '04 IRON MAN Pro, where he qualified for the Olympia, but the fierce competitor didn't stop there. He placed seventh at the Arnold and an amazing third at the Olympia, beating some of the biggest names in the sport.

He's had his pictures in every magazine and on many Web sites, including IRON MAN's graphic-muscle.com and flexonline.com, and he's been discussed on some of the biggest bulletin boards, including getbig.com, musculamayhem.com, ironage.us

and bodybuilding.com.

With all he's accomplished, Gustavo's most impressive quality is that he absolutely loves life. He loves his family and loves training and competing. It's wonderful to see that kind of enthusiasm in a pro these days. Many lose the hunger after earning their cards. Not Gustavo. You can feel it when he speaks.

DY: Where were you born, and where do you live now?

GB: I was born on November 3, 1972, in Venezuela. Now I live in Carolina, Puerto Rico, with my wife, Jessica, and our two children, Gustavo Jr., 11, and Barbie Ann, two. They are my biggest fans!

DY: What are your height and weight, and how long have you been training and competing?

GB: I'm 5'8" tall. My competition weight is 236 pounds, and my off-season weight is 255 to 260. I began training when I was 18 years old. My first competition was the 1990 Junior Caribbean Championships, which I won.

DY: So you've been training for nearly 15 years?



“My arms started growing like crazy, and all I was doing were chinups, pushups and dips.”

GB: And loving it!

DY: How did you get started in bodybuilding?

GB: When I was young, I always liked contact sports like boxing and kickboxing. When I was 16 or 17, I started amateur boxing, but I was skinny. My trainer told me to start lifting to put on weight and build up my arms because you get hit on the arms a lot, and it helps if they're bigger.

I started training and, as it would turn out, I have good genetics for

bodybuilding. My arms started growing like crazy, and all I was doing were chinups, pushups and dips. People started asking me if I was training for bodybuilding, but I said, “No, I'm just boxing.” They would say, “Wow! Your arms are huge for your body!” So then I started lifting weights, and I bought some books and magazines to learn about training and dieting. I began to really like it, and after six months I entered and won my first show. Now I love it. I'm so happy to be a bodybuilder!

DY: Besides being a pro bodybuilder, what do you do for a living?

GB: I'm a personal trainer in Puerto Rico. Most of my clients are top-level business executives and bankers and lawyers.

DY: Do you participate in other sports?

GB: I like aquatic sports like snorkeling, and I go shrimping sometimes.

DY: What motivates you to train and diet?

GB: Well, I love bodybuilding, and I love training, so diet is part of my life. In the past I really didn't know the proper way to diet for competitions, but I've always been very disciplined with my diet because I want to do well. I'm very motivated—very motivated! I never complain about my diet. My wife is supportive, and that helps. **Milos Sarcev** has been great at giving me the knowledge about training and diet that I needed. **Milos** is so knowledgeable, and he's become a good friend.

I'm motivated by being better at every competition. I love bodybuilding and want to do it all my life. The only time when I'm going to stop is when I die. I love the sport. Seriously!

DY: Your passion and enthusiasm really come through, and they're contagious. How does your diet vary from off-season to precontest?

GB: In the off-season I eat more complex carbohydrates like potatoes, rice and oatmeal. I also eat more red meat. Before a contest I restrict carbohydrates and eat more chicken and fish. It's all part of the plan to improve every time I compete.

DY: Do you have a cheat day?

GB: No, never in contest season. I'm very disciplined. No one has to push me. I want it badly.

DY: Tell me about something you've done that you're proud of.

GB: My nephew, Charlie, has Down's syndrome. I wanted to take him to the gym and show him how to train. Everyone at the gym said, “Why are you even trying?” They didn't think he could do anything.

Sometimes I couldn't communicate with him with words, but I'd show him *(continued on page 160)*



“I don’t want to get bigger, just always better.”

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(continued from page 156) how to do things by example: breathing, form, contracting up and down. Then he started to like it, and he’s gotten really good at it. He uses great form and everything. It makes me feel so good to see how happy it makes him! I love him very much, and he’s my number-one fan—he has all the magazines I’ve ever been in.

DY: Do you have any role models?

GB: Shawn Ray was the guy I most wanted to be like. He’s not too big, but he’s not too small. He’s just perfect. Plus, I like his attitude. He would always smile, he’s well-spoken, and he was also a great poser. So when I first started bodybuilding, I said to myself, I want to be like him.

