



PRESSED FOR TIME

BY RACHEL NAUD

PHOTOGRAPHY JOAN ALLEN | SHOT ON LOCATION AT
SPECTRUM CLUB SOUTH BAY MANHATTAN BEACH, CA

Fitness America competitor Melissa Hall shows you how to maximize your gym time for the best possible total body workout.

Competing in fitness can be a full-time job, yet many competitors juggle another career on top of training and dieting. Fitness America competitor Melissa Hall is one of them. She works long, 10- to 12-hour days as operations manager for Fox Sports Net. In her spare time, she's a fitness model and spokesperson for a supplement company. She also helps her personal trainer husband run his own fitness show, the Midwest Fitness Festival. "I help the girls get ready – it's really fun to see them get excited and give them tips before the show," she says.

With her full schedule, Melissa has to be efficient about how she stays in shape. That's why she took up circuit training a year ago. "I've become a huge fan of circuit training," she says. "It allows me to get a really good workout by doing cardio and weight training at the same time. And I can do it all in 40 minutes!"

fit or life

Athletic throughout her life, Melissa grew up playing volleyball and was involved in track and dance. During her college years, she was a cheerleader for the Minnesota Vikings and Minnesota Timberwolves. She won the Miss Minnesota title in 1997, then set her sights on competing in a Fitness America Pageant. "I thought it would be something that would make me happy," she says. "It was another outlet to be healthy." Her first competition was in August 1998 where she finished fourth place overall in the Iron Man Fitness Competition in Minneapolis. Her most recent fitness achievement was placing third in the tall class of Ms. Bikini America in Redondo Beach, California.

Now at 31, Melissa has long-term aspirations of starting a gym and a family with her husband. She also wants to spread the joy of fitness to others. "I want to be a role model, to share what I've been able to do – to be an inspiration." She's already succeeded in inspiring her family. "I have a twin sister who has just started working out and a brother who just got involved with his first triathlon," she says. "My father is working out three days a week now. He's 58 and just started weight training two years ago. It's never too late to start training."

short circuit

Melissa is taking a brief hiatus from competing until the fall, but still trains four days a week – two to three of those days are reserved for circuit training. She says circuit training keeps her fit and spices up her exercise regimen. "I like the

variety of exercises," she says. "You can get stuck doing the same thing all the time. I like circuit training because you switch body parts so that you're still getting a complete body workout." For instance, Melissa will work her quads, hamstrings, triceps, and chest during one circuit, and shoulders, biceps, and legs on the next. She usually completes three 10-minute circuits, making sure to do 15 to 20 reps of each exercise. But even though her workouts are fast-paced, Melissa says she's careful not to rush through the exercises. "You have to make sure you have proper form and technique," she says. "Take your time and squeeze your muscles. It's just as important as going through the motions."

When preparing for a competition, Melissa increases her workouts to five or six days a week and uses heavier weights. Her weightlifting sessions are extended to one hour and she does her cardio at least three days a week for 45 minutes. She's also a lot more strict with her diet and starts mapping out an eating plan about six weeks before a competition, cutting out sugar, dairy, and processed carbs such as breads, pastas, and cereal. "But, I'm not going to lie to you, sometimes I have a cheat here and there. But three weeks out, no cheats." Getting through the dieting can be tough, but Melissa says her husband helps her stay on track. "He'll let me know if I'm not where I need to be when I'm getting ready for a competition. And he's great at coming up with new recipes, which is something I take advantage of. He really likes to cook healthy meals and that keeps me motivated, too."

Although Melissa hopes to place second at the Fitness America competition in November, she says it will most likely be her last attempt. "The routines are very competitive and I don't have a gymnastics background," she says. "Each year I watch the girls come in and do all sorts of tumbling. First of all, I'd be terrified to learn how to do that and, second of all, I don't have the time to learn."

the workout

If, like Melissa, you're pressed for time, try fitting some circuit training into your weekly workouts. The following is a combination of some of Melissa's favorite moves guaranteed to get you toned in 40 minutes or less. Repeat the circuit three times. "After you're done with one full circuit, stretch a little bit and hop on an exercise bike for one to two minutes [stay above 80 RPMs]," says Melissa. "Then go back to the circuit."

squats with exercise ball →

(GLUTES AND QUADS)

