

Venus Open Level II Contest Essay for Naomi Sandoval

There are no words to express how grateful I am for the Venus, Adonis, ESE, AGD and related programs and material. To say this information has been life changing just doesn't capture what has happened for me and my family. I feel a level of peace knowing we are empowered to stay lean and strong for the rest of our lives.

My strategy this past year has been to focus on the following areas:

1. Glutes/Core

I realized after VT1 that I had poor glute activation, tight hip flexors and, let's face it, a flat butt. I worked on getting glutes to fire for the first time in my life. The VI program, with its many single leg exercise varieties, is a critical part of this improvement. In addition, because I was focusing on AI workouts, I began to add in a little core work towards the end of the contest (planks, side planks with feet raised, etc). I reopened my diastasis while doing AACC and have had to work very hard on getting it healed back up (splinting and ab vacuums).

2. Gut

I've worked very hard with dietary constraints to improve my gut health. This is a long process and I am very pleased to say I've begun to see and feel results!

3. Shoulder to Waist ratio

Unfortunately, I was not able to increase my shoulder measurement despite lifting heavy. I will not say I've given up on increasing this number but I understand that even a year (especially when most of it was spent dealing with shoulder injuries) is not quite long enough to make much of a dent in the amount I need to increase. Ironically, the work I've done on my gut health has caused my waist to get even smaller so I am closer than ever to hitting the ideal ratios!

I am most pleased about the now visible deltoid definition.

4. Form/Injury prevention

For the last few years, I've worked through nearly constant shoulder pain. It is a huge relief to finally have learned how I have been exacerbating the issue with a subtle form issue. By simply tucking my pelvis under and engaging abs and glutes on certain exercises, I am performing better and not suffering so many injuries!

Workouts:

I have done all of the Venus Index workouts so I switched over to Adonis Index programs well before the contest began. The one I liked the least - oh - I mean the most - was Cluster Cycles, which I was finishing up as this contest began. I was initially overwhelmed by the pure brutality of AACC. There was no option to add in any extra work and any attempts to eat below maintenance were total failures! Just before completing AACC, I injured my lower back doing deadlifts (8 sets? Really?) I then completed the first 7 weeks of IXP, which was just a ton of fun! I switched to VC (just 2-3 sets) for the last few weeks of the contest simply because I'm so depleted and want to enjoy IXP. I added cardio (stepmill and treadmill) back in about halfway through the contest.

Diet:

There were some big surprises here. I had crashed/muscled my way to very lean a few times over the last year but never did maintain! I didn't put it all together until the Transformation Diet came out. I have dropped about 4 pounds of fat during this contest and another few playing with water levels.

What I've done this time is shorter fasts; just 12-16 hours. I have been having a proactive refeed (up to 300 above maintenance) as needed and have not felt like binging. This is all grace; what a smooth process it's been, so unlike my experimental crashes. I did not worry about macro nutrient ratios or anything like that; I just eat what I think is healthy and good for my body.