

Building on tradition

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Student shares how bodybuilding was introduced and why he stuck with it

Senior Reese Stahlbaum never wanted to pursue some of the more common sports and decided to take on the sport of bodybuilding. “Sometimes I used to be made fun of and not taken seriously by people who were gifted in sports and generally felt left out,” Stahlbaum said. “Eighth grade is usually the year people take up their personalities, social groups are formed, and when the athletes go towards one particular sport and I didn’t see myself going that way so I had to find something unique for me.”

Stahlbaum claims that his father’s success has inspired him to take on the sport. “My dad was third in Michigan in my (weight) class, and competed at the state level,” Stahlbaum said. “We’ve always had a weight room down the hall from my room and just seeing the pictures of him winning these big competitions, I just think ‘I can do that, I want to see if I can do that.’”

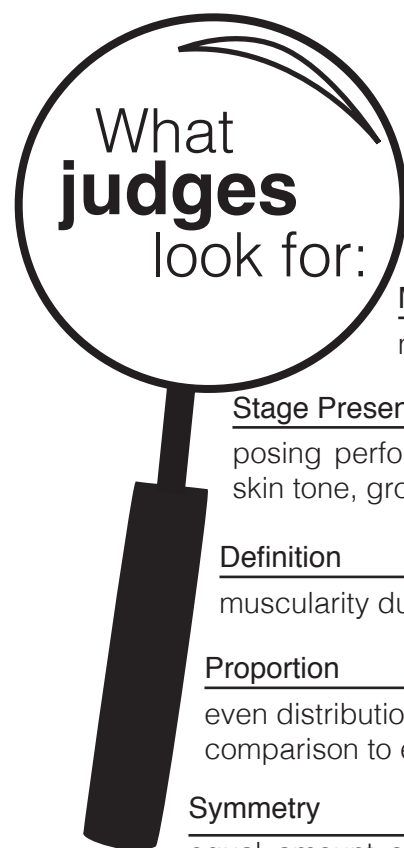
During bodybuilding, athletes can train over multiple months and sometimes even years before even competing once. Many bodybuilders only compete one time a year and base their schedule up preparing for that one competition. Stahlbaum’s first competition was back in May of 2015 where he placed first in the team division and fifth in the men’s division.

In the men’s division, Stahlbaum faced 14 men where he was the youngest by nine years. “[At the end of the competition], I was sitting there packing my stuff up thinking that there was no possible way I was going to place because these were grown men who were practically three feet taller and were better than me,” Stahlbaum said. “But they called the fifth spot and that’s the last place where you can get a trophy which was a pretty big deal for me because of how many men there were.”

Reese’s father, Jeff Stahlbaum, who competed in the ‘80s at the state level, helped Reese with the general form and muscle gain. “I didn’t let Reese start lifting until he was about 11 where we started to do some real light workouts and lifts, but really for the first year and half, I did nothing but strengthen up his joints, especially in his shoulders, hips and knees,” Jeff said. “So when he got to 16 or 17 years old where he is now, he can really push the heavy weights and I don’t have to worry about him getting injured.”

Reese is now usually in the weight room five days a week, for two and a half hours getting stronger and preparing for these competitions. “People always tell me that I’m working too hard and [for] too long but really I’m just enjoying myself and it’s the consistency that helps,” he said.

Although Stahlbaum does not need as much help anymore, he claims that his father is always there when he needs the assistance. One of the biggest imprints he has left on Reese is to not use drugs. “There is a lot of drugs in the bodybuilding and weight-lifting world but there is no reason for that,” Jeff said. “You may see temporary ben-



Mass

muscular size of the bodybuilder

Stage Presence

posing performance and other factors like skin tone, grooming, charisma and poise

