

This Chick Can Kick Your Ass... And You May Like It!

Marisa Inda

BY CHAD WESLEY SMITH
PHOTOS BY GABE NEYRA

Q: Tell me about your athletic background before getting into powerlifting? What made you want to start competing in powerlifting?

A: I was a gymnast for over 10 years and once I realized that I wasn't going to be good enough to take it to the next level, I needed an outlet. I tried track, hated it but I still managed to letter somehow. I even did jazz dance at one point, which I also hated, yet I still remember all of the routines. Luckily, I found my way into the gym at 17 years old and fell in love with it. I competed in bodybuilding and did my first show at 17. I won a lot of the local shows, as well as Teen Nationals and I even placed ok for a natural athlete in the bigger shows like the Jr. USA's. I kind of feel like this was the heyday of the bodybuilding era with people like Flex Wheeler, Kevin Levrone and Shawn Ray at the helm. For the women, Sharon Bruneau was my all time favorite because she had muscle, femininity and just an overall package that really appealed to me. However, I learned early on that I would only go so far being clean and as the women kept getting bigger and bigger, it was headed in a direction that I didn't want to go in. I kept training, focused on school and my family, but really missed competing and that's when I saw an entry form for a powerlifting meet and thought, "Why not? I've always been strong", and I just decided to enter. I'm really thankful that I did because I have met a ton of great people and PL is a lot less subjective than BB.

Q: So many people know you as the 'dancing pullup girl from Ellen'. What was it like being on a big TV show and how have your calisthenics helped your lifting?



A: Haha, yes...had I known that pull-ups were going to be my claim to fame, I'd have done it a lot sooner. It was kind of a whirlwind, to be honest, from uploading a video on a Thursday to having it go viral by Friday and then getting a call from the producers of the show the following week. I didn't have time to really process what was going on. In fact, I thought the call was a joke and I kept asking the poor girl if she was for real. It was really cool to be invited on the show, but I have to laugh at people when they ask me how much money I made off it, as if I suddenly became rich and a celebrity trainer to the stars. Sorry everyone, I am still me and the only stars I train are all my

amazing clients that show up day in and day out. It was an awesome experience and a cool story my kids can tell their kids because I don't think I'd ever be invited to a talk show for my acting skills.

I love calisthenics and next to gymnastics, it has helped with my lifting a lot. Not only does it take a ton of strength to pull off the planche holds, but it also teaches body awareness. So often, good technique is overlooked when it's a max effort lift, but I've found that being more aware of what my body is doing means I can set up tighter in the beginning of a lift. Hopefully, I can carry that tightness throughout, which means it'll look a lot less effortless and hopefully feel that way too.

Q: You [consistently] maintain a nearly stage ready physique. Do you follow any specific diet protocol?

A: I used to follow a bodybuilder style diet when I competed which meant I ate 6 meals a day and weighed out everything, but now I just watch my portions and eat whatever I want. One of the great things about consistent training and age is that it is a lot easier to stay lean without trying so hard. Not everything is wasted on youth, I suppose.



Q: What is your favorite lift and what is one tip that you have for people to improve it?

A: Bench is my favorite lift, especially because most women hate anything that has to do with the upper body, so it's really gratifying to be a decent bencher. [My] number one tip is to stay tight once you get set. This means don't move your feet or wiggle around once you unrack that bar - the tighter you can keep the body, the more control you'll have of the bar.

Q: Social media brings both positives and negatives to powerlifting. How do you deal with the negativity that you're presented with?

A: It's really unfortunate that people hide behind the anonymity of the internet, but it's not a new thing for women that lift or have muscle. I've learned to let comments roll off [my back] and I

don't internalize them because I love lifting, I love being strong and I do this for me. As hard as it is, I've also learned not to respond to the comments because the type of people that make them feed off of it and they love to get a rise out of you. Although, sometimes a good "f**k off a**hole" makes the soul feel right again.

Q: What advice do you have for women looking to get started in competing?

A: If it's something you want to do just jump in and do it. Don't feel like you have to explain your reasoning to anyone. You're never too old, too weak, too novice, too anything to compete. Besides, you never know how good you could be at something or what direction it will take your life if you never try.

Q: What advice do you have for balancing motherhood and training hard/competing?

A: My kids have been my biggest fans. They have grown up in and around the gym so they love it and see that being in shape doesn't take 5 hours a day like some people think. In the beginning, it was an adjustment, but you find a way to schedule it in and get it done. If anything, you become better at time management because you don't have a choice - kids have homework, they need to eat and have their own activities, but it's not impossible. Having kids doesn't mean that your competitive goals cease to exist.

Q: What is your favorite thing about your coach? (Editor's note, Marisa is coached by the interviewer of this story and this month's cover model... CWS!)

A: The professional me would say his amazing ability to write great programming, but who am I kidding - it's his thighs and eyes. **PM**