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Bodybuilding Forges Resilience for RAAF Aviator

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Corporal Matthew “Gladdy” Gladman, a Royal Australian Air Force avionics technician, has achieved notable success in natural bodybuilding during his posting at 80 Squadron at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. Gladman won the overall title in the Classic Physique Division at the Organization of Competitive Bodybuilders Emerald Coast Classic on June 14, 2025, earning an OCB pro card, which certifies professional-level status. He also placed second overall at the National Physique Committee Riptide Classic and won the overall title at the Summer Shredding Houston competition, taking home US\$1500 in prizes.

Gladman’s interest in bodybuilding began in Australia, where he competed in the I Compete Natural and International Natural Bodybuilding Association federations and

qualified for national-level competition. His athletic background includes playing Australian Football League in rural leagues while growing up in the Mallee region of Victoria. He enlisted in the RAAF in 2013 and served with 10 Squadron, working on AP-3C Orion aircraft and electronic warfare systems.

Now based at Eglin, he works in mission systems and data reprogramming for the F-35, teaching joint coalition partners. Gladman's disciplined daily routine includes early mornings for meal preparation, adhering to a five-meal plan, and completing 6,000 of his target 12,000 steps before work. He fits cardio into his lunch break and trains after duty hours while prioritizing sleep and limiting alcohol to occasional social events.

Gladman described bodybuilding as a test of his mental resilience, explaining that it involves managing time effectively and seeking support from his chain of command to balance high performance in both sport and service. He stated that his ambition in sport aligns with his professional life in the RAAF and identified discipline, consistency, and the ability to push through challenges as shared traits between bodybuilding and military service.

His success has prompted interest among fellow aviators, with some choosing to participate in sport as a means of personal development and resilience. Gladman's story illustrates how structured training, goal setting, and consistent effort in competitive sport can coexist with the demands of military service.