

CITIZEN



GLOBE-TROTTING MAYA NASSAR EXPLAINS HOW SHE WENT FROM BEING OUT OF CONTROL TO CONQUERING HER INNER DEMONS TO BECOME ONE OF THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER AND INSPIRING FITNESS FIGURES IN THE REGION.



MAYA SEEN HERE FIVE DRESS SIZES BIGGER THAN SHE IS TODAY.

MAYA'S TIP: NEVER SKIP ANY MEALS! THIS CAN MAKE YOU BINGE LATER IN THE DAY.



MY FITNESS ROUTINE

Right now I am training with weights five times a week and do cardio twice a week.

MY SCHEDULE IS AS FOLLOWS:

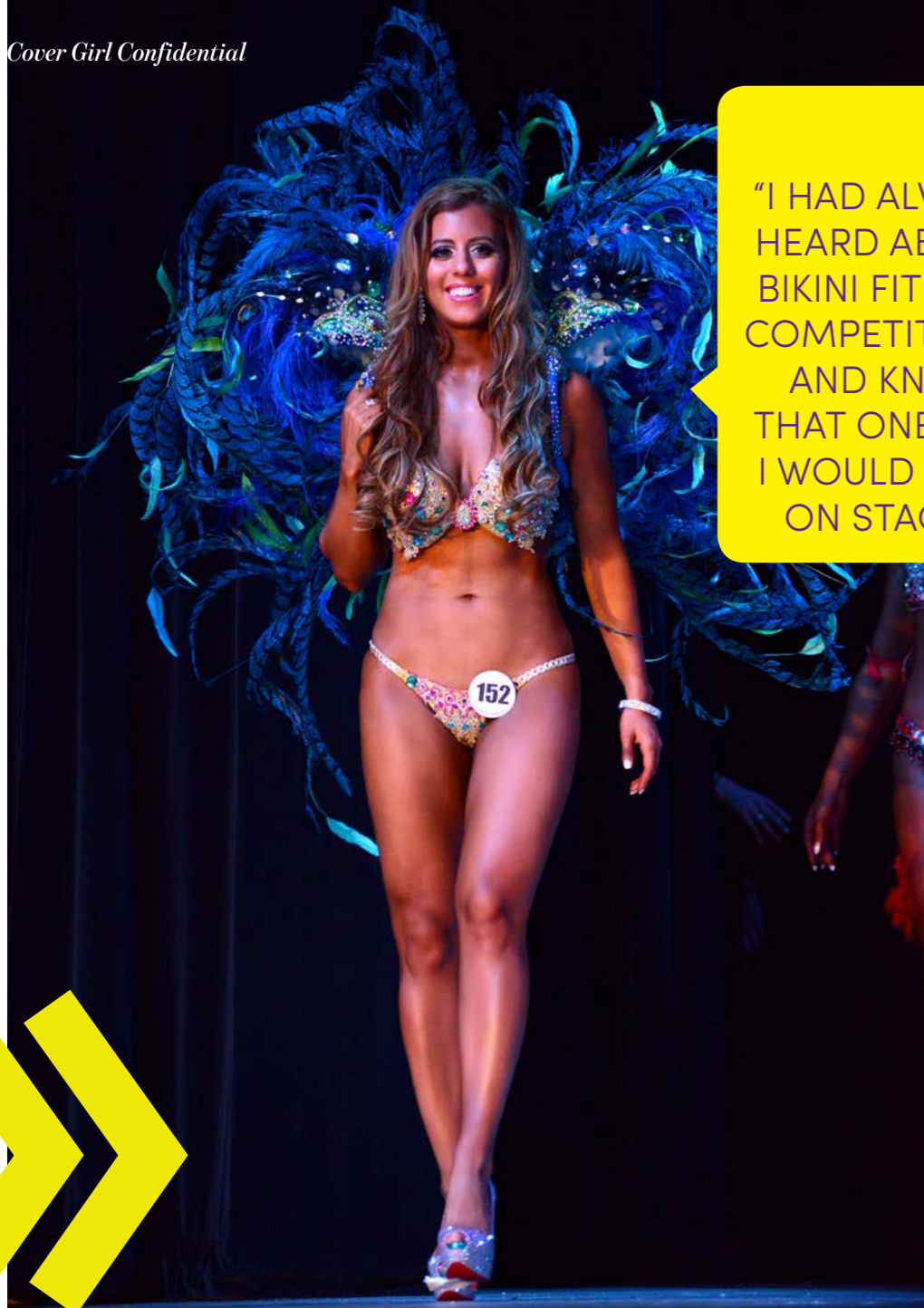
- MONDAY:** Legs, biceps and abs
- TUESDAY:** Back, triceps, obliques + 20 minutes HIIT cardio
- WEDNESDAY:** Chest and shoulders
- THURSDAY:** Legs, biceps and abs
- FRIDAY:** Back, triceps, obliques + 20 minutes HIIT cardio
- SATURDAY AND SUNDAY:** Rest

I am very multicultural and have four passports. I was born in New York, grew up in Africa (therefore became a Ghanaian citizen) and have a Lebanese father and a Dutch mother. I lived in England for a while before moving back to Lebanon for high school where I have been ever since.

