

LAST CHANCE

A preview of the 2009 NPC National Bodybuilding Championships, the final pro qualifier of the year

Five. That's the count for NPC bodybuilders who made it to the pros this season. There's room for seven more. On November 20-21, the best amateurs in the nation hope to make the list as they head into the last pro qualifier of the year — the NPC National Bodybuilding, Figure and Bikini Championships at the Westin Diplomat Resort, near the sandy and sunny beaches of Hollywood, Florida.

The new crop of pro bodybuilders — headed by fast-rising stars, such as Mark Alvisi and Daryl Gee, and veteran warriors, such as Grigori Atoyán — is an exclusive fraternity, and Lee Banks, Tamer El-Guindy, Steve Kuclo, plus a host of others are looking to add their names to the class of '09. Keep your eye on the following names (competitor list compiled as of press time), as they put it all on the line in an effort to finish the year as IFBB Pro League bodybuilders.

SUPER HEAVYWEIGHTS



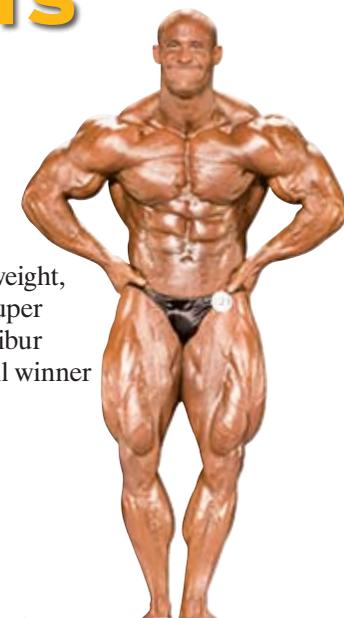
STEVE KUCLO

AGE 24
HEIGHT 6'
WEIGHT 255 pounds
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS 2008 Nationals, super heavyweight, 3rd; 2004-05 Teen Nationals heavyweight winner

HAS
 ■ Great structure, proportion and shape
 ■ Good quad separation

NEEDS
 ■ Chest and back thickness
 ■ Fuller biceps

OUTLOOK
 Kuclo has potential written all over his six-foot frame. He has all the bodyparts and, with a solid year off to train since the 2008 Nationals, he should roll into this year's contest with more size and fullness. He'll be a super favorite, if he nails his condition.



TREY BREWER

AGE 23
HEIGHT 5'10"
WEIGHT 260 pounds
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS 2008 Nationals, super heavyweight, 4th; 2008 Junior Nationals, super heavyweight, 5th; 2006 Excalibur super-heavyweight and overall winner

HAS
 ■ Fantastic wheels
 ■ Good arms and delts

NEEDS
 ■ Back width
 ■ Crisp dryness

OUTLOOK
 Big things have been expected from Brewer ever since he won the super-heavyweight and overall titles at the 2006 Excalibur Championships. If he makes improvements to his taper and comes in sharp, he could meet those high expectations.

ROBERT BURNEIKA

AGE 31
HEIGHT 5'9"
WEIGHT 243 pounds
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS 2009 USA, super heavyweight, 3rd; 2008 IFBB North American, super heavyweight, 6th; 2006 East Coast Championships super-heavyweight winner

HAS
 ■ Huge arms
 ■ Good outer quads

NEEDS
 ■ Back detail and side delts
 ■ Hamstring thickness

OUTLOOK
 Burneika has no shortage of brute size, but he'll need to work on fine-tuning his physique to take it to the next level.



DREW JEMMOTT

AGE 38
HEIGHT 5'11"
WEIGHT 235 pounds
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS 2009 USA, super heavyweight, 7th; 2008 USA, super heavyweight, 5th

HAS
 ■ Wide back
 ■ Tiny waist

NEEDS
 ■ Overall thickness
 ■ Deeper separation

OUTLOOK
 With his phenomenal upper-body taper, Jemmott is very impressive from the front, but lack of detail hurts him from the rear. Greater quad sweep, along with better condition, will move him up the ladder.



ALSO ON THE RADAR
 Malcolm Marshall
 Rudy Richards
 Kirk DeFrancesco

OUR TAKE

- 1 Steve Kuclo
- 2 Trey Brewer
- 3 Robert Burneika
- 4 Drew Jemmott

Kuclo has the overall size and finesse, and his head-to-toe balance will wow the judges. Brewer needs to strike the right balance between condition and fullness to challenge for the top spot. Burneika will have the size advantage, but a supersharp Jemmott could pose a threat.



BY DAVE LEE
 DEPUTY EDITOR

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HEAVYWEIGHTS



LEE BANKS

AGE 37

HEIGHT 5'8"

WEIGHT 218 pounds

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

2009 USA, heavyweight, 2nd; 2008 USA, heavyweight, 3rd; 2008 IFBB North American, heavyweight, 2nd

HAS

- Full muscle bellies
- Tiny joints

NEEDS

- Leg thickness
- Deeper back separation

OUTLOOK

Banks was in the shape of his life for this year's USA, with shredded wheels and striations popping out everywhere. If he can bring that same condition with a little bit more fullness, he will be the man to beat.



ANTHONEIL CHAMPAGNIE

AGE 28

HEIGHT 5'9"

WEIGHT 215 pounds

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

2008 Nationals, heavyweight, 4th; 2008 Eastern USA heavyweight and overall winner

HAS

- Superb taper
- Beautiful shape

NEEDS

- Bigger legs
- Back thickness

OUTLOOK

Champagnie is another athlete with loads of potential. With greater torso and leg mass, his shape and symmetry will help him stand out in any lineup.



