



Rosa-Maria Romero

AS MS FIGURE AUSTRALIA, ROSA-MARIA ROMERO KNOWS THAT A HARD BODY INVOLVES TAKING A HARD LINE WITH LIFTING WEIGHTS, AND AN EVEN TOUGHER ONE WITH THE CARBS.



Rosa-Maria Romero

(Rose to her mates) has an impressive body – and it's just as impressive as her body of work. The IFBB Figure Pro has won the Ms Figure Australia title three times and is the highest ever placed Aussie female at the IFBB World Champs, thanks to her fourth in Spain last year. Oh yes, and along with her equally impressive fiancé, Sam, she's also the reigning Aussie mixed-pairs champ. With her spanking new pro card tucked into her posing bikini, this year Rose is heading stateside to join the pro circuit by competing at the Pittsburgh and California Pros in May and the Colorado Pro in June.

If all goes well, by September she should be applying the fake tan for the big one – the Figure Olympia in Vegas. However, between then and now, there'll be a lot of cardio, a lot of lifting weights and very little variety in her diet.

JUST ANOTHER DAY

"Because I've got two kids and work as a trainer and a part-time international air hostess, my training hours change week by week. But I train six days a week, in the gym and cardio.

"I usually get up at 5.30am and get my cardio work-out out of the way – 30-45 minutes of high intensity on a stepper machine at home on an empty stomach; you get a better result that way.

"I head to City Gym (Crown Street) in Sydney around 1pm, and train from 45mins to two hours, depending on the body part and what I need to work on. I'll train one body part each session, though I split legs, because it's such a big muscle group. So Monday I might do shoulders. Tuesday, chest. Wednesday, triceps and biceps.



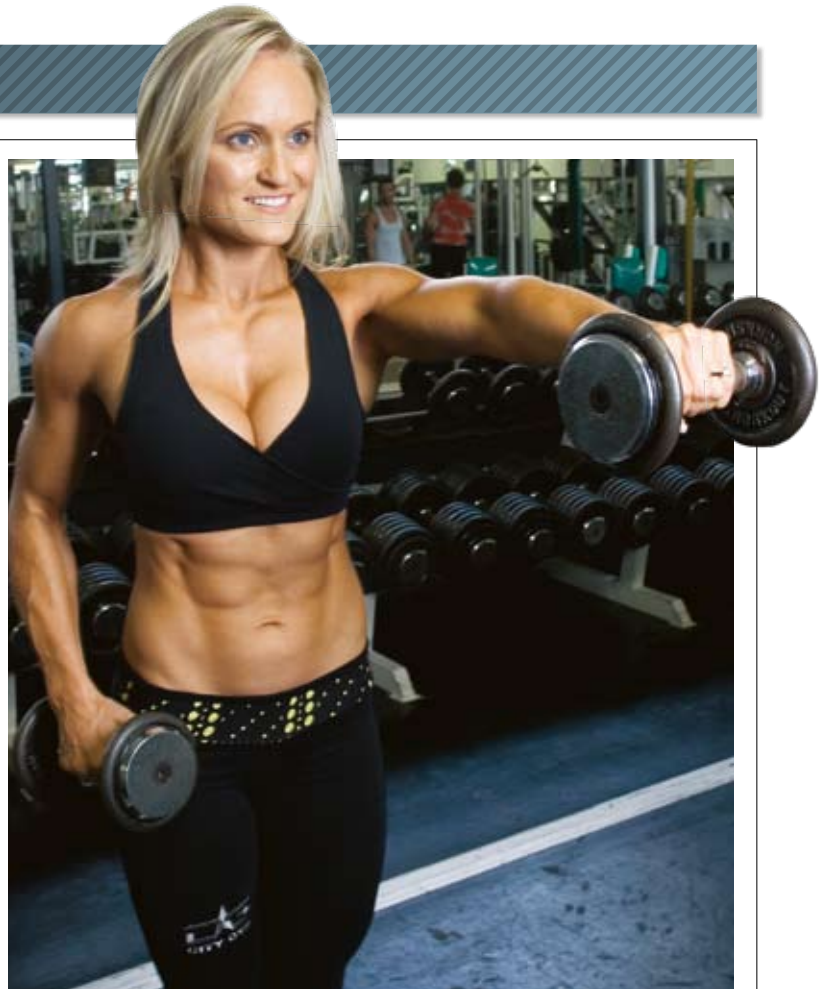
Thursday, back. Friday, quads. And hamstrings on Saturday."

