

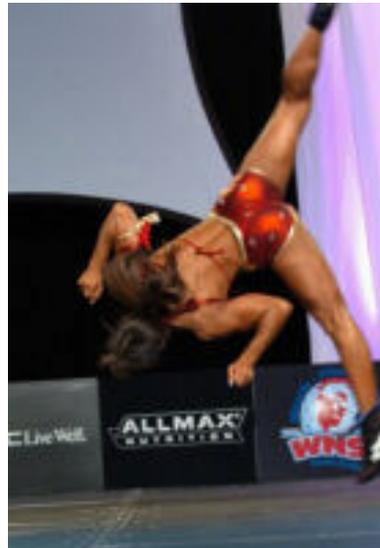
Volume

3

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Secrets to give you an edge in women's competitive Fitness, Model and Figure

Presented by Linda Cusmano, Body Rush Personal Training and
Fitness Team BC / Figureteam.com



Fitness, Model & Figure
Contest Tips

LINDA CUSMANO, BODY RUSH, AND
FITNESS TEAM BC / FIGURETEAM.COM PRESENT

Competitive Advantage

© 2005/2008 Copyright Linda Cusmano

All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction, in whole or in part, in any form. The use of any part of this publication reproduced, transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, recording, or otherwise – or stored in a retrieval system, without prior consent of the publisher, is an infringement of the copyright law. Brief quotations are permitted if they are embodied in critical articles or reviews.

1st Edition

Vancouver, BC

Email Angel@lindacusmano.com

Websites:

www.lindacusmano.com

www.bodyrushpersonaltraining.com

www.fitnesssteambc.com / www.figureteam.com

Legal Waiver

Always check with your doctor prior to beginning any diet or exercise program. Due to the variances in individuals, their personal health and needs, this book is not meant to replace professional medical advice.

The writers of this guide assume no responsibility for errors, inaccuracies, omissions, or any other inconsistencies herein. The content in this guide may not be suitable for all persons and is not guaranteed. The writers, authors and publishers of this book expressly disclaim any responsibility for any loss, liability, or risk, personal or otherwise, that is incurred as a consequence, indirectly or directly of the use and application of any of this guides contents.

<http://www.fitnesssteambc.com> aka <http://www.figureteam.com> is the place to join if you want to learn how to eat and train to compete. A member area for competitors with their own fully designed website plus meal plans and workouts that take you to lean and slim or buff and beautiful. Show off your new firm physique and keep your fans up to date with contest photos and results as well as your own journals.

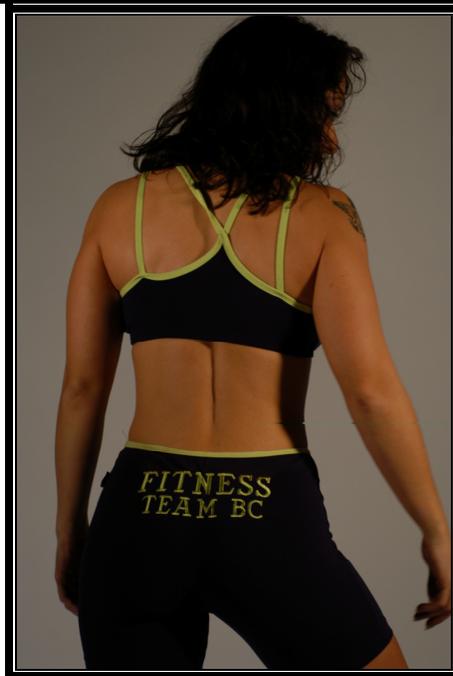


Table of Contents

PLANNING ABOVE & BEYOND	1
<i>Sponsors</i>	1
<i>Companies</i>	1
<i>Local Business</i>	2
<i>Family & Friends</i>	2
<i>Cutting Costs</i>	3
<i>Which Contest is Worth Entering?</i>	6
TWEAKING YOUR WORKOUT PLAN	9
Other training tips:	12
Mental tricks to stick with training.....	13
TWEAKING YOUR MEAL PLAN.....	14
Carbs	14
Salt	15
Protein.....	15
Dairy	15
Supplements	15
Mental tricks to stick to your diet plan.....	16
TWEAKING YOUR LOOK	17
Costume, shoes and Bikini	17
Winning colors, styles and suit designs.....	18
Hair and Make up.....	18
Tanning Tips	19
FINISHING TOUCHES	21
Music & Props.....	21
Perfect Theme and Music.....	22
Posing, Walking & Routines	22
Is it amazing skills or routine illusions?	23
BACKSTAGE, PRE & POST CONTEST	24
The week before contest.....	24
Night before Contest	25
Be confident at registration and backstage	26
Backstage Tips	27
Media tips.....	27
Self promo.....	28
General Stage Tips	28
Pleasing the judges, pleasing the crowd	30
Post Contest.....	31
<i>Other Competitors' Secrets!</i>	32
<i>Brigitte Levesque</i>	33
<i>Tammy Huber</i>	37
<i>Beckie Alexander</i>	41
<i>Melanie Pitts</i>	45
<i>Chris Goodman</i>	50
<i>Conclusion</i>	54

Introduction

Elite Trainer, Pro Figure and Fitness Champion Linda Cusmano shares her secrets in this complete Competitive Advantage Manual. Linda's' competition preparation, diets, training and experience will help you ascend to new levels.

If you compete then this is the book you need regardless if you're new or pro. Newbie's can use this as a supplement to Linda's Competitive Fitness, Model and Figure Guide.

Linda has decided to put her 10+ years of contest experience together into this much anticipated supplemental manual. This guide should help you polish up with tips and secret tricks of the Fitness and Figure industry.

Unfortunately there is not a set standard of Fitness, Model or Figure rules. There is much room to grow, which is great for creativity and breaking new boundaries, but difficult toward finding a perfect fit for judging. Through competing with various organizations Linda has been able to compile this 'tips and tricks' guide that will show you how to avoid problems and make your contest experience pleasant bringing you to that stage ready physique fully prepared and confident.

Having judged, choreographed, competed in all classes, coached, promoted and hosted these competitions, Linda is well versed in all aspects of this field.

"I am honored to pass along this information not only to beginners but to help out the seasoned competitors as well!

I come from an unhealthy childhood filled with asthma, allergies, bronchitis, pneumonias and anorexia. As I recovered and learned to get my health under control I was then able to finally exercise, something I longed to do as a child but just could not. Running was impossible, swimming was rare, sports needed more reliability in attendance, so even with dance and gymnastics I was unable to follow through for the long term due to fall backs in my health.

As I became a healthier young adult, weight training was easy and felt right, as did my skills in basic gymnastics and dance. I began kickboxing which was a childhood dream. With the weight training I became muscular quite quickly and easily.

I came across a Fitness contest on TV in 1994 and that was it, I was hooked and have never looked back since!"

Linda Cusmano

If you're ready to go then this guide will get you there! Enjoy the pages ahead and prepare yourself for some of the biggest accomplishments you will ever make! Let Linda guide you to your best.

Competitions & Awards



- Nov 10th, 2007 Placed 1st Fitness and Fitness Overall SWFC (BCABBA)
 - Nov 10th, 2007 Placed 6th Figure Medium SWFC (BCABBA)
 - Nov 18th, 2006 Placed 7th Fitness SWFC (BCABBA)
 - Nov 18th, 2006 Placed 13th Figure Short SWFC (BCABBA)
 - April 1st, 2006 Placed 2nd Women's Lightweight Bodybuilding FAME West (WNSO)
 - April 1st, 2006 Placed 1st Pairs Bodybuilding FAME West (WNSO)
 - July 30th, 2004 Placed 1st Fitness Short 30-34 Vegas World Pro Women's Tri Fitness Event (WTF)
 - July 30th 2004 Placed 12th Fitness overall Vegas World Pro Women's Tri Fitness Event (WTF)
 - July 30th 2004 Placed 17th Tri-fitness overall Vegas World Pro Women's Tri Fitness Event (WTF)
 - May 30th 2004 Placed 3rd Obstacle Course Challenge FAME World Event (WNSO)
 - May 29th, 2004 Placed 17th Fitness Canada Pageant (WNSO)
 - May 29th, 2004 Placed 7th FAME Figure (WNSO)
 - May 29th 2004 Placed top 200 FAME Fitness Model (WNSO)
 - April 23rd 2004 Placed 11th Emerald Cup Fitness Short (NPC)
 - April 23rd 2004 Placed 12th Emerald Cup Figure Medium (NPC)
 - Sept 21st 2002 Placed 3rd World Pro Ms. Exercise (WNBF)
 - Sept 21st 2002 Placed 4th World Figure (WNBF)
 - Sept 7th 2002 Placed 4th FVF Strength Competition (DV)
 - July 20th 2002 Placed 17th TSN Fitness Canada Pageant (WNSO)
 - July 19th 2002 Placed 4th ESPN series One Fitness (WNSO)
 - Nov 4th 2001 Placed 4th Natures Best Natural Pro Ms. Exercise (WNBF)
 - April 21st 2001 Placed 4th short class Bodybuilding Western Canadians (ANBC)
 - April 21st 2001 Placed 2nd Fitness Western Canadians (ANBC)
 - April 7th 2001 Placed 4th Lightweight Novice Bodybuilding Western Canadians (CNBF)
 - May 27th 2000 Place top 30 in the Fitness Universe (ASN)
 - Nov 13th 1999 Placed 1st & Pro Card in Fitness Western Naturals (CNBF)
 - Aug 21st 1999 Placed 6th in Fitness Canada Pageant (WNSO)
 - July 10th 1999 Placed 4th in Ms. Fitness Gold's Naturals Provincial (BCABBA)
 - June 19th 1999 Placed 2nd in Ms. Fitness Model Canadian Nationals (WNSO)
 - June 19th 1999 Placed 2nd in Ms. Fitness Canadian Nationals (WNSO)
 - June 19th 1999 Placed 2nd in Ms. Figure Canadian Nationals (WNSO)
 - May 8th 1999 Placed top 5 in Ms. Fitness Muscle Mania (BCABBA)
 - Apr 16th 1999 Placed top 12 in Washington's Ms. Fitness Emerald Cup (NPC)
 - Apr 2nd 1999 Placed top 10 in Washington's Ms. Fitness Vancouver (NPC)
 - Mar 6th 1999 Placed 2nd in California's Ms. Fitness Inland Empire (INBA)
 - Mar 6th 1999 Placed 2nd in California's Ms. Figure Inland Empire (INBA)
 - May 2nd 1998 Placed top 10 in the BC Provincial Ms. Fitness Championships (BCABBA)
 - April 25th 1998 Placed 3rd in the Prince George Pro Lab Classic Ms. Fitness Championships (BCABBA)
 - April 18th 1998 Placed 2nd in Victoria Gator's Classic Ms. Fitness Championships (BCABBA)
 - April 27th 1996 Placed 3rd in BC Provincial Ms. Fitness Championship (BCABBA)
-

Planning Above & Beyond

Sponsorships, cutting costs, and which contests are worth your while.

The best way to avoid problems is to try to foresee them. You cannot always foresee freak incidents that will impact your contest prep or contest day but you can learn from those who already have! I still run into situations which are new but now I can handle it with ease and find a way around it rather than panic. You learn little tricks along the way and now I will share them!

Planning is not only about the costume, performance or body but also about the days of, before and after. There are many opportunities for unexpected things to come up which you would never think about and are very simple. I will go over items I find many competitors do not always acknowledge.

Sponsors

There are companies, family, friends and local business that will help you out with sponsorship in one shape or form. Cash sponsors are the hardest to attract but not impossible. If you catch their eye you may be eligible but you have to have something that they want and every company has a different need although bringing in business and how you can help increase their bottom line is THE BOTTOM LINE. What do you have to offer and is it what that particular company can use? You have to explain the contest you enter so they understand you are working hard for this and it is not just about getting up there and being naturally pretty with nothing behind it! They may not understand Fitness, Figure and especially Fitness Model unless you explain it is a physique contest and that they look for fit and healthy bodies that are active!

Companies

You would be amazed at the companies you find sponsoring competitors. You automatically think fitness equipment, supplements, active wear, and swimwear or gyms right? Well I have known some competitors to be sponsored by pharmaceutical companies, construction companies, stock broking companies, chicken stores, therapeutic practices and technology companies. My main point is not to overlook approaching any company with a proposal, don't assume! If you fit the criteria, the timing is right and you put together a nice simple proposal then you are set.

PLANNING

You may need to do some research first to make sure you know about the company, their products and maybe try them out so you can speak to them at their level. This will also help you detail the proposal to their needs (more info on this is in the other competition manuals). You must ensure you include info they are looking for and avoid adding items that do not match the company. Make sure you know what you are asking for specifically and what you are offering. Concisely gather this together for a 1-2 page proposal which includes a brief bio, contest history or pertinent info. Be professional and polite. Phone calls are great as are emails and faxes but the best bet is to find out by phone or email who to contact in regards to sponsorships and you will get a name and contact info. You can also ask what the requirements for application are since some companies are up on sponsorships.

Typically you can offer photos and or the use of your image for their ads or products for a designated term. Offer time, so if they have expos or in store ad campaigns you would be a perfect spokes model. Offer testimonials in the event you get free products. You can also offer link exchanges with a plug on your site thanking your sponsors and showing a nice banner of theirs prominently on your site!