FRED SMALLS

AGE 34

HEIGHT 5'7"

WEIGHT 217 pounds

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

2008 USA, heavyweight, 3rd; 2008 Nationals, heavyweight, 5th

HAS

- Imposing upper-body size
- Thick back

NEEDS

- Tightness in hamstrings
- Shredded back

OUTLOOK

Smalls is anything but, with lots of muscle evenly distributed on his frame. More density through his legs and deeper ab separation will give his physique nice polish.

VLADIMIR SIZOV

AGE 39

HEIGHT 5'9"

WEIGHT 217 pounds

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

2009 USA, heavyweight, 4th; 2008 Nationals, heavyweight, 8th

HAS

- Thick, detailed back
- Peeled condition

NEEDS

- Leg size to match upper body
- Upper-chest thickness

OUTLOOK

The former Cirque Du Soleil performer looks very good from the rear and his legs have nice separation from the front. Added size will give him the firepower necessary to battle for the top spot.



ALSO ON THE RADAR

- Zinjun Croon
- P.D. Devers
- Les Galloway

OUR TAKE

- 1 Lee Banks
- 2 Anthoneil Champagnie
- 3 Fred Smalls
- 4 Vladimir Sizov

Banks, who pushed Alvisi hard earlier in the year at the USA with a crisp, flowing physique, is the odds-on favorite. Second could be a tossup between massive Smalls or the more symmetrical Champagnie, who's had a full year to prepare. A shredded Sizov — with more size — could be in the mix for top three.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS



TAMER EL-GUINDY

AGE 32

HEIGHT 5'8"

WEIGHT 186 pounds

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS 2009 USA light-heavyweight winner; 2008 USA, light heavyweight, 4th

HAS

- Pleasing lines and symmetry
- Bone-dry condition

NEEDS

- Back and chest thickness
- Fuller arms

OUTLOOK

The Razor was the hardest guy onstage at the 2009 USA. He's got ripped wheels and his paper-thin skin makes every muscle fiber jump to life. His tiny waist sets off his great taper, and with added back size, his rear shots will have greater depth.

BRANDEN RAY

AGE 28

HEIGHT 5'7"

WEIGHT 185 pounds

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS 2009 USA, light heavyweight, 2nd; 2008 USA, light heavyweight, 2nd

HAS

- Round muscle bellies
- Tight waist

NEEDS

- Deeper, wider back
- Crisp condition

OUTLOOK

Ray looks sensational from the front with excellent taper and thickness. He needs to come in dry and tight — especially from the rear — to make the most of his shape and proportions.



PHOTOS: (BOTTOM LEFT) TMO; CHRIS LUND; (BOTTOM RIGHT) BOB GARDNER

ALL-TIME TOP 3

Ranking the greatest Nationals champs

1

Lee Haney

1982 heavyweight and overall
Eight-time Mr. Olympia, 1984-1991



2

Kevin Levrone

1991 heavyweight and overall
Twenty pro wins, four-time Mr. Olympia runner-up



3

Shawn Ray

1987 light-heavyweight and overall
Top five in the Mr. Olympia from 1990-2001





AL AUGUSTE

AGE 32

HEIGHT 5'7"

WEIGHT 195 pounds

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS 2008 Nationals, light heavyweight, 2nd; 2007 Nationals, light heavyweight, 3rd; 2007 USA, light heavyweight, 2nd

HAS

- Full pecs
- Great overall shape

NEEDS

- Better leg and back separation
- Thicker hamstrings

OUTLOOK

Auguste needs to be spot on with that crisp, dry look that has eluded him the last couple of shows. If he can bring it, his shape and lines will put him in the mix.

CHULSEY GRAHAM

AGE 37

HEIGHT 5'8"

WEIGHT 198 pounds

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS 2009 USA, light heavyweight, 6th; 2008 Nationals, light heavyweight, 3rd

HAS

- Full muscle bellies
- Great outer-quad flare

NEEDS

- Back width and detail
- To come in shredded

OUTLOOK

Graham's densely packed upper body looks very good from the side, but his lack of lat width hurts him from head-on and rear poses. Graham will need to nail his condition to stay competitive in what will likely be the deepest lineup of the show.



ALSO ON THE RADAR

Joshua Fred
Rich Legislador
Mike Yablon

OUR TAKE

- 1 Tamer El-Guindy
- 2 Branden Ray
- 3 Al Auguste
- 4 Chulsey Graham

El-Guindy made substantial improvements to upset class favorite Ray at the 2009 USA and, based on the strength of that performance, has to be considered the front-runner. Ray will need to be in his best-ever shape to get his revenge on El-Guindy, while Auguste will have to come in at his hardest to keep Graham at bay.

WHO TO WATCH



MIDDLEWEIGHTS

« Ronald Torres
Nathan DeTracy
Kam Gallman
J.B. Bartlett
Todd Scott
Malachi Walker



WELTERWEIGHTS

Shavis Higa
Mark Ritter
Kevin Ofurum
Eddie Foster
Victor Delcampo »



LIGHTWEIGHTS

« Travis Rogers
Jimmy Nguyen
Leonardo Pacheco
Hector Cruz
Marc Bennett



BANTAMWEIGHTS

Alvin Viernes »
Bleu Taylor
Danny Stephenson
Eddie Damaso
Andre Hill FLEX



NOW AT FLEXONLINE

Head over to flexonline.com to kick off the 2009 Nationals with our weeklong preview, starting November 15. Then stay tuned for full show coverage November 20-21.