Definition

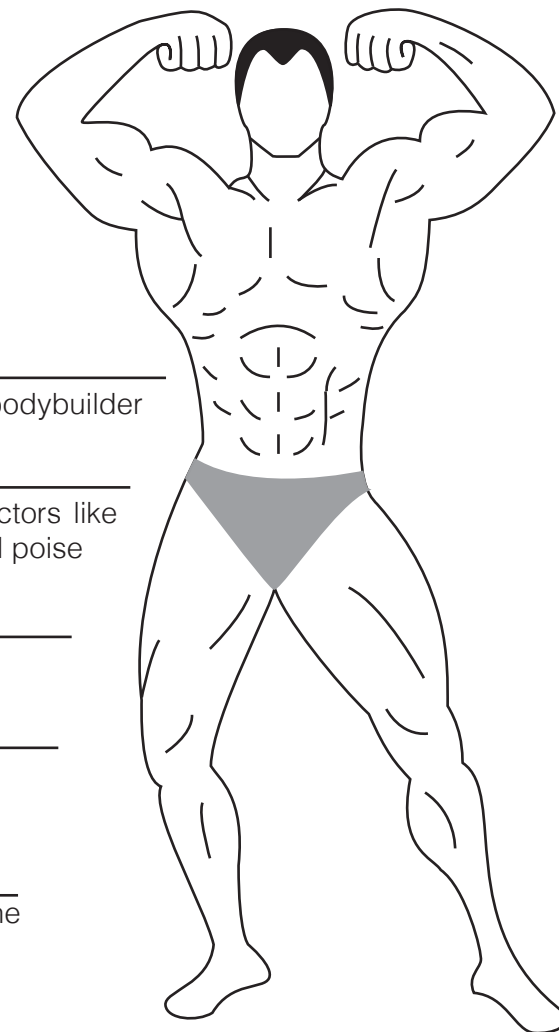
muscularity due to lack of body fat

Proportion

even distribution of muscle in comparison to each muscle group

Symmetry

equal amount of muscle between the left and right side of the bodybuilder



efits, but in the long run it’s just not worth it.” Because Reese competes in the natural bodybuilding competitions, he undergoes drug tests multiple times every year and has to stay clean in order to be eligible to compete.

Judges look for both symmetry and how lean the competitor is. Bodybuilders can only have about four to five percent body fat. This takes around seven to eight months of lean eating (grilled or roasted chicken, potatoes, clean cut carbohydrates like white and brown rice, etc.), a lot of weight lifting and just a little bit of cardiovascular exercise.

Bodybuilders spend a lot of time eating lean calories and foods to try and bulk up as much as they can until they are about two weeks out from the competition where they have to tighten up and start dieting much more. Within those two weeks they have to start dropping their amount of carbohydrates and salt they take in. They then have to consume a lot more protein and water in order to drop body fat and become more lean.

When the competition day comes all of the bodybuilders, which can sometimes be hundreds, walk out individually and pose in front of several hundred to a thousand people watching and judging them from head-to-toe. “We also have to put on this mocha colored paint for [stage presence] and it’s always hard to sleep because your skin is tight and you have to keep your body still,” Stahlbaum

said. The eight judges then have to cut the competitors down to the top five bodybuilders where they will stand on the stage side by side posing for their final standings.

With the wrestling season starting up, preparing for his upcoming competition in Spring may be difficult. “Reese’s upper body is exceptional and his chest back and arms look great, but what we really need to do work on to be successful in his next competition is his building up his legs,” Jeff said. “We are really crunched for time and because he is in wrestling season too, he isn’t able to weight lift full time like he would’ve been.”

Head wrestling coach Aaron Tecklenburg believes that Reese’s intense lifting and bodybuilding both gives the team an edge but also has him at a bit of a disadvantage. “When his competition walks out to shake his hand they are thinking ‘oh my gosh this guy his huge’ and he adds the intimidation factor as he walks out as the strongest guy on the mat,” Tecklenburg said. “But the disadvantage is the lack of flexibility.”

Despite the difficulties that comes with body building, Reese plans to continue on in the future. “[Bodybuilding] takes a lot more discipline and determination than people think because it’s such a long process and you gain so many new skills,” Jeff said. “Bodybuilding is a lifestyle, not a sport.”