



Shoulder ASSAULT

An All-Around Delt Detailer
From **Alex Azarian**

by Cory Crow
Photography by Michael Neveux

Alex Azarian sounded beat. The night before we were scheduled to talk about his shoulder training, he and his wife, Nga, had welcomed Stephen Azarian, all seven pounds, two ounces of him, into the world. I offered via phone message to postpone, but Alex wouldn't have it. Yes, he was tired; yes, having a baby is much higher on the scale of importance than an interview; and, yes, he had barely slept since the baby was born, but he wanted to do the interview despite all that—because he'd told me he would and he didn't want to upset my schedule. That provides a little insight into just how nice a guy Alex Azarian is.

He's also one heck of a competitor, a bodybuilder who, after taking the lightweight title at the '06 NPC USA, shot to prominence prior to the '07 Nationals, due primarily to some sick images of his conditioning that led many amateur prognosticators (including yours truly) to predict a win for him going away (see photos on page 144). Unfortunately, it was not in the cards. Alex finished eighth in that competition and got an eye-opening look at just how difficult it is to peak after making a cross-country trip.

What led me to respect Alex after his '07 Nationals experience was the professional and upstanding manner in which he answered the inevitable question: "What went wrong?" Instead of blaming a mysterious illness or food poisoning or some obscure malady—something that's common in bodybuilding when a competitor misses his or her peak—Alex calmly admitted that he'd made some poor decisions in the final days leading up to the show. That's quite a breath of fresh air.

Because of all that I was looking forward to speaking with Alex about how he trains his shoulders. Of course, when you're speaking of shoulders, you're really referring to two fairly large muscle groups: the deltoids and trapezius. The development of both groups is key to having a finished physique, and the key to proper development is balance.

Alex told me two things that I found surprising. The first was that, because he's genetically gifted in his shoulder-and-clavicle area, he stopped training delts for a while, which he later regretted because he felt it affected his physique negatively. The