



20 Pounds of Muscle In Two Months!

How Mike Semanoff Packed On More Mass With Proper Diet and Basic Training With X Reps

by David Young Photography by Michael Neveux



I featured Mike Semanoff and his wife, Holly, last year after they won the 2005 Fit Couple competition at the *IRON MAN* FitExpo in Pasadena, California. They entered the show on a whim, and the next thing they knew, they got a call on their cell phone saying they'd made the finals.

I contacted Mike to see how his career was going and learned he'd just packed on 20 pounds of muscle in two months. I thought to myself, "If it's legit, the guys reading *IRON MAN* will want to know how he did it. Let's find out.

DY: Mike, what improvements have you made to your physique in the past year?

MS: Well, on December 1 of last year I set out to prove I could put on 20 pounds of lean body mass in two months. I wanted to show that I could do it 100 percent natural, relying on high-intensity-training techniques and workouts and a solid diet.

DY: That's an impressive weight gain, but how can you be certain that it was all muscle?

MS: Justin Dees, a well-known and very experienced trainer and competitor living in Utah, monitored me from beginning to end. I started at 7.8 percent bodyfat, weighing 198.5 pounds in the morning before breakfast. I ended on January 31 at 6.5 percent bodyfat and weighing 217 in the morning before breakfast. After running the numbers through the computer we got 19.5 pounds of lean body mass.

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DY: Inquiring minds want to know what your daily diet looked like during those two months.

MS: I ate six meals a day, every day, no exceptions, for a total of 4,750 calories, 395 grams of protein, 552 grams of carbs and 110 grams of fat. Here's my schedule:

Meal 1

1.5 cups 2% milk
2 scoops whey protein
1 apple
2 cups oatmeal

Meal 2

1.6 cups brown rice
1.5 cups broccoli
1.8 tablespoons Smart Balance
1 apple
6 ounces chicken breast

Meal 3

6 ounces chicken breast
1 tablespoon Smart Balance
16 ounces sweet potato

Meal 4

Shake
1 cup blueberries
1.5 cups 2% milk
.75 cups of oatmeal
2 scoops whey protein

Meal 5

Same as meal 4

Meal 6

6 ounces fish
1.6 cups brown rice
1 cup mixed veggies
1 tablespoon Smart Balance

My wife did a very good job of keeping my eating schedule on track—even after we found out she

was six weeks pregnant. Apparently, pregnant women have a very keen and sometimes particular sense of smell, so there were times that chicken was off the menu. We just substituted another lean meat.

DY: I know a lot of guys think they can get away with skipping meals once in a while, but it just doesn't work. Did you use any special training techniques?

MS: I've been training for a long time, so I knew that I had to do something drastically different if I was going to attain such dramatic gains. First, I started doing some research on the relationship between testosterone and growth hormone. Through my research I found that these hormone levels in my body are almost directly proportional to the intensity level of my workout. So I knew that if I could keep my intensity maxed out for 45 minutes

A photograph of a very muscular man, shirtless, lifting a dumbbell. He is smiling and looking down at the weight. The background is dark, and the lighting highlights his muscle definition. A thick green horizontal bar is positioned below the quote.

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NEW!

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to an hour, I would be maximizing a key element of my body’s natural growth mechanism.

Second, I had to provide my muscles with a unique stimulus to really kick-start growth. I found my answer when I started reading about X Reps in *IRON MAN* and at X-Rep.com. I was very intrigued by the concept and started thinking of how I would incorporate these end-of-set power partials into my workout. The whole concept of attacking the semistretched point of the muscle really opened up a new world of training potential. The fun thing about X Reps is the creativity I could use within my workout to really hit the max-force point and overload the target muscle.

DY: How did you incorporate them into your training?

MS: Intensity and X Reps really go hand in hand. I did a lot of supersets, keeping my time between sets around 30 seconds to a minute. I would take my last superset to muscular failure and add X Reps.

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DY: The intensity sounds brutal. What does your training plan look like?

MS: I start every Monday with a different muscle group. I trained five days a week, taking Thursday and Sunday off. I always gave myself three solid days to recover between muscle groups. I’ll give you a quick example.

Generally I do three to four sets of every exercise. On heavy days I will do eight to 10 reps, and on light days I do 10 to 14 reps. I try to do something slightly different with every set. I believe every variation works the muscle group slightly differently, which enables me to get more symmetrical development. I also allow myself some freedom to listen to what my body wants. Sometimes one variation feels better than another, so I go with it. I figure there is more than one way to an end result, so if something is uncomfortable, I do something that is comfortable.

I’ll give you a typical three-day cycle.

Monday: Legs

Five-minute warmup on the bike

Back extensions (warmup)

Superset

Leg extensions

Leg curls

Superset

Stiff-legged deadlifts

Lunges (three variations)

Squats

Superset

Abductor pushes

Adductor pulls

Calf raises

Tuesday: Pull

Superset

Pulldowns

Cable laterals (two variations)

Superset

Close-grip pulldowns

Cable uncrossovers

Superset

Seated rows

Cable pullovers

Superset

Upright rows

Cable curls or dumbbell curls

Wednesday: Push

(Note: One week he starts with chest; the next week he starts with shoulders.)