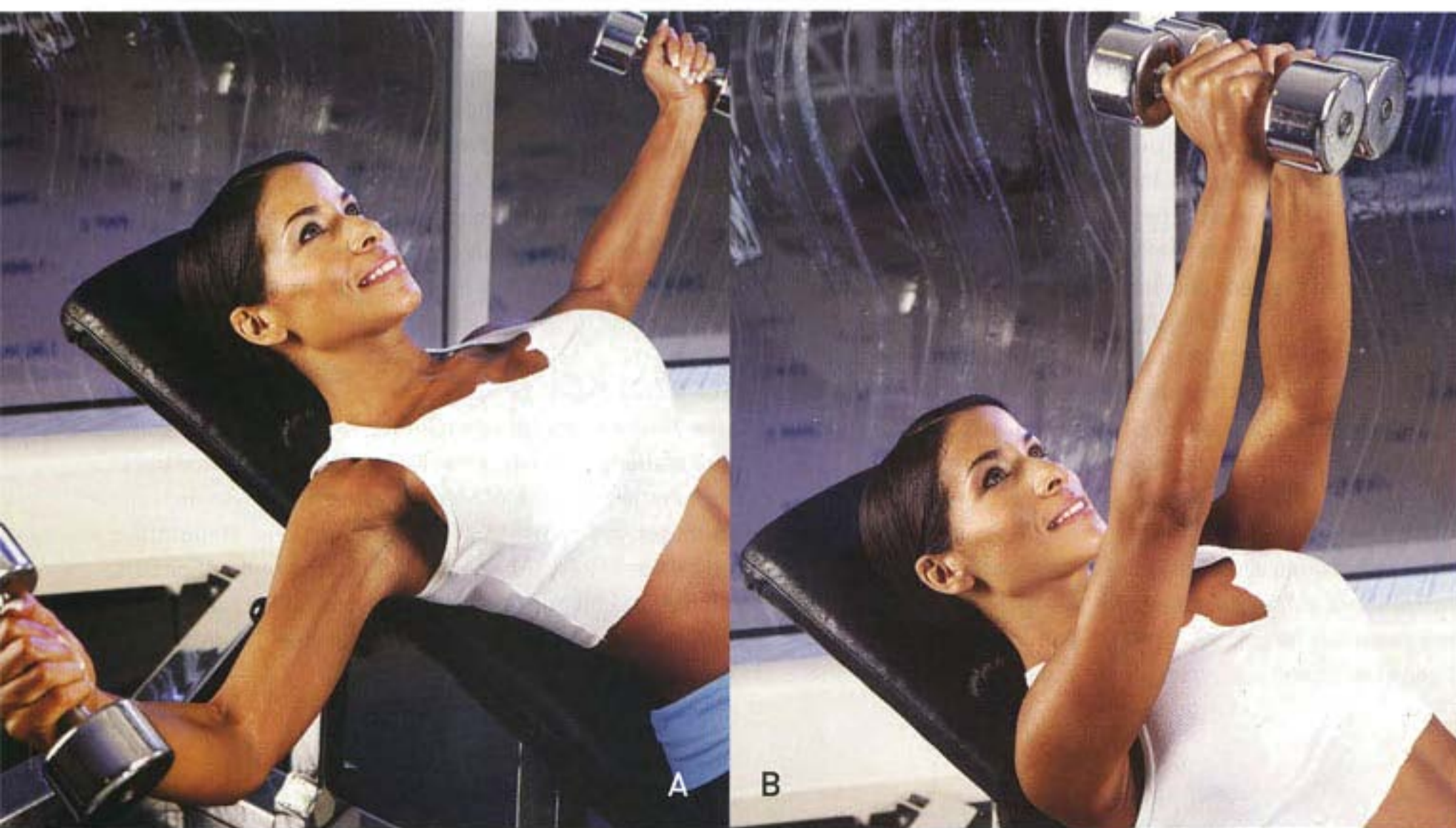
Position an exercise ball between your butt and a wall. Keep your upper body straight and press your glutes back against the ball. Your feet should be a few feet out from the wall, spaced shoulder-width apart with your toes slightly turned out. Keep your arms at your sides and slowly squat down, squeezing your glutes. Go down as far as you can without letting your knees extend past your toes. Repeat for 15 to 20 reps. "If you need more stability and balance, you can put your arms straight out in front of your chest and clasp your hands for extra support on the way down," says Melissa.