Some sponsors will tag your routine clothing or give you clothing for the model rounds and you would wear their t-shirts as much as possible in public, at the show, backstage and in front of media. These sponsors usually offer financial sponsorships. In most cases you will have one main financial sponsor but it is not unsaid to have a number of contributing sponsors depending on how you design your proposal. Sometimes it is easier to get a hundred dollars from 10 sponsors whose logo will all go on a T shirt than asking for higher full amounts. You can wear a different T shirt per show if you get different sponsors and do more than one contest in the year. You can also have sponsors mentioned during your introduction on stage. For televised shows this is a plus. Clothing sponsors can be even more prevalent in the Model division being that this consists mainly of 3 model type rounds with fitness and swimwear type clothing showing a healthy and 'fitter than most models' type of body!

Sponsorships may come in product, money or a combo. The most common is product. This is handy if you can find a sponsor for items you need specific to competing! Approaching companies who make or sell swim wear, supplements companies, tanning salons and the like gives you a higher chance for success at getting some sponsorship, if you get them all they do not conflict. It is lower cost for them to give you product than cash yet is still a benefit to them as a business deduction.

Local Business

This seems to be the most successful. You approach your local store, the one you buy chicken from and they give you chicken for free for your show prep, you plug them and attend a few events for them Simple and I know competitors who have done it! I was offered cash from a local momma and poppa coffee shop. Who you know can be handy as they may be more apt to help you out! One of the gals I coach sewed up my costumes for my 2004 competition year in exchange for discounts and freebies on training and diets. These arrangements can work out very well! Even the company you work for may be able to sponsor you so don't be afraid to politely look into this possibility.

Family & Friends

Some occasions allow for you to approach family and friends but you need to use judgment and tact. Normally they will let you know if they are interested and will offer to purchase an item you need or donate some cash. I have had beauty products and services donated to me a few times through friends

PLANNING

and family. My gowns were purchased by family a few times as well! My bikinis were sponsored by family one year. Small things like having a suit made by family members who sew or having them help pay for it will always lessen your contest cost burden. I have had my hair done as sponsorships with color and all. The aesthetics and beauty business can offer you most savings for the Model competitors!

Cutting Costs

Finding ways to decrease the impact of competition bills can be a tricky game but if you are creative I bet you will be sending me ideas to add in updates of this book!

There are many more resources now which direct you toward competitors who are buying and selling used costumes and suits. This is a brilliant idea especially with the height of cost you can soar to with some of these pieces of art! Contacting other competitors locally by attending a show or through your local contest federation is another way to look into purchasing used costumes. Many competitors are happy to recycle these items since many do not use them beyond a one year season and pay quite a bit of money to get them made.



Another way to cut costume cost is to find a novelty store which sells Halloween costumes in bags! The lower cost items. Depending on your routine theme you may be able to find something ready to go or needing minimal adjustments. I did a routine to 'I dream of Jeannie' and found a 50 dollar costume that was almost perfect.....I added beading and stones, cut the legs open to show more tone and wore a sport bra under the top which is not made for tumbling. Costume solved!

You can find new footwear through Ebay for affordable rates, clear heels, and platform, Capezio and other split sole dance shoes plus more. To order some of these items through local stores can cost tons.....I paid over 200 bucks for my Capezios a few years back, now on Ebay you can get them for a song!

Make up minerals are also a very effective make up for stage and used wet they can shimmer very bright. Now unless you purchase a full jar of MAC pigment which will last you 2 lifetimes, you can find samples on Ebay for much less. You can also find other brand pigments for very low costs. These pigments last awhile. You don't need more than a ¼ tsp of each color to last you at least a year for contest and modeling!

Dream Tan is a product that you can use and not have to tan or use other products for body color. If you really want to cut cost and do not like to tan, dream tan works best on lighter skin. I suggest having a base tan but again cutting costs means this is an option but not needed. If you buy bulk with other competitors you may be able to get a deal. Even the models should be colored up but not as dark as the other categories.

Bikini Bite is not too expensive but you don't use a ton so you may want to share this with another athlete who is competing at your show. Bodybuilders are always using this and would be happy to buy

PLANNING

into some with you I am sure. I have been lucky in that 99% of my suit were well made and did not need bikini bite!

Adornments are not too expensive from stores which sell mock jewelry for teens like Claire's in Canada but if you only wear them once you may as well borrow or buy these with another competitor who can use them for another show. This is prevalent in model classes because adornments really make up the overall look which is what the judges are looking at.

All these tiny 'cost cuts' add up!

Travel and accommodation costs can be cut if you are able to work with a group. Sometimes contacting the organization hosting the show is helpful as they can help you match up with others to share rooms and do flight bookings in groups of you are traveling to a show. It can be hard to plan ahead with some contests yet get a good flight deal can occur last minute so it is better to get a group planned ahead. On a rare occasion, those competing athletes who teach aerobics, yoga and classes of the like, can barter with the hotel so that they teach some classes while there in exchange for their room. Always buy cancellation insurance, unfortunately injuries can occur last minute so and you will lose airfare if you do not prepare for this, it is well worth the money as is travel insurance!

Hair and nails can be done by you or at a salon but to cut costs the best idea is to do them yourself. Many times you are not allowed any help backstage and the help provided will be spread thin! Better off be prepared to take care of yourself. With the show starting at 9am in most cases, you are preparing so early that it would be a challenge to find or hire help to be there that early and it has to be early since you usually need to be back stage an hour pre show and cannot bring your help.

With nails I suggest Broadway nails or some fancy fake ones you get at a drug store. You glue them on the night before and you're done! I even do them the morning off because I also color my dream tan that morning and like to add my nails after that. Keep your glue and spares ready just incase and you are then set for the show. Size is your choice so if you are on your hands a lot for routine then you can get sport length, if you do Figure you can get longer nails. Also consider how fidgety your suit and costumes are, nails that are too long can hinder your ability to connect shoe straps, bikini top clips etc. Ask yourself 'How much nail can really be seen and isn't it the body they are really looking at?'

Hair pieces are very handy and I tried that one year and loved the ease. Many gals also use full wigs; others use pieces to make the hair look fuller or longer. You can find many low cost online sources as well as locally. I borrowed mine from Tracy Holly, as well as her costume so I was low cost that year! Usually hair is bound or up for routine round in Fitness and posing round in Figure so hair pieces can be very hand for up do looks that take seconds giving you time to add sparkling adornments or what you like.

A show I recently did brought me first and overall. This was one of the times I went with a bun for all my bikini and suit rounds and a pony tail for routine. I did Figure and Fitness. I chose hair up for my suits because in taking my comparison pics the few weeks before show I noticed something. In the shots where my hair was down and pulled out of the way it was slightly distracting to the upper area shoulders, traps and lats. On stage, in blending with the backdrop, if your hair is dark it causes illusions of imbalanced shoulders. With the hair completely off the shoulders you give the judges a clean clear

PLANNING

view of your frame. The shoulders are such a huge part of judging as are lats so by keeping hair off your body the shape is true without any imbalance illusions. Being a huge fan of long hair, and showing it, it took all my will to do this but in the end I think it was a benefit to my judging and overall win.

If you look at the examples below, they are almost identical, the first shot is very slightly on angle but the second shot although a tad closer up is in a much darker room. The shot with the hair pulled forward, makes the shoulder look dropped much more so than the shot with the hair up. Now I do know I already have slight imbalance due to back pains causing the drop but the hair seems to really accent it, with a stage backdrop and hair up, it is not as outstanding.

You also want to ensure your bikini bottoms are even at hip, if you look at both shots below, the red is slightly off on the right side, the green on the left side. It makes a difference to the overall appearance making you look off balance in build. Small details that count big time!



Boob enhancements for those who are naturally breasted can also cost a bit, but a pair of nicely folded socks can make anyone look like they have a perky top end! Placed just right and no one would know it! There are gel type inserts you can buy but they do cost and socks are much cheaper but work as well!

Once there, the majority of your competitors look great so this is when those details come into play.

PLANNING



Music can be done many ways. If you can figure out how to do it on your own that is best. Many gals use free programs found online to cut and mix their music. Of course this is the lowest cost option but for a few hundred you can get custom professional mixes as well. Some Figure and most models do not need to worry about music.

Vitamins and protein powder, EFA'S and Creatine. If you do not have sponsors for your supplements you can go in with other competitors to purchase bulk amounts and share it. You can get huge buckets that are not sold in stores from wholesale and warehouse outfits which will save you some pennies. Models may also need supplements since they are striving for a fit body close to the fitness competitor look.

For competitions with choreography, practice space can cost quite a bit especially if you are approaching dance studios but sometimes you can find a community center willing to give you a discount drop in. This can be affordable but you must work with their time frames usually coming during their slowest times since full paying patrons get priority in this case. Some gyms will sponsor you this space or charge you a minimal drop in fee if you ask them. Models can ask about coming in during off hours to work on walking, standing, entrance and exits!

Lastly, research! Go online, ask around, and don't be shy! Go ahead and purchase a fitness manual or 2 to help you through, those are an investment that will help you save money as well. My Fitness and Figure competitor guides will guarantee you savings and smooth sailing!

Which Contest is Worth Entering?

This is a very personal choice but I can help you decide by presenting to you the focus on each federation so that you can apply your focus to a like minded show based on your research! As for the fitness models, be wary to enter Fitness Model contests rather than night club run bikini type contests. Although these can be of great practice they are very swayed and useful more for the exposure of being

PLANNING

on stage in a bikini like practice. Try to hook up with an official bodybuilding and fitness federation, many have model categories. Some Figure categories are essentially bikini model fitness type contests!

I always say to try a few shows and federations but some do not allow this and those may be the ones you choose so you have to research it first before you compete! If you are not keen on what each show can offer then you can end up competing in shows that do not meet your end goals. Even if you say you are entering for fun, you can still choose a show where your experience will be amazing rather than something you don't enjoy because you walked into it unknowing with unrealistic expectations of that contest.

Are you entering just for fun? Just to try it out? Then try to focus on a local amateur show. Nothing to competitive made up of open or pro women but more of a first timer show. If you are lucky enough to have a choice of more than one contest then plan for time ahead and find out about expected turnout. Attend the show you plan to try out and see how it is run, become familiar. You may be very shy and nervous so then choose the smaller show, or you may need the motivation of a larger crowd and more competitors so then go for the larger show. If you are brave enough and rules allow then do both! It is a bonus to attend a few as spectator to check it out but also be aware that things can change drastically from year to year or a show can be consistent so by going to watch you can get a feel for its flow.

If you do not have a local show you can find something near by but may have to sleep a night away or drive long hours. In this case it is nice to have a friend with you to help you prepare with everything from trip to stage. Even if they cannot go backstage they can help you prepare in your hotel or where you stay, they can drive you and carry things, touch up color and remember what you forget due to diet memory lapses!!!

It is nice to stay near the contest but that can factor costs so you do what you personally need to do whether it is staying with a friend if you have or a hotel. I usually suggest you pay for the hotel if you ask someone to travel with you but sometimes they will help you with half and that can be like a sponsorship as can the help they are giving you! Having a mentally stable person who is not carb depleted can be so handy!!!! Also by staying near the show venue you won't have to rush or worry about transportation and extra costs, less stress.

Another factor that can affect your choice is if you are looking for media attention. Some shows have more than others. That is plain to see when you breeze through the fitness magazines. If this is what you want then look at the shows which are televised and published for possible entry choices – some may need qualifier shows to be done first. Keep in mind that although there is media attention, it may not be so fun, it may be unfair, it may be more about the media than you and if you do not fit the look they want you will not get the attention you are seeking. You may not place fairly so you must keep this in mind and be willing to take that chance before you fork out the costs to travel and enter these types of shows! On the other hand if they like your look you can go very far and do very well with this type of federation, it's basically a gamble. Many times the winners of these contests may not be what you define or expect as first place and the crowd may agree but the judges call the shots so knowing what they want will help you enter the right contest that suits your look. Other times even this info will not help as definition of what judges look for can be pretty 'loosely' described with room for defining which still leaves you guessing. Fitness Model is the toughest one to nail down a standard. Some shows

PLANNING

change standards yearly making it hard to know what to bring to the table but my point is to be aware, like it or not this is the game so you have to decide if you want to play.

If you are seeking money prizes and pro status then you want to compete in those federations that tier up to pro. Many are natural, many are not.....many are fair and many are not! It's a toss up. All you can do is prepare as best you can and hope for the best outcome. Once you get a feel for the politics of the show, you can place better. Do they choose bigger girls or leaner gals, stuff like that. Many of these shows start you off with qualifiers and you can do very well at that level. Once you reach National status you need to be seen a few times and demonstrate loyalty to the federation, in most cases not being able to cross compete. You usually need to come back a few years in a row in order to finally achieve pro status. Many times these are unsaid 'standards' that you just learn but cannot find in writing anywhere. Of course the top focus is the body you enter with, but all these little factors play in.

Pros can compete for monetary prizes and titles. If this is your goal then prepare for a few years toward this! You have choices in the natural and non natural arenas but the most popular and well known is questionable as to how natural most of its athletes are, although I do see a few who legitimately are competing naturally so it can be done! This can be costly but if you focus on only doing the one or 2 shows per year then you only have the costs toward that and can save and seek sponsors by planning far enough ahead.

Think on these factors and research the federations before you decide, realize that you will only find out by observation of the info you find, not by the info itself. Anyone can tell you anything but you have to see for yourself to really know so don't rush. I do not have any particular federation I suggest nor promote since they all have their pros and cons depending on your competitive goals.

You also need to look at your physique and train accordingly to the show you choose. I discuss this thoroughly in the Fitness and Figure manual. Some shows have preference for more muscular gals, others for lankier and less muscular gals. Some like gymnasts some don't favor them at all. Look at past winners and what they did for a general feel. Ironically a few of my wins which lead to pro cards were done injured with watered down routines. Don't get me wrong, the routines were very strong and skilled just less dynamic in tumbling yet they brought first place, pro cards and overall titles.

