



Val Grose of Markham's Iron Works does a light workout with a barbell. Grose notes that contrary to popular belief, stopping the workout process won't make your muscles turn to flab. It's impossible, he insists. — Photos Bruce Etheridge

Debunking some bodybuilding myths

By BRUCE ETHERIDGE

Cannonball deltoids, bulging biceps, horseshoe triceps and armor-plated pectorals are being sought after by more men and women each year.

Thanks in large part to the 'Austrian Oak', Arnold Schwarzenegger, bodybuilding has become the fastest growing fitness craze over the last five years.

Now women, as well as men, spend hours hoisting barbells and dumbbells seeking firm, muscular physiques. 'Pumping Iron' has captured the fancy of the fitness-conscious in the eighties.

"It gives people a reason to be proud of their body," says Val Grose, chief instructor at The Iron Works gym on Bullock Dr. in Markham.

Weight training allows a person to shape his or her own body any way they choose. Through bodybuilding, a person can actively control their physical appearance.

If, for example, a man wants broader shoulders or a woman wishes firmer thighs then all they need do is embark on a weight lifting program designed to build up these areas.

Of course it's more complicated than that. The body reacts to the increased demands being placed upon it through weight lifting by increasing a muscle's size.

"Weight training tears down muscle fibres," Grose explains. "That's why you get muscle soreness after working out."

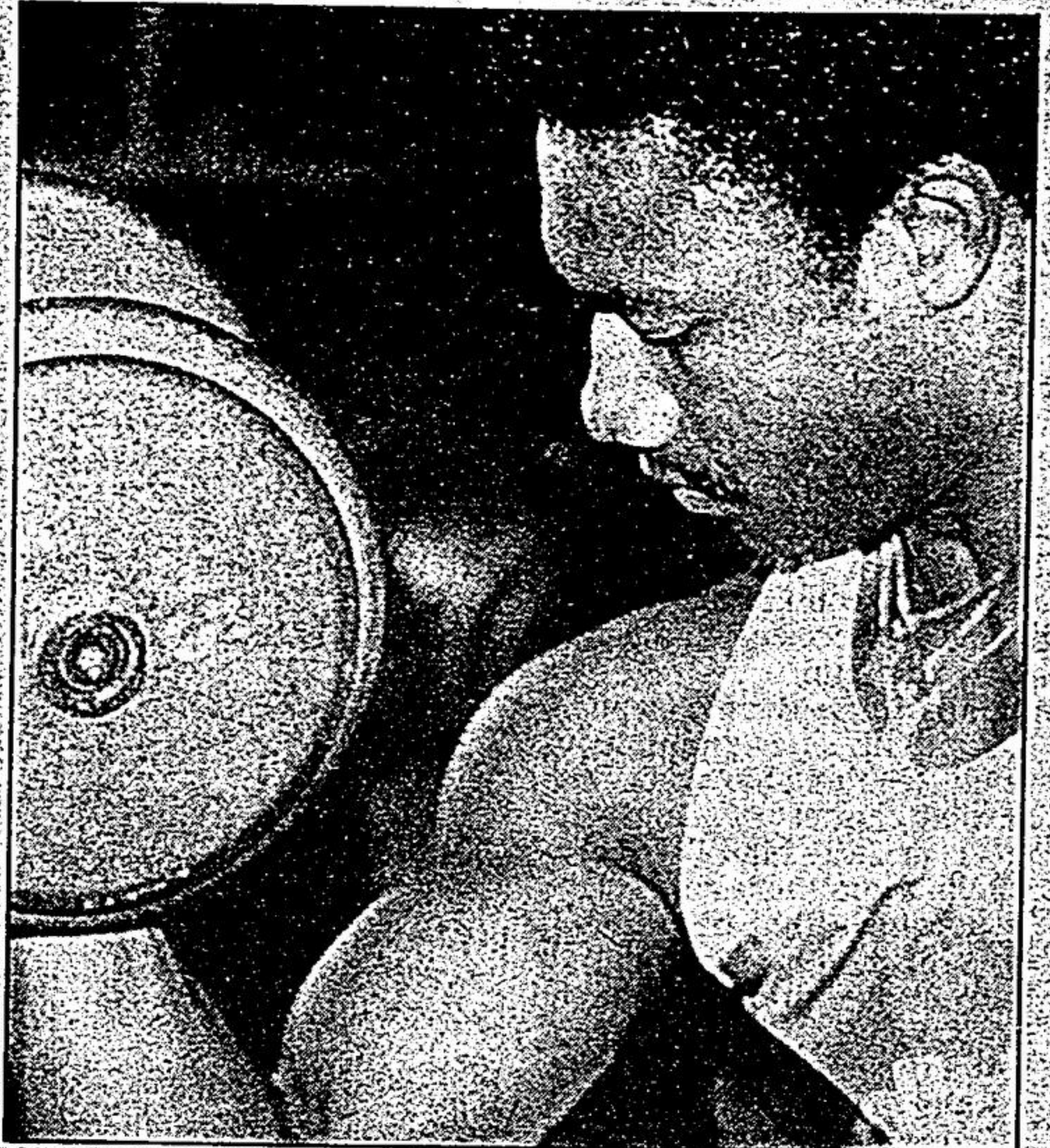
Over the next 48 hours the body "repairs itself" using proteins to rebuild the muscle tissue. To compensate for this increased workload the muscle fibres begin to increase in size.

