

Jourdanne's Journey: Quiet Confidence, Commitment, Empowerment

Jourdanne Lee

IFBB Bikini Pro, 4X Olympia

Owner: Elas Athletics, Prep Coach/Lifestyle Coach

Current Coach: Neal Cash, Team Cash, @ccash15_ifbbpro

Social Media: @Jourdanne__

Sponsors:

Iron Willed
Toxic Angels Bikini
Glam Competition Jewelry
Rule One Proteins

Competition Highlights:

- 2015 NPC Atlantic States Championships: Bikini Novice, Class D, 1st place, Bikini Open, Class E, 1st place
- 2017 NPC Atlantic Coastal USA: Bikini Novice, Class D, 1st place, Bikini Open, Class E, 1st place
- 2017 NPC North American Championships: Bikini Open, Class G, 1st place and earned pro card
- 2017 IFBB Professional League San Antonio Pro: Bikini Open Pro Debut
- 2018 IFBB Professional League Sacramento Pro: Bikini Open, 1st place & earned 2019 Olympia Qualification
- 2019 Mr. Olympia: Bikini Open Olympia debut
- 2020 IFBB Professional League Iron Games: Bikini Open, 1st place, earned 2021 Olympia Qualification
- 2021 Arnold Sports Festival: Bikini Open, 8th place
- 2021 Mr. Olympia: Bikini Open, 13th place
- IFBB Professional League Hurricane Pro & Atlanta All States Pro: Bikini Open, 1st place, earned 2022 Olympia qualification
- 2022 Arnold Classic United Kingdom: Bikini Open, 3rd place
- 2022 IFBB Professional League Legions Sports Fest, Titans Grand Prix, and Rising Phoenix Arizona Pro: Bikini Open, 1st place
- 2022 Mr. Olympia: Bikini Open, 11th place
- 2023 IFBB Professional League San Antonio Pro: Bikini Open, 1st place, earned 2023 Olympia qualification
- 2023 Mr. Olympia: Bikini Open, 10th place



While interviewing IFBB Pro Jourdanne Lee, her leadership qualities become evident; authentic, thoughtful, quiet strength. She shared her personal journey from gymnastics to bodybuilding, highlighting her struggles with injuries and grief. What has been her biggest takeaway as a competitor? The patience, tenacity and self-preparation that it takes to go through the entire journey is a 365 commitment. Through the years, it hasn't changed; it took a lot of work to get to where she is now as a pro bikini competitor and she puts that same amount of effort into coaching her clients. Jourdanne emphasizes the importance of passion, living with purpose, and adaptability, along with consistency and dedication in achieving success in the sport. Her own goals include continuing to train to qualify for the 2024 Olympia and a potential 5th Olympia appearance.



BODYBUILDING JOURNEY

I was a gymnast growing up, but I tore my ACL and meniscus. It was not only a setback but caused a lot of constraints as to what I could and couldn't do. Being taller, I transitioned into volleyball. That worked out for a while, but there's a lot of jumping in volleyball and eventually, it just became too hard on my knee. I needed something that was going to allow me to stay in shape but was safer and stationary. I joined a gym and began training isolated body parts. I saw my body make significant changes, I really enjoyed it, and by using good form and training techniques, it was safe for me. I did a lot of research to educate myself on how to grow the body and different techniques to train compound movements. During this time, I lost my brother. Grieving the loss was a really big driving force and motivation behind me getting into the gym, because I needed an outlet and that really pushed me. I was training in the gym, working on building muscle for two and a half years, maybe three, before I did my first show. Watching YouTube and reading the Internet for hours, I learned different ways to train and eat to develop the female body. There are a couple movements that were the foundation of my training and then I added accessory movements to focus on developing the shape I needed for the bikini category. Prior to getting into bodybuilding, I was vegan for five years. As I started to build more muscle, my body literally just craved animal protein. It was like my body just had this instinct, I needed animal protein. That's how I transitioned out of a vegan plant-based diet. I took training pretty seriously before I ever decided to step on stage.

.....
“ What I've learned is, there's always more within you. When you think you've given it your all, you find that you can push harder and grow and be better than you ever have been before. ”
.....

