

# PREP BEYOND THE GYM

By Tara Marie Segundo, M.A.

To the outside world, it all looks pretty straightforward. You work out 5-6 days a week, diet religiously and show up on competition day and nail the title, right? Wrong! Anyone who has ever successfully competed knows how many elements go into prepping for a show beyond the training you do in the gym.

Let's take a step-by-step look at the life of a typical figure competitor as competition day approaches:

## 16-20 WEEKS OUT

Hopefully you have decided whether or not you are doing a given show and are entrenched in a structured workout routine that will change as the weeks pass. As soon as I decide to compete, I start thinking about my contest bikini. I always contact my designer as soon as possible so I'm not told that she has already committed to making too many suits. At this stage, I am looking at different fabrics, colors and design ideas.

If I need an evening gown, I start looking early. I would much rather have a gown hanging in my closet an extra month than panic two weeks before a show and buy something that doesn't really suit me. If you get your evening gown custom-made, that's another reason to get started right away.

Depending on how much bodyfat you need to drop, you should start to diet slowly. If you wait too late in the game you will have to diet too hard in the final weeks and end up losing too much muscle, not to mention looking flat on stage. Start early and lose fat while you keep your hard-earned physique.

## 6-10 WEEKS OUT

This is a good time to start thinking about stage presence. To make it look easy prancing around nearly naked in front of a panel of judges and screaming fans (while wondering all the while if your bikini bite is doing its job) you must rehearse. Do not wait until the day of the show to pull out your six-inch heels and hope you don't trip. Walking in heels is hard in the first place; smiling and looking graceful while doing it is an art form.

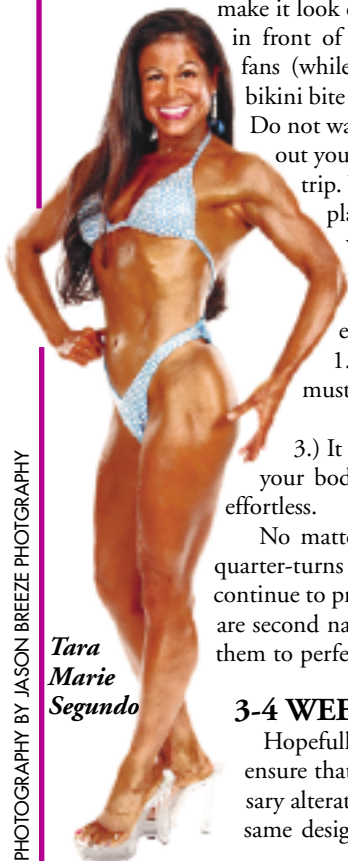
Let's not forget the quarter-turns. Practicing quarter-turns is essential for three reasons:

- 1.) Between shows you get rusty and must work out the kinks in your form;
- 2.) It will keep you hard;
- 3.) It is exhausting and you have to train your body to do it well and make it look effortless.

No matter how much I train in the gym, quarter-turns always wipe me out. You must continue to practice them until show day so they are second nature on stage and you can execute them to perfection.

## 3-4 WEEKS OUT

Hopefully your bikini is being made to ensure that you get it in time to make necessary alterations. Even though I always use the same designer, my body changes from show



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Best Body Swimsuit Champion Allison Vernon

WNBF World  
Figure Champ  
Michelle Shepherd



PHOTO: SETH BEAUDREAU

to show so the pattern she has on file for me may need tweaking – allow time for this. One year, there was a problem and I got my bikini (after final alterations) the day before the show. Needless to say, that was stress I did not need.

It is also time to schedule your manicure/pedicure and hair appointments. If you are getting your hair cut, I would advise getting the cut two weeks before the show so if there are any mistakes, you can correct them. Now is not the time to try new things. One year I let my stylist talk me into extra layers . . . he said it would give my hair “movement.” It looked fine for everyday life, but I found that the “movement” drove me nuts on stage because hair was falling in my face and I could not touch it during the quarter-turns. Stick with what is tried and true.

Now, if not before, it is time to stock up on your supplies: Bikini Bite, Pro Tan, Muscle Juice, etc. Since these are items that are ordered online, it's better to order early and make sure that everything arrives in time. Also, plan on bringing these items to the show. You don't want to be the annoying girl who borrows from everyone else because you couldn't be bothered to plan ahead. Contest day is stressful and you will make everyone's life easier if you are self-sufficient.

### 1-2 WEEKS OUT

Make necessary alterations to your evening gown. I usually do this two weeks out, as it is close enough to the contest that I have a more accurate sense of what my stage weight will be. You also want to have a buffer of time in case it needs to be re-altered for any reason.

Start exfoliating your skin now so your Pro Tan applies evenly. You will need to do it a few times, so begin early and give your body a day between treatments. I use a body lotion and white sugar mixture and scrub vigorously before my shower . . . it is inexpensive and effective. Also pick up your contest bikini and make sure that final alterations were done correctly. If not, you have time to fix it.

### ONE WEEK OUT

Get your manicure and pedicure. No crazy nail art or ultra-long nails . . . go for the clean and classy look.

Get your brows waxed or plucked. Do not wait until the night before the show in case you develop red marks.

Get a bikini wax if you have not already used a more permanent method of hair removal. Again, not the day before the show in case any redness develops.

This is the week that you taper off your workouts, carb-deplete, carb-load, dehydrate, apply your Pro Tan and make final preparations for contest day.

Mentally rehearse. I like to keep the last few days before a show as low key as possible and spend time thinking about my performance on stage. Your body will respond to whatever you rehearse in

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# WHAT IT TAKES TO SUCCEED AS A FIGURE COMPETITOR

your mind; see, sense and feel yourself on stage doing a great job and your body will follow suit.

### **THE DAY BEFORE**

I make a packing list to ensure that I don't forget anything I will need on competition day. Better to be extra careful than to arrive and realize that you left your special bra for your evening gown at home. Being organized will take more work, but it will make you feel more confident; your performance will reflect this confidence.

Pack your bag and make sure to bring plenty of food and water. Some venues supply these items for the athletes and some supply nothing. Count on nothing.

These are the final hours, so make sure that no detail has gone unnoticed. I know some competitors who like to have dinner with friends the night before a show, but that would break my focus. You need to decide how you should best spend this time and honor your feelings . . . then, get to bed early and dream of trophies. In a matter of hours you will be primping, pumping up and going on stage.

Remember: Success is when opportunity meets preparation – so be prepared! Good luck and see you at the next show! ★

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