In the Fitness Model divisions it can also vary in degree of lean or muscle but you do definitely want to be more buff and lean than regular runway type models. Balance, proportion and symmetry is very prevalent here just like most physique contests. On the rare occasion you may need to speak. Most organizations have eliminated the question round done usually during the gown portion but it's never wrong to be prepared and on the ball, no need to pre think it because you want to be able to speak well on the spot!

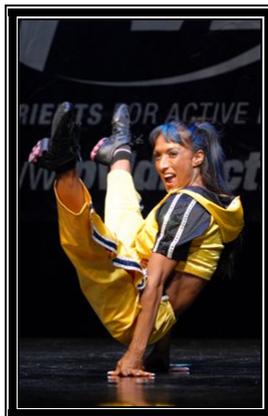
Tweaking Your Workout Plan

Weights, cardio, routine practice, skills, injuries!

The overload that competitors expose themselves to is amazing! Rising to levels of excellence that push the average athlete to success can also cause sabotage and injury if not done just right! “The line is so fine”

You need to be efficient and balance all your training which is called periodization. To keep your workouts from being progressed incorrectly you need to plan it out like a set of stairs, slowly over months. You proceed by slowly increasing your intensity, time and type over these ‘stairs’. The catch is you need to back off every 4th week just slightly, called active rest, then progress starting at that step yet eventually bringing you ahead. Form is crucial and foremost. Those of you reading this who are pros or experienced competitors know exactly what I mean and do it all year like habit.

Having skills down pat before routine building and practice is very useful and you need to start working on new skills at least a year ahead. This way by the time you are 3-4 months out you are polishing the routine and able to do it comfortably – of course this does not always apply to practicing gymnasts and acrobats. Timing things in this manner is how you avoid injuries which are normally caused by shock to the body. You eliminate this shock by slow preparation of the joints and attachments. You can also worry about presence near pre contest instead of polishing a certain move, if you have worked on that skill well ahead. Allowing slow progress will allow your body adaptation without defiance.



WORKOUT TIPS

Plyometry is very useful for joint conditioning and should be done during pre season, no later than 4 months out but as early as a year ahead. Those who are fit all year do plyos right up to pre contest and use it for leaning. Many leaps used in the fitness and figure routines are basic plyometrics and by doing them over and over a few times per week, maybe 3-6 times per shot is an excellent way to develop power and height in that skill!. I like to throw them in between sets on an upper body workout which also maximizes your time! I also add some dynamic stretches for splits in between sets when I am resting the area worked especially when going heavier. This keeps your heart rate up and fat burning excels by end of day. Plyometry itself is an amazing anaerobic workout with fat loss and leg/glute toning side effects.

Speaking of stretching, that is crucial. If you want results then you have to get blood to the areas worked, even for fat loss.....if you are tight and do not stretch then those areas are limited in that blood flow hence oxygen is also limited. NOT GOOD! My hamstrings did not grow for a few years no matter what I did. After a car accident I had to get some deep tissue treatment and it happens my hamstrings were the ones affected and my back. Once my hamstrings had been stripped of scar tissue I grew 2 inches! This stripping process took a few months as it had built up even before the accident, during an inactive time in my life. By stretching between sets you are eliminating the build up of scar tissue and opening up the availability of oxygen to those muscles so they can grow! Fitness models want to be limber so they look tall and long in stance without the pull of taut muscles interfering.



Because of all the items that need to be covered by training it is nice to be able to compress training when you can. Super setting and Tri setting the weight program has always worked well for my clients when it comes to lean muscle gains. You can do more in a shorter time and get very strong. Muscles tone up faster and pump up for days if you train 4-6 day per week.

6 day splits with 3 muscle groups per day is a hardcore way to get fit fast, paired up with super and tri setting you can get amazing results. It's intense and effective. Grouping up exercises like so:

Back, Biceps and Abs

Chest, Triceps and Obliques

Legs (inner and outer thigh, quad, ham and calves) **and Shoulders** (rotators, upper postural and glutes)

These are your 3 days so you go heavy for the first round then repeat the 3 days going lighter. You can rest between each 3 day period or only for a day between each 6 day run. Changes during pre and off season will keep you from overtraining.

WORKOUT TIPS

You can do 2-4 exercises per area. Legs I will normally do 1-2 per side so 1- 2 inner, 1-2 outer, 1- 2 ham,1- 2 quad, 1-2 calve exercises. With Sets of 3-4 and reps of 8-12 generally, although some days I do 2 sets with high reps such as active rest weeks or when on the beginning of a season from time off. Fitness models may lay back a bit on all this and may focus on circuits and higher rep training but they do still need to build some lean muscle mass!

Some essential exercises are body weight! Pullups, chins, Dips, Tri dips, Pushups, one arm pushups, abs done while you hang from a bar by your knees! I also like to add V-sits, handstand presses, squats, single leg Squats, dead lifts and glute work. For models you want to concentrate on legs, glutes and overall curves!

To save your joints do not ignore small areas such as rotator cuffs, serattus, rhomboids, traps, knees and ankles (balance work). These areas are going to be the ones who say whether you will lift heavier or not. Balance work with boards and foam noodles are also essential to keep your joints happy during the damaging process of pounding out your routine on hard wood flooring if you are doing fitness or a higher energy figure routine! Many figure routines use fitness moves which are non inverted.

Pilates is an excellent pre season activity for training your core. You need to learn to engage your transverse abs for almost everything from training to routine and this is the way to do it! Some use yoga to help with flexibility and find success with that. This will help models too!



Vary the angle of your toes when doing leg exercises such as calves, hams and quads, this will help you train in and out keeping growth equal. Also do straight but don't ignore the inner and outer angles. For outer quad development you would work with toes in, for inner development in your quads you train toes out!

You realize all of this is injury prevention right? Details for periodizing and training is including in the Fitness and Figure Manuals.

For those who are pros then you may not need to go so hard. 3 days on then 1-2 off is good. You can essentially get away with maintaining by training 3-4 times per week on or off season. You can do plyos compressed and weekly. You will know your sport specific needs better and will have identified your weaknesses more clearly than a new competitor could giving you an advantage so that you can focus on those weaknesses.

WORKOUT TIPS



For thicker abs you want to train using weights, ankle weights and hand weights. For example, use weight on your chest during a crunch. This will help thicken the muscle to show better. The Ab bench shown in the photo above is excellent for this. My abs are very thick so they show on or off season even if I have 20 extra lbs on.

Cardio is a great tool for leaning but if you can meal plan out far enough you can limit cardio so that you can concentrate on routine, skills, weights, plyos and not lose muscle in the process by over training. I have seen the desperate 2 hour cardio workout to get lean but that is not the most pleasant way to go and if you can avoid last minute then you are better off. Another point is to make your cardio worth it so try using no hands on the stair master, use the arms on the cross trainer and try reverse. Give yourself a tiny push. Models, try to avoid becoming cardio queens!

If you have to do weights and routine on the same day and close together then try to do the routine first. You rather not have tired legs and body when doing routine since you are more apt to get hurt than if you do weights after routine where you can adjust weight and are less likely to get hurt by fatigue. I normally use routine AS cardio but if you add extra then same rules.

Other training tips:

- ★ Turn your pinkies in for some of your pec fly days.
- ★ Turn your thumbs out for some of your chest press dumbbell workouts.
- ★ Turn pinkies in for peaking a bicep curl.
- ★ Bring your squats down just beyond 90 degrees and vary with ATG squats if you can do them safely.
- ★ Keep squats between heels and 90% for butt work only.
- ★ Squeeze your elbows closer to body during tri and chest dips.
- ★ Watch your knee alignment during leg workouts, aligning the mid knee to outer top of foot, no wobble or knock knees!
- ★ Do not scrunch neck during exercises.
- ★ Watch your speed unless you are doing pulse or slow reps.
- ★ Keep reps higher for areas you want to tone and thin, lower for areas you wish to build and strengthen.
- ★ Use DB more often than bar for upper body work so that your building is even.

WORKOUT TIPS

- ★ Make sure to hit all angles of muscle groups such as shoulders (rear, front, side).
- ★ Use weight for crunches and ankle weights for leg raise type abs work.
- ★ For some triceps exercises which lead with pinky, turn and lead with back of hand.
- ★ Figure gals can count posing practice as cardio in most cases.
- ★ Do cardio after weights for fat loss stages.
- ★ Figure poses can vary and some do not use posing at all so make sure to find out details.
- ★ For Figure posing make sure you learn to flare lats by practice and having someone touch the shoulder blade and push the direction you need to flare. Some federations look for big backs overall.
- ★ Fitness gals need to know the degree of tension to pose on stage, some orgs. will deduct points if too flared, others if not strained enough!!
- ★ For all classes, when facing back to judges, some gals like to open and close mouth exaggeratedly to relax muscles around the lips.
- ★ Make sure to add a standing lat exercise to your training program to make the lats long, not just wide.
- ★ Make sure to care for injuries and train as best you can around them without making it worse (of course after seeing your physio, chiro and mt)
- ★ Most common injuries are joints and attachment areas so warm ups, cool downs, stretching and proper conditioning to these areas will help you avoid injury. The ones you are prone to will show themselves in a subtle way so do not ignore any pangs or soreness beyond DOMS (delayed onset muscle soreness)
- ★ Models want to ensure full range of motion training to keep muscle long and lean with less stress on size, but some stress on size too!!

Mental tricks to stick with training

You must put priority on your workouts just as you do eating, sleeping and pooping! There is no other way around this. Training is the only way combined with diet to get the body you need to achieve some success in your contest prep. Have training pre planned so you have to follow it like you do your appointment book. Do not try so hard to lift heavy or do more, that you end up hating going into the gym on days you may not feel so energetic. Find a person you can be accountable to, to show them your logs and maybe even train with you, if not always then on occasion. Do not let your priorities clash, make sure to plan out all your days' priorities well so that if you need to shop for groceries, tan, deal with kids or work, you have a designated time to train and do foods prep! No one will put you in the frame of mind you need to succeed except you so you have to learn to depend on and count on you to drive and motivate yourself. Come to terms with this and you will do well!

Tweaking Your Meal Plan

Carbs, sodium, sugars, protein and supplements, much to know.

When dieting for a contest there are so many variables and like the training, everyone is different so not all things work for everyone. The key is to learn what works for you with trial and error. Through your research you should try different diets for leaning and see what your body responds too best.

Carbs

Vegetables are funny because depending on your personal tolerance; certain veggies can cause gas and bloat for some individuals. Some are also very high in salt which scares some competitors and again this depends on your body.

Broccoli, cauliflower, and other cabbage type greens are great but some competitors just find it too hard on them so you know who you are, skip them and try green beans or spinach instead. Green beans seem to be safe for salt as well!

Tomatoes, carrots, and sweeter veggies tend to get skipped for on season although squash is fine. Off season any veggies are allowed! Just watch those starch carb veggies during on season.

Huge multi-colored salads are great ways to get good carbs in, using some omega oil and favorite vinegar, topped with cracked peppercorns!!

Fruit is also skipped during on season for many due to bloat and sugars. Some use frozen berries in morning shakes but not near contest date. Banana is used right up to contest date for some; others cannot handle the sugar and end up with bloat. Grapefruit seems fine either way if you can take the acidity. Fruits are essentially a simple carb, although healthy and great for normal diets and off season they can leave you with a lack of ab definition if used week of contest, with exception of bananas and those individuals who are blessed.

Tubers are usually avoided by half the competitors while others successfully eat small portion of potato or yam pre and off season with great results. I like to say that balance is your keys so do include a small potato or ¼ cup with dinner if not using brown, wild, red or black rice. It depends on your lean down stage since carbs are decreased then loaded over weeks.

Brown rice is preferred over white rices due to the processing and bleaching. Brown rice tends to be more efficiently processed in the body than the others. ½ cup avg with your lunch or dinner is

DIET TIPS

a great carb that will not sabotage you. Some competitors drop these altogether but find they look flat. Hmm.

Grains are normally skipped, they are very high carb and do not allow many individuals to lean out enough while taking them in. You always get your exceptions though; those people just don't need to worry. An exclusion from bad grains would be oatmeal as it has natural occurring chromium which helps regulate blood sugar in turn aiding in the fat loss and sculpting process. We covered rice above.

Salt

Sodium can leave you bloated too but until you get to contest week you normally do not worry although most of us do not add extra salt on any foods. Most diets I work with are non sodium other than the natural stuff in the food itself. We only need a ¼ tsp salt per day according to standards and that is what we get pretty much in our foods each day without additional table salt. Table salt is not bad though, and off season you can use a tad as it does have iodine added to it for our health. Salt loading is a practice I do not really use, too scary.

Protein

The proteins which seem best are white, such as chicken, fish and turkey. Again I know some exceptions that eat beef and pork but my suggested choices are less fatty and carcinogenic. Protein shakes are a wonderful help to get all the protein you need per day. Egg whites are also good and easy now that they come fortified and in cartons!

Foods must be nuked, steamed, roasted, grilled or BBQ for best results and so that you do not saturate them with fats by frying. Cooked plain with non salt spices is the way to go! Add water to keep from sticking if needed. Off season you can use juices, beer or wines to cook with. Amounts of protein are between 20-40 grams protein in each sitting 5+ times per day depending on your requirements which should fall between a gram to 2 grams protein per pound of bodyweight per day. The body may not utilize higher amounts and instead you would waste or pack so going above 40 grams per meal may be useless.

Plain almonds are a great snack, occasionally so are raisins to a degree. Almonds have some protein but are mainly a good fat while raisins are a natural sugar but compact so you can taste a few without sabotage. For some competitors it helps them stay on track with a small sweet taste on occasion to satiate cravings. Dried cranberries and dried blueberries are also popular.

