

**Medical Note:** Aortic Stenosis is the abnormal narrowing of the aortic valve. Symptoms include breathlessness, fainting, coughing at night and pains in the chest. There are four valves located in the heart. All are one-way valves. Each valve either consists of two or three folds of thin tissue. When closed, the valve prevents blood from flowing backwards to its previous location. When open the valve allows blood to flow freely. Blood entering the heart first passes through the tricuspid valve and then the pulmonary valve. After returning from the lungs, the blood passes through the mitral (bicuspid) valve and exits via the aortic valve. Valve problems can occur because of congenital abnormalities, infection, or other causes.

Each valve has three leaflets that pull the valve open and close; it's called a tricuspid valve. I was only born with a bicuspid valve, the two leaflets, so it basically wore out as I was getting older. When the valve opens and shuts it becomes sticky so it doesn't open properly. When it finally opens the heart has had to work four or five times harder to force it open, then when it does open it gets stuck open, so all the blood it's worked hard to push out rushes back in again. I didn't know I had it until I was twenty-one when I had a bad chest infection. I had an X-ray on my chest and they picked up the murmur and told me I had mild Aortic Stenosis. Every year after that I had to go in for tests to monitor it. Each year it was slowly getting worse. I started competing in 2001 and had no problems. At the end of 2003 I went in for my normal yearly check-up, which was the week after I had just competed at the *INBA* Australia in Canberra. I went in and saw the doctor and he said "Oh my goodness, this is like triple the severity!" My heart was so enlarged that it took up my entire chest cavity.

**WAS THIS IN ANY WAY RELATED TO YOUR COMPETING:** No, no, it had nothing to do with the competing, nothing whatsoever. Competing actually helped prolong the fact that I didn't have to have the surgery so quick. I was able to go on for years without the surgery because I was so fit.

**HAVE YOU GONE THROUGH YOUR FAMILY TREE TO SEE IF THERE IS ANYONE ELSE WHO HAS HAD HEART PROBLEMS:** Yeah, it is hereditary, my brother's son has it but my daughter is fine thankfully.

**SO WHAT DOES THE OPERATION INVOLVE:** The operation is huge, the full sternotomy. They saw through the chest cavity, pull all the organs out then do the surgery. They actually open up my entire heart because the surgery has to be done on the inside, it's not like a by-pass where the work on the outside. Basically what happened was that they wanted to put mechanical valves in, but once you get a mechanical Aortic valve that means you need to go on heavy dosages of medication that makes your blood thinner and that can make you become a hemophiliac. I was told that if I had that then I would never be able to train again and I would definitely not be able to have children because it can cause massive deformities. I was all ready competitive by this time and my goal when I started in 2001 was that in five years time I was going to win a World bodybuilding title, so I was only three years in and this happened, it really threw me out of whack. I was just about to get married, I was aiming for a World title and I wanted to have children. While I was waiting for my operation I thought to myself there has to be another way besides getting a mechanical valve so I got on the Internet and found a new way that a surgeon in Melbourne does which is what they call the Ross Procedure. It was a lot more risky and a longer operation. Not many people have had it done so they don't quite know what the mortality rate was, so it was a big decision. It involved taking out my damaged Aortic valve and taking out my Pulmonary valve which was healthy, then modifying it and putting it in the Aortic position. Then I had a human donor Pulmonary valve put in, so all I need to take now is one Aspirin a day. I can now continue training and try for a baby but it won't last forever. They said it will last about ten years.

**SO YOU WILL NEED THE SAME OPERATION IN TEN YEARS TIME:** Yeah, about ten or fifteen years. It could last longer but they don't know because there is no data yet.

**HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO GET OVER THE OPERATION:** I was in hospital for two weeks in intensive care, and then I stayed in Melbourne a bit longer because I wasn't allowed to fly home straight away. I got home about four weeks after the surgery and went back to the gym. I couldn't train, I couldn't even open a bottle of water but I wanted to be in the gym again so I went there to do all my stretches and each day I got stronger and stronger, then within twelve months I competed in *INBA* All Female Classic and I won the Intermediate class.

**SINCE YOU'VE HAD THE OPERATION HAVE YOU NOTICED ANYTHING DIFFERENT IN THE WAY YOUR BODY PERFORMS:** I'm actually much better now because my resting heart rate before the operation was really high, around 150 beats per minute, whereas my resting heart rate is a lot lower now at around 100 beats per minute.

