

Old-School Muscle:
How Jones Trained Viator for the 1971 Mr. America
by Ellington Darden, Ph.D.



I recently found the above slide of Casey Viator while reviewing some files and it brought back a number of old-school memories, one in particular.

"You'll get to see Casey's final workout," explained Arthur Jones, the developer of Nautilus equipment, over the phone. "Why don't you drive down tomorrow?"

The date was June 9, 1971. I hadn't seen Casey Viator in several months, so I was anxious to view him working out. Jones had been training Viator on and off for eleven months. Everyone interested in bodybuilding at that time was following the escapades of Jones and Viator through *IronMan* magazine.

Their big test was the 1971 AAU Mr. America contest, which was to be held in York, Pennsylvania, in three days . . . on June 12th.

"After observing Casey train," he continued in his baritone voice, "you'll be able to judge for yourself whether he'll beat that big red-headed bastard or not." That redheaded "bastard" Jones was referring to was Ken Waller, who'd placed second to Chris Dickerson the year before. Waller was well prepared and purportedly next in line to win the Mr. America in 1971.

You can read the entire exercise-by-exercise report of Casey's workout, which involved doing a single set of 15 different exercises, on pages 18 and 19 of my 2004 book, *The New HIT*. Without being overly redundant, I want to comment on just *two* of Viator's exercises — the barbell squat and the triceps extension—just to give you a taste of how brutal a workout can be.

But first, let me describe the workout setting.

A Musty, Muscle-Building Emporium

Prior to completing his 20-acre Nautilus headquarters in Lake Helen, Florida in 1974, Jones' training facility was situated behind the DeLand High School in an old army, semi-circular, Quonset hut. The hut was dimly lit, humid, and musty-smelling. The floors were concrete and there was no reliable heating or cooling in the structure. High-school athletes and a few local fitness buffs used the facility, along with Jones and a few select bodybuilders.

As you entered through the front door, you'd see a Universal Gym machine on the right and a Nautilus Combination Biceps/Triceps Machine on the left. At the far end were prototypes of the Nautilus Pullover, Behind Neck, and Rowing Machines. In the middle were squat racks, several old Olympic barbells, and half a dozen dumbbells.

This was where Jones had challenged Arnold Schwarzenegger and Franco Columbu. After three workouts, Arnold left in a huff, his ego damaged, while Franco thrived and stayed for another week.



Franco Columbu and Arnold Schwarzenegger had recently competed in the Mr. Olympic when they came to train at the Quonset hut in DeLand, Florida. In the middle is Larry Gilmore, a local lifter who assisted Arthur Jones with the workouts.

The hut's surroundings were ordinary, but when Jones was there with his entourage, the gym became *electric*. Arthur would bark orders as his assistants prepared the equipment and visitors with eyes as big as 5-pound plates would hang around the door.

Jones definitely filled the place with old-school muscle-building excitement.

Viator, who usually showed up 5 minutes before Jones arrived, told me that his heart rate would double when Jones walked into the gym. "He kept me pissed off most of the time," remembered Casey, "with all his intimidation tactics and demands. No one could get me into the max-training mode the way Arthur could. I hated what he made me do during my workouts . . . *but I loved the results.*"

Larry Gilmore remembers the facility's special "ambience" well: "Due to the workout's intensity and pace, plus the lack of circulating air, we sweated gallons during each workout. And the air in the Quonset hut was usually foul due to guys missing the bucket when they had to puke. But you know what? You could sure get a ball-busting workout, if you had a mind to."

And a ball-busting workout is exactly what I saw Casey Viator do.



Casey Viator, as he looked in December 1970, six months before he won the AAU Mr. America. In this picture, Viator weighed 215 pounds and had 19-inch upper arms.

Squat Til Ya Drop!