Dairy

For those who can tolerate dairy, although I do not suggest it the last month of dieting, dry cottage cheese and plain yogurts that are no fat are awesome. They can be bloaters for some people's body chemistry hence be safe and keep off dairy the last month of contest. Some bodybuilders use casein. I am not too familiar with this but it is supposedly a cheaper bulker used by 'old schoolers'. It is a slower processed protein best taken before bed.

Supplements

Supplements are a personal thing based on need. If you are vegetarian you need help with protein by taking in some soy/rice/veg or hemp protein powders.

Creatine is a supplement I love but some find it hard on them by cramping and upset stomach so trial is the only way to know. If you can tolerate it I find it useful for extra umph! Monohydrate

DIET TIPS

seems to be fail safe, regardless of the new ones out in the market but again many find it a bloater and rather try the newer ones which claim to have no bloat or camp effect.

Glutamine is excellent for joint care and muscle recovery, expensive but if you are okay with using supplements, this one should be on the list.

I found HMB to be very useful although it is harder to find in powder form and very costly. It helped me during a year of overtraining, competing in 13 shows over 9 months. By end of year I had gained 4lbs of muscle vs losing!! There are glutamine and hmb combos worth trying.

I believe, especially with the increased amount of abuse your body takes for contest prep, a multi vitamin/mineral is needed. I like to take a multi but if I was on some cheap choice I would add up to 10 grams extra Vit C, a B-50 complex, and 400iu Vit E.

Omega oils are the best; they keep you from the leather skin you can get from leaning and dehydration. Flax blends are the best! You cannot cook with this but top your food with it. Some of my team girls use up to 8 tbs per day with great fat loss results!! EFAs are your ticket! Watch those nails and hairs grow like weeds on this stuff, it's like 'miracle grow'! Great for the models skin which is judged.

2 liters of water per day is a nice amount, some use way more. You can drop to a liter the night before and sips the day of. If you cut too much water, you get flat! Many gals do 2-3 gallons on and off season! Water is super important for models as well!

Carb up is essential the week before, 4-7 days out, so you do not look flat. Some go crazy with pies, pancakes etc. A nice plain steak and non salt fries are safer!! Stay salt free at this point.

Diuretics can be found in herbal stores with products like water shed, dandelion, diuretic and pms teas. These are useful the last few weeks of lean down to help squeeze out the last bit of water you may be trying to get rid of. These are legal and safe but should not be used more than 4 weeks as the body then gets accustomed to them and you will slowly gain the water back. Due to the severity of dieting down and after show eating, you will gain water bloat after contest, after stopping the diuretics. If you are natural then it should not go beyond 10 lbs and should be out within 2 weeks through urinating frequently. Look for products containing Uva Ursi, dandelion, kelp, black cohosh and chromium type ingredients.

Thermogenics and fat burners are not used with my clients. I do know people who have used them and had temporary success but I find the rebound is worse; it affects the body much more severely than the natural diuretics by hindering the ability of self functioning metabolism. It quickly starts to depend on them. I have also heard about too many heart palpitation and mock heart attack scares. There are a few non stimulant thermos so if you must, try those instead.

Mental tricks to stick to your diet plan

Stay focused with notes, journals and pasting a show poster up in your room to remind you of your goal date! Keep only the foods you are allowed that are on your diet, around the house if possible, to avoid cheating or binging. Having your meals pre planned will keep you from steering away from the food you are supposed to eat. Focus on the fact that food is your fuel toward your goal which has nothing to do with taste, taste should not factor in your choices, be strong!

Tweaking Your Look

Costume, bikini, make up, shoes, & tanning tips.

When picking your overall theme for competing you need to look at several options and choose the best fit for you! Normally you want your 'look' to match your music complimenting each other with your bikini. You do not want to make time an issue which can snowball into availability and cost increases when rushed. Models can use a theme too especially for the sport wear round.

Costume, shoes and Bikini

You do not want to measure too soon for your costume and bikini so that they fit well when lean BUT you can look into the required materials and costs before that. Find out what is out there for you, ask your seamstress what a safe amount of fabric is when you go to purchase incase there is a sale and you want to buy some on the spot. You may only have certain fabrics to choose unless you shop online, in which case time is needed for shipping and for backup incase things need exchanging! You will need some photos or designs of your costume and bikini for the seamstress to work with you forward onto fabrics. Draw them out and attach any photos which show similar color, material or style. Many seamstresses do not have fabrics you want; you have to get them yourself unless you buy from someone who exclusively does fitness/figure suits. So if you have to get the fabric you need to know how many yards of each. Based on your concept, your seamstress can help with these figures, even off season. Be ready to compromise with color or texture if needed so have back up choices.

Some online costume/bikini sites will need you to contact them well ahead of time, regardless of measurements so make sure to pre warn those you wish to hire, once you have decided.

Shoes for routine/posing can be found on eBay or online for great deals. Locally it can be harder to find and sometimes only in dance/sex shops at higher costs. Make sure you get lined heels so that you do not slip and make sure it has the bottom rubber piece to avoid slippage. If you are short then go for platforms. Pre check the rules, some federations have shoe outlines to follow. I find platforms best for all bodies to compliment the physique best but some federations have requirements for this with full explanation of measurement required for heel and front.

For those of you doing a routine you want a shoe with enough slip for splits but not enough that you will slide around. If you can find a nice pair of sneakers to match your costume you are best off but can always have cuffs made for the footwear!

STAGE TIPS

If you look for a pre-made costume, you still may need someone to adjust it so have a seamstress chosen and make sure they have availability around the last 3-4 weeks before contest day. Halloween costumes, fetish costumes and used costumes are all available online. See www.fitnesssteambc.com for links.

I always say to try to go for something that stands out when looking at you from 10 feet or more away and make sure you know what type of suit you can or must have, some demand regulation suits. A style that does not cover up your assets, but does hold you in respectfully! Bright, metallic, shiny, sparkly and fringy type outfits seem to be fun. Full on costumes can be burdensome so make sure your costume and prop are realistic and manageable. It can really blow things when you cannot get something off properly and are timed to do so during your routine.

You also do not want a bikini top accident. Close scrutiny of your clothing items and their attachments is always a plus! Test them out, jump around, do what you need to make sure you will be safe on stage. Always carry a little sew kit, pins and things that in a last minute mishap can put your suit back on to get you through the round! Trust me, it happens.

For adornments you can glue them on or stud them yourself saving you tons of money. Beading would be charged for the time it takes to do this if someone else does it for you.

Gowns or evening/club wear can be a wide range for the models. Some contests want floor length gowns while others will allow slacks, short skirts and non traditional evening wear.

Winning colors, styles and suit designs

Some of the tips I give Figure, Model and Fitness gals is to try to find a suit you can hike up on your hips, has a v front and back and if you go with the under wire top style then make sure the underarm area is open using instead 2 straps with the middle part open showing skin. The top strap looks best around neck but for very gals it helps if it is halter style or on shoulders like the bra strap style. Beading always helps accent straps. Keep the hip material small. Gals with heavier tops can use under wire style top where if you are a B or smaller then you can go with conformation style suits which cross at back then connect to the hip of the bottoms. Of course in the model category you can look at the suits in style for the season with more freedom in style where as for fitness and figure it's about accenting the physique to look lean and femininely muscular.

Some of the most flattering suits for lighter skin tones are non strong blues, pinks, purples and greens where as oranges and yellows seem to work best on darker tones. White and black are a toss up. Olive skin seems to work nice with solid dark and deep colors or some light shades of pink and purple. Of course this is just a lite guide and not everyone fits a mould. There are always exceptions.

Velvet will always be the classier choice and look more delicate but the hologram and printed shiny metallic's are great for a stronger appearance rather than the softer velvet look.

Hair and Make up

Hair pieces seem to be the rage. The gals wear them already set up, do not change them unless they put it into an up do, giving them versatility with ease.

STAGE TIPS

If your hair is manageable then you have no worries but you do not want to be dealing with fighting hair on a day like this so make sure you have it pre done, even if you have to choose one setting for the whole show. Adornments seem to really make a look pop, just do not over do it and make sure the show allows this.

I find that sharp red streaks on brunettes are very appropriate to make you stand out depending on the costume, theme and bikini. The brunettes do not fade into the blondes nor each other when they have this. Fitness models have 3 rounds so vary the hair if you can for each round!

Pigment eye shadows seem to be the best facial color to use for stage since they are so strong and hold long. You can find all sorts of these powders on eBay and online sites. MAC makes these as well and you can find many color samples online at eBay much cheaper than buying a whole jar which would take you a lifetime to use! Getting a few colors in sample are the smartest way to go. Glitters are also usually available. Even eyelashes have great color and adornment so look into them. Colors are really a personal choice and based on your skin and features but if you are clueless then you cannot go wrong with sparkle browns, golds, coppers and light pinks or ivory for highlights. Plums and pinks look nice on lighter haired girls and some neutral tones can get away with blues or greens. The match of eye shadow color to your suits can vary so you can blend using other colors that compliment the suit with one which matches but does not over power or you can work with the offsetting color to the suit which works really well. I always like to peruse the MAC website and have a favorite make up forum which discusses MAC and shows all types of variations when you search certain colors.

Most gals use hairspray or spray on glitter for the pageant type contests but less so for the physique oriented shows. Accessory stores and make up stores have these in gold, silver and other tones.

Some Figure contests allow you to wear jewelry, as do some fitness. Get the fake stuff which shines well such as plain tennis bracelets and diamond like earrings, either drop or solitaire. Hoops are also a great choice! They need to come on and off easily. Usually the bracelets are stretch.

Vaseline will help keep your lips from sticking to your teeth during the time you are on stage. Just slather a light coat on the teeth before you go out. This will help you keep a nice big smile.

Tanning Tips

Many people do not wish to use tanning beds. There are many pre tan and contest tan products made naturally which will help you achieve the tone you need for the class you are competing in. Many gals will match a foundation to the tan product; others use the tan cream on their face and have mastered that. The key is to try this out ahead of time! Some can turn you green or splotchy and some are just not dark enough or do not apply evenly. Applying to the face is an ART!

Dream tan number 2 can do the trick to any tone when applied as needed, dark for darker or less for lighter. It is done a few hours before stage time, you make sure you exfoliated the night before and wear baggies once done waiting dry time. Touches up like a dream! There is number one for a lighter tone but it is too gold and is banned from most shows, #2 can be made to look light if applied light. Again personal preference.

STAGE TIPS

There are some pretty intense practices like 6 coats pro tan, up to 3 night before, no shower off and I have tried a lot of these but to this day found the dream tan easiest with no stress. One thing you want to be able to do is learn to apply it to yourself, back included. Uses a tool like a backscratcher taped with a sponge applicator or you can invent a new way. I just stretch back there! Whatever you choose, be sure to exfoliate the skin the day before the first colorings with a loofa so that you keep the color on better and longer.

Finishing Touches

Music, props, figure & fitness routine, walking and posing tips

Music is usually the first thing you choose and base your theme and costume on. You want to draw in your audience right away and then keep them interested not only by your movement or the music but the unity of both. You have to really love the music so much that it shows on stage.

Music & Props

You need to beam with confidence by having fun with the sounds effects and words of your song. Older or newer won't make a difference but how much of a good time you are having will definitely show. Pick something upbeat, a few songs which can be blended together smoothly. Some have sound effects but you can add that yourself. This can take you months so plan this one out far ahead before anything else. Prepare a few CD copies and a few cassette tapes.....believe it or not some shows are at places which still use those or have no music and the show supplies only tape availability. Have duplicates, loss and destruction is common with music! Make sure to hold certain skills or poses to make sure everyone gets a good look and angle around a tad if needed, pan the judges.

If you are doing a figure routine which demands heels and suit then make sure the poses are bang on with the music, using sharp beats for bicep poses and ab poses. If your figure class asks for you to supply some 'walk on' stage music then pick beats that you will not walk too fast through yet something upbeat and popular. This should be practiced well ahead of time with heels on so that you walk in them like bare feet!

Props can be fun in any class if it is allowed. Make sure it fits and is well used through your routine. Use it for posing if you are doing a figure routine or incorporate the prop into your tricks for fitness.



STAGE TIPS

Perfect Theme and Music

A well mixed song will not only stand out but add to the pleasure of entertainment. Blips and funny noises can ruin the essence of your routine making a great routine fizzle no matter how well you nail it. Quality is so important that it is mentioned on the entry form in most contests.

Finding your perfect theme means finding the perfect music which in some cases can be one song and sometimes many mixed into one with additional sound effects. You definitely want to keep the entertainment factor in mind when picking but you always know there are a few favorites among us all which will please you and the crowd such as Madonna, Janet Jackson, Usher, new young artist at the time, old time favorites like ACDC, Michael Jackson, Prince, and Ricky Martin.

Many of the unknown or rarer songs come into play when they fit the routine theme. Mortal Kombat was a very popular one as was the Rocky theme!

A perfect theme is something fun which gets the audience involved and focused, wanting more by the end and saying 'wow was that over fast' because it was that good! Choose something recognizable. Some examples to give you an idea are the California raisins, video mimics, Latin themes and such.

Posing, Walking & Routines

Really enhance your strong poses and skills by being up close to front stage and smile big, hold it for a few seconds to ensure you are well seen. There are illusive ways to hide your flaws by using angle tricks for smaller waist, fuller split appearance, illusion of size so play with that in the mirror and realize the judges are farther away so stand away from the mirror so you can see what they see! Video your practice so you can pin point things you would not see. Some poise, confidence and stage presence tricks are to always look at the audience and judges keeping head up at all times. Do not stand stiff; really work on mirror training to look relaxed while tensing. Elevating shoulders is a normal reaction, so work on that to ensure you do not, you need to have shoulders squared and comfortable looking. Boosting confidence pre stage by practicing in front of others both those you know and those you do not can be priceless prep for when you finally do the real thing. Do it for them as if it is the real thing because there is no time for embarrassment.

