



Against All Odds

John Rowley

The crowd erupts into a standing ovation as this unlikely warrior finishes his posing routine. Though he is out-muscled by 50 pounds and more and not nearly as cut as others or as he wanted to be, the crowd is uncontrollable. Backstage all the competitors are hugging him and thanking him for being an inspiration. His name: David Lyons. His challenge: Multiple Sclerosis (MS). His answer to the challenge: fight!

Not only is David fighting MS, he is inspiring others from all walks of life to face challenges head-on regardless of what the experts say. In 2006 at the age of 47, the executive producer of Lyons Entertainment was working out -- which wasn't unusual. As a former gym owner you could find David working out often; what was unusual was the weird pain and tingling sensations he was experiencing down his left arm. As weeks went by, the pain, numbness and tingling spread throughout his body, making it almost impossible to feel or coordinate his movements. He eventually landed in an emergency room paralyzed from the chest down.

After an MRI, the doctors thought it was a brain tumor that needed surgery, which would leave him either dead or in a wheelchair. Refusing the operation was David's response and after many MRIs, a spinal tap and blood tests, his neurologist told him it was MS and

that he would be wheelchair-bound. David refused to listen and forced himself to walk ... walk right out of the hospital and into the fight of his life.

In the midst of deals in Hollywood he gave up, took no calls, stopped working out and started feeling sorry for himself, as most people would do. He just gave up for more than a year. The fight was out of him ... at least that's what he thought.

Then an old bodybuilding friend came over and persisted until he got David in the gym by throwing him in a car and not accepting no for an answer. The gym was a familiar place for David but this time he was facing an unfamiliar challenger as he felt embarrassed at his body, which went from an in-shape 190 pounds to a soft 165 pounds. His lack of coordination due to the MS made it hard to work out the way he used to. As a bodybuilder David knew that success was on the other side of failure but MS was a daunting challenger, an unfamiliar opponent that thrived on failure. This is when the fight kicked back into the fighter!

David decided right on the gym floor that he would enter an NPC bodybuilding show despite knowing that the odds were against a man who was about to turn 50 with a disease that would fight against his muscle development. His training partner knew that to attempt this would take help and asked their other partner, a certified fitness trainer named Darren Barnes, to take on the challenge. After Darren picked his jaw up from the floor he committed to helping David. The MS Bodybuilding Challenge was born!





MOTIVATIONAL

Mike admits that he doesn't baby David at all and working with him is both inspirational and frustrating. David said despite all the obstacles he is facing he is putting muscle on like never before using Mike's system, even though he is on restricted calories.

At the end of the day the cheers come to a halt, the crowds go home and the excitement of the moment disappears. What doesn't go away is the ongoing fight David Lyons has every day. He lives in a constant state of fatigue, pain and numbness yet never loses focus on his goal to inspire others.

MS has been quietly victimizing its prey for years. I know this firsthand because my aunt's brother, Dr. Joe Panzerella, fought this same opponent for many years while fighting for the rights of the handicapped to live with dignity. He consistently stressed to his patients, "With disabilities, I've learned that the fighters live while the quitters die."

David Lyons isn't a quitter, he's a fighter. He has entered the ring and is making this a public fight. Please join his battle and lend your support to the MS Bodybuilding Challenge. Log onto www.thembodybuildingchallenge.com today and become one of the TEAM in "defying all odds to beat this life-changing disease."

Inspiration or desperation? Either way David decided to fight with perspiration and inspire others to action. He has been flooded with people and organizations that want to support his challenge. Powerhouse Gym; professional sports medicine physician Brad Homan; NPC promoter Deke Warner, a filmmaker friend who wanted to document his journey; the list goes on.

Within six months of training and a goal to compete in a June 2009 NPC competition only a year away, David tears his pec in half as the MS leaves him with no feeling while he overstrains on his fourth rep on a 400-pound bench press. One more obstacle that David wouldn't let stand in his way. After being told that it would take six months to heal enough to be able to get back to full training, David waits three weeks and begins on his odds-defying feat once again, this time with a goal to compete in the August 2009 Florida State Bodybuilding Championships. The rest is history!

Now it is time to do it again. David's former trainer, Darren Barnes, could not help in the preparation due to David's move to California, so David was on his own. But when David's friend and former Mr. California, Mike Torchia, hears what David is doing, he immediately takes the reigns as his trainer. Mike is the celebrity trainer of notable stars such as Al Pacino, Matt Damon, Kim Cattrall and many others. Their sights are set and the training begins for another contest in June/July 2012. Mike was inspired by David's story and wanted to help him get to the next level. He called Mark Wells, the owner of High Energy Labs supplement company, and they are now providing products for David as well as became one of his top sponsors and endorsers. Mike admits that training someone with MS for a bodybuilding show comes with many challenges and is daunting at times.

Using cardiovascular exercise to burn body fat is near impossible because when David's core temperature goes up it can trigger an MS attack and most times he cannot coordinate his movements long enough to show results. So the two have to get very creative to burn body fat. And Avanti Fitness has stepped in to help, donating a Cardio Gym for David to use at home when he is able to push through a cardio workout.



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