CUTTING IT

"I cut up for a comp in 12 weeks, training six days a week. In the off-season, I won't do much cardio, just 30 minutes on the stepper three times a week to keep everything moving. But when I'm dieting for a comp, cardio is big; to strip down you up the cardio and cut out the carbs – a lot of protein and supplements. It's very intense and your body becomes very tired. I'll drop from around 63kg to a competition weight of 53kg.

"At the end of every week, I'll take a couple of pictures, front and back, and I'll put them up against the pics from the week before and analyse them – see where I'm looking toned, what I need to work on. You need to lose at least a kilo a week. If you're not doing that, you're plateauing and it's time to up your training.

"In the off season, I do low reps (six to eight) of heavy weights to gain muscle. But to strip down for a comp, I change to higher reps (15 to 20) with lighter weights. It's a different kind of training.



"My trainer is Jenny Lind, the 2006 Figure Olympia champion – No. 1 in the world. She's in the US, so we do a lot over the internet. She helps me with my progress. When you're dieting, you're often not thinking straight, so it's vital to have somebody there to guide you through it."

IN THE GYM

"I prefer free weights, although sometimes I will use a machine. Free weights are better because you're controlling it yourself. When you use a machine, you can slack off a bit. You push one handle and the other one goes up as well."

SHOULDERS: "I start off with a shoulder press, using 6kg dumbbells to warm up. Then I'll use two 15kg dumbbells for 15 reps. Then I'll do a set using 17kg, then another with 19kg, moving up in small jumps. If you start with the heaviest weights, you'll fatigue and not be able to finish the sets. "Next I might do a seated lateral raise – 10kg dumbbells out to the side. And then out to the front using 12.5kg – nothing too heavy, because you want to be able to lift and hold and bring it back down slowly. You

want to isolate – that's how you get the best results.

"Then I'll use the cable-pull, before finishing off with a bent-over raise. Generally, I'll do four or five exercises for the shoulders, stick with them for four weeks and then change to different ones. There are many different exercises: laying down lat raises, military press, upright rows – but I *always* do a shoulder press with the dumbbells."

CHEST: "I start off on an incline bench, doing a press with dumbbells. Then I'll move to the flat press, then push-ups off a stability ball and

push-ups with a 20kg plate on my back. In the off season, I keep my reps for shoulder and back a bit lower than every other body part, because I want to grow more in the shoulders and back to create the hourglass figure the judges look for."

BACK: "Back's my favourite; I'm really strong in the back. I start off with a pull-up on a chin-up bar. Then I'll do wide-grip lat pull-downs using 60kg. Then I'll do a close-grip ▶

"When I'm stripping down for a comp, I up the cardio and cut out the carbs. It's very intense."



TRAINING DAY

pull-down, before moving over to the T-bar for a bent-over row with 55kg. And lower back extensions using 10kg. I always wear a weights belt when I'm doing back."

ABS: "There are all these weight machines for abdominals, but I don't use them. I get on the floor and I grab a plate and I do crunches. You just can't go wrong with crunches – they work. At the moment, I'm training abs every day, and I'll do between 60-80 reps per set and I'll do four sets, using 5kg and 10kg plates. I'm very strong in the mid section. I love that burning feeling. When it burns, you know it's working."

BICEPS/TRICEPS: "I use only three exercises for each of these. For the biceps, I do independent bicep curls and hammer curls using 12.5kg dumbbells as well as preacher curls

using 15kg. For the triceps, I do rope pull-downs, dips and kick-backs, using 10kg. I change the different exercises every four weeks, to get the best results. I don't work at all on my forearms. Guys do, but it's not very feminine."

QUADS: "I'll do squats and sumo squats, with your feet pointing out to the side, on the Smith machine – 15 reps using around 80kg. I don't do any free stuff with legs. I also do hack squats on an angle and leg extensions, either single, double or a mixture of both. For legs, I need a spot, so as much as possible I try to train with my partner."

