

## JODIE YUNCKER: Forging Her Own Path

**Age:** 29

**Occupation:**

Lifestyle & Competition Coach, FitBody Fusion

**Team:**

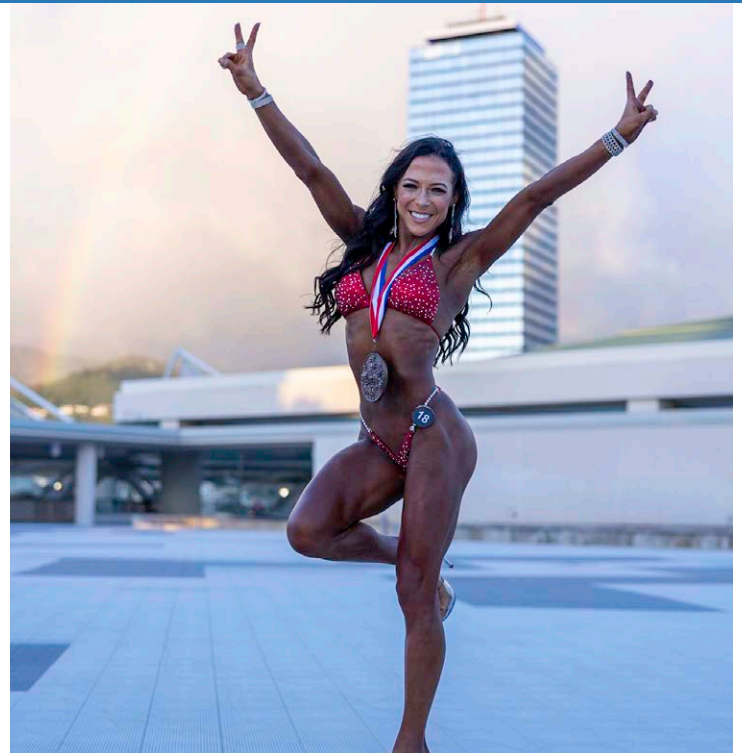
FitBody Fusion, Coach Jaime de Bernard,  
Jodie@FitBodyFusion.com

**Sponsors:**

Toxic Angels Bikinis  
Liquid Sun Rayz  
T fuel supplements  
The Shoe Fairy  
Premier Alternative Medicine

**Competition Highlights:**

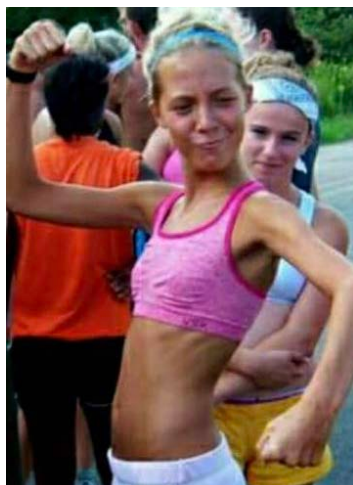
2022 Mr. Olympia, Bikini  
2022 Texas Pro, 2nd place  
2022 Tahoe Pro, 2nd place  
2022 Carolina Excalibur Pro, 2nd place  
2021 NPC Junior Nationals, 1st place,  
earned pro status  
2020 Battle In the Desert, 1st place  
& Overall Winner  
2020 NPC North American Championships,  
2nd place  
2019 NPC Battle In the Desert, 2nd place  
2019 NPC Lehigh Valley Championships,  
1st place True Novice, 1st place Novice Bikini,  
2nd place Open Bikini



### Your competition journey began with and eating disorder. Can you share your story?

My mom and dad and 6 siblings have supported me through every walk of life. Growing up in a very athletic and competitive family it didn't matter what night it was; we were always at the ballpark, a basketball court, football field, or some sort of sporting event was playing on TV at home.

From 2012 to 2018, I struggled with anorexia and orthorexia. I had an eating disorder that consumed me from my teenage years, all the way up through college. I felt like if I could figure out how to recover from this illness, I could have control again. I could have gone to numerous counselors and doctors, or eating disorder clinics, but they weren't going to help me get to the root cause of why I was spiraling down this path. I knew it was up to me to change my mindset. I also knew that food is fuel, and it's not going to kill me, but what would kill me is the eating disorder. My parents and family were so supportive throughout these difficult years. During my senior year of college, my parents basically told me the hard way. They said, "Jodie, if you don't choose to recover, and fight the demon inside of you, then chances are you will die at a very young age." At the time I was 23 years old and about 70 lbs pounds soaking wet, I was running anywhere from 12 to about 20 miles every day, and maybe eating 500 to 800 calories at most. Hearing what my parents had to say was my wake up call. I told them, please let me do this on my own. Don't question what I'm doing or why and I will prove to you guys that I can recover in a healthy way.