Now my role model is **Milos Sarcev**. He’s my trainer and my friend. He’s like a big brother to me, and he’s taught me so much, not just about training and dieting but also how to enjoy bodybuilding no matter what the result of a contest. I’m just so happy to be competing and doing what I love, and he’s the

same way. He’s a real inspiration to me, and I feel fortunate to know him and his family.

DY: What are your goals?

GB: I want to be the best bodybuilder I can be—not to win contests, but for me. It would be great to be Mr. Olympia, but I can’t say, “I’m going to win,” or “I’m going to be in the top five.” You never know what the judges think. I want to show everyone how good I can be, and I want to always get better. I don’t want to get bigger, just always better.

DY: How many weeks out do you start your preparation?

GB: I start at 12 to 18 weeks, but I’m already eating clean and staying lean at that point.

DY: What do you do for cardio?

GB: Cardio is 30 minutes in the morning first thing, working up to 45 minutes, and another session at night.

DY: What supplements do you use?

GB: Muscletech **Meso-Tech** shake. Muscletech Cell Tech and the

Hydroxycut before each cardio session.

DY: Can you describe a typical day of contest dieting?

GB: Okay.

Meal 1

2 cups oatmeal
15 egg whites
Water

Meal 2

Muscletech **Meso-Tech** shake
4 weeks before a contest switch to
2 chicken breasts
Steamed broccoli

Meal 3

White fish
Baked potato
Steamed broccoli

Meal 4

Muscletech **Meso-Tech** shake
4 weeks before a contest switch to
2 chicken breasts
Steamed asparagus

Meal 5

Steak
Baked potato
Steamed broccoli

Before evening cardio

Muscletech **Hydroxycut**

Meal 6

Muscletech **Meso-Tech** shake
with Crystal Light
4 weeks before a contest switch to
White fish
Steamed broccoli

Meal 7

15 egg white whites
Steamed broccoli

DY: How do you overcome plateaus?

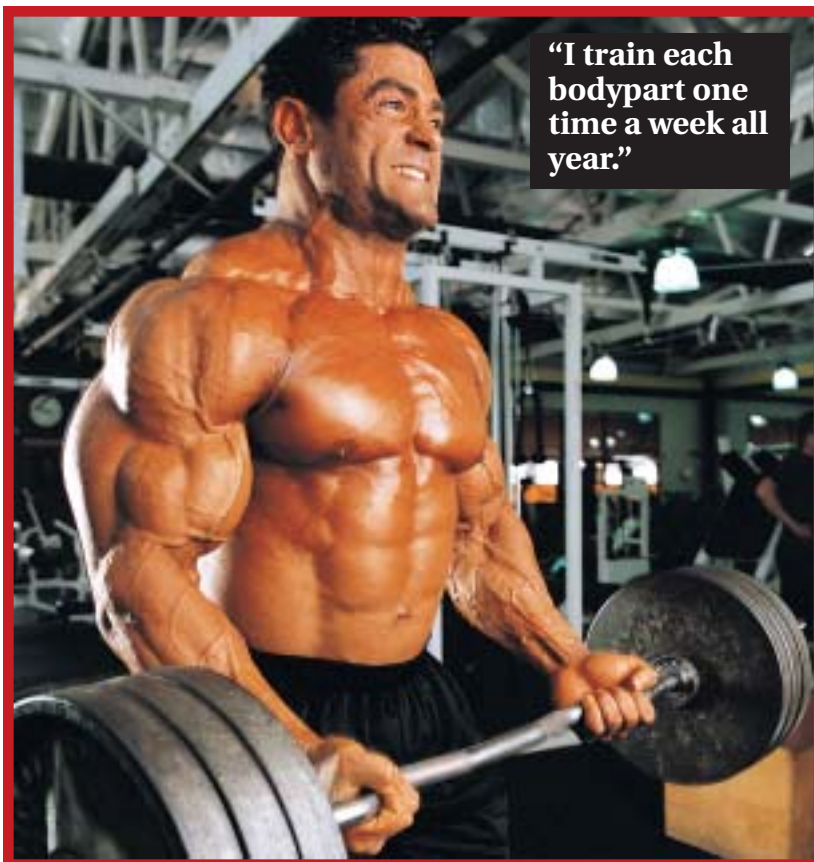
GB: First, I just take a break for a week or two. Then I come back and change it up a little. Do that, and eventually, you’ll start growing again.

