



Fueled by Passion, Unfettered by Age

by Rachel Payne

CASEY DELONG

Age: 44, Height: 5'8"

Coach Team AC, Mother of 5

Competition Highlights

2x Olympia Qualified 1 X Arnold - Wellness

Earned Pro status at 2018 NPC Teen, Collegiate and Masters Nationals Championships - Bikini 35+

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As a competitor, mother of 5, and coach, Casey DeLong is always on the go. When we did our interview, you could feel her energy and enthusiasm for the sport as she described helping her clients, both young and old, work towards their goals. Before she began her own competition journey, Casey worked for the IRS in the audit department for small businesses but medically retired due to a brain tumor that she still lives with. Her passion for the sport of bodybuilding makes her one of the most recognized Masters Wellness Athletes in the sport.

When Casey was pregnant with her middle son, she had some complications that ended with her delivering at 32 weeks. They originally thought it was a placenta issue but later discovered she had what they called a pregnancy tumor. Ten months later she was working in her garden on a Saturday and lost the use of the right side of her body. Her husband is deployed so, somehow she drove herself to the hospital where they realized she had experienced a complex seizure that affected the use of her body. Several tests later, Casey was diagnosed as having a brain tumor. Due to the location of the tumor, it sometimes affects her vision in a way similar to dyslexia. She's lived with this tumor for 15 years now.

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Initially, she tried the medications the doctors put her on but they made her feel so bad she finally just handed them all back to the doctor and said, "I'm done taking these." Casey did her own research cutting out soda, fried foods and processed foods. She began exercising in the gym three days a week and eventually someone said to her, "you should compete." Casey explains, "From the first time I ever stepped on stage, I knew this would keep me motivated and moving forward so I would never have to take the type of seizure medication that made me feel horrible all the time. Instead I take a medication that my body feels better taking, it doesn't cause damage to my liver or sodium levels and even though it's an older medication, it's the right one for my body. Eight years later, I still love competing!"

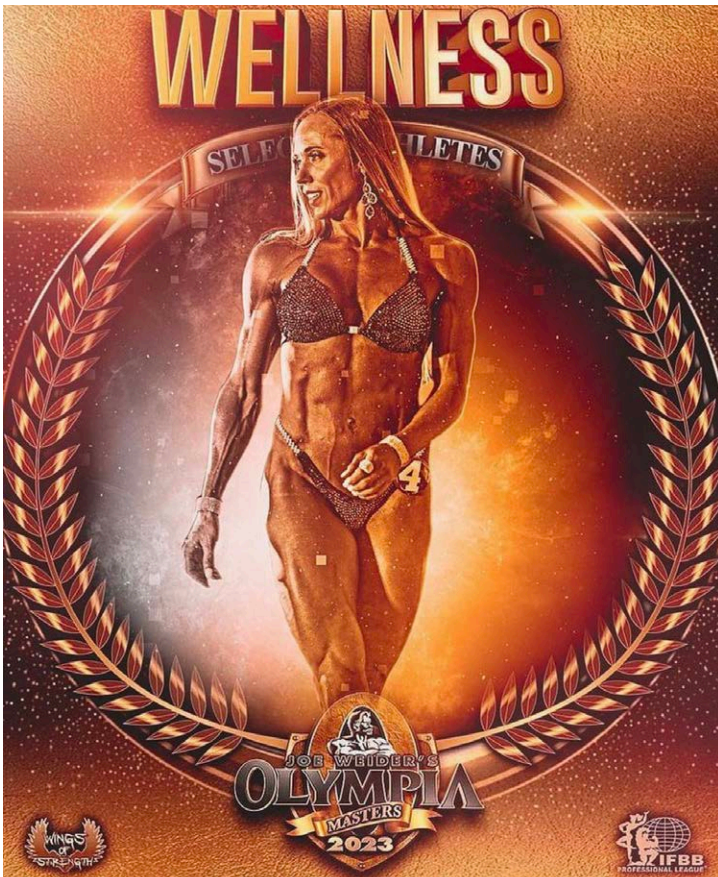
In 2021, Casey had earned a spot on the Olympia stage but she collapsed backstage before finals and was rushed to the hospital where they discovered what the doctors considered, not a tumor yet but a cyst. Casey will occasionally have an aggression seizure (anger followed by a blackout) but they are few and far between and occur when the immune system is weakened. For the most part, she lives her life to the fullest, one day at a time.



Casey is passionate about the sport of bodybuilding and because her brain tumor has forced her to become so in tune with her body, she advocates for competitors to listen to their body. Casey's 2021 Olympia experience resulted in a 9 1/2 day hospital stay. While they did discover a cyst, what actually caused her collapse was dehydration which caused her digestion tract to stop functioning. This resulted in a very dangerous bowel obstruction caused by her admittedly not trusting herself and listening to her body and instead trusting others and the plan they prescribed that didn't take into account her specific needs especially given her medical history. It was a hard lesson to learn.

"Everyone is different so my advice to women is to listen to your body and remember, you are responsible for you. If you are not comfortable with what your coach is telling you then you need to have that conversation with them or move on. I want to keep my body healthy which means it will take me longer to get the results I want." No matter what category you are in, bodybuilding is a process that takes time, takes mature muscle, and although everyone thinks that it'll just come quick, Casey wishes they would understand the need for patience. It makes her sad to see so many girls rushing to the stage.

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Promoting women in general but masters women especially, and tall women, because at 5'8" Casey is considered a tall wellness competitor, that even when they are told they can't do it, that they can. Posing Coach Steve Payne helped Casey in the very beginning and has always encouraged and supported her. She shares, "He once told me, 'You will always be the hardest worker in the room and that's all that you can control.'" My goal moving forward is to help other women understand that and to be a role model for Masters athletes. She says, "I love being a Masters athlete and making it to the Open stage. If I can do it, I know others can too."

Casey earned Pro status in the Bikini division at 35 years old, as a mother of five and completely natural at the 2018 NPC Teen, Collegiate and Masters Nationals Championships. When she first turned Pro, there were very few Pro shows that offered Pro Masters divisions so she competed in Open Pro. A lot of women that earn Pro status as a Masters competitor stop there because they don't feel like they can be competitive in the Open division. What made her keep going? She had not reached her ultimate goal yet. Casey says, " I always wanted to step on the Olympia stage and Arnold stage because I wanted to see Arnold in person. I know, silly but that's what was driving me! Plus, a couple of people told me I couldn't get there and I was determined to prove them wrong. I competed as a Bikini Pro for a year but when the Wellness division became available people told me this was the class for me. I felt they were right so I made the switch and focused on winning my way to the Olympia and Arnold stages. When I finally made it there, having reached my goals, I really could have quit, but I had already qualified for the 2022 Olympia so I decided to compete one more time."

You can contact Casey DeLong, Wellness & Bikini Prep coaching on instagram @teamac

The return of the Masters Olympia was announced on the same day Casey went to the doctors and was told she was sick and needed to slow down and get healthy. It was fate and she made the decision to focus on earning an invitation to the Masters Olympia. Casey has been on every other inaugural wellness stage so being a part of the inaugural Masters Olympia Wellness is something that would mean a lot to her. The Masters Athlete invitations were announced on April 25, 2023 and Casey made the list!

She is a fierce advocate for women to be proud of their age and proud of who they are as well as one of the first to acknowledge that it doesn't mean any less to grow out of the open division and compete as a Pro masters athlete as long as you love what you do. Through her Team AC, the future is about sharing with other women that this sport is not just for the young, and that you can be competitive over 40.