chest flies (PECTORALS) ↓

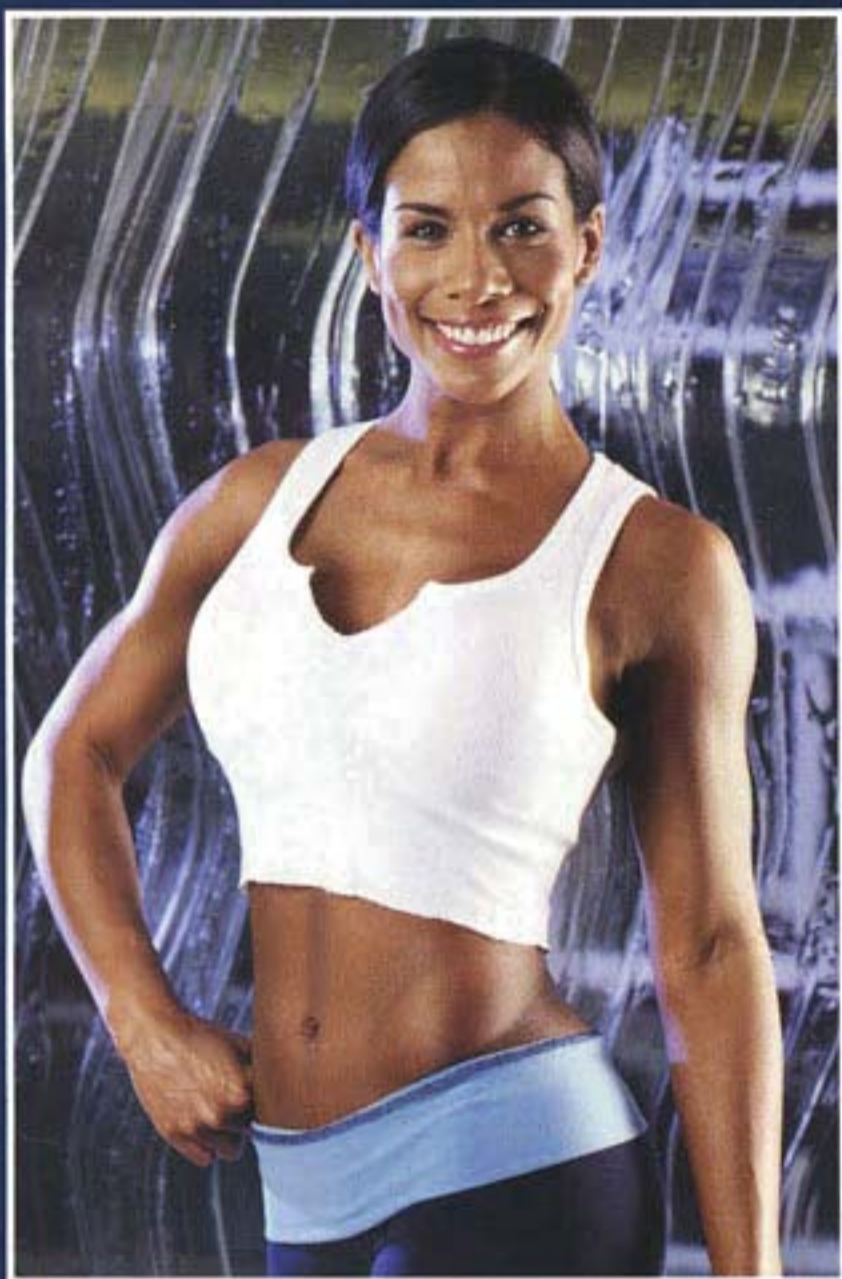
Lie on your back on an incline bench and hold a dumbbell in each hand. Start with your arms extended out to the sides, elbows slightly bent and palms facing up. Straighten your arms as you lift the

weights up, bringing them together over your chest. Your arms should be fully extended. Return to the starting position and repeat for 15 to 20 reps. "Make sure you isolate your chest muscles when squeezing up," says Melissa.



deadlifts (HAMSTRINGS) →

Stand up straight with your feet together and hold a barbell with an overhand grip, your hands placed slightly closer than shoulder-width apart. Keep your arms straight and fully extended down in front of your body so the bar rests against your thighs. Keeping your head up and your knees slightly bent, press back on your heels and push your butt back as you slowly lower the bar toward the ground. Keep your shoulders up slightly to help you maintain a small arch in your lower back. Lower the bar as far as you can while maintaining proper form, then return to the starting position and repeat for 15 to 20 reps. "Really keep your weight back in your heels. If you don't, you won't isolate your hamstrings," says Melissa.