At approximately 9 o'clock on the night of June 10, 1971, Viator did 13 repetitions in the squat with a 500-pound barbell on his back. None of his reps were half squats. They were all ass-to-heels, full squats – performed *after* he pre-exhausted with 750 pounds on the Universal machine leg press for 20 reps, followed by 225 pounds on the Universal machine leg extension for another 20 reps . . . *with no rest between the exercises.*

That's right, Jones pushed Viator through a double pre-exhaustion cycle: leg press, leg extension, and squat, performed back-to-back-to-back . . . with very heavy weights, in good form, for maximum repetitions . . . which was the ultimate in HIGH INTENSITY.

I'd never seen anything like this leg cycle. Can you imagine squatting with a 500-pound barbell 13 times . . . *after pre-exhausting your thighs?*

Jones was on the left side of Viator encouraging him – or I should say shouting at him: "Slow down! Hold your head up! Keep going! Don't quit! Think about that big redhead's thighs! Goddamn it, Casey, get *three* more! Breathe deeply. That's it, that's it! Now . . . *one* more!"

It worked. Viator exceeded Jones's expectations. His heart rate must have been more than 220 beats per minute for at least 2 minutes. I'd never imagined such intensity was possible – *ever.*

Early in 2005, I interviewed Casey and he remembered that workout well (it'd be difficult to forget). "I planned to hold back a little on those squats because I knew I had a bunch more stuff to do, but with 500 pounds on my back and the adrenalin flowing, all I could do was think 'Get 10 reps.' I was really surprised when I got 12 and couldn't believe I made 13. I knew then that the workout was going to be *a real bitch.*"

A real bitch it was. From my 45 years of training experience, that three-exercise leg cycle was the most demanding and impressive series that I've ever observed.

Jones talked about it later and concluded that "Paul Anderson (who, at one time, was considered the world's strongest man), in his best condition, could have duplicated Viator's leg cycle, but to do so, he'd had to have an injection of Novocain in each thigh to combat the pain. Furthermore, if Anderson had survived this feat, he'd have probably died afterward."

Viator not only performed that cycle in championship style, but after a two-minute rest and some water, he *continued* his workout. His next-to-last movement, in his 15-exercise routine, was the triceps extension performed on the Nautilus Combination Biceps/Triceps Machine.

Kick-Ass Triceps

On that night, Jones loaded Casey's triceps with 125 pounds – which was more than I ever saw anyone use on that plate-loading arm machine, particularly at the end of a routine. Maybe 125 pounds doesn't sound like a lot of weight, but this Nautilus Triceps station placed him into a tight, vertical position that made it impossible to cheat. Only his triceps were called into action on this precision exercise.

Casey initiated the repetitions deliberately . . . one by one, from a full stretch to maximum contraction and back. Again, Jones was near his ear, urging him to pause, lower slowly, and continue.

At repetition 8, Viator was spent . . . he couldn't quite make the contracted position, even with Jones's

coaxing. Jones calmly looked him in the eyes and said: "That redhead in California is going to get the best of you." That motivated Viator into finishing number 8 and, in fact, making another rep in better form than the one before. The 10th rep, however, was a no-go. Casey couldn't get it started. He'd reached true failure.

In an instant, Jones had two assistants lift Viator out of the sweat-dampened triceps machine and hustle him over to the nearby parallel-dip bars.

I could tell Casey did NOT like the idea of doing dips . . . especially after punishing his triceps on the previous machine.

But then, Casey seemed to get a second wind – *no*, it was a *third* or *fourth* wind – and mounted the parallel bars and started his dips.

He was near the end of the hardest-training session I've ever witnessed and he'd just finished blasting his triceps on a Nautilus machine. Could he really be expected to do more than 3 or 4 dips?

That, in fact, is the very question I asked Arthur as I peered over his shoulder and studied Casey's previous workout on his chart.

"Three or 4 reps, you say," Jones noted. "He'll do 20 . . . or I'll kick his ass up around his shoulders."

Up and down Viator went as if his arms were connected to a couple of well-oiled pistons. The first 10 were slow, smooth, and steady. The second 10 were a bit faster, with Jones questioning his manhood on 18, 19, and 20. The final two (reps 21 and 22) were painfully s-l-o-w, with Viator's upper body drenched in sweat and his triceps, deltoids, and pecs almost vibrating through his skin.

"Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah," bellowed Casey from deep within his lungs as Arthur commanded him to do a controlled lowering on the final rep.

The Final Pose Down

As Viator sunk to one knee, Jones smiled ever so slightly. His work was almost completed.

He let Casey slither over to a jug of cold water and linger for a couple of minutes. In the interim, he noted that Viator's entire workout – legs, back, shoulders, chest, and arms – had taken exactly 27 minutes and 40 seconds. Jones claimed they'd have finished in 25 minutes or less, if the gym hadn't been so damn crowded.

Then Jones signaled to Viator: "Come over here. Take off your shirt and let's see how you look."

First, Casey hit a double-biceps pose. All of the dozen or so people in the room, with the exception of Jones, were dumbfounded. His arms resembled wet footballs with pulsating veins.

Second, he went into a side-chest pose and his deltoids and pecs looked as if they were armor plated and about 18-inches thick. Then, he spun 90 degrees and hit a back pose. There was nothing but mounds of muscle on top of more muscle from his hips to his neck, with striations everywhere.

Even in the dimly lit Quonset hut, Casey's back, shoulders, chest, and arms seemed to glow and be lit

with some internal fire. When he contracted intensely, his muscles appeared as if they were about to erupt from his skin.

I'd entered the 1969 and 1970 AAU Mr. America contests, so I'd seen most of the top bodybuilders at that time do their posing routines, but I'd never seen anyone as massive, as cut, and as explosive in a pose . . . as was Casey Viator that night.

The Winner Is . . .

From what I observed that night, I was sure Viator would defeat Ken Waller and win the Mr. America title. Interestingly, two days later, Waller was disqualified from the Amateur Athletic Union for appearing in a non-sanctioned, exercise-related magazine advertisement several months earlier. Thus, the Viator/Waller confrontation never occurred.

But Casey competed against 32 other men on June 12th and easily won the 1971 AAU Mr. America.

I overheard one of the judges say, "Viator was simply overpowering!" Sure, but I thought to myself, "Was it Viator – or Jones – who was overpowering? Or, was it their combined talents working together?"

After the 1971 Mr. America, Viator had plans to enter the NABBA Mr. Universe, which was scheduled for early September in London, England. Unfortunately, Casey had a disagreement with Jones and took a leave of absence from training for several months and he didn't go to the Mr. Universe event.

Furthermore, after that June 10, 1971, supervised workout, *Jones never again trained Viator seriously*. No, I take that back. He did train Viator 14 times in May of 1973 during the Colorado Experiment. But that was a part of a research project and not for a bodybuilding championship.

1978 NABBA Mr. Universe

In February of 1978, after another lengthy leave of absence as well as being out-of-training for almost a year, Viator returned to the Nautilus headquarters. He declared that he wanted to enter the NABBA Mr. Universe in September. The job of training him was given to Jim Flanagan, a 6-foot 5-inch tall, 265-pound mountain of a man, and me.

Together, we trained Casey three times per week on whole-body routines. Over the next five months, Viator's body weight increased from 194 to 220 pounds – which was 2 pounds more than he weighed at his Mr. America win seven years earlier.

I took hundreds of photos of Casey in the summer of 1978 and two of the best ones are below.



Viator had plenty of mass, but he also had an athletic look, which is frequently lacking among today's professional bodybuilders.

At the 1978 NABBA Mr. Universe, Viator placed a controversial second to Dave Johns. Many in the audience thought Viator should have won.

Challenge Yourself and Cross the Line

Jim Flanagan and I pushed Casey as hard as we could during our six months' tenure with him in 1978. But it wasn't quite the same as having Arthur Jones at his shoulder and . . . in his face.

Jones was the ultimate, do-it-my-way, kick-ass, old-school taskmaster.

