

# Pumping Iron

## Three women prepare for competition

by Colette Hutchings

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Theresa Hensley, Linda Phillips and Debbie Crafts are three Aggies who, like most other women on campus, probably worry about their makeup, what to wear to school and their grades.

And like most students, they have particular interests and hobbies apart from getting a college education.

But their "hobby" is participating in something probably not too popular among other women on campus.

They bodybuild.

I don't mean they diet and wear padding to achieve the normal lumps and curves most men find enticing ... these women work out in gyms with heavy weights, sweating and hurting with the male bodybuilders to acquire strong, muscular physiques.

When I first thought of interviewing women bodybuilders, I expected big hulky women with gruff voices. But when I saw them I found otherwise — I was bigger and and at least 4" taller than all of them.

Hensley is 5'2½" and weighs 106 lbs.; Phillips is 5'4" and weighs 125 lbs.; and Crafts is 5'1" and weighs 87 lbs.

The three women are preparing for the Gulf Coast Classic and Mr. Collegiate Texas Bodybuilding Championships contest sponsored by the Texas A&M Weightlifting Club on Sunday. They'll be competing with 15 other bodybuilding women from Gulf Coast States. And this is the first contest for all of them.

Hensley, a 22-year-old senior physical education major, was formerly on the Texas A&M gymnastic team and said she began bodybuilding after the team disbanded and her boyfriend, Mark Costa, president of the A&M Weightlifting club, encouraged her to work out.

Phillips, 21, a junior physical education major also formerly on the gymnastic team, began to work out with her.

Crafts, 21, a senior wildlife and fisheries major, swam in high school and got her start when her boyfriend joined the weightlifting club, and encouraged her to work out with him, six weeks ago.

All three can bench press 95 lbs, but they say they are not really interested in working on building strength. That's a different weightlifting category cal-

led power-lifting. They are more concerned with cut — the show of the muscle. To build muscle, the women say they use light weights and heavy repetitions.

There's nothing unusual about wanting to keep fit and trim, but why go for the muscles?

Crafts explains: "I want to see what I can do. I've seen a lot of progress in six weeks, so what can I do in three months?"

Phillips says, "I enjoy being a bodybuilder. I like the recognition. I gave an impromptu speech in my speech class about coming to the meet and they were all very supportive."

Phillips said when friends ask her if she really wants to look like the bodybuilding women on the cover of magazines, she quickly says that yes, she does.

"I am working to be like the girls on those magazines," she said. "I think being fit is being muscular and less fat. And bodybuild-

*All three say they've heard the comment "Women bodybuilding, that's gross!" from others at least once.*

ing makes you feel special and unique. It's not like any other sport."

Hensley said, "I think it makes you look better and keeps you younger." Crafts said: "Being in shape is a lifestyle. I'm a very nervous, high-strung person and this relieves anxieties. Some people go the the (Dixie) Chicken, I go to the gym."

Being a bodybuilder takes hard work and discipline. Hensley said she works out six days a week and takes off Sundays. Her schedule is a 2-hour workout with a 2-to-3-mile run afterwards. These are usually workouts in the afternoon since she student teaches until 4:30 p.m.

Phillips, Hensley's roommate, works out with her and her work-out schedule is about the same. Crafts gets up at dawn for a morning run and schedules her daily three hour work-out between classes.

Hensley said, "Your life revolves around when you work out and run. You actually have to plan your studying around

when you have to work out. I get tired and frustrated sometimes."

Diet is another big factor they have to watch while preparing for a contest.

Hensley said it's necessary to lose fat in order to define the muscles for a contest.

Hensley said she eats natural foods, yogurt and no red meat.

Crafts said: "I keep a running calculation of the calories I've had during the day. For the contest, I've been cutting down on fats — keeping carbohydrates for energy. I eat fresh fruit, tuna, white chicken, and eggs sometimes."

"Right now, I'm eating only 700 calories a day and today is my last day of fruit in order to prepare for the meet."

Crafts says it's hard to give up food and fun to get in shape for a contest. "I went to a barbecue last weekend and brought my own salad and tuna fish."

As for how others take her special eating habits Crafts says: "Most people won't bother you about it if they see you are really serious about sticking to your diet. In fact, most of the time they admire you. It's hard, though. I mean, I love peanut butter and I've had cravings for it."

Hensley says the only other special attention she pays to her diet is trying to stick with white wine and spring water. Crafts says she drinks only spring water because the water here contains too much sodium.