MORE ABOUT MELISSA

HEIGHT: 5-foot-6

HOMETOWN: Minneapolis, MN

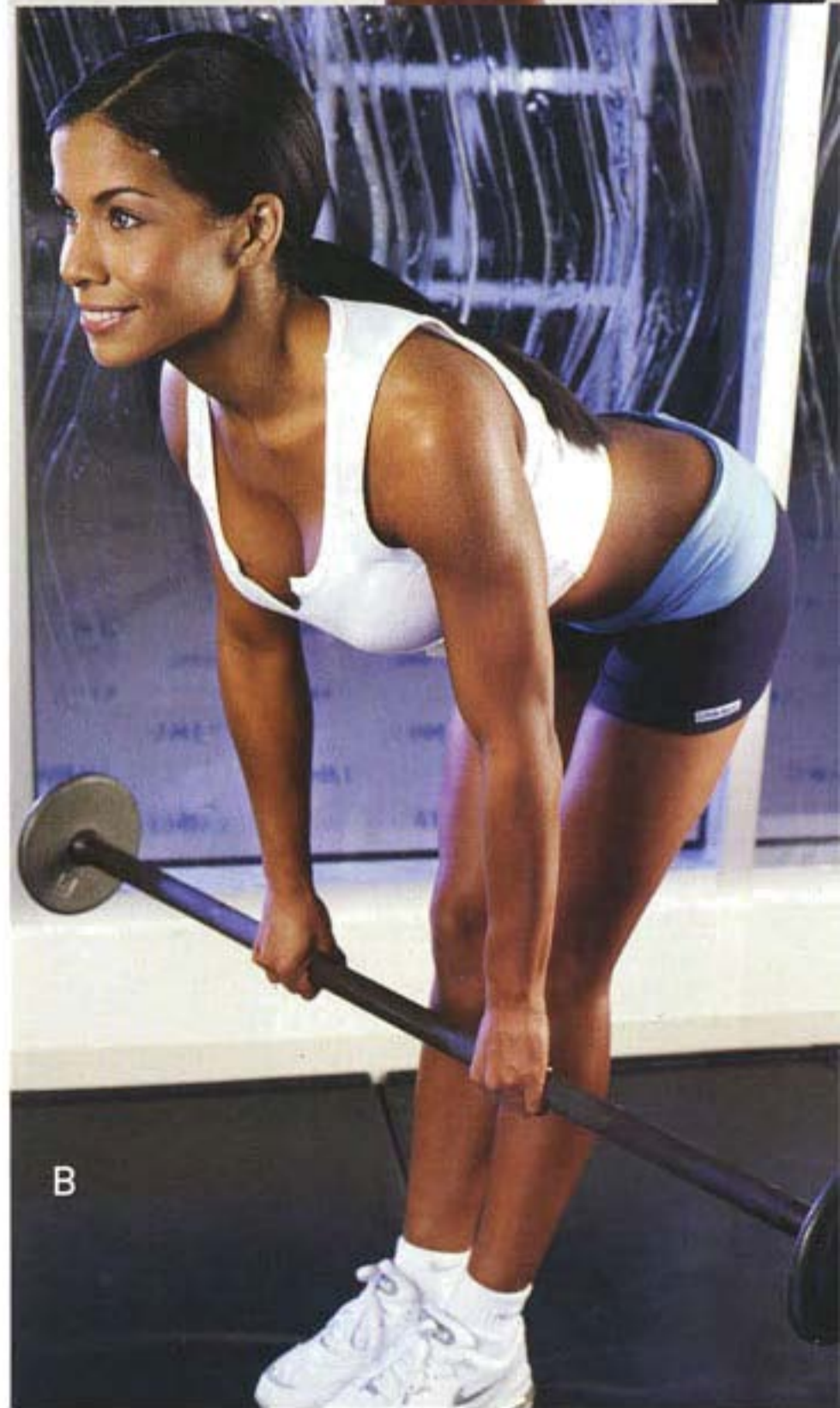
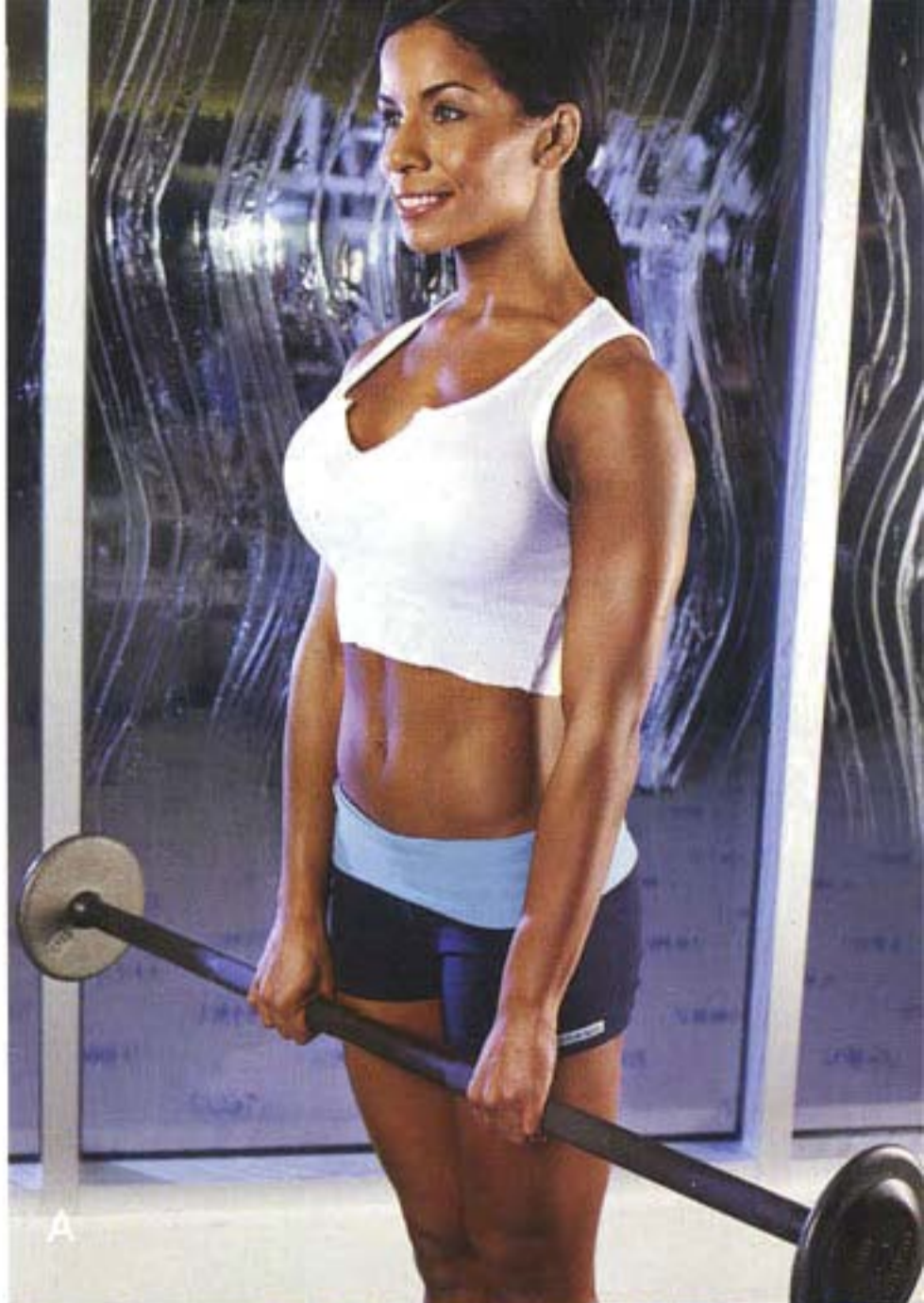
WEIGHT: Off-season, 125 pounds, on-season, 122 pounds