I went back to college, I stopped running cold turkey, and went to [bodybuilding.com](http://bodybuilding.com) to do some research. I wanted to learn the best way to gain healthy weight while keeping a healthy body composition. What scared me most was the number on the scale. I know a lot of people can relate; the number on the scale is one of the biggest obstacles to progress. So I threw the scale out for a while. It was my first big move in the right direction towards healing. I went to the gym and quickly discovered I could barely curl a five pound dumbbell. I started to slowly build my caloric intake over an extended period of time and I connected with some girls through Instagram. We were all on the same journey to overcome our struggle. We held each other accountable. I'm still a very close with one of those friends in particular. Seeing how much both of us have grown throughout our journeys, and how we are paying it forward by making an impact on others is truly inspiring for us. We were moving forward in our journeys. Once I felt I was fully ready to take the next step to becoming stronger, I reached out to Jaime de Barnard, Team FitBody Fusion, and shared my story. I told her I wanted to do just one bodybuilding show, to prove to myself that I can overcome even my darkest days. I also wanted to show my hometown, which is a very small town in Michigan, don't judge people by the outward appearance. People are so much more than what you may see on the outside, sometimes it just takes time for them to find themselves.



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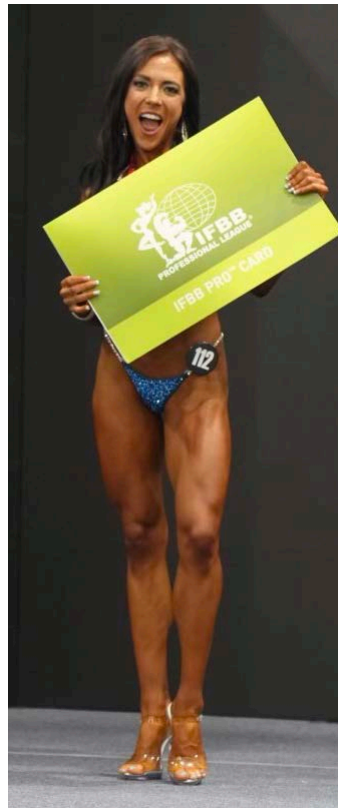


My first show was NPC Lehigh Valley Championship in Pittsburgh, PA. I took first place in Bikini True Novice, and Bikini Novice and second in Open Bikini. One show turned into three shows in 2019 and it has just never stopped. We went to Vegas and competed in the NPC Battle in the Desert, where I placed 2nd in my class. My coach Jaimie suggested we go to North Americans to see how we stack up on the national stage. I said, Okay, why not? Let's go for it, see what happens. Our goal was a top 10 finish and I placed 10th, so I took that as a win in my books. The judges feedback had been good, so we went into a short improvement season, and came back in 2020 to do a national circuit. I went back to the NPC Battle in the Desert and won Overall Bikini and then placed 2nd in my class at NPC North American Championships. I felt the momentum going into the following season, and knew I was taking the right steps to progress in the league, while improving at each show. The athlete in me understood it was just a matter of time before the pro card would be coming to then be competitive in the IFBB Professional League. I was determined to embrace the entire journey. In the meantime, I truly enjoyed experiencing being an amateur competitor, the ups and downs and the battles that build the momentum towards earning Pro status. Knowing that when you finally earn your pro card, you are ready to be competitive on the IFBB Pro stage. That's what really makes the journey special. I earned pro status in 2021 at the NPC Jr. National Championships. In 2022, I competed in 17 shows and won the opportunity to compete on the Olympia stage as the leader in the points system. I have taken this season to allow my body to grow, rest and recover. When I step on stage again, I want to make sure that we've made the progress and improvements that the judges have asked for with the goal of getting another Olympia qualification and being competitive on the Olympia stage! I want to win versus earn my spot.

