

Tom Venuto Biography

This autobiographical piece by Tom was in answer to a series of questions he received from newsletter subscribers.



QUESTIONS:

What's your personal story?

Do you have any before pictures?

You talk about fat loss but have you ever really had to lose serious fat?

What's your body type?

Have you always been muscular?

Why should I listen to you if you've never been fat?

It helps to see where you have come from and what obstacles you personally have had to overcome to reach the type of body you show in your pictures.

ANSWERS:

I'm glad you asked these questions because you're 100% correct: If people think I'm some kind of "genetic freak" who was born with muscles and no body fat, they might wonder if my advice and coaching can help them. They might figure that progress has always come easy for me, so my methods and techniques won't apply to them.

If people think what I've done is unattainable for them, they'll be less likely to make the attempt; but if they see that I'm just like them and that I've been able to overcome hardships myself, they'll probably be more motivated to give it their best shot.

Believe it when I say; it hasn't been easy for me. I can relate to the hardest of hard-gainers and the most extreme of endomorphs.



Here's my story:

I've never been severely overweight, but there was once a time when my body fat was more than double what my off season body fat is today. I was definitely NOT naturally muscular. In grade school and as a teenager I always had a few rolls of fat around my waist and it only seemed to get worse with time. I only weighed about 155 lbs though, so 5' 8" tall I guess you could say I was a "skinny fat person."

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How I got started in bodybuilding...

When I was a 14 year old high school freshman, I saw a picture of Arnold Schwarzenegger as Conan the Barbarian and this inspired me to start training. From then on, I was totally hooked on pumping iron. I started training in my parent's garage with a barbell set and a bench. After 6 months of training at home, I joined a gym.

By the time I was a 17 year old senior in high school, I had a pretty good build: I had put size on my arms, chest and thighs; I gained about 35 pounds of muscle; I benched 300 and squatted 400, but I still had a thick layer of fat. I was very frustrated because no matter how hard I trained, I couldn't get rid of the fat. Then I went to college and discovered beer.

College days...

It didn't help that I went to a "party school" and lived in one of the most notorious party houses in town either. Twice a week we hosted keg parties and packed our basement with about 200 rowdy party-goers (just think of the movie "Animal House" if you want some idea of what went on at our place). Of course, all the training I had done came in handy because I had no problem lifting the beer kegs and carrying them up and down the stairs!

Although I continued to train diligently through college without ever missing a week of workouts, I also drank heavily every weekend and ate a lot of junk. At midnight or 1:00 am every Friday and Saturday night after the party, it was off to Sal's Pizzeria for cheese fries, stromboli or a large pepperoni pie.

During the week it was the typical college junk food diet of fast food, pizza and subs. I had been reading all the books and magazines and studying nutrition since the first day I picked up a barbell, but I just wasn't applying it.

My freshman and sophomore years in college I continued with my party animal ways, and before I knew it, I had ballooned up to a big, bulky 205 lbs. But this wasn't the same 205 lbs that I weigh in the off-season today (9% body fat).

A fitness major and a fat slob...

I was a health & fitness major and I remember doing body composition testing in exercise physiology lab. I was measured with skin folds and with bio-electric impedance analysis and I clocked in at a chunky 16% body fat (chunky for a 19 year old male bodybuilder, at least). It was my junior year in college that I finally took a long hard look in the mirror and reached a point of total disgust. I was planning on starting a career in health and fitness being a role model to others and I looked like a big fat blob.

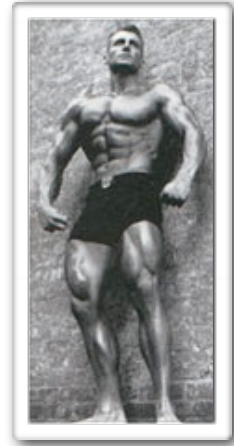
Sure I looked big and "bulked up" in an XL sweatshirt and everyone knew I lifted and I was strong, but when the shirt came off, it wasn't a pretty sight. I was 20 years old and had never seen my abs before. They say you will only change when the pain of

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remaining the same is greater than the pain of changing. Well, staying the same was too painful to bear anymore, so with the encouragement of my friends and training partners at the gym, I made a decision to finally get ripped and enter my first bodybuilding competition.

My first bodybuilding competition...

It took an entire year of incredibly hard work every single day, including hours of cardio and strict calorie counting to get there. In the summer of 1989 I finally did it; I stepped onstage at the Lehigh Valley Natural Bodybuilding competition weighing a ripped to shreds 150 lbs - a lightweight (with eight pack abs!).



Between the summer of 1988 and the summer of 1989, I lost 55 lbs! If you do the math, I obviously didn't get it quite right, because I lost a lot of lean mass, but I came away with a 2nd place trophy anyway.

I won many natural bodybuilding championships...

The next month I competed in Wildwood at the Natural New Jersey championships and won the lightweight and overall titles in my division. Since then I've gained a lot more muscle and competed 26 more times as a middleweight, including 8 first place titles and 7 second place awards.