FAVORITE CHEAT FOOD: Chicken fingers with waffle fries and seasoned sour cream.

FAVORITE HOBBY: Reading

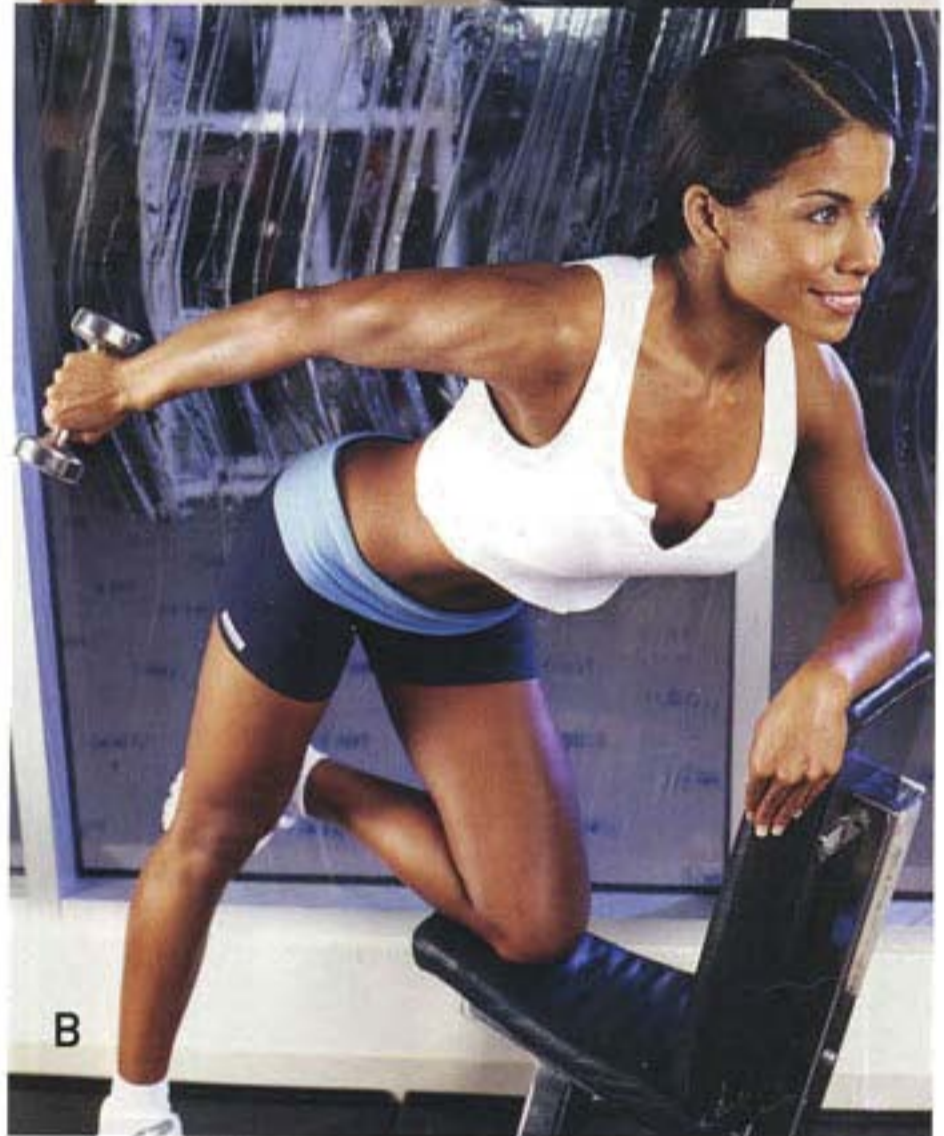
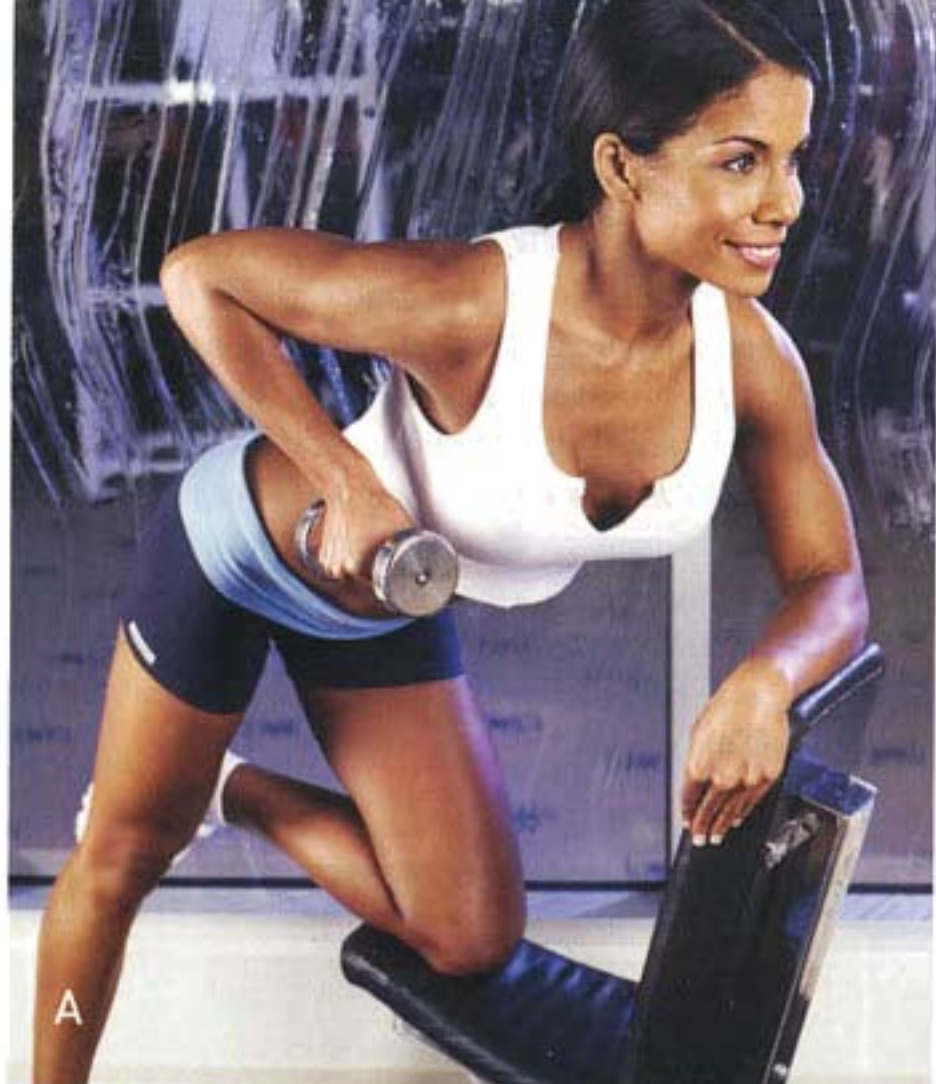
