

And So It Is



Glenn Swain

The Title of Mr. Puniverse Goes To ...

What a great idea. Recruit some scrawny but courageous guys to strike poses, lift dumbbells, do a cardio workout and answer exercise questions in a format akin to a beauty pageant, and do it all in front of four Gold's Gym athletic judges and gawking, beer-drinking spectators for the right to be called Mr. Puniverse.

It's just this kind of contest that renews my love for liberty and the freedom of everyone to intentionally make fools of themselves for a title and all of the spoils that go with it. The spoils, in this case for the crowned Mr. Puny, would be a free lifetime membership to Gold's Gym, a one-year free membership for a friend or family member, personal training, Gold's Gym fitness apparel, and the honor of representing Gold's Gym throughout 2007.

Pretty heady stuff for the six brave contestants—all weighing less than 145 pounds—who showed up at Flicka's Bar and Grill in Scottsdale one Friday night in early March for the inaugural Gold's Gym "Mr. Puniverse" competition.

Before the competition started, the Punies—which sounds like a resort in upper New York State—stood near the stage wearing shorts, shirts, numbers and eating plates of complimentary sliders.

As I watched them eat, do knee bends and flex their noodle-like arms, I wondered if anyone had told them

that this was officially being called the Mr. Puniverse Pageant. I suspected not. Just the mention of the word "pageant" would send some scurrying off emasculated and making shrink appointments.

Before the pageant started, I had a good sense about one of the contestants, a 19-year-old ASU student named TC Mulcahy. If TC leaned against a flagpole, he'd disappear. He looked painfully thin. The most striking thing about him was his jet-black hair that stuck straight up, Don King style. I asked him how he would use the title of Mr. Puniverse to promote world peace. "Uh, I don't know about that," he said with a grin.

It's a good bet that world diplomacy is not in young TC's future.

He told me that his entire life he had weighed under 120 pounds. "I really want to change that before I turn 20," he said, stretching a bony arm across his chest. "I've been working out, but I'm not sure what workouts I'm allowed to do since I broke my neck a year ago."

Broke your neck?

"I fell out of a tree trying to get off a roof," he said with a comforting smile. "I was ditching my fifth hour and I was at school."

Great. Here's a guy ready to star in "Jackass 3".

I wished him well and took my seat by the stage, which I noticed was covered in a leopard print cloth. The DJ spun off the Black-Eyed Peas' "Let's Get It Started" and we were off.

Event MC Yvette Craddock introduced each enthusiastic contestant and asked why they had come to compete. One Puny wannabe said he wanted to turn women's heads. By his gaunt look, I figured he was used to women's heads turning away from him. Another said he needed muscles to "keep his woman." TC did not mince words. "I'm tired of the ridicule," he said.

The first test was pushups. Then came the 10-pound dumbbell lifts: tricep overheads and lunges. Within minutes, reality set in for the Punies. All were struggling, especially TC. His shorts were perilously hanging on his hips, ready to slide to his ankles at any moment. The band of his black Calvin Klein underwear was showing.

He and the others glistened in sweat as the group entered the cardio portion of the contest—uh—pageant. At the end of jumping jacks and running in place, the Punies were beginning to wonder what the hell they had gotten themselves in to. All were panting heavily, a few looked pale and somewhat sickly.

To the strains of "I'm Too Sexy For My Shirt", the Puny Six were then asked to take off their shirts and strike different poses to show off their biceps, abs and triceps, just like pro bodybuilders. All clamored for attention with silly Atlas-like poses. I saw a few heads turn away. "Do you like this portion of the program?" the MC asked the audience.

Few clapped.

As the MC directed health and fitness questions to each contestant, I noticed just five Punies stood on stage. TC was missing. I soon figured out that my Puny hopeful was in the bathroom puking his guts out. He returned during the second round of questioning. His hurling episode garnered the sympathy vote. The crowd cheered his return. As the others were asked questions, TC stared to the side at a TV screen showing the Suns-Pacers game. When he was asked to recite the Gold's Gym motto, TC drew a blank, having no idea that it's "Change your body, change your life."

Each contestant was asked a final question: Why should he be crowned Mr. Puniverse? They had 20 seconds to answer. "Justin" approached the microphone and immediately bragged about his sizable schlong, and then reiterated how bad he wanted to be Mr. Puniverse. Most recoiled in embarrassment. He slid back into line when Craddock reminded him that the winner would be a Gold's Gym representative. The brash boasting of the "Johnson" lost him the right to wear the crown.

As the judges tallied the numbers, Craddock had the contestants dance to music. Most performed what they thought was dancing, but in reality were odd, primitive gyrations. A couple Punies simply turned their ass to the crowd and shook what little they had there. Now I wanted to puke.

The crowd and I were stunned when beanpole TC was declared the winner! A cheap plastic gold crown was placed on his head. As he came off stage, women clamored to have their picture taken with him.

"Oh, it's amazing! I was not expecting that at all. I love it! I can represent the Punies!" he yelled out.

I asked him about his bathroom gag session.

"I puked right after that cardio thing. It was a test. For dinner I had an energy drink and Wendy's."

Hopefully, the Gold's Gym trainer schools our young TC on the benefits of proper nutrition.


Congratulations, TC. You are Mr. Puniverse for 2007! 



PHOTO BY TINA CELLE

As Mr. Puniverse 2007, 19-year-old TC Mulcahy has awesome responsibilities.