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Features

Dreams of being a bodybuilder

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05/14/2008

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A typical day for Cy-Fair High School senior Sam Parker-Smith includes school, playing Playstation and working out at the gym for two hours. Sam is training to become a professional bodybuilder. He also has cerebral palsy.



Sam and his trainer Ray flex before the bodybuilding competition in Stafford.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, cerebral palsy is a disorder that permanently affects body movement and muscle coordination and is caused by abnormalities in parts of the brain.

The condition affects Sam's legs and right arm, causing him to walk with a slight limp and need assistance with some of the weights. But he doesn't let that stop him.

"I knew when I was five years old that I wanted to be a bodybuilder," Sam said. "I was too young to lift the weights then, but I lifted my first weight at the age of 13."

In order to be competitive in bodybuilding, Sam trains two hours a day, six days a week. He also had to completely change his diet.

"I started eating healthy stuff — not the normal teen foods," he said. "I cut out sodas, ate a lot of protein, vegetables and unsaturated fat. I enjoyed the diet because you get so ripped. It gives me self-confidence."

Sam spent the last three months training for his first bodybuilding competition at the NGA 2008 Southern States National Extravaganza Bodybuilding Competition in Stafford, TX on May 9.

"Last week was nerve-racking, but as soon as I got on stage I was perfectly fine," Sam said. "The stage became like second nature to me. I just went out there and posed."

Though Sam didn't win at the competition, his trainer Ray Bessette said the whole crowd was cheering for him.

Since Sam began training with Bessette, he has gained 11 pounds of muscle and lowered his body fat from 22 percent to 7.5 percent.

With the support of his family, his trainer and his strong determination, Sam hopes to reach his ultimate goal of being around 265 lbs. and being named Mr. Olympia. He doesn't see cerebral palsy as an obstacle.

"I learned it doesn't matter what condition you have," Sam said. "Everything you're capable of is determined by what's in your heart. I hope to inspire young people."

Bessette has been working with Sam since August of 2007 and said he's seen a great change in Sam.

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"Sam used to be kind of shy and now he has a lot of confidence in himself," Bessette said. "What he's done so far at age 18 is quite the accomplishment."

Bessette said Sam is the poster child for working hard to achieve anything you want.

"I hate to even bring up his cerebral palsy, because it's really not a factor anymore," he said.

When Sam's mother approached Bessette last year asking if he would train with Sam, Bessette agreed because he knew how hard Sam would work.

"I first looked at his weaknesses and tried to strengthen those," he said. "Then I developed work-outs that he was able to do."

Bessette said Sam works harder than most people in the gym.

"He's very dedicated, disciplined and consistent," Bessette said. "Those are the three words that I would say equal success."

Sam is now training and looking forward to his next competition June 14.

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