I've been training in the style of bodybuilding for 12 years. It takes time. Once you start competing and stepping on stage every year, you're going to be in a caloric deficit for the greater part of the year, which makes it difficult to build muscle. On the other hand, when you're not competing, it's just as important as when you're in prep to maintain your nutrition or even have a little bit of a surplus, because you need food to grow.

My first NPC show was in 2015. That was a cool experience, so I went on to do two more shows after that. I was preparing for the NPC Team Universe and two weeks before the show I realized that you had to be an American citizen to compete in that show. At the time, being from Toronto, Canada, I was not an American citizen, I only had a green card. I was absolutely crushed. I was having a blast doing shows and doing well. I was ready to go to the national stage, just to find out that I couldn't. I completely walked away from the sport for two years. I didn't think I would ever compete again.

I continued to train hard, eat well and build muscle, keeping my body composition in a good place. I made a lot of progress during those two years off. I got curious about the process again and began prepping. As a Canadian citizen, I knew that I had only one opportunity to get my pro card if that's what I wanted to do. It would be my first national show and only my fourth show ever. I competed at the NPC North American Championships on September 20, July 2017 and earned my pro card.



The beginning of my bodybuilding journey, including my first few pro shows, were completely self-taught. Just a couple weeks after earning my pro card, I made my pro debut at the IFBB Professional League San Antonio Pro. I made a lot of mistakes. It's taken a lot of work. The prep for every show has been different, some have been easier than others. It's definitely taken a lot of patience and tenacity to finally become top ten in the world and still be always striving for more.

I decided to work with a coach for the first time and a few years later I transitioned to my current coach, Neal Cash. I am currently preparing to qualify for the 2024 Olympia. I'm focused on making sure that I'm getting in shape, getting conditioned enough so that when I'm right there, we can just choose the show and go for it. If I qualify, this will be my 5th Olympia.

.....

“ I was having a blast doing shows and doing well. I was ready to go to the national stage, just to find out that I couldn't. I completely walked away from the sport for two years. I didn't think I would ever compete again. ”

.....





What do you think you've learned the most from being an Olympia athlete?

Every time you step on the Olympia stage you are striving to take it to the next level; each time is different. What I've learned is, there's always more within you. When you think you've given it your all, you find that you can push harder and grow and be better than you ever have been before. Every year bodybuilding literally levels up. The physique is getting more and more competitive and in order to hang, you have to keep developing your body. What won last year isn't going to win this year. It's always changing and always getting harder. There's always more of you to give and it's purely mental. When you think you can't and you want to give up, you just have to push through.

Do you see bodybuilding athletes at the same level as a professional athlete in other sports?

Athletes at the highest level, the Olympia level, within the top 10-15, have a different mentality, a different push, a different hustle, a completely different focus. Literally, your entire being is based around your training, your food, your sleep and your recovery. That is your 100% sole focus. That is what it takes to really be at the top and be the best at the top versus others. There's a reason why there's a separation between the top athletes in the world and everyone else. It's the focus and the mental fortitude.

No matter the sport, it's a 365 commitment. In my experience with bodybuilding, even when you're off prep, it doesn't mean you can stop your training. You might have a week off for vacation, but you have to get right back in it, because everybody else is training 365. Those constants don't stop.

You have a number of sponsors, what has made those partnerships successful for you?

I put a strong emphasis on the importance of aligning with a company's mission statement or culture of the brand, or the product. It's important to me to feel the authenticity and belief in the brand. If I don't align with those things, then it doesn't matter how big the name is, it's not something that would interest me. When I'm going to work with a company, it's got to be something that like I truly believe in.

COACHING AND PERSONAL GROWTH

What led you to begin your own coaching business?

I started coaching full time in January of 2021. Prior to that, I was working in business technology, product management for Microsoft X Box products. For two years I was doing both. I worked my butt off to make sure that when I transitioned to full-time coaching, I was comfortable within my job, I was able to produce enough income, and that I would have no regrets leaving my corporate job behind.