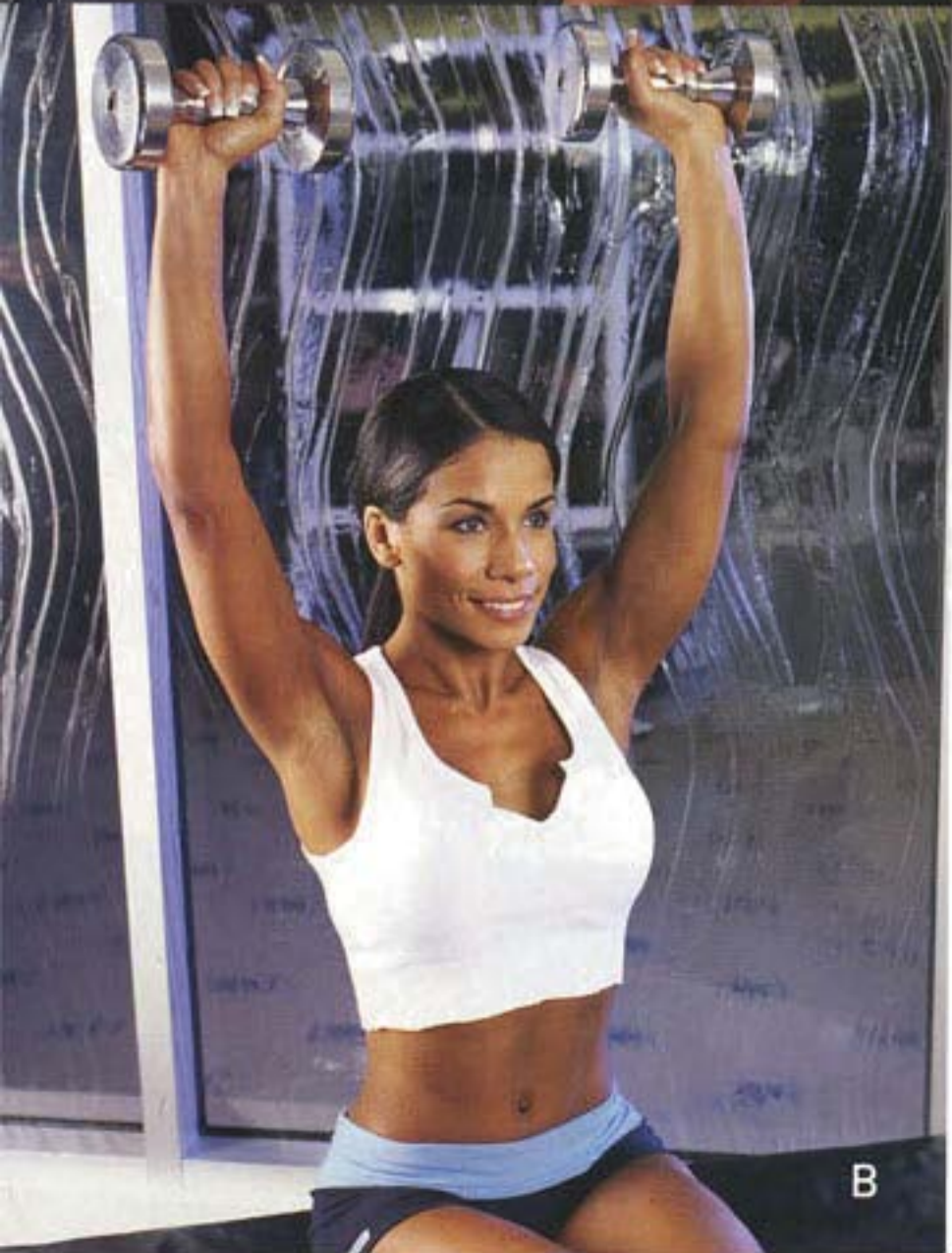
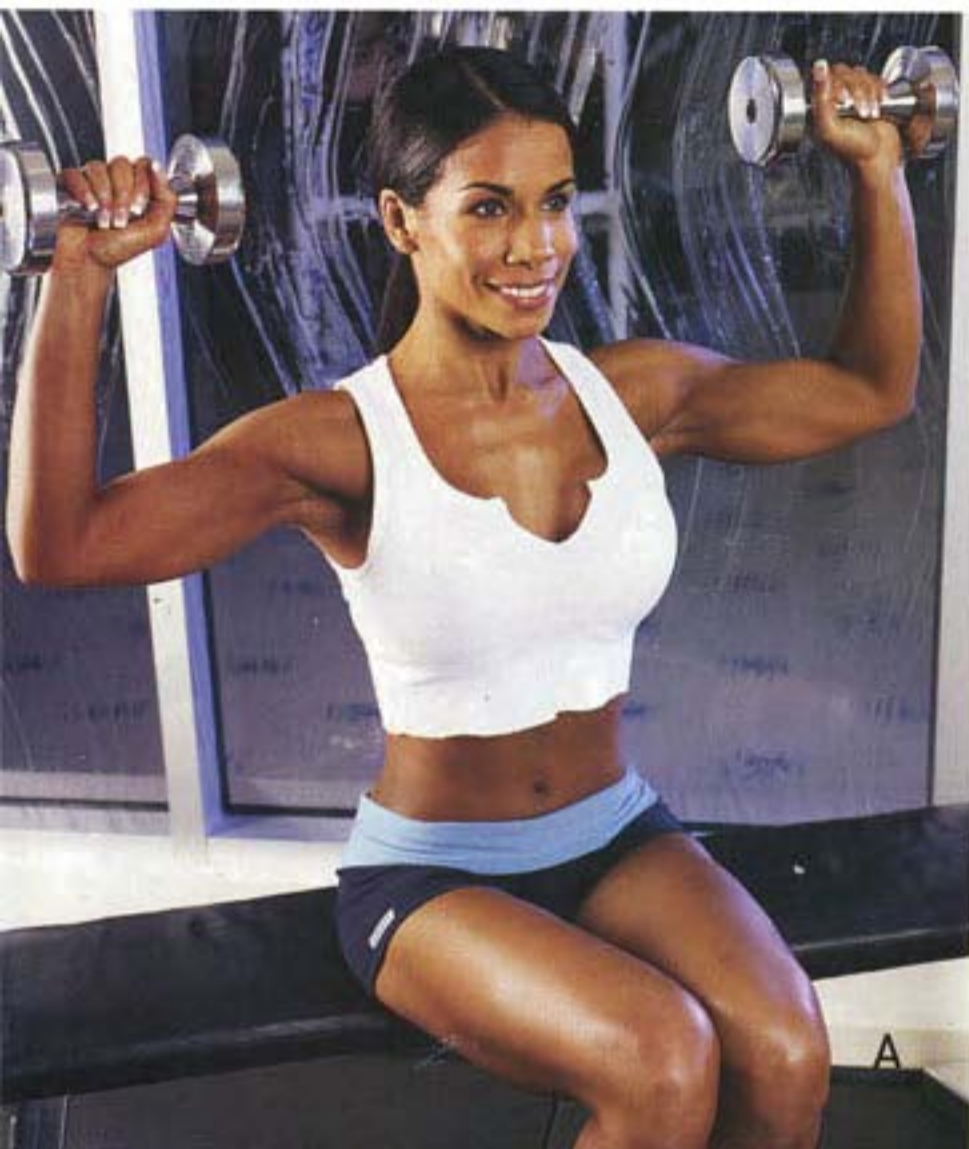
FAVORITE MOVIE: *The Green Mile*

