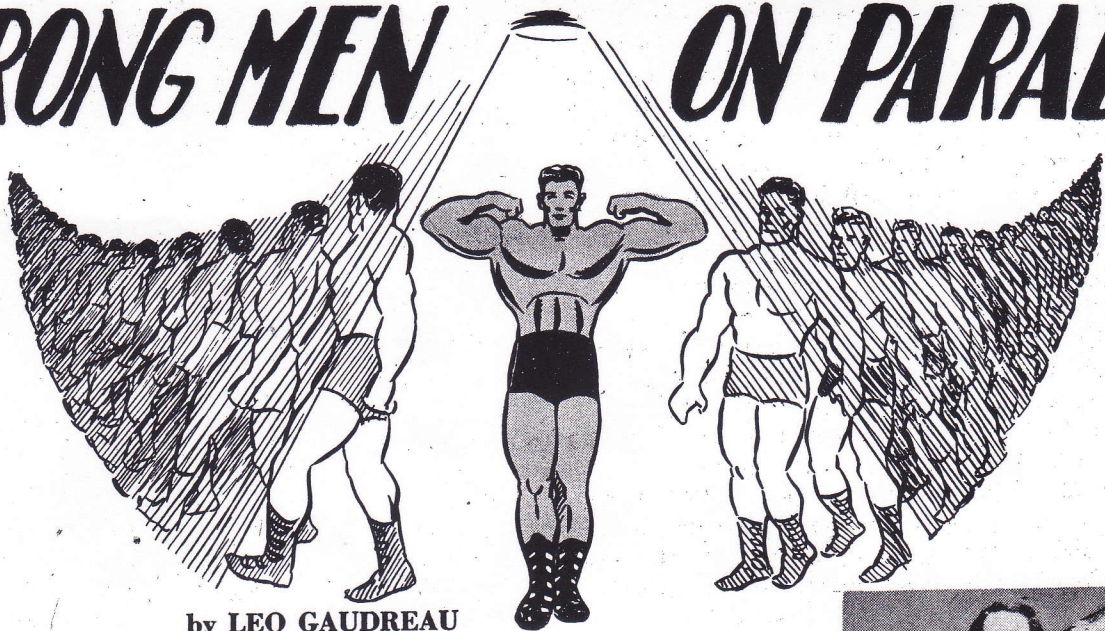


STRONG MEN ON PARADE



by LEO GAUDREAU

• This month we introduce an unknown whom the American strength followers have never met.

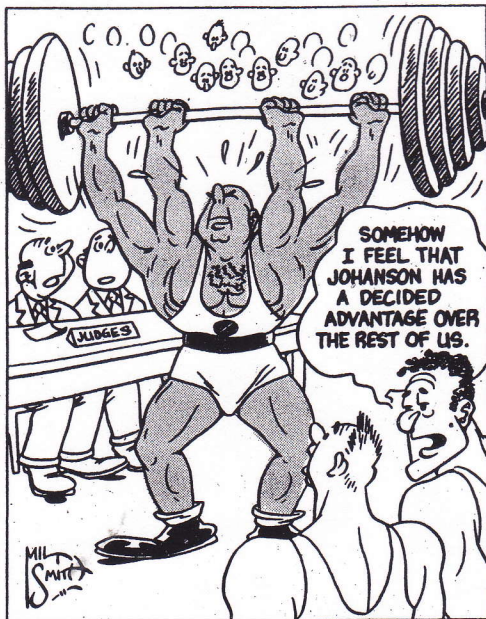
THE great god of strength makes no distinction of race, color or creed. He is international. There are men of all nationalities in our parade. This month we focus our attention, not only on one but, on two strength characters—Italians.

Felice Napoli was born in Naples, Italy, February 19, 1821. His real name was Prades but he adopted the name of the city of his birth, Napoli (Naples), as his professional cognomen.

Napoli was engaged in the best circus organizations in his day, as a strength artist, pantomimist and slack wire performer. His greatest fame arose from his ability at pantomime. One of his greatest roles was that of a poacher being pursued. Posing apprehensively behind a tree listening attentively, perched on a ledge, anticipating the sudden appearance of his pursuers—he was inimitable. He was engaged for many years by a great circus director named Wallshlager. This director made pantomime a particular feature of his show and spared no expense in scenes and costumes. Napoli achieved considerable fame during the years he was engaged by Wallshlager. His pantomime and choice of subjects



Felice Napoli, the famous Italian strongman, circus performer and wrestler.



became an artistic achievement of the "highest type. Pantomime is more often than not little more than mimicry. Napoli was able to strike such noble attitudes and realistic approach of his portrayal that the greatest artists of his day were outclassed by him.

In 1850, when Wallshlager sold his circus, Napoli confined his professional activities to feats of strength. His feats consisted of hanging from a trapeze upside-down and holding really heavy weights from this position; having a cannon shot-off while held on his shoulders; bending iron bars; supporting a heavy iron bar and five men on his shoulders; twelve chairs balanced on his chin; tricks on a vertically suspended rope, known in modern circus language as the Spanish web; in the Tomb of Hercules position, feet and hands on the floor with body bridged face uppermost, he supported heavy weights: having a fine tenor voice he would render a solo while in this position. His sole concession to pantomime was a struggle with a tiger which was eventually killed and shorn of his skin—all done in panto—and finally the strong man struck a pose in the center of the circus ring, draped in the tiger skin. It has been said that: "Two there are who may fitly wear a lion's skin—the lion himself and a Hercules."

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