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My friends back home and my family understand why I do what I do. Others ask, why can't you just have a cheeseburger or pizza or why do you always have to be working out. Hearing stories of how other bodybuilding athletes got to where they are today is inspiring to me. Some of their journey's are similar, most are different, many have faced their own struggles but what matters is that they fought hard to become an elite athlete. We are professional athletes, this is what I do for my living. This is how I make my living just like professional baseball, football, or hockey players. We don't make as much money and we are not on TV but it doesn't make us any less of a professional athlete.

When I first started bodybuilding, I told my parents, I'm going to be the first professional athlete in our family. Their response was, of course, we know how hard of a worker you are. They told me, you are manifesting and speaking it out into existence as you work towards your goals and you will achieve them plus more.

**What are you're doing to share your story and message with others? Are you speaking in high schools? Or other groups?**

Currently, I share my journey on social media. Some of my clients have had some experiences with eating disorder or are still currently trying to recover. Being able to relate by sharing my journey with them, talk through what their mindset is and how to change is one of the reasons I love being a coach. I eventually want to speak at high schools and seminars around the world and be a strong voice as I know what it is like to have once lived with an eating disorder and until one can see the beauty behind recovering, it is a hard and long battle to fight.

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**You took a slow journey to recovery on your own. At this point, do you feel like you've overcome your eating disorder? Or do you feel like it's always there, and you're constantly managing it?**

I will say, not until this year do I feel like I fully have overcome my eating disorder. In particular, taking this longer improvement season, allowed me to truly give myself balance. I can go out to eat without guilt or feeling like I had to go exercise more to work off the extra calories. Currently, I am the heaviest I ever weighed in my entire life. I understand that the food I eat is fuel and by eating clean and lean I can maintain a healthy and strong body composition. Knowing that I'm able to go out and enjoy life, without letting that scale control my life lets me to know that I have fully overcome my eating disorder.

**What would you say the impact of bodybuilding has been for you?**

The impact bodybuilding has had on me is having a connection with like-minded people. Knowing there is a small percentage of people that understand this sport and that taking my tupperware and my gallon of water with me wherever I go, getting my workout in and my cardio done; that's normal for us, as it is truly a lifestyle.



## What do you feel like are the most important lessons that you've learned on this journey?

The biggest lesson I've learned is to Never Give Up. There will always be obstacles along the way. They might be good, they might be bad. It's how you react to them that will make the biggest difference. For example, last year, I did 17 shows. I could have stopped after my third show. But I knew deep within my heart that I could keep going and show the judges that I would improve show to show and earn my qualification to the Olympia. My body was in a healthy spot. My food was in a healthy spot. We were doing minimal to no cardio. I knew that fighting all the way to the Olympia stage, I would earned respect from the judges.

## When did you know you would go to the Olympia on points?

At the very end of the season. I was the leader in points all year but didn't have confirmation until the end. You never know when someone can knock you out of the lead; it becomes a game of strategy. When I finally stepped on the Olympia stage, I made third callouts out of 55 girls. I was in the middle of the pack and I was extremely happy with the results for my first Olympia. It just goes to show that no matter how many losses you have, or how many wins you have, it doesn't matter. What matters is that you continue to show up and take the judges feedback, and execute upon it show after show and earn the judges respect.

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**This has been an off year for you but you continue to make progress. Do you stay within a certain weight range so that you're not too much one way or the other way? How have you and your coach managed your nutrition? How are you able to manage your nutrition to get you to where you need to be without having to do anything drastic?**

I'm a very avid macro tracker. Following macros allows me control over my nutrition and allows me to eat a diverse range of foods that I enjoy and digest well with my body. As an elite athlete, knowing that I'm doing everything right now, to set me up for a successful season next year is key for me. Even though I'm about 25 pounds above my stage weight, I'm still eating lean and clean and know that I have put on solid density to have a refreshed and strong competition season in 2024!

**What show plans do you see next season for you?**

What my Coach and I have discussed is starting prep at the first of the year to hit the stage at one of the first shows of the season, maybe IFBB World Klash Series Championships and then hit every show until we have won a show.

**What do you see for your future self?**

Personally, in the next five to 10 years, the competitor in me wants to win numerous pro shows. I want to compete against the best of the best. I would love to crack a top 10 at the Olympia, and even the top five. I would also like to compete at the Arnold Classic. It's a very prestigious show, being one of only 10 girls out of the selected pool that they choose from would make it a very big honor for me.



