

thick, raw, like it comes from the lumber yard, and then invite the weightlifters, with their hands on top of the plank, and then let them snatch this plank with two hands, and then they should let this plank down slowly without dropping it on the floor. You will see there are not many who could perform this feat of strength."

Continuing about the plank, Kurt wrote: "In 1922, at Berlin, Circus Busch, I saw behind the curtain, the well known Siegmund Brietbart, trying to lift our plank! Brietbart could not move our plank one inch from the floor and he was famous for his hand and finger strength.

"You see Leo, we small boys never made a fuss about a feat of strength like lifting this plank. We only had our fun when we saw such strong men and had a good laugh."

I am no expert on wood and cannot even recognize it by its proper name when it is denuded of foliage—much less can I estimate or figure the weight of it. John Valentine, of Leeds, England, who had much experience with construction work, wrote to me in connection with the aforementioned:

"When I was a construction worker in Detroit (Michigan), I handled what must have been the heaviest plank made: about 4½ inches thick and 14 feet long and must have weighed about 112 pounds. It really was a piece of timber and I imagine a man like Saxon would pinch-snatch it. I doubt if a plank weighing 180 pounds really exists."

In conclusion, and to further confuse the issue, I have in my garden, a plank, in use as a garden seat. It is 6 feet long, 12 inches wide and 3¼ inches thick. It weighs 75 pounds and it is probably made of oak. I have only tried to lift it once, pinch-grip with both hands: I did the plank plus the addition of an extra 25 pounds. Not in the Davis-Abele-Berger class by any means, but this gives you an idea of the complexities involved when you are trying to get at the bottom of some of these feats of strength credited to old time strong men.

Future Greats

(Continued from page 17)

when they began training . . . all of them weighed under 140 pounds and today each is a giant of power and size. For instance . . . Ed Theriault began as a 85 pound weakling . . . today he is the world's most perfectly formed short man, with upper arms measuring over 17". Roy Hilligenn, who won the Mr. America title in 1951 weighed well under 100 pounds when he began. Clarence Ross, another Mr. America winner, who is considerably taller than you, weighed under 140 pounds when he started, while Marvin Eder was a skinny 120 pounds when he began training.

"There is one thing about weight training," continued Ben, "no one can tell where it will lead him at the beginning. Often the man who appears to have the LEAST possibilities and the most handicaps will develop into the most brilliant star. Doug Hepburn, our great Canadian star was very thin and weak as a boy. Through weight training he converted himself into a giant of power and is being referred to by many as the strongest man of all time at the present. He already holds 4 world records in strength and will make many more. Steve Reeves, one of the greatest Mr. Americas of all time, had to wear a shoulder brace when he was a boy, in an attempt to correct round shoulders. The brace failed, and he threw it away when he began using weights. Today, he is a big Television star, thanks to his sur physique.

"I could continue to tell you hundreds of stories like this," added Ben, "but I doubt if you would be convinced. After all, the test is in what our system can do for you. Try it for just 3 months . . . follow our courses exactly as outlined and then come back to see me. If you are not more than satisfied, I'll give you your money back; That's fair, isn't it?"

Normand Gagne looked at Ben Weider. I could sense that something of Ben's enthusiasm had rubbed off onto him, for he smiled for the first time and looked more encouraged than when he had come in. "You bet that's fair Mr. Weider. You'll see me in three months." And then he was gone.

Turning to me, Ben said . . . "You know Ed, I've got a hunch that Normand Gagne is going to get some place. He'll be a hard one to convince, but just as strongly as he now shows his scepticism . . . he will show ever greater enthusiasm, once results come. Mark my words, we'll see much more of him."

I had almost forgotten this incident, when one day about 3 months later, a young, energetic fellow popped his head through the door of the office and cheerfully asked . . . "Can I come in?"

"Sure," I answered, "what can we do for you?"

"So you don't remember me," smiled the young chap, "I said I'd be back in three months and here I am. My name is Normand Gagne."

Of course now I recalled him. But what a change. In the place of his rounded shoulders, were square, compact bulges of muscle which even his clothes couldn't conceal. His face had filled out, there was a sparkle in his eyes while his neck was round and full.

Just then Ben came in. Ben has an amazing memory for faces. He said . . . "Hello Normand. I knew you'd be back. How have you made out?"

A torrent of words flowed from Normand's mouth. . . . Gained 15 pounds. Over an inch

on the arms. Doubled my strength. Chest went up 3 inches." And so on. His story was one of happy success and he showed us a snap shot to prove the gains he had made. This picture appears with this article and it is the earliest one we have of Normand, showing him after he had already made great gains on the Weider System.

He still used his Weider Weights at home, but in addition had begun training at the Roland Studio, in Montreal, where Weider Methods are taught, training once or twice a week there and filling in the rest of his training days at home. He was delighted with his progress, had lost all his scepticism and was full of questions about his future training.

Ben took a look at the snap shot and then asked Normand to take off his shirt. "Train for a little more bulk," was Ben's advice. "Then, enter the Jr. Mr. Canada contest. You have made sensational gains. I think you can take a place. It will be good experience anyway."

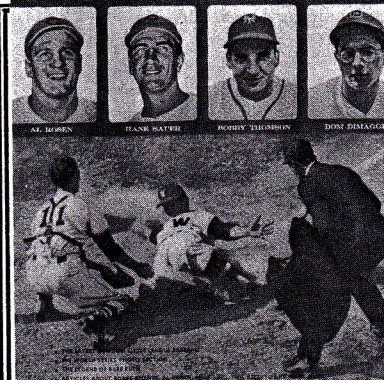
So here it was . . . a sceptic of only 3 months previous, being told that already he had progressed to the point where he should enter a physique contest. But no longer was Normand sceptical. Three months was all he had needed to change this and to transform his body into outstanding muscular proportions. He followed Ben's advice and a few months later, with less than six months training, entered and won 2nd place in the Jr. Mr. Canada contest.

Early the next year, Normand Gagne took 1st place in the Jr. Mr. Montreal event, and several months ago he won the Jr. Mr. Canada crown. In less than 2 years of training, 23 months to be exact, Normand Gagne rose from a skinny, weak, sickly youth, to a great champion. At 19 years of age, his future is still all in front of him. A look at his recent photographs reveals that his physique is molded with lines of symmetrical proportion,

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