A lot of people look at my physique today and automatically assume that I'm in some way gifted with a fast metabolism or great genetics. Let me assure you, nothing could be further from the truth. I've sweated blood for everything I've achieved. An elite bodybuilder once said, "The harder I train and the stricter I diet, the better my genetics appear." Ain't that the truth!

My body type...

I am what you call an endo-mesomorph body type. This means that I've been gifted with the genetics to develop muscle easily (mesomorph), but I also have a tendency to store body fat very easily (endomorph).

My body is very unforgiving. Even a single day of poor eating takes its toll. Not only that, but as soon as I stop doing cardio, the fat begins to accumulate, regardless of how well I'm eating.

How hard do I train?

The amount of effort it requires for me to reach the condition you see in my photos is mind-boggling! For 6-12 weeks before competitions, I literally do nothing but think, talk, eat, sleep and train bodybuilding. My diet is nothing short of total perfection, and for the last six or eight weeks before a competition, I sometimes even do cardio twice a day!

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(yes, that's 1 1/2 to 2 hours a day of training in order to hit the low single digits in body fat!)

For a competition, my body fat measures between 3% and 4%, but that doesn't last long. I like staying at 6-7% body fat, but even this requires a very concerted effort to keep.

Unless I maintain a superhuman effort, my body fat usually creeps up to about 9% in the off season. If I'm not careful, it will continue to creep up into the double digits. No matter how clean my diet is, I need cardio all year round to stay lean, even if my carbs and calories are very low. I guess you could say I have a somewhat high body fat "set point." My body doesn't like being in the single digits and I have to fight to keep it there.

The back injury...

A less than optimal metabolism isn't the only obstacle I've had to overcome. While in my early 20's I ruptured the L-4 disc in my lower back. This is another other story altogether, but let's just say I went from squatting 400 lbs. to being barely able to bend down and put on my shoes and socks.

I hope you never experience sciatic nerve pain because it's the most excruciating thing you could ever imagine. (Imagine an electric shock shooting from your lower back, down one buttock and all the way down the back of your leg, combined with low back muscle spasms). A neurosurgeon told me I shouldn't lift more than 40 lbs., I would never squat again and I would eventually need surgery. Basically, he said I could kiss bodybuilding goodbye. I never accepted his prognosis. Not for a minute. I denied it from the second the words came out of his mouth.

I limped and hobbled around in excruciating pain but I always believed I would recover 110% - and I did. It was like starting from scratch all over again. Over a period of years, I worked my way from an empty bar back up to my previous poundages, which I then exceeded.

Recovery - Stronger than ever...

After the injury, without ever getting surgery, I squatted 405 for 6, stiff legged dead lifted 315 for 6 reps, and bent over rowed 275 lbs. for 6 reps. That's lifetime natural, by the way. It's never been easy for me. It's been a challenge since day one, but I'm actually grateful for my challenges because they have caused me to develop dogged persistence and a tremendous work ethic.

I've developed a high threshold for pain and the willingness to test my limits, go the extra mile and refuse to give up. People who are extremely gifted genetically tend to



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coast on their genetics and sometimes fall far short of their full potential because of it. Their great genetics make them lazy.

Don't envy them. I can relate to those who are struggling with injuries and with those who have stubborn and diet-resistant body fat because I have been there myself. And if I can do it, then anyone can do it.

Where's my fat pictures?

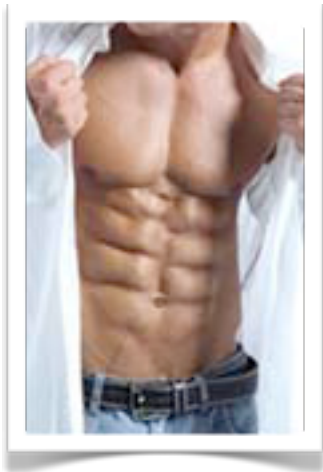
You asked if I have any "before" pictures? As a matter of fact, yes; I have a few pictures from college when I was 18 and 19 years old, including a classic "fat picture" of me sitting shirtless on the sofa with a Budweiser in hand.

As far as me posting any of these photos on the Internet for the whole world to see - well, let me think about that for a while. :-)

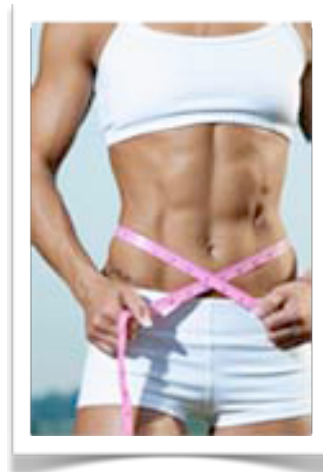
Tom Venuto

Author of [Burn The Fat, Feed The Muscle](#)

For more information about Tom's Burn the Fat Program:



BurnTheFatForMen.info



BurnTheFatForWomen.info