When you walk onto a stage you look at the judges and smile, then at the audience as you are prancing in. Chin up, chest out and shoulders back moving smoothly across the stage. You can look down on occasion briefly but do not keep your head down and do not do this often or you can lose your balance or appear shy. Take advantage of pose downs during figure (if applicable), get right out front yet be polite and walk away from those who are aggressive, go to another area and pose....chances are they will come to you if they feel you are competition so be ready and be cocky! You own the stage and should exude this!!

You want to throw out occasional waves, nods, winks or kisses when appropriate, to the audience of course. Little hips sways are also great to add in when you walk. Really shine every minute you are on stage whether you are in back or front, in focus or not! You can really play this up during your routine for those in Fitness and Figure!

Make sure you have your 'step turn' down pat! This can look fluid or clumsy and when you are nervous you want to know it like the back of your hand so that you do not bobble!

During the stand, make sure you have one foot forward and the other slightly angled. You can actually angle the forward foot a tad the same direction as well for more of a leaner waist

STAGE TIPS

appearance but if the judges tell you to rearrange your stance you do as told! Do not let your forward arm cover you on the side poses, pull it back a tad. Always hike up the tush during any back posing, it helps to avoid a 'fold'. Heels always stay close.

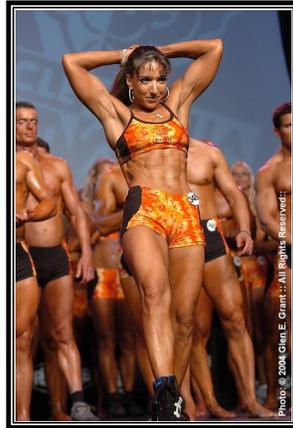
Do not suck in the abs, you blow out and down, from the diaphragm. No one wants to see ribs!

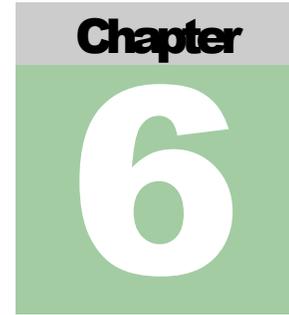
Triceps poses can vary for figure posing as can the number of total poses so research and learn. The Competitive Figure Manual outlines this better. One show I did had as many as 10 poses!

Legs seem to be the toughest to flex when using the heels, some find pointing the toe out helps, other find heel digs better but in those heels you can only do so much. Again this is all trial and error. You need to find your key to getting those quads out by trying out these suggestions wearing your heels in front of the mirror and video camera under some good lighting. When you are tanned or colored you will see the tone much clearer. Bottom line, get lean and they will show.

Is it amazing skills or routine illusions?

There are so many illusions used in routines to make moves appear hard and impressive but many are just an illusion. Some gals will do their straddle hold with legs on elbows for support or a split facing forward so you cannot see that her split has a bent knee in the back and is not fully down! The yoga hold itself has only to do with balance not strength! There are so many ways to fix things if you are not a gymnast or pro by using the same illusions the pros use! High kicks too low? Do them facing the audience so it may look higher than it really is. Lifting a leg up during a pushup seems impressive but it really is not and can be done by anyone if they bother to try it. So if you are not too strong on skills don't count yourself out!





Backstage, Pre & Post Contest

Week before, night before, during and post contest

The week before contest

The week before your contest you should be close to peak without the need of excess cardio or workouts, well that is the goal anyway. You want to think about carbing up at this point by adding some yam into your meals and oatmeal. Focus on light training, routine and posing. Do not work out too hard or you will go flat and the energy level is so fine line at this point that overdoing it can ruin your peak. If you have no choice due to last minute leaning needs then so be it.

Stop creatine at this point if you are taking it. Most competitors do, again there are exceptions. I may try staying on it for my next show to see if I look fuller but only if I am lean ahead of time!

Those who are not happy and feel soft or puffy, you need to have looked into diuretics that are taken at this point and sometimes sooner. Dandelion is a common herbal diuretic. You can only do some much at a week or so out.

If you are really off then do the best you can, fit in the cardio and prepare better next time! You cannot do much during last week but can gear up for cardio twice per day an hour each and shed what you can with some diuretic help.

At this point you should have done dress rehearsals with your suits, props etc. and this is crucial. They should all fit well and be ready to go in little freezer baggies. Spare glue and stones should be included or the studder if you use that. Some gals keep spare suits with them and if you happen to have that, keep that handy and make sure it fits well too.

Be prepared to walk in on stage left or right, you never will know until show time so your routine and walking should have been practiced for either. You should have all your products and items by now with nothing to worry about fixing or buying.

Get yourself mentally prepared with some quiet time that you use to go over things in your head including walking, posing and performing.

Media is usually a factor so if you want, have some comp cards or business cards ready made as well as some spare photos or a portfolio. Always be prepared to be shot ready or not – click!

PRE TO POST CONTEST

Make sure if you need tickets for family that you have them ready or know where to send them, maybe supply a website and map for the theater.

Have a friend in place that will help you. If they cannot go backstage then you can meet in your vehicle or public areas of the theater such as stair wells, washrooms, and hallways if needed!

Night before Contest

Make sure to pre-pack all items needed and prepare your food for the next day. Some theaters have nothing near by for you go eat. Take in up to a liter of distilled water the day before, keep diet super simple and clean with just chicken/fish, protein shakes or if you prefer just the chicken/fish. Have some yam and steamed spinach or green beans at about 1/4 cup still eating every 2-3 hours. Food choices for night before are covered in the other manuals but you do have some carb and can cheat to some degree.

You will normally have a registration meeting the night before contest so be prepared with food and water, even a book as this can take long. They do weigh-ins, height ins, take music, give your competitor number to you, costume checks and last minute speeches about updates and changes to the show. Some also have drug testing the week or night before. Some on day of which is rare. This can be done various ways. Urine testing is normally done once you are named winner then you go straight backstage to pee! Many times this is done with someone watching so don't be surprised.

Be ready to go home and sleep, you may be anxious and many cannot sleep the night before but try. You may get home late after registration depending how long it takes and where it is located. The higher the athlete number the longer the waits usually are.

The best thing is to have a list ready and prepared and I have included a sample below:

(These are general, not including travel)

- ★ Costumes and props (additional prop items if you made it and have extra parts)
- ★ Suits and mini sew kit, glue/studder with spare stones and backings if needed
- ★ Footwear (heels, runners, backstage flip flops)
- ★ Extra pairs of socks for bra stuffing and routine
- ★ Bikini bite, spare dream tan and latex gloves
- ★ Posing oil incase it is allowed (or pam)
- ★ 2-3 old baggy t shirts and pants with huge waist that ties up
- ★ Band-Aids, scissors, tweezers, safety pins, pen and scratch pad
- ★ Ibuprofen
- ★ Distilled water
- ★ Bananas, almonds, rice cakes, honey
- ★ Chocolate or icing (pre stage taken 10-15 mins for pump)
- ★ Extra hair elastics, bobby pins and your hair accessory needs
- ★ Make up (shimmer powder, shimmer spray, eyes, cheeks, bronzer and lips, fancy eyelashes, sponges, Q-tips, Vaseline)
- ★ Jewelry accessories
- ★ Fake nails or back up if your done nails break
- ★ Music and backups

PRE TO POST CONTEST

- ★ Any medications you may normally take if you are on daily meds such as puffers etc.
- ★ ID
- ★ All paperwork given to you pertinent to show including rules and entry info, itinerary
- ★ Portable or disposable camera for backstage shots – memories!!
- ★ Towels and extra bags
- ★ Toilet paper – they always run out
- ★ Extra change for emergencies, cell phone
- ★ Workout band for pump up incase all the weights are being used or they do not have any
- ★ Mirror
- ★ Questions for meeting in the morning all written down

Some gals like to bring a walkman or iPod to listen to their music to mentally prepare. Some bring an extra set of clothing for the after party. Cell phones are also a popular item to keep although most times they cannot be used backstage due to lack of reception.



Be confident at registration and backstage

By being prepared, catering to the lists I mention and knowing what will happen to a certain degree, you will be much more confident and can focus on your tasks at hand. Being prepared at registration makes the process simpler for you and by remembering all the items you need on hand it avoids hassles while making the registration process run smoothly for everyone involved. Registration and backstage can become a den of lions with the occasional negativity due to tempers, moodiness and head games that can be used to make you fail and empower themselves. If you are aware of this and not naive then you can ignore it and focus on you. Do not let insecurity show or you will get played on it! Try to stick with focus on you and you will succeed in getting through the tensity that can come to play during backstage times. Being polite, smiling even when you are not smiled at and just feeling good about what you have accomplished to get here will take the whole world off your shoulders leaving you feeling free and ready to wow the audiences!!!

Backstage Tips

You normally have to arrive at least an hour early for the shown for athlete meetings so you want to arrive colored that way you only need to touch up. I like to show up with makeup and hair done, but if I know for sure I have time then I will do it backstage, early before it gets too busy. The spots can fill up fast as can any plugs if they are there!! Best be safe and come ready unless you can find out these details ahead of time. Models especially fight for space as there are normally highest numbers in the model class and many times you share with Fitness, Figure and Bodybuilders!

Be prompt for the meeting and make sure you ask any questions then! Notate your questions and have them written down so that you do not forget them by the time you can ask. You may not get any info on order of classes and the show can start late so be ready. Many times you will be waiting backstage between other classes so be patient.

Some classes stand out there for awhile so be prepared to wait and also if your class is large you may be on stage for awhile. If you are lucky enough to get some time estimates, always give that leeway.

Relax with your feet up so that your legs are ready and look good for show and make sure before you do this you are ready. Fast touch ups can be done just before stage which can be 10 mins or NOW. You may not always have warning for warm up so make sure to pay attention to who is on and who is next and where you are in the mix so that you can be prepared and warm.

You want to have some chocolate or icing before you go out for your physique or posing rounds so your muscles look nice and full. The sugar will go straight to the veins bringing out the muscles! Take tiny sips of distilled water during the day, no more than 8 oz or so. Night show means you are done so once morning judging is done you can pretty much eat or do what you want....but don't make yourself sick as you still have the night show to go on a long day.

Be kind and courteous to everyone, do not complain because the athletes who do are usually the ones who did not prepare well and looked down upon. Who needs that atmosphere right? Do your best to smile and be nice regardless how bitchy or hungry you are. Everyone is tired, even the show hosts, they sleep less than most of us and work very hard.

Do be helpful if you have strengths in make up or hair. Good sportsmanship goes a long way and usually there are other newbies there who will remember you for your help!

Media tips

If you want memories of this day then make sure you have paid for photos and or video ahead of time. Make sure everything is well understood between what you want and what is offered.

On some occasions you will be asked to sign a media release. Usually this is safe and for the photos or footage that may gets used in future show promotions. Media is everywhere so watch your attitude and how you look at all times!

Smiles and great personality demonstrated usually attracts the media so if you want this attention don't hide but if you do not want to be on camera you should stay in the dressing room when cameras are not around. Most pro shows do have camera people filming backstage and on.

PRE TO POST CONTEST

For those onstage with you, they are told to watch for you so you can go ahead and perform without collision but do it well so they catch you at your best. Although they know to watch for us, still be aware of them around you on stage incase you are doing any tumbling, maybe pre warn them about that. I have only done one show which did this; most do not have camera men on stage.

Self promo

The media you get during the show is a great way to get some self promo in if that is what you are seeking. Models want exposure and most Fitness or Figure gals are looking to market their training or consultation services. Having 8x10 photos and a sharpie felt ready are handy. Keep business cards or comp cards on hand and if you have brochures bring them too. You can hand these out backstage or leave them in a pile for others to take. Some shows will allow you to place your cards on their house table in the front where displays are and in some cases will let you add these in competitor bags. Have a pen handy as photographers will most likely approach you as well. Make sure if you have an online portfolio or site, it is included on your business card or promotional materials. You can also offer smaller shows the use of your image for upcoming contest posters.

Contact your local paper and let them know you are competing; they usually will publish a small story about and your journey! There are local news shows which sometimes are interested so you will want to contact them well in advance and see if they want to mention you and have you on to briefly discuss your sport and how you prepare!

General Stage Tips

Walking is so simple yet your entrance and exit on stage can fluster the best of us! Making your walk in 4-6 inch heels look like you are moving on water is your goal but does not always come so natural to all of us! This is a big part of your time on stage and is counted toward your final scores. To the judges your walk is poise, confidence, coordination, stage presence and overall beauty. Giving a nice big smile and facing the judges for a few seconds then toward the audience for a few more seconds, back to the judges again. Moving slower will avoid any fumbles or bumbles and make you look very confident so do not rush. Carry yourself as if you are water moving fluidly and flawless. It does not matter if you are doing a physique oriented show or pageant type show, this can affect your scoring a lot because you are using these means to present yourself and how you come across is what you get judged on. They can only judge based on what they see and how you present it! Video cameras are so much more affordable now, invest in one so you can practice on video and really work on making your look pop!



PRE TO POST CONTEST

Your steps need to be sure yet soft. You want to balance your strides so that they are not too short or too long. Try not to bounce as that will enhance body fat but do show some femininity in your hips and shoulders. Your fingers can be very sexy as long as they are not tense or jagged. If you are not too sure then keep the fingers touching each other but with a slightly cupped palm. Those familiar with dance or gymnastic fingers can try that with a soft feminine touch. Models that have to come out to stage several times really need to have their walk and stand mastered so that all they need to think about is smile and have fun!

