



Fit from the Inside Out

Tamar Cohl Proves that Hard Work Reaps Unlimited Rewards

—by Candice Mutschler

The adage “never judge a book by its cover” has never been more apropos than in the case of Tamar Cohl. This lady with a rockin’ bod and bulging biceps will quickly shatter any stereotypical notion one might have about people who, well, **look like that.**

Tall. Muscular. Sexy. Her physique is impressive indeed. But 10 minutes into a conversation with Cohl, you realize her “pretty package” houses a smart and savvy businesswoman on a clear and ambitious path. Her body is the finely tuned vehicle that propels her through life as a professional fitness model, personal trainer and southeastern U.S. marketing representative for Oxygenfit brand fitness products.

Cohl’s passion for health and fitness began at a very young age. “My mother was a bodybuilder when I was growing up, and because my brother and I were home schooled, we would go to the gym with her. I loved being in the gym,” she recalled. She learned healthy habits, and as she got older, they evolved into a lifestyle — one that includes a gluten-free diet. “I was diagnosed with celiac sprue disease,” Cohl explained, a chronic disease of the digestive tract that interferes with the digestion and absorption of nutrients from food. People with celiac sprue cannot tolerate gluten, a protein commonly found in wheat, rye, barley and oats.

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The disease may have been a blessing in disguise. "Dieting is hard for me; I love to eat," she said. But because so many foods are off limits to her, Cohl easily lost those last stubborn pounds. She also caught the attention of the folks at Bodybuilding.com, a site she had written to about her experience with the disease. They offered her the opportunity to compete in the 2007 National Physique Committee Southern States Figure Championships under their sponsorship.

Cohl didn't win, but the experience provided a huge confidence boost. "I've gone through a lot of stuff in my life; I had the worst self esteem," she said. "I wasn't a confident person."

Cohl also works as a personal trainer, both privately and at Achieve Fitness in Port Charlotte. While she works with both men and women, her passion lies in helping women. "I call myself a life fitness coach. I want to motivate women, whether they're 15 or 80, to feel good about themselves from the inside leading to the outside," she said. "The outside is important, but the inside is more important."

Cohl places a big emphasis on living well, not just living healthy. Her life with her husband, Sam, is pretty laid back, she said. "We love watching sports and spending time on the water. I'm drawn to it; it makes me happy." She's close with her family and adores her dogs, a Neapolitan mastiff named Bella and an American Staffordshire terrier named BoBo. "I'm very much into the breed, and I advocate them because they are **not** bad dogs. They're very misunderstood."

Sometimes, Cohl is, too. When asked if she thought others found her intimidating, a touch of frustration showed. "I want to be approachable," she said. "That's why it's so important for people to meet me in person so they can see my personality. I'm goofy, and I don't think I'm perfect by any stretch of the imagination. I know what God blessed me with, and I know what things I have to work on, whether it's emotionally or physically."

She goes on to say that everybody has issues and that it's pointless to try to live up to somebody else. "You don't have to look like the next person to be in the best shape for your own body and be truly happy from within," she said. "If you feel good, even if you don't lose much weight, working out and being physically active is beneficial to your heart and lungs. You don't have to be stick skinny or lean and muscular to be in shape."

Cohl switched from traditional modeling to fitness modeling to help change her image and to provide more of an inspiration to those interested in improving their health and physique. She landed the February cover of Southern Muscle Plus, a magazine distributed to gyms all over the southeastern U.S. She recently represented the magazine at the Arnold Classic, the largest bodybuilding expo in the country.

The event is sure to garner a few more friends for her MySpace page (she currently has over 20,000), one of several Web sites she maintains. Her official site, www.planettamar.com, provides informative articles and showcases Oxygenfit products. "My website eventually will have videos showing me demonstrating the Oxygenfit products and doing actual routines, because there are 500 different exercises you can do! Whatever you can do at the gym, you can do with this stuff. I've done it."

Cohl also posts healthy recipes she's discovered or created. "I've become passionate about cooking, something I absolutely hated before being diagnosed with celiac sprue," she said. "I got sick of eating boring, plain things when I wasn't contest dieting, so I had to create ways to make things taste good using gluten-free ingredients."

As the 2008 NPC Figure Championship approaches, Cohl is busy fine-tuning her physique. It takes a lot of determination and a positive mindset. "I'm going into this with the attitude that I am going to win," she said. "I just believe that if you bring your body to the best point it can be for you, eventually you'll be rewarded." 