{joomplu:44636 left}The 2009 Mr. Olympia promises to be the most exciting Olympia since the 1998 Mr. Olympia. At least five competitors have a legitimate shot at winning this year!

Once upon a time in the history of the Mr. Olympia, the winner of the world's most prestigious bodybuilding contest was quite predictable year after year. For over two decades beginning with Lee Haney's triumph in New York City, the contest held little real suspense. A grand total of three men represented the winners of the contest for 22 years. Lee Haney racked up eight victories before his retirement; he was succeeded by Dorian Yates who won six times before retiring. Then, Ronnie Coleman introduced a spark of excitement with his 1998 victory which quickly fizzled with eight impressive, but uninspiring, consecutive titles.

Jay Cutler made the contest interesting again in 2006 when he denied Ronnie Coleman a record 9 victories; many expected Coleman would be awarded a ninth Sandow as a storybook ending to his career.

Cutler defended the 2007 title but not without considerable controversy. Many experts felt that Victor Martinez or Dennis Wolf should have won.

In 2008, Dexter Jackson won the Olympia after playing second fiddle for so many years. He clearly outdueled Cutler for the Sandow; however his victory was not without dispute. Phil Heath was indentified by many as the uncrowned Mr. Olympia

The Mr. Olympia contest, which was once characterized by the predictability of the winner, is anything but predictable in 2009. We see five men as legitimate contenders this year. Phil Heath. Kai Greene. Dexter Jackson. Dennis Wolf. Victor Martinez.

Anyone in the top 5 can easily win. This promises to be the best show in a long time.

1. Phil Heath – We were vocal in our belief that Phil Heath should have won last year. Consequently, he is our favorite to finally be crowned the winner in 2009.

It is difficult to be certain of Phil Heath's progress since last year. Heath's progress from year to year is difficult to judge since he never appears particularly impressive in the off-season unlike many other pro bodybuilders. His guest posing appearances this spring, like previous years, belie the imposing physique that he brings to contests.

If Heath nails his conditioning at show time, he will be the clear winner.

2. Kai Greene – The 2009 Mr. Olympia will be a fight between Kai Greene's "Colemanesque" size and freakiness and Phil Heath's incredible muscle shape and muscle bellies.

Greene is coming to his Olympia debut with an incredibly strong showing at the Arnold Classic. Kai won the Arnold. He could easily win the Olympia.

3. Dexter Jackson – Dexter "The Blade" Jackson is the reigning Mr. Olympia. He is always in shape. Dexter is a great bodybuilder. He should make the top three for sure.

4. Dennis Wolf – Dennis Wolf is the dark horse. If brings condition of last year with additional size and fullness reminiscent of 2007 he will be difficult to beat. But we don't know how he will show up.

5. Victor Martinez – It is very hard to say how Victor Martinez will place especially given the recent personal tragedy in his family. The old Victor of 2007 that placed second at the Olympia could easily win the 2009 show. The Victor of 2009 that appeared at the Arnold should be good for fifth place.

6. Jay Cutler – We would not be surprised at all if Jay Cutler does not show up at all on stage. If Jay Cutler really competes, he might place around the sixth spot. And even that is an unknown with the noticeable changes that have taken over his physique. The changes in the symmetry and proportion are even more obvious on this year's guest posing circuit than ever before.

We believe Cutler is a very smart man. This is precisely the reason we doubt he will compete. We are certain Cutler knows he will never win it again. So, why compete?

7. Toney Freeman – The Toney Freeman of the Arnold Classic would be good for seventh place at the 2009 Mr. Olympia. The Toney of the 2008 Olympia could easily be top 5 again. To Freeman's credit, he was the only one in FIBO that was in decent shape.

Freeman told us in June that he has stayed in such good condition all year long that he could be contest ready within 5 weeks if required. Instead, he plans to take his time preparing for the Olympia possibly even filling out some more in the last two weeks.

8. Melvin Anthony – Melvin often surprises us with better showings than we expect. But this lineup is particularly tough and we don't see him higher than eighth.

9. Branch Warren – Branch Warren had a very strong Arnold classic showing. If he can duplicate it, he can be eighth.

10. Silvio Samuel – Silvio is always in amazing condition again and again. But the judges may be getting bored with Silvio. They have already shown their willingness to drop him, even when he is in excellent condition, at the Arnold.

If new IFBB pro and Olympia qualifier Evan Centopani decides to compete, he could potentially take a top 10 spot away from Silvio.

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