I get a bit tired quicker than the average person as my body is still working overtime but nowhere near as hard as it used to.

**SO WHAT DO YOUR PARENTS THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE GONE THROUGH:** Everyone's still a little bit worried about me thinking that I might be pushing my body and doing too much, but my surgeon has said that this sport or whatever it is I'm doing is working because my heart and what I can do is better than anyone else he has ever seen. My parents have been really supportive of me competing and they were involved in the decision of going with the Ross Procedure so I was still able to have children and compete.

**WOW! THAT'S TRULY AMAZING TO OVERCOME ALL THOSE ODDS:** Everyone was telling me that you're never going to compete again, you're never going to have babies - even the doctors said it. Everyone tells I'm too tall, I'm too skinny, I should just be a Sportsmodel, but I don't want to be a Sportsmodel, I'm a Figure competitor. That was years ago when people told me all that, but if you say that to me it drives and motivates me.

**YOU'RE WHAT I WOULD CALL A LEAN/HARD FIGURE COMPETITOR. YOUR CONDITION IS RAZOR-SHARP AT EVERY SHOW. AS IS YOUR HUSBAND DAVID - WHAT'S THE STORY THERE:** We live the lifestyle 24/7. We don't drink, we don't smoke. I know it sounds really boring but since I've had the surgery and being so close to death, we both decided that we don't ever want feel like that again, so since that time we have done everything in our power to make sure that whatever goes in our mouth is of benefit to us. It's not that we're weird, twisted or boring old farts, we still like to party with the best of them but we've chosen to be as healthy as we can and to live long healthy lives. Because we lead the clean lifestyle, we do end up eating a bit of shit, we follow the 80/20 rule - 80% of the time is good food and 20% of the time is shit food.

**OKAY, SO WHAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE SHIT FOOD IN THE NAZOROFF HOUSEHOLD - CHOCOLATE AND PIZZA PERHAPS:** Well...not really pizza.

**SO IT'S NOT REALLY THAT SHIT THEN IS IT:** No, but we do like to buy boxes of ice-creams that have say twelve ice-creams in them. We'll eat a box each at night sitting there on opposite ends of the couch. Stuff like that.

**IT MUST BE A BLOODY LONG COUCH BECAUSE YOU ARE BOTH REALLY TALL:** It is! Everything in our house is big. We have two 80kg Great Danes; our daughter who is only 20mths old is the size of a three year old. Everything we have seems to be big.

**WHAT TITLES HAVE YOU WON SO FAR:** I've won National titles in Novice, Intermediate and Open classes in the *INBA* as well as the All Female Classic and the *INBA* Olympia so I've won everything I need to win in the *INBA*. I've proven myself there so now I've decided to go to the *WFF* and prove myself there as well.

**WHAT OTHER FEDERATIONS THAT YOU'VE COMPETED IN:** *INBA*, *NABBA/WFF* and *IFBB*.

**WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS:** I've got pure grit - I'm focused, I'm determined, I train hard and heavy and I never miss a workout.

**SO WHERE ARE YOUR WEAKNESSES:** Possibly my genetics, I'm very long-limbed. I've got long arms and long legs.

**BEST BODY PART:** My back is definitely my best body-part and that comes from all my years of horse riding, that's why it's so developed. I have a tiny waist with a really wide back.

**WORST BODY PART:** I want to get wider and thicker shoulders, I love big hard muscles. I'd love to be like *Anna Hetzel* but at six foot tall.

**DO YOU ENJOY DOING THE POSING ROUTINES:** I love the posing. I love classical figure, I'm not a dancey poser, I'm very precise. A lot of routines these days are like a dance, they're not even showing any poses. My routines are all about showing my physique off.

**WHAT'S THE BEST COMP YOU'VE EVER COMPETED IN:** I think I'd have to say the *NABBA/WFF* Southern Hemisphere in QLD this year. It's the first time that I'd ever done that federation and they made me feel so welcome.