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### Do you plan to continue to compete once you hit masters?

I absolutely plan on continuing to compete. I would love to stay competing in the Open divisions until I’m told or its suggested that I move into the Master division. I want to compete with the young girls as long as I can. I know, some people might laugh at me for that. But I feel that I have that potential to stack up with the new, up and coming pros. Once I do have to make the transition to Masters, then I will work to qualify for the Masters Olympia.

### Where do you see your career as a coach going?

I hope that I will always be able to be a coach. Coaching allows me to help make a real difference in the lives of others and I want to continue to do that. Sharing my knowledge and watching my clients, whether they are lifestyle or competitors, change their life for the better is my greatest reward. I currently have three ladies that I have turned pro, my goal is to get a many more. Eventually I would like to get a couple Olympians underneath my belt too. As a career, FitBody Fusion is an amazing team to work for. About a year and a half ago, they opened up retirement plans for each one of the coaches. Eventually, maybe I would even like to become a judge or help promote a show. I know the opportunities are endless for the career, and there’s much more just outside of coaching that I can pursue if the timing is right.

## To your credit, how did you go through the process of overcoming anorexia on your own, as opposed to getting help?

People see the immediate results, they don’t always see the stages of progression that it took to get there. It wasn’t a two week transformation or a one month transformation. It’s been years upon years of discipline, work, mindset changes that have gotten me to where I am today. A lot of times, people are looking for a quick fix, as opposed to learning how to navigate and cope and set boundaries and change the mindset. Circumstances will arise that could throw things out of whack; which generally will send a person back to old habits. Over time, I’ve learned how to ask the question, “How am I going to work through this?” and figure out a plan for overcoming whatever challenge may come my way.

In the beginning, my parents did take me to a nutritionist. I went to multiple sessions with her but I didn’t feel she could provide me with what I needed to help me to recover. I wanted her to tell me the foods that I should be eating to nourish my body and tell me the reason why these foods will help me achieve the results I envisioned. Instead she just said, continue to eat with your family, you’re doing a great job, just write down what to eat. The eating disorder controlled me; I would write down what I was supposed to eat, but actually eating it was another story. At that time, I would eat dinner with my family to show that I was eating, but then not eat the rest of the day. So that is why I worked through overcoming anorexia on my own. I believe its essential to be able to explain how to create a healthy plate and the benefits that foods give to your body. I definitely like to know the reasoning behind the why of what we’re doing and I make a point of sharing that information with my clients. I feel the more a person understands the process, increases the intention with which they execute the plan and will stick with it versus just going through the motions.



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### Did you ever pinpoint what may have triggered the eating disorder?

My eating disorder was triggered by a few different things. When I started puberty, I was just over 100 pounds. And when I saw the triple digits on this scale, I sort of freaked out. I thought there’s no way that I can weight 100 plus pounds, and be only 28 pounds less than my mom after she’s had seven kids. I watched what she ate throughout the day, which was very little. But then she would binge at night. Plus, at the grocery store, I would see magazines with movie stars. I thought that’s what I had to look like to become a movie star. I know that sounds silly. But I thought one day I’d be in California and walk the red carpet. So seeing movie stars, as well as watching what my mom was eating, and her habits around food and her physique is what triggered my eating disorder. I was eventually able to share those thoughts with my mom. She was literally devastated at the thought that she was part of the reason I had gone through such a hardship. It wasn’t until then that my mom realized that she also had unhealthy habits with food and that she needed to work on her own eating habits.



### Were you able to help your mom with that?

Yes. Actually, while I was living back at home for a couple years, my mom always complained of digestion issues, and a bloated stomach. I told her it’s because you don’t eat anything and you chomp on gum all day long, inhaling air, and then you come home, and try to get in the food you’ve missed all day. I meal prepped for her for three weeks and I promised her she would not gain weight. Her bloating stopped, the digestion issues leveled off, and she didn’t gain any weight. She began to feel good and lose weight and she wasn’t even working out. She was just changing her eating habits. She’s continued eating healthy, and has noticed a difference in her energy level and the overall benefits of eating healthier.

**Without a doubt, you’ve put yourself in a very healthy place. It’s so good to see when bodybuilding can have such a big influence and impact not only for you, but then for the message that you share for others. That’s very inspirational. And I’m looking forward to sharing your story. Thank you Jodie, I look forward to seeing on stage!**