Part of this muscle building process involves something called 'the pump'. In the book 'Pumping Iron', author Charles Gains referred to the pump as "the rush and fix of bodybuilding."

A pump is when "All the blood goes to the area or muscle your working," Grose says. As the muscle becomes flushed and engorged with blood it almost immediately begins increasing in size.

Aside from the instant gratification of watching a muscle grow right before your eyes, hormones are also released into the system.

Grose describes the feeling as a "natural high" akin to the high



Grose works out on a machine designed to increase pectoral muscle size. Fifteen repetitions on this can cause a bit of pain, but it leads to bigger and healthier pecs. And Grose says weightlifting is no more of a danger to your heart than any other sport.

experienced by long-distance runners.

Arnold Schwarzenegger even claimed that getting a pump was better than making love but Grose notes "I wouldn't go as far as saying that."

He does state that a good pump is an indicator of a good workout. "A pump means growth," he points out.

Over the years bodybuilding has been pervaded by more myths than perhaps any other activity. One of the most common about weight training is if a person stops working out the muscle turns to flab.

Muscle tissue can't change into fat cells any more than fat can be converted into muscle tissue. It would be like turning lead into gold.

"If you don't work out for a while you start to lose size but you don't get fat," Grose maintains. "Eating fatty foods and not working out, that's how you get fat."

Bodybuilding takes a great deal of food to fuel the body and build

muscle tissue. If, when a person stops training, he or she doesn't reduce their food intake, then fat will replace the muscle tissue giving the appearance of muscle being turned into fat.

Another popular myth about bodybuilding is that it makes one musclebound. While it is true the sheer physical size of a muscle can restrict movement, weight lifting does not make muscles permanently stiff or tense.

This notion has most probably arisen from the way bodybuilders appear during contests on television. When on stage bodybuilders are continually being evaluated by the judges. So even in a supposedly relaxed state they are flexing.

Grose says that weight lifting can actually improve joint flexibility if a muscle and its adjacent tendons and ligaments are worked at various angles through different exercises.

Many people also believe that bodybuilders simply rely on drugs — specifically steroids — to attain such physiques.

But if it were as easy as taking a pill, then everyone would have a build like Arnold Schwarzenegger.

"If you take the stuff and don't work out you're not going to get results," Grose says.

Competitive bodybuilders do generally use steroids four to six weeks before a contest, he says. But there are drawbacks.

Because the body eventually adapts to this influx of artificial male hormones, steroids are only effective for a short duration.

To continue making gains through the use of steroids a person would have to continually increase the dosage. Because of the side effects associated with the drugs this isn't possible.

And once a bodybuilder stops taking steroids the muscles return to their size prior to the time the drugs were injected.

Women often believe that if they start training with weights they will begin to develop large, manly muscles. But this is not so.

Because women have lower levels of testosterone than their male counterparts, women are limited as to how much they can increase the size of their muscles.

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