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Lamorinda Women Win in Figure Bodybuilding

By Sophie Braccini



Kelly Suronen trains with Ryan McNabb at 24 Hour Fitness Photo S. Braccini

runner. "I like to work hard and to train for something," she said. She has competed in Figure for three years and has won many awards. Dalton placed fifth at last year's National in the over 35-years-old and over 5'7" category

Although she's always active, the May 7th competition was a first for Suronen. She competed in the 5'1" category. "I've always been a health freak," says Suronen, "As a kid I was always involved in dance and sports, but started getting into working out at UC San Diego where I studied Urban Planning."

Working out, even going to the gym six times a week, is not enough to compete in Figure. Judges in a Figure competition will look at a symmetrical and harmonious development of the whole body and using a trainer becomes essential.

"Kelly (Suronen) is an endomorph type," says McNabb, "a shorter, stockier body type that can develop a nice muscle mass, but can put on fat easier, too." According to McNabb, a good program can help go beyond the genetics, but only to a certain extent.

During her training, Suronen built muscle mass that boosted her metabolism and in the last weeks of her three-month training she had to follow a very strict diet to eliminate as much fat as possible. "For breakfast I ate four egg whites with two slices of Canadian bacon and 8 oz of coffee, two hours later I took a protein shake with flax seeds, almond meal and amino acid powder, at lunch raw broccoli and a can of tuna, another protein shake in the afternoon and for dinner, asparagus and chicken."

"It was an amazing transformation," she said, "I always wanted that perfection, but it is not realistic to maintain the 11 percent of body fat that I reached, I felt so proud."

For Dalton, training was quite different. Dalton is a mesomorph type, a naturally athletic, lean body. Dalton's challenge was to gain weight, and she had to be on a diet of filet mignon, chicken and salmon, eating six times a day. "I've worked out six hours a week since forever," says the mom who was a group fitness instructor when she was pregnant and ran with her stroller after giving birth, "what I found hard was to learn the poses for the competition."

The competition is two intensive days during which the women present themselves in high heels and bikinis. "I had to walk in a figure suit in front of a couple thousand people on five-inch high heeled glass slippers," remembers Suronen, "it felt like a beauty pageant."

Now that the competition is over, both women are pondering what to do next. "I may stop competing for now," says Dalton, "I will continue to train driven people at the California Health Club in Pleasant Hill, but I have to put my family first."

Suronen has not decided yet if she will continue to train, "I went out of my comfort zone, but it was very exciting."

Forget Steroids and Testosterone. Lamorinda women who compete in Figure Bodybuilding do it the natural way. And if they turn heads with their energetic and slender figures, it's just because they are healthy and highly disciplined. Kelly Suronen, assistant planner for the Town of Moraga, and Orinda resident and trainer Christy Dalton, both competed in the May 7th Contra Costa National Physique Committee (NPC) tournament in Hayward. Dalton won first place in her category and Suronen finished in the top 10 in her category.

According to the NPC, Figure, a women-only competition, is the fastest growing segment of bodybuilding. The goal is to be well balanced, instead of overly muscular.

"To compete in regular bodybuilding you have to take steroids," says Ryan McNabb, Suronen's trainer, "you have to take your body beyond what it can naturally do. For Figure it's different, it comes down to a structured regimen of diet and training, tailored to each person, to become the most perfect you can be."

Both Suronen and Dalton are athletes.

Dalton, a mother of two boys, was a gymnast and a marathon



Christy Dalton runs when she does not lift weights Photo provided by Brian Hayes

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