The decision to change career paths was a no brainer for me. Working the corporate job was very transactional. I wasn't doing something that I was passionate about, and I feel in order to live, you have to live with passion, and you have to do something you really love. Coaching is something that I've always loved. Having the opportunity to help people improve themselves, help them improve their lifestyles and help guide them to their goals is more fulfilling from an emotional perspective. I felt called to being able to help people on a personal level that truly makes a difference in their lives versus doing something on a macro level. The relationship you build interacting with your athlete, seeing them grow and mature as a human, is rewarding and at the same time there's so much to discover. As a coach, I'm always open to learning. I feel you have to be in order to progress and continue to get better. No one's journey is the same. Everybody has different personalities. The way that I may communicate with one athlete is different than I communicate with another athlete. Some people need a little more TLC and other people are a little bit more independent. You have to be able to adapt your coaching to get the best results for your client.



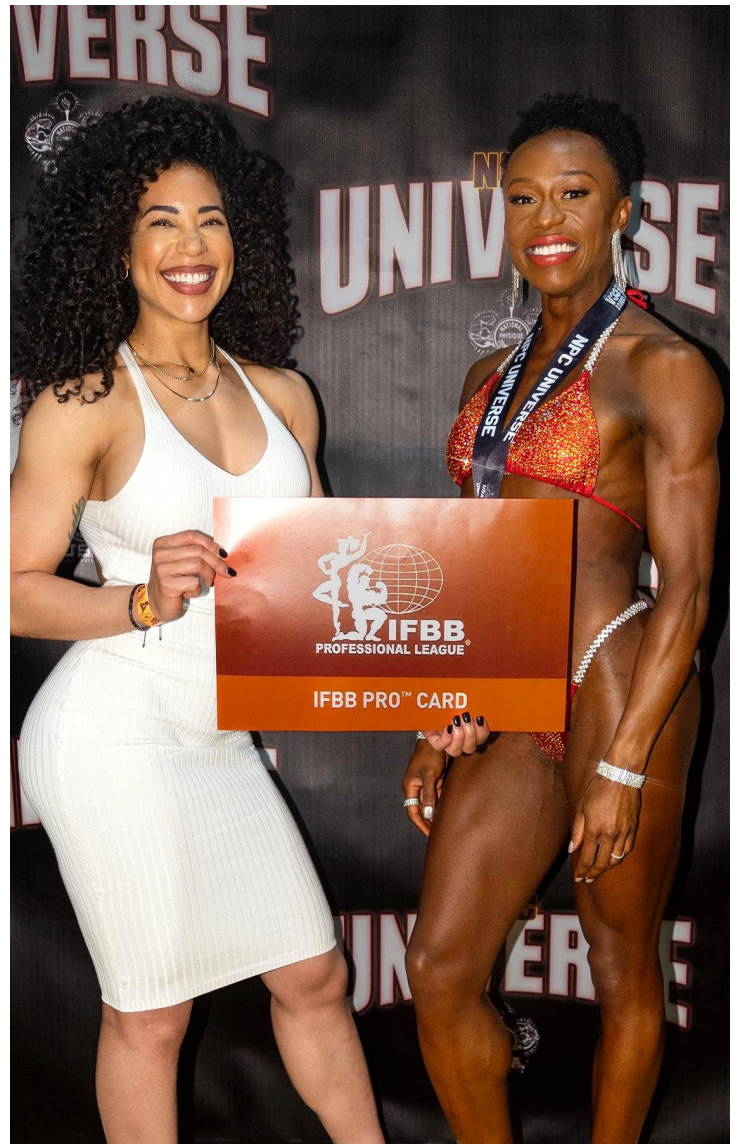
Two years after transitioning to coaching full time, I officially started my own prep coaching company in August 2023. I have been a fully independent coach for a year now and it's been a really great experience for me. In addition to coaching, I also provide one-on-one private posing sessions. It allows me to be able to focus on the individual athlete. I believe it works better for me and for the athlete.

In life, you have stepping stones, and eventually the goal is to reach your final destination. For me, it was time for me to reach my final destination. Being completely independent and able to grow and flourish with my own coaching business has been empowering.