**MARK RYAN'S GREAT ISN'T HE:** Oh yeah, everyone helped me heaps and it was a big show, it was probably the most professionally run show that I've been to. I loved it; it was just so well run. I'd never ever met any of these people before yet they made me feel very welcome. From the day of the weigh-in to the end of the show it ran like clockwork and the passion that they showed for all the competitors was fantastic. Making a WA competitor like me feel welcome and wanted was really good.

**ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE JUDGING AT MOST SHOWS:** I think the judging is good. It's a subjective sport. I think this year I got my condition right as to what I truly believe Figure should really be. I think Figure should have fantastic shape - you've gotta have that wide V-taper and I think at the end of the day Figure girls are still bodybuilders, you've gotta be hard and you've gotta be lean. Nothing should move or wobble otherwise go and do Sportsmodel. There's gotta be



a real difference. Sportsmodel is soft and round, Figure is hard and muscular but not over muscular.

**DIFFERENT FEDERATIONS HAVE SLIGHTY DIFFERENT CRITERIA'S YET YOU'VE COMPETED IN THREE FEDERATIONS AND WON THEM ALL:** I think that at the end of the day each federation is looking for that classic figure. If you can get that hourglass shape with good conditioning you will be competitive.

**BEST THING ABOUT COMPETING:** I like the whole lead-up, the excitement and being backstage with all the girls.

**WORST THING ABOUT COMPETING:** I suppose just the monotony of the diet, I don't mind doing it but it does get a bit boring.

**SPORTSMODELS AT BODYBUILDING SHOWS - YES OR NO:** No, a big no.

**G-STRINGS YES OR NO:** No. I used to wear G-strings but I've gone the other way now and I can tell you that I should've done it years ago! I'll never wear them again.

**YOU ARE A NATURAL BODYBUILDER WHO INTENDS TO REMAIN NATURAL BUT YOU ARE ALSO HAPPY TO COMPETE IN NON TESTED SHOWS TOO:** Yep for sure. The beauty for me is that I can compete anywhere as I am natural. I can do whatever I want, I can compete here, there and everywhere.

**DID YOU GET TESTED AT INBA:** David's been tested heaps but I've only been tested twice. Perhaps I don't look developed enough to be tested that often?

**BEST BODYBUILDING ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED:** I was always told to keep it simple, it's not rocket-science. Stick to the basics and don't get too fancy, don't get ahead of yourself.

**WOULD YOU AND DAVID EVER CONSIDER DOING COUPLES:**

We've done Couples, we placed second at the Olympia in 2006. It was so funny, we were talking to each other during the back poses asking each other what comes next! It was a great experience - we did it so we could get some photos of ourselves on stage together.

**FAVOURITE STYLE OF MUSIC:** I'm a bit strange, I love classical and

relaxation music.

**FAVOURITE TV SHOW:** I like cooking shows, I love cooking, that's one of my hobbies, I to cook and I'm right into organic foods.

**FAVORITE MOVIE:** I love true stories and facts, people who achieved great things. We focus on a lot of the negative stuff like death. All the TV shows we watch are about someone being killed or murdered, it pisses me off.

**IS THERE ANYONE WHO INSPIRES YOU:** Lance Armstrong. When I had my surgery I read his book and that really made me sure that I'd made the right decision and that I could come back.

**DO YOU HAVE A TRAINER OR COACH:** Andrew Ivy from Elite Sports and Julian Hamilton from Pure Fitness.

**WHAT GYM DO YOU TRAIN AT:** Aqua Jetty Gym, Warnbro WA.

**ANY SPONSORS YOU'D LIKE TO THANK:** I've just been signed up by Next Generation which is great as I have used their products for quite a while now, Malibu Fresh are my major sponsor and they put in \$6,000 for my trip to Germany, Margarita Undercover Wear are my clothing sponsor and Layer Construction who chipped in \$2,000 towards me as well.

**SPECIAL THANKS:** Julian and Felicia Hamilton, Graeme Lancefield, mum and dad.

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**Editor's note:** We'd like to thank Michelle for her time, her story is truly inspirational. Michelle's basic philosophy is that when the chips are down then it's about getting back up and believing in yourself and not listening to everyone else and that bodybuilding can be a healthy sport if you do it right. She is a perfect example of how no matter how bad things look, you can still make the most of a difficult situation if you believe in yourself and surround yourself with positive people. We'd like to wish Michelle all the best for the future, both in completion and in health.