I was extremely active as a child and a young teenager. I used to play sports outdoors and rode horses all my life. I started competing in showjumping as a young teenager and in 2001 I became the junior champion of Lebanon.

WEIGHT GAIN AND MY UNHEALTHY LIFESTYLE

I have always been someone who loves to eat. My appetite is uncontrollable and during my late teenage years and early twenties, I eventually stopped being active and ate whatever I



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by the amount of information available. I started doing my own research and bought a book called "Burn the Fat Feed the Muscle" by Tom Venuto. This book completely changed my life and taught me what I needed to know to go about my journey.

Almost immediately I joined a gym and started lifting weights. I completely changed my diet and started eating clean, natural and unprocessed foods. There was a fire inside me that wanted this so badly that I was willing to do whatever it took. I went from someone who never set foot in the gym to training up to six times a week, sometimes twice a day. I replaced junk food, fried food and sweets with protein, veggies, fruits, salads, healthy fats and wholegrain carbs.

SETTING CHALLENGING GOALS

Within a period of three months, I dropped three jean sizes and lost a total of 15 kilos of fat. I was also proud that nobody helped me and I achieved this by doing my own research. I was leaner than before I had gained weight and had a new burst for life. I went from being insecure to feeling confident and full of life. I discovered that I loved fitness and nutrition so much that I went ahead and became certified in personal training and sports nutrition.

After reaching my fitness goals, I set about on a new journey, deciding to challenge myself. I had always heard about bikini fitness competitions and knew that one day I would step on stage. My journey began when a friend of mine in London told me about a competition

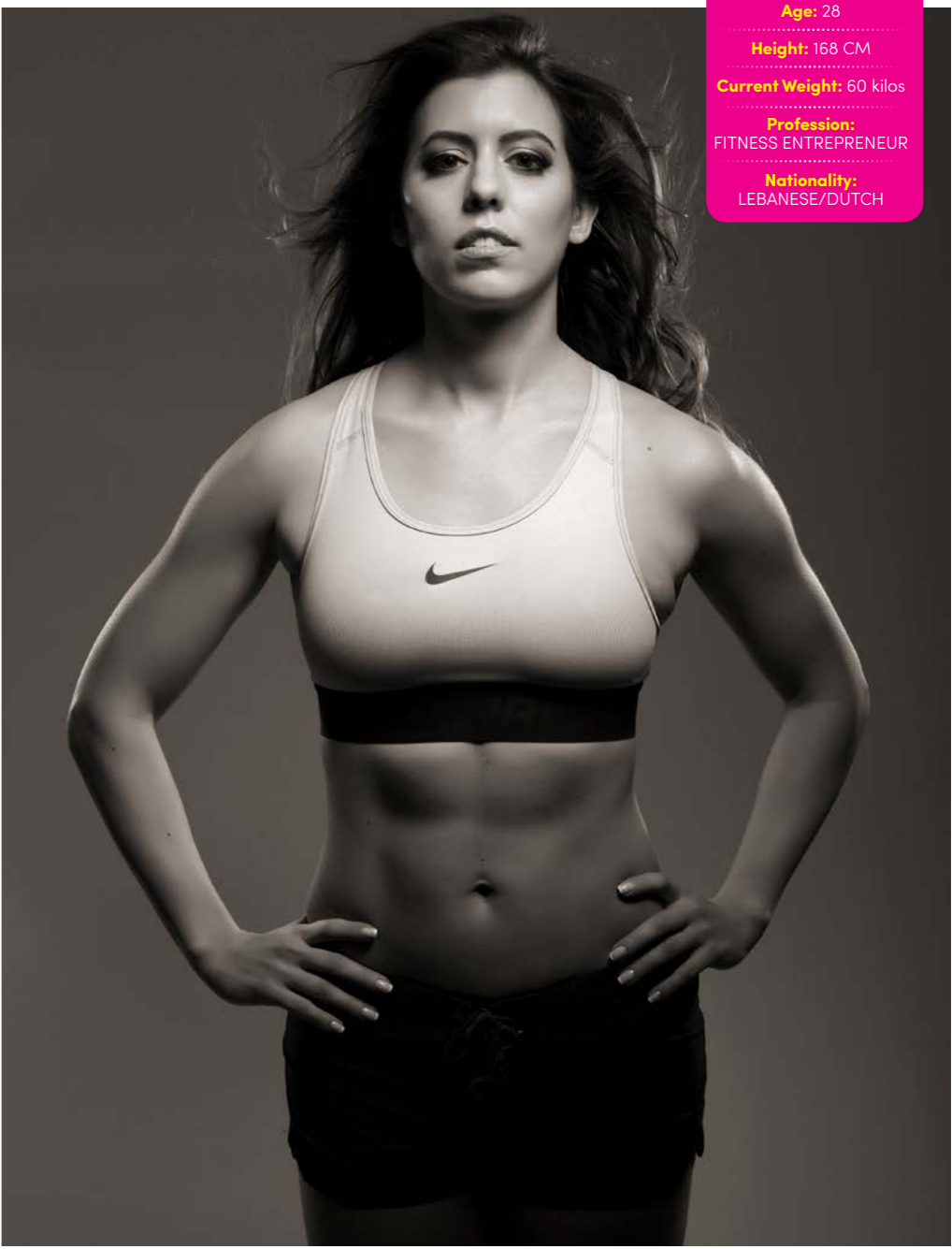
being held that summer. In July 2013, I entered my first competition in the UK participating in the Miami Pro European championships. I trained for three months following a really strict diet and training up to six times a week. At one point, I had no life. I would wake up before work to train (30 minutes), go back to the gym during my lunch break (30 minutes) and then go back after work (one hour) totaling two hours a day. My life was going to work and to the gym.