.....

“ Having the opportunity to help people improve themselves, help them improve their lifestyles, and help guide them to their goals is more fulfilling from an emotional perspective. ”

.....



The name of my coaching business is Elas Athletics. I opted for a more inclusive name that reflects the focus on lifestyle and transformation. Bodybuilding is such an individualized sport. Having camaraderie is important, but at the end of the day, when you're competing, you're getting on the stage by yourself and everyone next to you is your competitor. You're competitors first before you're friends. Of course, within fitness and bodybuilding and even competing, you develop relationships and friendships. That's one of the things that makes any sport fun. But when you're on that stage, there's only one person that can get first place. The same thing with your fitness journey, it's personal and individualized. Your level of fitness is going to be different than someone else's. The chapter that you are in within your fitness journey or experience is going to be different than someone else's. My goal in naming my business was to create a space where people didn't feel like it was anything other than a program that is unique and tailored to suit each individual. I provide coaching for competitors, but that's not all I do. I also work with lifestyle and transformation athletes. I wanted a business name that reflected a more inclusive opportunity for people from all walks of life to feel comfortable and not lost in the shuffle.

Is there advice you want to share for someone looking to start their own fitness journey?

From a coaching perspective, my advice is when you're getting started on your fitness journey, social media is a really great tool and has valuable information, but it also has a lot of conflicting and confusing information. So, if you are interested in making lifestyle changes or want to compete, definitely take some time and look for a coach that you have a good connection with and who you feel will listen to your needs. The coach should tailor their approach to the athlete's individual needs and goals. Don't rush that process; spend time with that coach to discover their style of coaching, their methodologies, the tools that they use, and look at their athletes. If their athletes look great, there's going to be a really good chance that they're going to be able to work with you in a positive way to help you achieve your goals, too. The focus should be on finding the right fit; your coaching choice is super important in order for you to flourish.

From a competitor perspective, competing is hard and it takes a lot from you. You need to be prepared to live that lifestyle and be completely locked in and focused in order to get to the stage at a competitive level. When it comes to competing, you may hit some plateaus, you may hit some roadblocks, but you just have to continue to be patient and stay faithful and committed to the promise that you've made to yourself. That means showing up for yourself every day, that's means hitting your macros or your diet meal plans, that means getting your workouts and your cardio done and getting your rest and recovery in. You can't just talk the talk, you've got to walk the walk in order for you to be successful.

Success looks different to everybody. Success can be just getting on stage. Success can be just losing 10 to 15 pounds or success could be learning how to count macros and feeling comfortable in your own body. So, everybody's success and everybody's goals are always going to be different. Athletes should focus on their own progress rather than comparing themselves to others and celebrate small wins and milestones along the way. I know it's hard to do. But when you are writing your own chapter, you can't just jump in someone else's book. The journey of a pro is going to be different than somebody who is a lifestyle person. Your journey may evolve and even become more intense over time and if it does, you've got to be willing to commit to that next level.

Fitness journeys are not always linear and it's important to be adaptable when life changes occur. Even when you hit roadblocks or plateaus and things are not going the way as planned or the way we expect them to go, it's important to learn how to adapt to the situation, make the best of it, and not get completely thrown off track and give up. Instead, you need to just keep moving forward.

Where do you see yourself for the future?

Ten years from now, I probably won't be competing, instead my focus is to produce very high-quality athletes competing at the Olympia level. Currently, I am working with some pros as well as some athletes that are running the national circuit. I'm really proud of the athletes that I'm working with that have made amazing transformations. Most importantly, my mission is to help athletes become the maximum version of themselves; thriving and comfortable with who they are in an environment where we can all learn, grow and evolve.

Jourdanne, your approach to coaching is refreshing. Whether it's for competitors, or lifestyle or transformation clients, your philosophy is very clearly defined. You know what you want, you know how you want to go about making it happen and you're authentic. I have no doubt people will be able to respond and get the results that they want from it and you will see the success you are striving for!



“ Ten years from now, I probably won't be competing, instead my focus is to produce very high-quality athletes competing at the Olympia level. ”