During a workout, Jones had a way of quickly finding and hitting a person's "hot" buttons. That style certainly worked with Viator – and it worked with many other lifters.

Some bodybuilders can be pushed, some can't. Those who can be pushed are usually the high achievers.

Working with bodybuilders for more than four decades, I've discovered that there's a thin line between those who can and those who can't. Crossing that line and accepting *proactive pushing* can make a significant difference toward getting the best-possible gains.

If you're interested in making the most of your potential for muscular size and strength, you've got to determine which side of the line you're on.

If you're teetering on the can't-be-pushed side, do something about it. Get involved with a coach or training partner who knows how to hit your hot buttons.

Old-school taskmaster Arthur Jones helped Casey Viator and a lot of trainees cross that line . . . and achieve *maximum results*.

Pass the Course with an "A" or "B"

Want to try a couple of old-school muscle workouts? Arthur Jones often recommended an A and B routine for trainees. Below is an example:

A Routine

1. Leg extension machine, immediately followed by
2. Leg press machine or barbell squat
3. Calf raise with machine or with barbell
4. Lateral raise with dumbbells
5. Chin-up with underhand grip
6. Overhead press with barbell
7. Bent-over row with barbell
8. Triceps extension with one dumbbell held by both hands
9. Biceps curl with barbell
10. Wrist curl with barbell

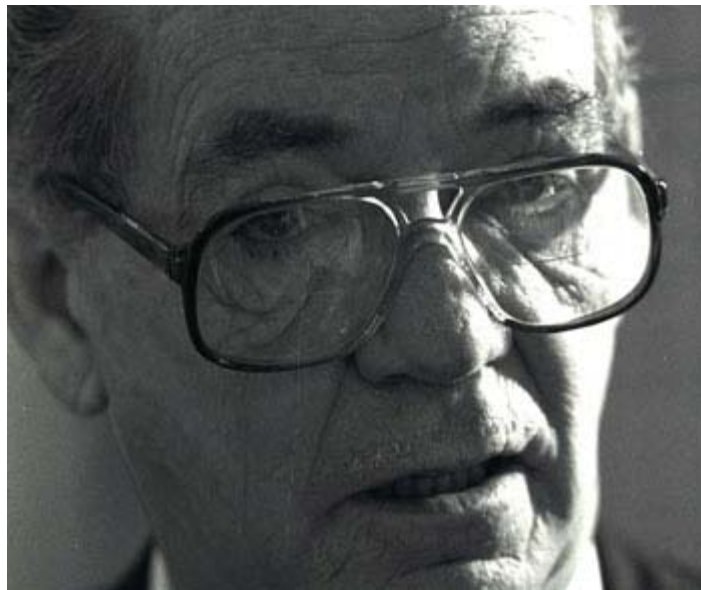
B Routine

1. Leg curl machine, immediately followed by
2. Stiff-legged deadlift with barbell
3. Pullover across bench with one dumbbell held by both hands
4. Bent-arm fly with dumbbells
5. Bench press with barbell
6. Shoulder shrug with barbell
7. Dip on parallel bars

8. Hammer curl with dumbbells
9. Side bend with one dumbbell
10. Trunk curl on floor

Guidelines

- Alternate the A and B routines. For example, do A on Monday and Friday and B on Wednesday. The next week, perform B on Monday and Friday and A on Wednesday.
- Perform 1 set of 8-12 repetitions per exercise. After 12 or more repetitions are achieved, increase the resistance by 2-5 percent at the next workout.
- Lift and lower the resistance smoothly on each repetition. A tried-and-proven speed of movement is 3 seconds on the lifting (positive) and 3 seconds on the lowering (negative).
- Continue each set of repetitions until momentary muscular failure.
- Train for three nonconsecutive days per week.



This is one of the best-ever pictures of Arthur Jones. Jones' exercise guidelines were always up front, thought provoking, and relevant. When Jones trained you, there was no straddling the line. You did it his

way . . . or you left with hurt feelings and a rumpled suit.

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