



BRITISH BOMBSHELL HITS AMERICA

IFBB bikini pro **MICHELLE BRANNAN** gives the inside story on making her pro debut in America

Michelle Brannan is Britain's premier bikini competitor. Last year she became the first British woman to win an IFBB pro card in the bikini division; this year she made her pro debut in St Louis, where she finished a highly impressive fourth, and she now has her sights set on qualifying for the Olympia. Michelle kept a diary for Muscle & Fitness describing her transition from the amateur to the pro ranks, her training and diet and what it's like to compete in America alongside the best bikini bodies on the planet. Here are the highlights.

OCTOBER 2011

Exactly a year after winning the very first UKBFF bikini contest, a qualifying event for

BY MICHELLE BRANNAN

the national championships, I placed third this month at the IFBB Amateur World Championships in Serbia to earn my IFBB pro card. How exciting! I am the very first UKBFF athlete to earn professional status through the bikini class. As an amateur I have been fortunate to represent the UK at the European Championships, the Arnold Europe and the World Championships. I also won the Amateur Olympia at the 2011 British Grand Prix. Now I am so thrilled to have the chance to enter the IFBB pro league and will compete at the earliest opportunity. My coach Shannon Dey and I have picked the St Louis Pro on March 12 next year. My goal is simply to get an assessment of where I stand in the pro ranks. Until you line up alongside the other girls on stage you don't know how you compare. You can look at all the photos you

want but you need to actually compete to get a true impression.

DECEMBER 2011 CHRISTMAS TREATS

Bikini girls don't really get an off-season as there is no need for us to "bulk up". However, I have increased my calories and reduced my training this month. My aim is to work on the areas that need improving by lifting a little heavier and giving my body more time to recover. The areas I'm targeting are my glutes, hams and shoulders. My legs develop really quickly so I have to go easy on them and I don't do any more heavy squats. Increasing my calories also gives me the chance to loosen up on the diet a bit and enjoy being with my family over Christmas.