Posing and or stance is the next step once you arrive on your spot. Basic quarter turns are done in all classes but some figure contests include basic bodybuilding poses done with open palms. These poses are covered in the Figure manual. A side chest tip would be to perform this with palms together rather than grabbing a wrist:

Triceps poses have variations other than just grabbing the wrist behind the back. Double check the rules so that if you are able you can try the double triceps pose. If you have a triceps that is better than the other then stick to the one side.

Flex your quads on every figure pose even if it is upper body.

Quarter turns give the judges a look at each side and the back. You need to make sure you have mastered the lat flare. Even if you do a show which wants no lat flare you still need to know how to make it sit outward nicely at a slight level. Have someone stand behind you and guide your shoulder blades with their hands so that you will eventually get the feel and pull it off on stage on cue! A lot of this has to do with proper lat development.

You also want to keep slightly tense for side pose, at first looking forward for a few seconds then facing the judges unless otherwise specified. Hike the hip and keep smiling even when you are in that back pose! I tend to stick out my tongue to the competitors behind me, usually gets a giggle or 2 making the mood even better!

First shot was in movement, second one – oops forgot arm cuff from fitness routine as I was doing fitness, figure and model that day. Last shot, knees should not knock as mine are!



PRE TO POST CONTEST

Smiling is very important. From the moment you step into the theater you have a permagrin until you leave that night! The smiling never stops. Many of us may not be beauty queens but without the smile you will only make it true. You need to have a nice relaxed smile to enhance those positive features.

During these contests in every class you will be standing for long periods. Find a few comfortable poses and occasionally you can shift to that but do not fidget or talk or move around as this will turn off the judges. A few ideas are hands on hips, knees bent, one had on hip, legs straight. Try these ideas out and maybe find some of your own, have fun and find the ones that fit you!



Pleasing the judges, pleasing the crowd

Dealing with the audience and making them yours, can you pull it off? Of course you can! The audience can be very supportive. At times you get a show with all friends and family of your competitors and may not hear as much support but at many shows you will get appreciated for your hard work and efforts. They love performances and the routines so this is when you ham it up, gets them going and it gets you going! They love the hard tone bodies so you smile and prance like peacock standing strong and muscular!

Involving the audience with small waves and winks will always be a winner. You can egg them on and ask for applause, they love it. During a routine you can wave or nod while doing some skill or pose and feed off the energy they give you!!



Do not be shy, you get a minute or so to shine and show what you have worked so hard for during the past few months or so. The better you make your on stage appearance the more the

P R E T O P O S T C O N T E S T

judges will be in your favor and remember you especially if you go to ask them about scoring after the show or via email. You should be so well prepared that the show is a breeze even so it may be your nervous first time! Everyone can only prepare so far ahead so if you have done your best then now is the time to enjoy the end result!

Post Contest

After the show you will have your head telling you that you want lots and lots of junk food and craving foods yet your stomach will let you know later one that this is not so.....Many gals regret post show binging and I always suggest balance. You have a week to go nuts even if you have a show coming up soon unless it is next week! Try having one thing per day with a moderate diet surrounding it. You will get bloated anyway from salts and sugars but why get sick?

If you do use diuretics, natural ones of course, then you can expect to gain some water weight for a week or so. You will excrete some of this water through urine over the week or 2 as your body regulates. Make sure to take in lots of water to re-hydrate. This is your body normalizing. Your weight will balance out but you should be no heavier than 10-15 lbs off season. The whole diet rollercoaster is bad enough without extra drastic measures added to this so eat in moderation after your show, go easy on the cheat!

Other Competitors' Secrets!

Input from various sources is the best way to find your own special niche!

The way I was able to perfect my contest prep layout as well as learn to work on others was through years of experience and listening. Never have the 'know it all' attitude because - we don't, no one does no matter how pro you are. There are too many areas for personal preference so just because one trainer tells what color suit to get or what color make up to wear with that suit doesn't mean they're right or wrong. Another trainer may have dieting practices with stacking ECA but that does not make it right or wrong. Many cases you pick and choose what you want to try depending on your goals and needs not according to what is right or wrong – key thing is to go by what is right or wrong FOR YOU. Personal preference makes it work and the judges' opinion has some bearing on the judging aside from the straight forward scoring so if a judge does not like your look, another might and that is the way it goes. It affects the overall with unpredictability, you cannot please them all.

Bringing in unpredictability to your regimen or look can be bad or good. An extreme can go your way or against you. Do I compete blonde thinking it may help my overall look and placing or do I add blue streaks to stand out? Well I have done the blonde thing and even the blue streaks which I had in my last win, but it's not the singled out details, it's the overall package you bring and a very lean body.

Here are a series of interviews with some inspiring competitors sharing their trade secrets and a personal view through their eyes. These interviews reflect the heart and soul of a competitor.

Thanks ladies for all your wonderful contributions you have chosen to share with everyone. I am sure it will set some inspiration in motion!



Brigitte Levesque



Stats

Age: 28

Location (city, state/province, Country): Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Classes you compete in (Figure, Fitness, Model): Figure

Years competing: 2

Years working out: 6

Career: Personal Trainer

Hobbies: Movies, reading

Media (magazines you were in, TV appearances etc): Oxygen Magazine – Future of Fitness, Bodybuilding.com – Fitness competitor of the week

Your websites: www.brigittelevesque.com / www.proactiffitness.com

Contest History

IFBB Amateur World Championships, Santa Susanna, Spain

September 21-24, 2006

16th place

IFBB North American Championships, Cleveland, OH

September 15-16, 2006

18th place

CBBF World Qualifier, Toronto, Ontario

August 5th, 2006

Medium-Tall Class Winner

FAME East 2006, Montreal, Quebec

May 6th, 2006

2nd Runner-up

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

Quebec Tested, Montreal, Quebec
April 22nd, 2006
Tall Class Winner

Coupe Progym, Montreal, Quebec
November 21st, 2006
Tall Class Winner



Lifts listing any stats of your lifting ability, max lifts or lifts/exercises you are proud of showing sets, reps and weight lifted.

I don't place much importance on how much I lift or how many reps I can do. I always try to increase my loads progressively.

Measurements including weight for on and off season, upper arm, thigh, waist, chest and calve. Also include Height.

Height: 5'4.5"

Weight on-season: 127 lbs

Weight off-season: 140 lbs.

Since I am still building muscles, my weight has never been the same from competition to competition.

Q: Reason you began competing?

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

A: I saw pictures in Oxygen magazine and fitness routines on the sports channel. I liked the physiques and felt it was possible for me to achieve that level of muscularity. Several years ago, I visited Lisa Lowe's website. She was a fitness competitor but didn't have a background in gymnastics and her encouragements that anything was possible really put the idea in my head.

Q: Have you ever suffered an eating disorder and if so would you mind explaining, this is common among competitors as far as their history.

A: I have never suffered from an eating disorder but I can understand how it can be a problem since we think about food all the time!

Q: For your first contest, how far out did you begin to prepare, even before lean down, if you did prepare beyond that?

A: I started to train with my coach in January 2005 and was aiming for a November competition. My initial bodyfat was 32%. I wasn't on a strict diet; I just watched what I ate and made better choices. Three months out of the competition, my bodyfat was down to 18%, I then started my contest diet and competed on stage at about 10%.

Q: Can you give an idea of your meal planning for off, pre and on season to lean down?

A: When I am off-season, I try to eat clean most of the times with 1 or 2 cheat meals per week. During pre-season, I will measure my food and prepare all my meals for the day. When it comes time to cut on-season, my portions slowly decrease but I still eat many small meals.



TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

Q: Can you give an example of your off, pre and on season workouts?

A: Once my season is over, I take several weeks off from the gym to let my body recover and take care of nagging injuries. I've had a shoulder problem for several months but still continued to work through it. Taking a few weeks off allowed me to rest and revitalize.

Q: Many women wonder about implants. You can skip this one but if you do have them, would you be willing to tell us a bit about your experience as far as how long you had down time and how fast you were able to return to your normal workouts? Also do you suggest over or under the muscle? If you have not had them, what do you do to enhance yours (inserts, tricks?)

A: When my bodyfat becomes really low, my breasts disappear! Therefore, I usually lightly pad my suits.

Q: Where do you get your suits done and how do you like your suit fit, style, bling? What types of costs do you incur per suit?

A: My suits are either done locally or bought online and then beaded by a fantastic couturier. He does amazing work! The cost for a 2-piece competition suit could be around \$300, and a bit higher for a 1-piece. Buying second hand suits is also a great option! I don't have a favourite style but I really like the cuts of Merry Christine suits.

Q: Which organization do you prefer to compete with and why?

A: I've competed in a few organizations such as WNSO, CBBF and IFBB. I think the CBBF and IFBB are better suited for my physique.

Q: What are 3 tips you feel are most important to let other competitors know about regarding contest prep?

A: I would strongly suggest hiring a good coach that knows how to prepare for these events. Sure, you can do it alone but you save so much time and avoid mistakes. Posing and walking in higher-than-average shoes can never be practiced enough. Presentation plays a huge part in the total package, take special attention to little details.

Q: How do you stay motivated?

A: I am motivated because I want to see where the sport will take me. It's not always easy, I do have bad days but when I pull through them, I'm proud! Hearing the positive comments about how much I've changed in the last few years also motivates me. I have inspired many people to start taking care of themselves by exercising and making better food choices.

Q: Competing can be very costly, how do you keep costs under control meanwhile attaining all the supplies and suits you need?

A: Having competed 6 times during my first year, it was a struggle to keep the expenses low. I was lucky to have a sponsor for my last 2 shows. I am still seeking sponsors to help me this year. I save money by doing my own makeup and hair. I have my suits and shoes so that helps keep the cost low for this season.

Q: How did you figure out the diet and training you needed to become successful in your contest prep end result, what were the keys to your success? (Trainer, online resources, friend etc)

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

A: I have been training with Francine Savard from Proactif Fitness for the last 2 years. She is a well-known Canadian coach in the industry. I also learned from online resources and by talking to other competitors.

Q: Figure ladies, what tips can you give about posing, quarter turns, call outs and walking?

A: Practice, practice, practice! Try to find your best angle to showcase your physique; there are many variations on how to present yourself.

Q: Can you describe your pre contest tanning procedure, which products do you use, when and how, tanning time and when to begin that, pre scrubbing etc?

A: I used to tan in a booth for my first competitions and then spray tan. After using the Jan Tana onstage color, I don't need to do that anymore because I become dark enough. I usually exfoliate several weeks in advance before the spray tanning.

Q: What do you consider the KEYS to leaning?

A: I think it's best to do it gradually. My body adjusts quicker and I find I don't have as many mood swings.

And anything else you wish to add, you can do here: This is not the easiest of sports but it's worth it! You need all the support you can get from family and friends, they might not always understand all your sacrifices but if they support you, it makes it easier. My husband has been behind me from day one and it's one of the things that make me push harder and be better!

Tammy Huber



Stats

Age: 39

Location (city, state/province, Country): Wheatfield, New York

Classes you compete in (Figure, Fitness, Model): Figure

Years competing: 2

Years working out: 3

Career: College Counselor

Hobbies: weight training

Your websites: www.tammyhuber.com

Contest History

2006 : NPC Mr.Ms Buffalo Bodybuilding/Figure competition in Buffalo, New York: I won 1st place in the A class

2007 NPC Mr.Ms Buffalo Bodybuilding/Figure competition in Buffalo, New York: I won 1st place in the over 35 class and took second in the open A class

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

Measurements including weight for on and off season, upper arm, thigh, waist, chest and calve. Also include Height.

5'2"

104lbs off season

100lbs comp. weight.

Measurements: 33/25/33,

Q: Reason you began competing?

A: I have always admired natural female bodybuilders. I really needed something for just me. With always taking care of a family, a house and having a full time job I just started to lose me. I also never felt secure in my looks so I thought that getting into fitness would help and it sure did! Also, having a goal to work towards really keeps me motivated.

Q: Have you ever suffered an eating disorder and if so would you mind explaining, this is common among competitors as far as their history (optional).

A: Yes, I suffered with anorexia for about a year or so. I guess I needed something to control since I couldn't control other features that I had. I could control what I ate and how much I weighed... It was a distorted and warped way of viewing myself and being involved in competitive bodybuilding has shown me the true way to have a healthy and beautiful body.

Q: For your first contest, how far out did you begin to prepare, even before lean down, if you did prepare beyond that?

A: Well I competed about a year after I joined the gym. I always trained on my own and just learned from other people. I didn't have a lot of muscle to begin with so I worked on my conditioning most for my first competition. I dieted and did a lot of cardio about 8 weeks prior to the comp.

Q: Can you give an idea of your meal planning for off, pre and on season as well as lean down?

A: Off season I eat pretty clean most of the time but do give myself reward meals a couple times a week. For contest prep it doesn't change that much. I just really clean it up. I do need to start eating more off season if I want to put on more muscle. I'm an ecto so putting on muscle it tough for me although I can probably eat more carbs than most.

Q: Can you give an example of your off, pre and on season workouts (weights, plyos, yoga, cardio, anything you do and you can get as detailed as you like)?

A: Off season I don't do any cardio in the gym. I get that with doing stuff outdoors and with my kids. I work only with weight training. With prepping for a show I will do several weeks of cardio with my workouts to really solidify everything.

Q: Many women wonder about implants. You can skip this one but if you do have them, would you be willing to tell us a bit about your experience as far as how long you had down time and how fast you were able to return to your normal workouts? Also do you suggest over or under the muscle? If you have not had them, what do you do to enhance yours (inserts, tricks) and any posing tricks for either?