DY: What’s your training philosophy?

GB: I listen to my body. I thrive on high-volume workouts.

DY: Can you outline your training routine?

GB: Sure, I train each bodypart one time a week all year, even before a contest. Most exercises get four sets, and I like high repetitions—in the 12 to 15 range—with heavy weight.



“I train each bodypart one time a week all year.”

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“I like high repetitions—in the 12-to-15 range.”

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Monday: Chest, biceps and abs

- Incline presses
- Bench presses
- Machine vertical bench presses
- Flyes
- Dumbbell curls
- Standing barbell curls
- Preacher curls
- One-arm cable curls
- Standing cable curls
- Reverse curls
- Wrist curls
- Various ab exercises

Tuesday: Back, triceps and abs

- Chins
- Pulldowns
- Barbell rows
- Dumbbell rows
- Lying extensions
- Dips
- Pushdowns
- Various ab exercises

Wednesday: Shoulders and abs

- Dumbbell presses
- Hammer Strength machine presses
- Dumbbell laterals
- Upright rows
- Rear-delt machine
- Dumbbell bent-over laterals
- Shrugs
- Various ab exercises

Thursday: Quads and hamstrings

- Front squats
- Squats
- Hack squats
- Leg presses
- Lunges
- Leg extensions
- Leg curls
- Deadlifts

Friday: Calves and abs

- Smith-machine standing calf raises
- Standing calf machine
- Seated calf raises

I work abs four times a week in contest season, usually supersetting these exercises:

- Crunches
- Cable crunches
- Leg raises
- Cable serratus pulls

DY: What are some of the challenges you've faced as a pro bodybuilder?

GB: Being noticed and judged all the time. When you're a baseball player, unless you're really famous, nobody notices you. You don't stand out. As a bodybuilder you are so much bigger than everyone that you stand out. Wherever you go—to the bank or to the supermarket—people notice you. Some people tell you how good you look, but others start talking about steroids.

It bothered me when my son came home from school and said, "Papa, a bunch of boys from school

said the only reason you got big is because of steroids." So I said to him, "Well, what do you think?" And he said, "You eat six or seven times a day, and you train so hard every day and you take a lot of protein." It bothers me when people tell my son that they don't respect what his father does. They respect baseball players, but bodybuilding is harder than baseball. Baseball is about having a talent and playing a game. But with bodybuilding you have to train and diet and get enough sleep

Gustavo Badell's Contest History

- '97 IFBB World Amateur Championships, 10th heavyweight
- '98 IFBB Grand Prix Germany, 9th
- '99 IFBB Grand Prix England, 17th
- '99 IFBB Night of Champions, did not place
- '99 IFBB World Pro Championship, did not place
- '00 IFBB **IRON MAN Pro**, 18th
- '00 IFBB Night of Champions, did not place
- '00 IFBB Toronto Pro Invitational, did not place
- '00 IFBB World Pro Championship, 11th
- '01 IFBB Grand Prix England, did not place
- '01 IFBB **IRON MAN Pro**, 16th
- '01 IFBB San Francisco Pro Invitational, 11th
- '02 IFBB **IRON MAN Pro**, 13th
- '02 IFBB Toronto Pro Invitational, 3rd
- '02 IFBB Night of Champions, 10th
- '02 IFBB Southwest Pro Cup, 6th
- '02 IFBB Mr. Olympia, 24th
- '04 IFBB **IRON MAN Pro**, 3rd
- '04 IFBB Arnold Classic, 7th
- '04 IFBB San Francisco Pro Invitational, 4th
- '04 IFBB Show of Strength Pro Championship, 3rd
- '04 IFBB Mr. Olympia, 3rd

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and take supplements and do cardio. Bodybuilding is not just a sport—it's a lifestyle. You have to live it all the time.

DY: Name something you love about bodybuilding.

GB: The people you meet as a bodybuilder and the respect bodybuilders have for each other. Everyone is so supportive within the community; it's a great feeling.

Editor's note: Visit [Gustavo Badell's Web site](http://GustavoBadell.com), www.gustavobadell.com. Visit his sponsor's Web site at www.muscletech.com, and visit his contest adviser's Web site at www.milossarcev.com. **IM**