PHOTOS BY SIMON HOWARD



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ISAAC HINDS

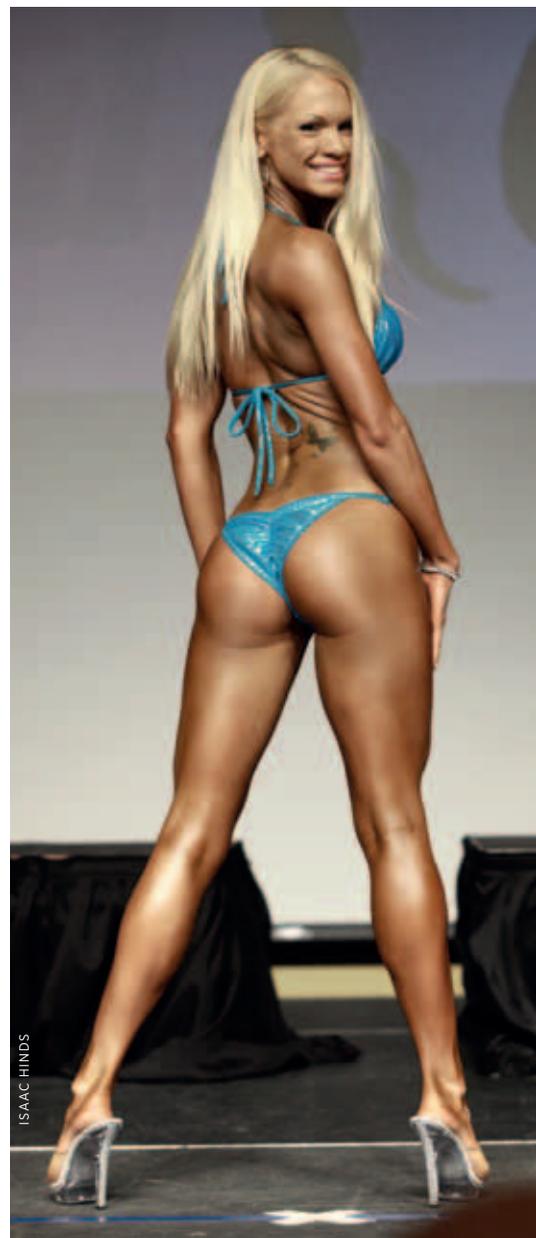
10 WEEKS OUT TRAINING INCREASES

It's January and I weigh 117 lbs, which is approximately 5 lbs over my contest weight. I wanted to refuel my body and come in a bit rounder for my first pro show and feel as though I'm on track. I want to be a bit fuller in my pro show than at my last contest in Serbia. My training has increased slightly; I'm now back doing cardio 6 days a week and resistance training 5 days a week.

8 WEEKS OUT PLYOMETRICS ADDED TO PROGRAMME

I'm feeling good about the contest. My coach Shannon, who runs Team Bombshell, which consists of numerous successful bikini, fitness and figure competitors, has added some plyometrics to my training and upped the intensity to build up my glutes and get more power into my legs. I used to train myself but now I'm entering the pro ranks I need some guidance. Shannon sends me monthly training and diet programmes and that takes away a lot of stress.

I'm doing higher reps and lighter weights and I'm still full of energy. People often ask how I manage to stick to my diet all year round but I don't see it as being "on a diet"; this is just how I eat now. I have been doing it for two years and can't really imagine going back to eating three meals a day again, or regularly eating junk. I enjoy my diet; it consists of lean meat, particularly steak and chicken, fish, oats, potatoes and lots of green vegetables. I have one or two cheat meals a



ISAAC HINDS



MICHELLE BRANNAN

Date of birth
1st June 1982

Place of birth
Basingstoke, Hampshire

Lives
London

Height
165 cm/5' 5"

Weight
112–115 lbs/51–52 kg

Competition highlight
Getting my IFBB pro card in Serbia at the World Championships

Ambition
To compete at the Olympia

Training advice
Be consistent

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week, which usually consists of something sweet like cheesecake.

6 WEEKS OUT SORTING MY BIKINI

The Harlequin Workshop, which specialises in creating posing costumes, is making my bikini. I just picked a shiny blue fabric with crystal side and top connectors. Can't wait to see it!

4 WEEKS OUT SUPERSETS TO BURN FAT

Training still going well. I am doing split body part resistance routines now—mainly supersets to burn more calories. I have to watch I don't get too lean; the bikini class is not about getting as lean as you can, it's about being shapely and tight so my coach always amends my diet if she feels I'm getting too lean.

2 WEEKS OUT MORE POSING PRACTICE

I'm getting very excited now. My flights and hotel are booked. I just have to keep training hard and eating clean and try not to obsess too much. I'm trying to fit in as much posing practice as I can. It is so important to show yourself in the best way possible for the judges. Usually we are on stage for no longer than five minutes, which is a very short time considering we prepare all year and you have to make every second count.

1 WEEK OUT FLY TO ST. LOUIS

I fly into St. Louis via New York a few days before the show to make sure I don't suffer from water retention after the long flight. Luckily, the host hotel is really nice and there is a friendly little grocer's next door to the hotel so I go there and have my chicken and vegetables weighed up for the next few days. When you fly to America from the UK you're not allowed to take meat, fruits and vegetables into the country. It is so easy to

mess up your diet when you travel abroad so it is vital to plan ahead.

1 DAY OUT ATHLETES' MEETING

I attend the athletes' meeting in the hotel where they go through the running order of the show. I meet with Team Bombshell coach and IFBB figure pro Gennifer Strobo who, after seeing me in my posing suit and heels, gives me a few posing tips and some amendments to my diet to make sure I come in full tomorrow. So excited!

SHOW DAY TANNED-UP AND READY!

