

Mclish, Rachel (1958-) Encyclopedia Article

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McLish, Rachel (1958—)

Rachel McLish earned immortality by becoming the first woman to win the Ms. Olympia bodybuilding contest in 1980. (The Mr. Olympia contests for men, begun in 1965, had quickly become the sport's most prestigious title). Even though it was only her third bodybuilding competition, the graceful McLish was the clear choice of the judges. After her victory and the attendant publicity, she became a role model for aspiring young women who wanted to reshape their bodies by training with weights.

Rachel McLish

McLish, who was of Hispanic descent and was raised in South Texas and trained in ballet, became well known outside of the subculture of bodybuilding with the release of the feature film *Pumping Iron II: The Unprecedented Women* (1985). A pseudo-documentary, *Pumping Iron* concentrated on the differences between the lithe McLish and the heavily muscled Beverly Francis, a power-lifting champion. McLish went on to work in other films and in television, and was seen in *Getting Physical* (1984), *Aces: Iron Eagle III* (1992), and *Raven Hawk* (1996).