At my first competition, I did not place. It was very difficult because I did everything on my own and did not have any support from anyone because such female bodybuilding competitions do not exist in Lebanon. I was quite disappointed, but knew I had to try one more time.

In May 2014, I competed with Pure Elite in the UK and won first place in bikini fitness. It was one of the best experiences in my life, where all of my hard work and dedication paid off. It was my moment of glory from being the girl who was too insecure to walk on the beach to winning an international competition against some very beautiful women.

That year it was different, because I became the first female bodybuilder to be endorsed by the Lebanese government to represent Lebanon in my competition abroad. This made me receive a lot of media attention including

MY DIET
BREAKFAST: Oatmeal with an egg white omelet or grilled chicken breast on the side
MID-MORNING SNACK: Serving of fruit
LUNCH: Salad with avocado and a grilled serving of protein (fish or chicken) and a serving of a wholegrain carb (brown rice or sweet potato)
AFTERNOON SNACK: zero fat yoghurt or a protein shake
DINNER: Salad with grilled serving of protein (fish or chicken) and a serving of a wholegrain carb (brown rice or sweet potato)
CHEAT MEAL: once a week



Name: MAYA NASSAR
Age: 28
Height: 168 CM
Current Weight: 60 kilos
Profession: FITNESS ENTREPRENEUR
Nationality: LEBANESE/DUTCH

liked. I started gaining weight over the years yet continued to eat. It reached a point where none of my clothes fit me anymore. My jeans would stop at my knees and wouldn't even come up to my hips. I had to go shopping and buy a whole new wardrobe every few months because I kept gaining weight. This was a real shock to my confidence. I never walked around on the beach unless I covered up with a towel and felt

insecure about my body. I did not feel good on the inside. I felt very unfit and unhealthy. I had no energy and never wore tight dresses, leggings or anything that would show just how much weight I had gained. I would wake up each morning feeling insecure and self-conscious about whom I had become.

THE TURNING POINT

One day it hit me that there is something I can do to change.

I am responsible for my own lifestyle. I was gaining weight and feeling insecure because of my poor lifestyle choices. I wanted to be the girl who was fit, healthy, strong and proud of her body. I wanted to walk on the beach feeling confident. I was sick and tired of being insecure and wishing I could be a different person.

One morning I simply woke up and decided it was time to change. I had no clue where to begin and was overwhelmed

TV, newspaper, magazine and radio interviews, which helped me become well known as a fitness professional. In April 2015, I competed one more time with Pure Elite. This time I won overall female winner as voted by the audience (out of more than 200 women), second place in the model category and third place body transformation. I qualified for the world championships, which is by invitation only, and is taking place at the end of the year.

GIVING BACK

In Lebanon, I launched the first fitness mobile application, which was endorsed by our Lebanese Minister of Sports. It is the mobile version of my fitness website, which offers free and useful advice to others to help them live a healthier lifestyle. My application has been ranked as the number one fitness application in Lebanon (competing against international apps) by the Apple store. It includes animated

exercise illustrations, fat loss calculators, recipes, advice and tons of information. I wanted to change other people's lives and give back to anyone who wants to live a healthier lifestyle but does not know where to begin, just like my old self when I began my journey.

Maya's app can be downloaded for free by searching for "startlivingright" in any smartphone store. More info: startlivingright.net.