A: I do not have them. I did consider getting them but decided it wasn't for me. I just put lots of padding in the top and hope that it helps.



Q: Where do you get your suits done and how do you like your suit fit, style, bling? What types of costs do you incur per suit?

A: My black velvet two piece was about \$125 by lidia Conti and the one piece black velvet, was about \$60 and decorated by a friend of mine! Funny thing is that the one piece is too tight on me now so I guess I am putting on some size! I actually wore the same suits both years of competing for financial reasons. I'm going to get new ones this year! I have a longer torso so the cut needs to be higher and narrow on the bottoms.

Q: Which organization do you prefer to compete with and why?

A: I am natural so I like the drug tested shows. I do compete in the NPC because there is a local one every year and I really like the promoter. It is convenient for me right now with having such a busy schedule.

Q: What are 3 tips you feel are most important to let other competitors know about regarding contest prep?

A: 1. Keep things in balance. If you put too much energy into one thing something is going to suffer. Just be aware of those around you who might be missing you while you are all caught up in the mechanics of contest prep.

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

2. Don't over diet
3. Give it your all so no matter what, you know you did your best.

Q: How do you stay motivated?

A: I just look in the mirror. I will be 40 years old soon and I can honestly say that my body looks better than it ever has! Even after two kids.

Q: Competing can be very costly, how do you keep costs under control meanwhile attaining all the supplies and suits you need?

A: Money is an issue so I try to do the best I can to make things affordable. Like wearing the same suits two years in a row, having a friend decorate them, we just budget it in. My husband is supportive so we just make it work.

Q: Do you have sponsors and if so how did you go about attaining them?

A: No

Q: How did you figure out the diet and training you needed to become successful in your contest prep end result, what were the keys to your success? (Trainer, online resources, friend etc)

A: My friend and mentor Michele Naylor really helped me to learn the ropes. She is awesome!

Q: Figure ladies, what tips can you give about posing, quarter turns, call outs and walking?

A: Make eye contact with the judges, walk with confidence and just be yourself and with call outs be the first to step out to change position. It makes you more visible to the judges. Also, listen to what the head judge tells you in the beginning and just do it even if is different than what you practiced.

Q: Can you describe your pre contest tanning procedure, which products do you use, when and how, tanning time and when to begin that, pre scrubbing etc?

A: I use Jan Tana with the scrub and moisturizer. Their glaze is great too. I shower two nights before the show and apply the first coat, the next morning I shower and then later that night I apply another coat and then the next morning I put the moisturizer on. The morning of the show I just wash my hair at the sink with lots of towels and gloves on!

Q: What do you consider the KEYS to leaning?

A: Cut sugar and only eat complex carbs like sweet potatoes, cream of rice, brown rice and tons of veggies, eat the proper amount of protein and get the proper amount of good fats in. I just pretty much eyeball it in the mirror and adjust from there. Also for me once I hit the cardio everything starts to come in and I harden up. I have to be careful because my body wants to be skinny so I have to make sure I don't lose any muscle and that I look full on show day!

Beckie Alexander



Stats

Age: 37

Location (city, state/province, Country): Wellington New Zealand

Classes you compete in (Figure, Fitness, Model): Figure

Years competing: I've done 2 shows so far but have been involved in the sport for more than 10 years

Years working out: since 1992

Career: Online fitness trainer, routine choreographer, and Avon rep

Hobbies: Reading and listening to music

Media (magazines you were in, TV appearances etc): Dominion Post (NZ paper) 14 Oct 2005, Capital Times, 13 October 2005

Your websites: www.fitkiwipersonaltraining.com (my business site)
<http://bodyspace.bodybuilding.com/BeckieA> (my training log)

Contest History including name of contest, contest org., date of contest, location of contest and your placing:

NABBA Wellington Champs Sept 1997, Novice figure tall, did not place (13 in my class)

NZFBB Wellington Champs October 2005, Novice figure tall, 5th place

Lifts listing any stats of your lifting ability, max lifts or lifts/exercises you are proud of showing sets, reps and weight lifted. When I was lifting a lot heavier a few years back, I used to be able to squat and deadlift my own bodyweight, but back and knee injuries have forced me to train differently.

Measurements including weight for on and off season, upper arm, thigh, waist, chest and calve. Also include Height.

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

Height 168cm

Offseason weight 61 kg

Contest weight 54-55kg

Measurements (offseason) 35(chest), (26.5Waist), 37 (hip) Arm (13") Calf (14.5")

Measurements (in contest) 34 chest, 24 waist, 35 hip, arm 12" calf 14"

Q: Reason you began competing?

A: The discipline of training for a goal



Q: Have you ever suffered an eating disorder and if so would you mind explaining, this is common among competitors as far as their history (optional).

A: no I haven't but I have a close friend who did-when one has to lose a lot of weight to get really lean, the temptation is to want to stay that way and those who try tend to fall into the ED-exercise obsessive behaviour You need to plan what to do with your trainer so you don't go crazy when you come off your diet. As far as I can see it is the perfectionist personality that is most likely to sink into this behaviour.

Q: For your first contest, how far out did you begin to prepare, even before lean down, if you did prepare beyond that?

A: about 6 months

Q: Can you give an idea of your meal planning for off, pre and on season as well as lean down?

A: Off season when I am trying to bulk, I eat a lot more calories and also vary my macro split a lot more. I tend to eat 50%carbs, 25% protein and 25% fat. Being an ectomorph I need food that fills more up and I have learnt the way to do this is by eating more good fats like avocado, nuts and seeds.

When I am dieting, the ratio of starchy to fibrous carbs changes as do my macros. I tend to eat a 45C/25P/30F with a lot more veggies, sweet potato and oats being my staples. My

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

calories vary but I generally start out at 1900 cals and work down to around 1500. Anything lower than that and I lose muscle.

Q: Can you give an example of your off, pre and on season workouts (weights, plyos, yoga, cardio, anything you do and you can get as detailed as you like)?

A: I have just started a new bulk so I am training 4 x week split into legs, back and biceps, shoulders and triceps and then everything else. I am not training chest right now as I had a bad injury which precludes heavy chest presses but I can do flyes, pressups and cable crossovers.

When I am bulking I keep my cardio to a minimum, probably 2-3 walks a week of no more than 30 minutes. I also tend to do reps in the 6-10 range and keep rest periods under 90 seconds.

As far as cutting goes I usually go to a 5 day split-legs, back, shoulders, chest and arms and then specializations/weak point training. This next contest time I will probably do 4 days of weights and 1 day of plyos as this seems to be the only way to shape up my glutes and hams. My trainer will dictate my cardio schedule this time around but I tend to prefer 2 shorter spells a day rather than prolonged cardio sessions. Generally the closer I get to a show the more frequent they become. Last time around I was doing just over an hour a day split into 1 high intensity session and one longer walk, this was 6 days per week.

Q: Many women wonder about implants. You can skip this one but if you do have them, would you be willing to tell us a bit about your experience as far as how long you had down time and how fast you were able to return to your normal workouts? Also do you suggest over or under the muscle? If you have not had them, what do you do to enhance yours (inserts, tricks) and any posing tricks for either?

A: I would like to get them done but right now I am not financial enough to consider that option so I get a contoured suit top which actually looks like you have breasts even when you don't! The suitmaker I am going to use does an incredible job in achieving this look.

Q: Where do you get your suits done and how do you like your suit fit, style, bling? What types of costs do you incur per suit?

A: This time I will be going with Jo Rogers in Australia (www.styleonstage.com.au), she has all her styles on her website and is very good at choosing colors and styles to suit different coloring and sizes. I like a fairly simple suit with not too much bling and to be honest I prefer fabric that already has some sparkle to it. The estimated cost of my suit is \$285 Australian which compared to some US suitmakers is quite reasonable.

Q: Which organization do you prefer to compete with and why?

A: I don't really have a preference although I am in favour of drug testing. I live in a small country and the options are more limited so I prefer to see how my body looks then pick a show based on that.

Q: What are 3 tips you feel are most important to let other competitors know about regarding contest prep?

A: Give yourself enough time to prepare

Use a trainer experienced in bodybuilding nutrition to guide you, don't try and bluff your way through it.

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

Listen to one person only, that should be your trainer-too much advice from too many people can leave a competitor confused as to what they should be doing.

Q: How do you stay motivated?

A: Goal setting. I know I tend to meander or go off course if I don't have a goal(s). And setting different types of goals like adding mass to shoulders, lifting more weight on X exercise etc.

Q: Competing can be very costly, how do you keep costs under control meanwhile attaining all the supplies and suits you need?

A: I buy food in bulk when it is on special and freeze it especially chicken and broccoli. I set myself a strict savings regime prior to contest prep so I know how much I'll have to spend come contest time on supplements, tanning etc. I order almost all my supplements online as retail is very expensive!

Q: Do you have sponsors and if so how did you go about attaining them?

A: No, I do not have the results nor profile as yet

Q: How did you figure out the diet and training you needed to become successful in your contest prep end result, what were the keys to your success? (Trainer, online resources, friend etc)

A: Even though I am a trainer myself I always use a trainer for nutritional guidance. It takes the stress out of trying to figure everything out yourself and leaves it in the hands of an expert.



Q: Figure ladies, what tips can you give about posing, quarter turns, call outs and walking?

A: Keep your head up

Smile

Elongate your torso by lifting up your ribcage (no sticking out your chest)

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

Start practising your walking and/or posing at least 12 weeks out and get professional coaching if you really don't know what you're doing. A good stage walk needs to look graceful and fluid, like you could do it any day

Q: Can you describe your pre contest tanning procedure, which products do you use, when and how, tanning time and when to begin that, pre scrubbing etc?

A: Exfoliation is the key to a smooth looking tan so start at least 8 weeks out several times a week. Follow this up with a good moisturizer (I use cocoa butter) and make sure you get all the dry places too. The closer you get to your show the more frequent you should exfoliate, every second day if you are prone to dryness.

I have used several different varieties-first show I used Contest Colour by Phil Kabakoff (www.pke.com.au). It gave a nice golden colour on my fair skin but didn't adhere properly to my drier areas

The second time I used a spray tan and Dream tan #2. The spray tan was really dark so I only needed one coat of dream tan over the top.

Next time I am not sure-I like the Phil Kabakoff products and they have a beautiful sheer shimmery top coat that looks amazing so I will probably go that route.

Q: What do you consider the KEYS to leaning?

A: Without question sticking to your eating plan is the most important factor. You can do all the work in the gym but if you don't eat properly or clean enough, you won't shift the body fat!

And anything else you wish to add, you can do here:

Always communicate with your trainer, if you are not happy with any aspect of your training or dieting TELL THEM and BE HONEST. If you are cheating on your diet you need to be truthful with yourself and your helper

Try not to put too high an expectation on competing to win. You need to treat each show as a learning experience and a progression of your physique. As long as you can do that you are a 'winner'.

Melanie Pitts



TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

Stats

Age (optional): 32

Location (city, state/province, Country): Home: Nanaimo, BC, Canada –Central Coast of NSW, Australia.

Classes you compete in (Figure, Fitness, Model): Figure

Years competing: 1 (2004)

Years working out: Fitness Instructor for over 10 years.

Career: Business Professor

Hobbies: Fitness, Travel.

Media (magazines you were in, TV appearances etc): Various modeling and acting experiences.

Your websites: www.melaniepitts.com, www.fitnessnanaimo.com

Contest History including name of contest, contest org., date of contest, location of contest and your placing: 3rd Annual Western Naturals - May 29th, 2004 - Nanaimo, BC - Figure - Tall Class - 5th place.



Lifts listing any stats of your lifting ability, max lifts or lifts/exercises you are proud of showing sets, reps and weight lifted. Have never recorded any of this as historically I've always been a fitness instructor.

Measurements including weight for on and off season, upper arm, thigh, waist, chest and calve. Also include Height.

On season: 135-140 lbs, off season: 140-155 lbs. Height 5'9" No recent measurements taken.

Q: Reason you began competing?

A: On a whim. When I was a child, I used to watch fitness and bodybuilding competitions and used to think "Wow, I wish I could do that." I had heard that the Western Naturals were coming to town so I thought that I would take the leap and train for it, and that's how it started.

Q: Have you ever suffered an eating disorder and if so would you mind explaining, this is common among competitors as far as their history (optional).

A: I have always preferred "junk food" and have always had a very bad diet when it has come to nutritional habits. Ask anyone who really knows me and they will say that I am the "chocolate bar and coca-cola girl." Dieting for the competition was an unreal experience for

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

me as the diet itself was strict and I was determined to stick to it for the sake of the competition. However it's not a diet that I would ever stick to regularly. I think when it comes to fitness and health, the diet for any competition (especially the week before the competition) is not really a healthy one at all.

Q: For your first contest, how far out did you begin to prepare, even before lean down, if you did prepare beyond that?

A: The competition was in May and I thought in January that I should start training. I am a fitness instructor so I was in decent shape, however my diet was not exactly the best it could be and I lacked a strict weight training program. I started weight training about 3-4 months before the competition, and I started a competition diet about 12 weeks out, but I modified it quite a bit as I didn't want to carb deplete. At that time, I was a full time student and was still teaching fitness classes full-time to pay for my MBA so I needed my carbs for energy and didn't want to "hit the wall" and be "duh" during my exams.

Q: Can you give an idea of your meal planning for off, pre and on season as well as lean down?

A: Off season: I basically eat what I want, when I want. On season, my diet consists of lots of chicken, tuna, fresh fish, leafy greens, sweet potatoes, rice and water.

Q: Can you give an example of your off, pre and on season workouts (weights, plyos, yoga, cardio, anything you do and you can get as detailed as you like)?