Flat-bench dumbbell presses

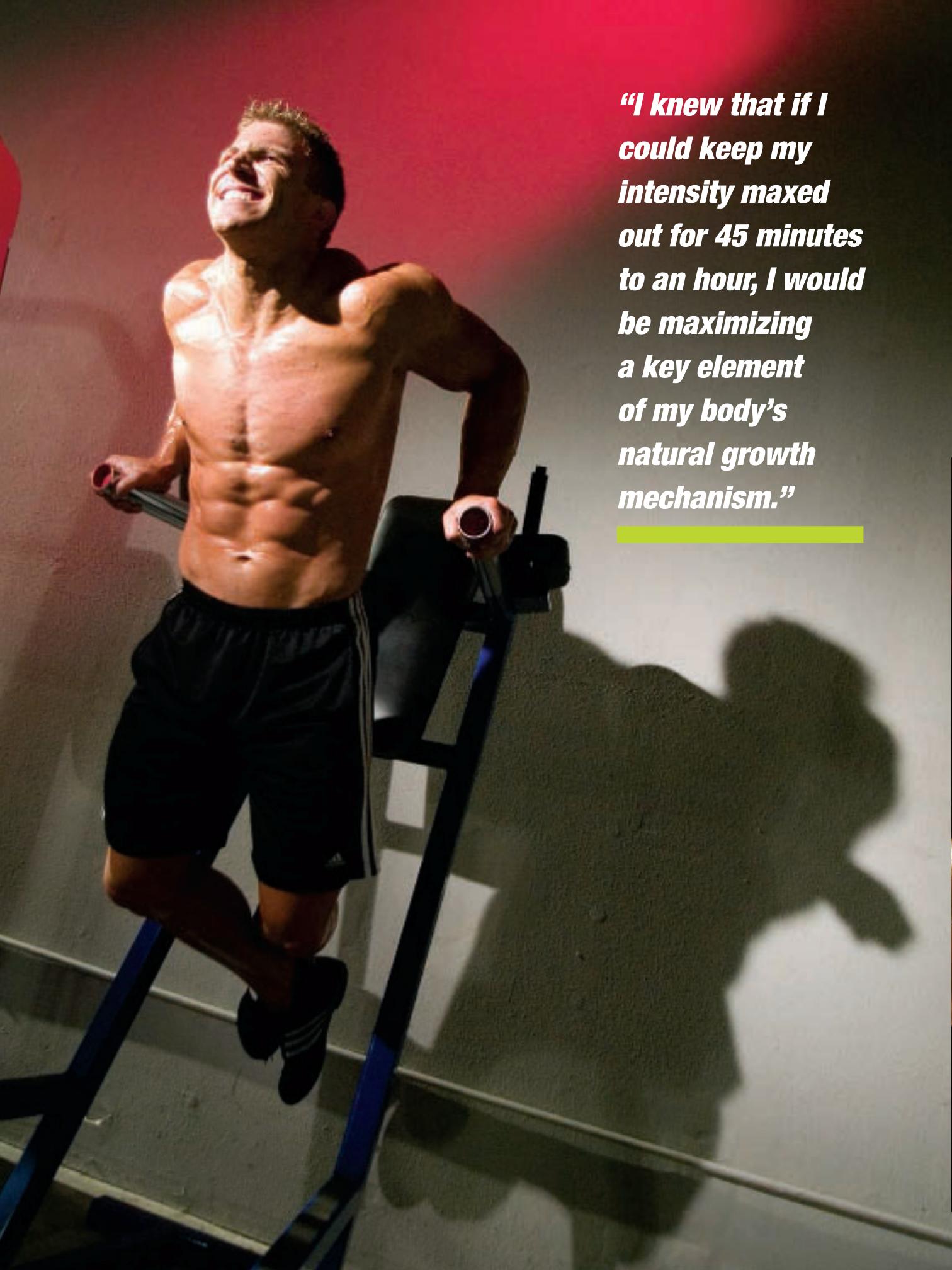
Incline dumbbell presses

Dumbbell shoulder presses

Its complete power has remained dormant, but something has awoken it...

Turn the page to get shredded





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Superset

- High cable flies
- Machine presses

Superset

- Middle cable flies
- Overhead triceps extensions

Superset

- Low cable flies
- Cable kickbacks or hands-close pushups

Thursday

Recovery day

Friday

Cycle begins again

DY: What supplements did you use on a daily basis during those two months?

MS: I started out using Tahitian Noni and Costco protein. One month into it I ended up traveling a lot for work and found it difficult to get the calories I needed, so I re-introduced Cytosport Muscle Milk into the diet.

DY: What do you find the benefits of those supplements to be?

MS: I've been taking Tahitian Noni juice a few times a day for about four years. I found through track-and-field, triathlon training and bodybuilding that it really speeds up recovery time between workouts, supports my immune system and helps provide sustainable energy throughout the day.



NEW!

... and it's going to set off an eruption of fat-burning fury.

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I’ve been taking Costco Pro Rated whey protein because it’s simple, low calorie and inexpensive. My wife makes her special oatmeal and protein bars with it.

I’ve had good experience using Muscle Milk. I feel it gives me what I need to increase size and strength while enabling my body to efficiently burn fat in the process. I travel a ton for work, and Muscle Milk is very convenient to travel with.

DY: What does the future hold for you in competition?

MS: Well, I just won the heavy-weight division at the Mr. Utah, and I took the overall at the Northwest Regional Natural Bodybuilding Championships. So until next spring I’ll probably get back into the triathlon circuit around Utah and start racing again. I’ve been debating setting a goal to eventually make it to the Mr. Natural Olympia or Natural Universe, but doing triathlons isn’t going to make that very practical. In the meantime I’m going to enjoy my new son and whatever else life throws at me.

One more thing before we end this. I’m always interested in suggestions or answering any specific question. So readers can feel free to write to me at mike@semanoff.com or check out Holly and me at www.Semanoff.com.

Editor’s note: For more on X-Rep training, visit www.X-Rep.com.

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