For the competition, Crafts said she's working on cutting her thighs and that her best points will be her arms, and Phillips and Hensley say they think their best points will be their backs.

All three say they've heard the comment "Women bodybuilding, that's gross!" from others at least once.

"At first my parents were grossed-out, especially when they flipped through a magazine and saw what I wanted to do," Phillips said. "But now they understand, I guess. At least they're taking it a lot better."

Hensley said: "Well, I laugh at beauty contests, that's not a sport."

"This is an athletic sport," Phillips said.

Hensley said a lot of people expect a woman bodybuilder to be a big, hulky woman but that's usually not the case. "It used to be that women posed masculine, but now more and more

women are getting more feminine," she said. "Also, most of the women, if you see them up close, are not large at all."

Crafts said: "I've had friends come up to me who don't understand and think I'm hurting myself physically. They've even told me they won't come watch on Sunday. I don't want to alienate myself from them, but this is what I want to do."

Hensley said she's had her physical education teachers point to magazines and say "You think that's attractive?" and she tells them yes.

Crafts said she thinks a lot of myth surrounds the sport in

general. "I think it's a curiosity," she said. "I know that's probably why a lot of people will be coming out to watch."

Phillips said when she was a gymnast there was so much pressure in competing but now she's on her own, doing it simply because she wants to. "There's nobody to report to afterwards," she said. "I like that part of competing individually."

So, the interview ends and picture taking begins. Crafts was hesitant about posing with her hands showing — her nails weren't painted. When she saw that I noticed, she giggled and said, "See, I'm still a girl!"

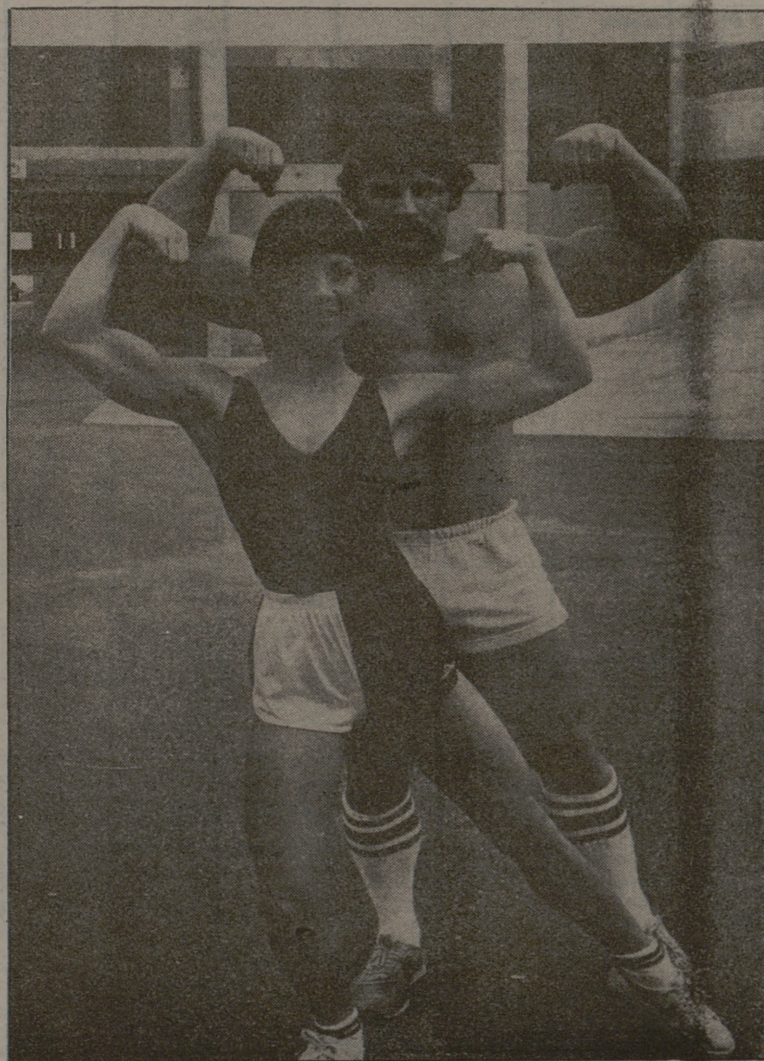


Photo by Todd Woodard

Theresa Hensley, senior physical education major and a woman bodybuilder, and Bruce Crowhurst, a physical education graduate student, pose in a conventional bodybuilding stance.