FAVORITE BOOK: *Tuesdays with Morrie*



shoulder press (DELTS, BICEPS) ↓

Sit up straight on a bench with your feet together and a dumbbell in each hand. Start with your elbows bent and your arms out to the sides so that your elbows are in line with your shoulders and the weights are level with your head. Next, press the weights up over your head, keeping your elbows slightly bent. Return to the starting position and repeat for 15 to 20 reps.



triceps kickbacks (TRICEPS) ↑

Place your left knee on a bench and lean forward, supporting yourself with your left arm. Hold a dumbbell in your right hand and, keeping your upper body still, pull it up toward your armpit so your elbow is bent straight back behind you. Next, extend your arm straight back, feeling the contraction in your triceps. Return to the starting position and repeat. Perform the move in a slow and controlled motion throughout. "Don't rush," says Melissa. "Take your time and squeeze on the way back. If you're going too fast, you're cheating." Repeat for 15 to 20 reps for each arm.

DIET DAYS

When Melissa is adapting her diet for weight loss, she keeps it split at a 40/40/20 ratio – 40 percent from carbs, 40 percent from protein, and 20 percent from fat. She lowers her carb intake during the evening and sticks to clean carbs during the day. She also keeps potatoes and white rice in her diet. Her daily calorie intake is about 1,800.

7:30 A.M. Three egg whites and one yolk, scrambled, two slices of turkey bacon, and one serving of oatmeal with a little peanut butter.

10:30 A.M. One low-sugar protein bar (Nitro-tech Smores Sensation) or a protein shake.

1:00 P.M. One chicken breast, green beans, and half a cup of rice.

3:00 P.M. One grilled turkey burger, salad with fat-free dressing, and half a baked potato with butter spray.

6:00 P.M. Six to eight ounces of orange roughy, a large salad with a few rice cakes crumbled on top, and half a baked potato with butter spray.

9:00 P.M. Protein shake.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY...

"The ratios in Melissa's diet are close to those recommended by health experts – 45 to 65 percent carbs, 20 to 35 percent fat, and 10 to 35 percent protein, which is an improvement from the current low-carb diets," says Althea Zancosky, spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association. However, Zancosky says Melissa's diet appears to have no food sources of calcium, which is not healthy for women who need at least 1,000 milligrams of calcium a day. She also recommends eating more fruits and veggies. "You should eat at least five fruits and/or veggies to make up a healthy food plan. They provide nutrients, fiber, and water."

leg lifts (ABS) ↓

Lie flat on your back with your legs fully extended and your hands, palms down, positioned slightly under your butt. Focus on pressing your lower back into the floor. Grasp an exercise ball between your feet and ankles. Tighten your abs and lift your heels a few inches off the floor. (You can bend your knees slightly if it's more comfortable.) Pause for a moment, then lift your legs straight up so the soles of your feet face the ceiling. Maintain a quick, controlled range of motion as you return to the starting position. Repeat for 15 reps. 