HAMSTRINGS: "I start off with lunges, either walking or on the Smith machine using 50-60kg. Then I'll do leg presses with my feet up high – single or double – lying

hamstrings and seated hamstrings lifting 55kg."

FINAL COUNTDOWN

"If I'm competing on a Saturday, I start carb depleting the Sunday before. I even cut out beef, just fish, to get as lean as possible. You carb deplete through to Wednesday, which is very hard. Because you're still training, you become very hungry and you have no energy.

"Weights stop on the Wednesday – because you physically can't lift them anymore, because of the carb depleting, though you carry on with the cardio. It's then that you carb load – eat sweet potato or rice – to pump up your muscles. At the same time, you're reducing your water – from six litres down to one litre in the days leading up to the comp. The day before the comp, you cut out water altogether – just the odd tiny sip. You

feel like crap. Sometimes people look really sick because they've gone too hard. You need to know when to stop.

"Just before you go on stage, you pump up for ten minutes. I use 4kg – a few bicep curls and shoulder presses, but that's it, because physically you can't do anymore."

PLATTERS NOT PLATES

"I eat between five and eight small meals a day. At the moment, I'm having five, because I have to come in a little leaner for the US comps. You do this to speed up your metabolism. You want to train your body so it gets hungry every three hours. A typical day during the lead-up to a comp looks like this:

"7am: Six to eight egg whites and a cup of oats made with water, along with my cutting-up tablets and vitamins. I'll add a little bit of sweet-chilli sauce to my eggs. I have this



"The day before a comp, you cut out water. You feel like crap and sometime people look really sick because they've gone too hard."

within 30 minutes of my cardio, to ensure I don't strip muscle.

"10am: One cup of rice and 95g of tuna in spring water. I might also have some green veggies.

"1pm: 100g steak with some sweet potato and green veggies. Then, after training, I'll have a protein shake, my fish oil tablets and BCAA.

"5pm: Tuna, this time with salad.

"8pm: Tuna with green veggies.

"People always say, 'Oh, you're not eating.' But you're not starving yourself. I'm still getting 1500 calories a day."

STRIKE A POSE

"Six weeks before a comp, I start posing in front of a mirror for half an hour every day. There's an art behind it, you have to learn to do it properly – some people get up on stage and have no idea how to bring out their lats or their shoulders. I've loads of

DVDs and books that I use, and I study the competition to see what looks best up on stage. Practising posing also helps makes you tighter and more toned."

GOLDEN BROWN

"You need a base tan, so I'll start in the solarium about eight weeks out from a comp. Three days out, I'll start applying a product called Pro Tan. You build up around eight coats with a roller. On the day, I put on Dream Tan, which is like a paste. It makes you look coppery and gives your muscles better definition. Pro Tan stinks and it doesn't come off for at least a week afterwards, which is a bit of a joke if I've got to go on a trip with work. Passengers stare at me because I'm bright orange."

– Bruce Pitchers

For more news on Rose's progress, log on to www.fitrose.com



PILLS & THRILLS

Just as important as the hours in the gym and the strict diet are the pills and potions Rose takes. On top of normal multi-vits, antioxidants and fish oil tablets, are these muscle-orientated supplements:



Chromium: To help regulate blood sugar level and the uptake of glucose, and to assist in shedding fat and building muscle.

BCAA (branched chain amino acids): The building blocks of protein and, therefore, muscles.

HMB (B-hydroxy B-methylbutyrate monohydrate): A metabolite of the amino acid leucine, used to lessen the breakdown of muscle cells.

ZMA (zinc monomethionine aspartate and magnesium aspartate): A BALCO labs patented supplement, basically a mixture of vitamin B6, zinc and magnesium, said to aid cell growth and tissue repair.

MAX'S Hydroxy Phase: Protein dietary supplement that also inhibits the conversion of carbs into fat.

MAX'S Nitro C3: Taken before a workout for increased energy. A hi-GI mix of energy nutrients.

MAX'S Glutamine: Taken after a workout and before bed. An important amino acid crucial for muscle growth and recovery.

MAX'S Creatine: Taken before a workout to allow muscles to use stored energy more efficiently, allowing them to work harder before becoming fatigued.

MAX's Fat Burning Tablets: Taken in the morning with the hydroxyl phase to help stimulate the metabolism and curb hunger.