The show starts early so I am up and ready by 7 am. Luckily, I haven't adjusted to the time difference so I'm up bright and early anyway. Usually I am so not a morning person! At the venue I get one last coat of tan to make sure the lights on stage don't wash me out, and go through some final adjustments to make sure my suit is on properly and I'm ready to go. Backstage I have the opportunity to meet some other girls from Team Bombshell. It's great to have a little team backstage where we all help each other out. I feel as though I have achieved my goal of coming in a little fuller although strangely my weight is almost the same as it was at my last show—113 lbs.

I place 4th on my IFBB pro debut, which is a great result and it's been a really positive experience. The show was well organised and ran seamlessly. I learnt a lot and am already seriously excited about my next time on stage. I thought I would be too small compared to the other girls but when I got on stage I realised everyone is tiny.

WHAT I LEARNED

There are fewer girls at pro level but the standard is higher. The pro look is more about being tight and full but in a tiny, compact package, not too muscular or skinny. It's more polished and serious too. The judges really look more at the overall package and the way

MICHELLE'S WEEKLY TRAINING PROGRAMME

MONDAY: LOWER BODY

Leg Presses	4 x 15
Barbell Stiff-Leg Deadlifts	4 x 15
Hack Squats	4 x 15
Leg Curls	4 x 15
Leg Extensions	4 x 15
Travelling Lunges	4 x 15
Sumo Squats	4 x 15

TUESDAY: UPPER BODY

Shoulder Presses	4 x 15
Lateral Raises	4 x 15
Prone Flyes	4 x 15
Front Raises	4 x 15
Chest Presses	4 x 15
Incline Dumbbell Presses	4 x 15
Chest Cable Flyes	4 x 15

WEDNESDAY: PLYOMETRICS AND CALVES

30 minutes of plyometric-based exercises (e.g. squat jumps, box jumps, jump lunges)

Seated Calf Raises	5 x 20
Standing Smith	5 x 20
Machine Calf Raises	

THURSDAY: UPPER BODY

Assisted Pull-Ups	4 x 15
Lat Pulldowns	4 x 15
Seated Rows	4 x 15
Single-Arm Rows	4 x 15
Barbell Biceps Curls	4 x 15
Hammer Curls	4 x 15
Triceps Dips	4 x 15
Overhead Triceps Extensions	4 x 15

FRIDAY: LOWER BODY

Squats	4 x 15
Leg Presses	4 x 15
Good Mornings	4 x 15
Bulgarian Split Squats	4 x 15
Bench Step-Ups	4 x 15
Cable Kickbacks	4 x 15
Lying Leg Curls	4 x 15

I also do cardio 6 days a week, I try to mix it up every day and use a variety of different equipment including Cybex Arc, treadmill and stepper.

MICHELLE'S DIET

MEAL 1

Oats

Flaxseed oil

Egg whites

1 scoop whey protein

MEAL 2

100 g chicken breast

Asparagus

Sweet potato

MEAL 3

Oats

1 scoop whey protein

MEAL 4

100 g salmon

Mixed green vegetables

MEAL 5

100 g white fish

Spinach

Green beans

MEAL 6

100 g turkey breast

Green beans

SUPPLEMENTS

Fatburner supplement

Vitamin C

Lactobacillus acidophilus

you present yourself. Everybody at pro level has a good physique so they're really looking for details. I have also learned that people take the pro scene very seriously. At amateur level a lot of women compete to prove something to themselves, maybe to get in shape after having a baby or just as a one-off goal, but after the show they ease off for a few months. The pro bikini girls really do live the lifestyle all year round.

WHAT'S NEXT...

I am really pleased to be competing in the IFBB pro league and would like to do as many shows as I can. My goal is to qualify for the Olympia and I have four more shows planned this year. I am really happy with the changes I've seen in my body over the past year and look forward to seeing how I can improve from here. Thanks to everyone who has supported me, including friends and family, Malcolm Denmark, my coach Shannon, everyone at Team Bombshell, and my sponsor — the Harlequin Workshop. **M&F**