A: Off season: Since I am a fitness instructor, I generally teach a variety of classes (from Aqua to Yoga) each week. On average I used to teach about 20 classes a week. When I competed, I continued teaching and then would add a weight-training program as well. Yes, definite overtraining and I wouldn't recommend it. My weight-training program consisted of a 10 minute warm-up on an elliptical rider, and then I would work particular body parts for up to 2 hours in the gym, 5 days a week (Chest/Bi, Back/Tri, Legs, Shoulders, Abs/Lower Back). I would end with stretching the body parts that I worked that day.

Q: Many women wonder about implants. You can skip this one but if you do have them, would you be willing to tell us a bit about your experience as far as how long you had down time and how fast you were able to return to your normal workouts? Also do you suggest over or under the muscle? If you have not had them, what do you do to enhance yours (inserts, tricks) and any posing tricks for either?

A: I don't have them. When I competed I taped what I did have and padded my suits to the max with bra/swimwear inserts! It very hard to compete against those who are enhanced when you're not as breasts are fat and when you diet down, and you're natural, you basically end up being "flat."

Q: Where do you get your suits done and how do you like your suit fit, style, bling? What types of costs do you incur per suit?

A: I purchased a few swimsuits from swimwear merchants and got a friend to make them into posing suits. I also had a friend design a posing suit off of a swimsuit that I had.



Q: Which organization do you prefer to compete with and why?

A: No preference.

Q: What are 3 tips you feel are most important to let other competitors know about regarding contest prep?

A: Remember that you're trying to achieve a goal/ideal/dream/image and that as hard as it is and/or seems to be, once you complete your goal/ideal/dream/image, you will feel so much better. Stock pile (freeze) all of those sweets and save them for the day after your competition as a reward for your efforts (don't eat them all at once or you'll be sick)! You are not the only one feeling the way you're feeling. Join a fitness/figure competitor group and keep in touch with others who are going through the same thing.

Q: How do you stay motivated?

A: Knowing that I will achieve a goal that I have set forth for myself (I'm a little stubborn). Having a great support network around me (family, friends and colleagues).

Q: Competing can be very costly, how do you keep costs under control meanwhile attaining all the supplies and suits you need?

A: Since I'm in the fitness industry I had some contacts that were willing to sponsor me (supplements, tanning, posing classes, etc.). That being said, I did shell out quite a bit of money on my own too.

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

Q: Do you have sponsors and if so how did you go about attaining them?

A: Yes, I did have some sponsors. Some sponsors approached me once they heard that I was going to compete. Others I approached.

Q: How did you figure out the diet and training you needed to become successful in your contest prep end result, what were the keys to your success? (Trainer, online resources, friend etc)

A: The diet was courtesy of friends who had competed in bodybuilding competitions. I took their diet and modified it. Anyone that I knew who had competed at some point in their life; I just started asking them various questions and asked for helpful hints and advice. The whole thing was quite the learning experience and a lot of trial and error.

Q: Figure ladies, what tips can you give about posing, quarter turns, call outs and walking?

A: Practice practice practice! Walk around the house in those high heels to get used to them. Practice posing in front of mirrors and get used to what looks good for you and how your body feels when you are in that position so that you can remember that position when you are not in front of a mirror. Getting a friend to video tape you also helps



Q: Can you describe your pre contest tanning procedure, which products do you use, when and how, tanning time and when to begin that, pre scrubbing etc?

A: I am a “fake and baker” so I spend quite a bit of time in the tanning beds and have a general base tan year round. A friend of mine owned a spray tanning machine so she would spray me every week for the month before the competition. I also got her to take the pro-tan and put it into the spray tan machine to get a more even tan the day before the competition. It worked wonders – however the room didn’t smell so good afterwards~!! The morning of the competition I used dream tan and a tanning pressed powder to even out my color.

Q: What do you consider the KEYS to leaning?

A: Cut carbs, and cardio cardio cardio!

And anything else you wish to add, you can do here: If you have any type of issue with your body image and self-esteem, you really need to think hard about competing. When you compete, you will look AWESOME, but remember that it’s not a look that you will most likely be able to maintain year round (unless you are blessed with some great genetics).

Chris Goodman



Stats

Age 38
Hiawatha, Iowa USA
Figure Competitor
1 year competing
14 years working out
Dental Assistant/ Fitness Instructor
Biking, camping, reading suspense and mystery novels, gardening are hobbies.

I like Oxygen (if only it had less advertising), shape, Midwest Living, the daily paper here.

I won the NANBF Best of the Midwest, Figure Champion Overall and Novice class. (yes...that was my 1st competition) My proudest moment came when Fred Rowlett, who is the President, came up to me and told me to go Pro. He said, he talks to over a 1,000 figure competitors a year, and he's only seen a handful who he would hand-

pick to push Pro...I was one of 6 gals he's talk to. Wow...flattering..

I vary my lifting routine every 6 to 8 weeks. Right now, I'm on a 5/10/20 routine. push/pull. So, I do chest and Tri, 5 heavy reps, 4 sets,(bench press...skull crushers) 10 mod reps, 4 sets (incline press, chest flye compound/ tricep extension w/ rope) and then 20 or to failure w/ light weights, 4 sets. (pushups/ dips)

So, I'll do my bench press, incline/fly, pushups. Then go to skull crushers, extension and dips.

Next day is legs, same thought, 5/10/20

Rest for 2 b/c I've got to teach.

Back/bicep and legs again the next day.

This lifting schedule works for me b/c I can't fatigue myself for work. I've got to have energy for my classes. So, Mon/Tues and Fri/Sat.

I've also done a 6/12. Where you've do the 1st two sets at 6 reps heavy, the 2nd two at 12 mod.

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

Rest is only 1min!!

I've done circuit too. Where I've done explosive scizzor lunges, squats, deadlift and jumprope (200 revolutions) 1 min rest then start again. I did that for two weeks doing the push/pull thing again. Mon, Back/ bi, Tues legs. Fri, chest/tri, legs again on sat.

Right now, my max lift is 132# bench press. Sled, I've done 8, 45# plates for 6 reps. My butt hurt.... My favourite one is call the Jam'n. It's a standing squat machine, plate loaded. 230#'s and it HITS your glutes!! Love it!!!!

I'm 5'2' and currently weigh 124.5 and 16.9% bf. At contest, I was 110# and 9% bf. I don't have measurements of any body parts.....oh well.

I began competing because it's something I've always wanted to do. I tried 9 years ago, but with asthma, I had health problems. I came down w/ Pneumonia and bronchitis. So, I stopped training. It was just too much at that time. I didn't think about it for years again until I went to a show...and that was all she wrote! I loved it!!

I've never been anorexic or bulimic...but I do feel I use food to comfort me. I'm a stress eater and will binge (sorta) when I'm stressed, depressed and such. So, that's something I've had to work on. I keep a food journal, so I can vent my feelings instead of burying them w/ food. It's better to face your problems then add more to it w/ guilt eating.

I began preparing for my 1st competition 9 months out. I started to clean up my diet and lift consistently so I would be in a great position 10 weeks out. I started at 129 and 18% bf, in January. By the time it got to be July, I was at 121 and 13.9%. Then at 10 weeks out, I went 'clean'. No processed foods, pop and beef. I had no starchy carbs after 3pm. Saturday was my 'cheat' day. We would go to Culver's for dinner and I would get a grilled chicken sandwich and a salad. Water, water water like nuts!!! By preparing so far out, I was in a great position to cut and not starve myself.

My diet for precontest was (for me) a no-brainer. Clean eating means eating foods fresh or frozen. I ate very little canned, boxed or processed foods. Lot's of chicken and fish. I only had beef 3 times...it's was 96% lean beef. I ate 6 x's a day and made sure my afternoon snack and a starchy carb. I got depressed in the afternoon if I didn't have it!!! Funny how your body reacts to diet changes..... Right now, I'm eating fairly clean...but I like my junk food. I'll have a cookie or candy, but not in excess! I don't eat fast food french fries or chips. I have 1/2 of my plate full of veggies at lunch and dinner. I keep my starchy carbs to a minimum in the evening and eliminated white bread. I only eat whole grain wheat products. It helps w/ the GI spike. I'm sensitive to that.

I don't have implants...but boy I sure wouldn't mind a healthy set of b's!! darn! I'm what you call a member of the 'almost A club'....Oh well. My posing suit had a decent built in pad. Bikini bite kept my suit from 'popping up' and showing I really had nothing. I had these self-adhesive bras' but they don't look right. It looks like I have saggy boobs when I wear them!!! Ick.

My suit was from a place that I would NOT recommend!!! WHEN it FINALLY got mailed to me, it was nice. I thought the butt could've been bigger but hey. I altered it myself, by adding

TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

hotfix rhinestones. Much cheaper than if the seamstress would've done it. I paid \$65 for my suit and that was supposed to include alterations. But like I said, once I finally got it, there was NO way I was sending it back to get altered. I received it 1 week before the show!! I got it on a Friday, worked on the alterations for the next 3 days. Yes, I was stressed!!

As far as organizations, I stick to drug free shows...just because that's all that's around here....

3 tips....1 don't get obsessed w/ how you think you'll compare to the other gals. You have no control over how they look. you only have control of yourself. 2 Treat yourself well....I had a cheat of Altoids mints dipped in dark chocolate every night. They were only 15 calories and helps w/ chocolate cravings. You can't beat yourself up over a slip. Just be prepared that one could happen. I let myself have those Altoids to avoid a major slip. Be nice to yourself! 3 Have a blast!! I went in with the intention of having fun! It showed on stage. My goal was to 'sell myself' onstage, make the judges think I've done this before. Boy did I have them fooled. It was because I looked natural up there....I was smiling, having fun.... You've got to relax and enjoy what you're doing and it will show on stage!



TIPS FROM FELLOW COMPETITORS

I kept my eye on the goal.... Imagine a race horse w/ blinders on....that's what I did. I didn't think about the foods I couldn't eat right now or how tired I was. I kept telling myself, I can eat these things, I just choose NOT to at this time. My daughter's birthday was during my 10 week cutting phase and that was tough. I made two cakes (yeah two!!!) during that week and I held my ground. I knew after this was all done, a good friend of mine (who bakes) was going to make me the greatest cake!! I also had soooo many friends who were supportive of my efforts and would boost me up. I love those guys!!!!

I was my own trainer, nutritionist and motivator! I got lots of help from online forums and books. I love to learn and push myself. I knew what eating clean meant and I stuck to it. As far as fat/carb/protein ratio, I went w/ how I felt and how much weight I wanted to lose. 15% fat, 35-40% protein, and 45-50% carb.

I highly praise YouTube.com for helping me plan my posing and quarter turns. GREAT, great resource!!!!!!

OH boy...pretan procedures.....ok. I did 'fake bake' for a few weeks just to get a base. Then Mystic Tan twice. That's the spray on tan and a salon. Pro Tan is the product I used for the show. I tell ya, I freaked out the first time I used it!! I looked streaky and a mess!! My co-worker called me up and told me not to freak out....it will blend when I rinse in the morning. It did just as she said and I liked the color of the product. I did NOT use it on my face...I just bought a dark foundation. I did use Veet allllll over my body earlier in the week and did touch up shaving before I used the Pro Tan.

Keys to leaning....NO CARBS after 3pm! Lots and Lots of water!!! I also went for a 20 minute walk every night to 1) get myself away from food, 2) curb hunger 3) burn fat. I walked at a very brisk pace around my city park. That walk was on top of my lifting 4 days a week, teaching 5 classes a week and my cardio 3x's a week. Phew!!!

I cannot describe the feeling of being up on stage and having that crowd cheer for you! They didn't know who I was; they were just supporting the sport as well as all gals on stage! It was a thrill and I loved it!

Conclusion

In the end you are doing something to better yourself, set and achieve some goals, learn new health tips and nutrition secrets, train your body to be the strongest and fittest it can be which looks great but overall will extend your quality of life.

Accomplishing a Figure or Fitness competition regardless of placings, regardless of what you can lift or how tight you were able to get your tush, makes for a confident and successful individual in all aspects of your life. This type of discipline is driven by self worth proving to yourself you can do this. So many obstacles are surmounted for individuals with various fears or phobias such as getting on stage in swimwear! No, getting up on a stage in swimwear and smiling like you love it and are God's gift to this earth! Walking in 5 inch heels alone should be dubbed a 'talent' and as you see by the comments from the various competitors in the previous pages, they all advocate practicing that 5 inch heel walking!!

Learning to be able to control your health through proper diet and exercise will be with you long after you are done competing and will help you extend that quality of life. Obesity, health risks, childhood mortality are all huge concerns which you can help when setting an example to those around you both young and old.

You don't have to get into debt to compete and another example the competitors here have set is that many competitors are on a frugal budget but yet they are still able to compete, showing another discipline that competing can teach.

I personally find that competing has saved many women from eating disorders, although many could argue it causes them. I have not met anyone who's eating disorder came after, but I do know of many who have used competing as a way to stay recovered. To compete and look like a competitor you must eat, regularly which is completely against the normal eating disorder habits. I do though agree with Beckie (competitor interviewed in previous pages) regarding this issue with exercise obsessive disorder but in the end I would think that competitive meal planning will conflict with an eating disorder and I see that as a plus.

I hope some of the information here has helped you. My figure and fitness manuals have more detail in contest prep basics, some meal and training plans laid out for 16 weeks and elaborated information on some of the topics touched on in this eBook. See this manual as an addition extending beyond the general info useful for those who have competed and are well experienced as well as the beginner.

All the best in your competition endeavours!!! Go get em Divas!

**Credits to photographers:*

*Michael Palmer, Glen E Grant, M Scott
Alt, Aura Mckay, Sara Murray, Bill
Henning and David Ford.*