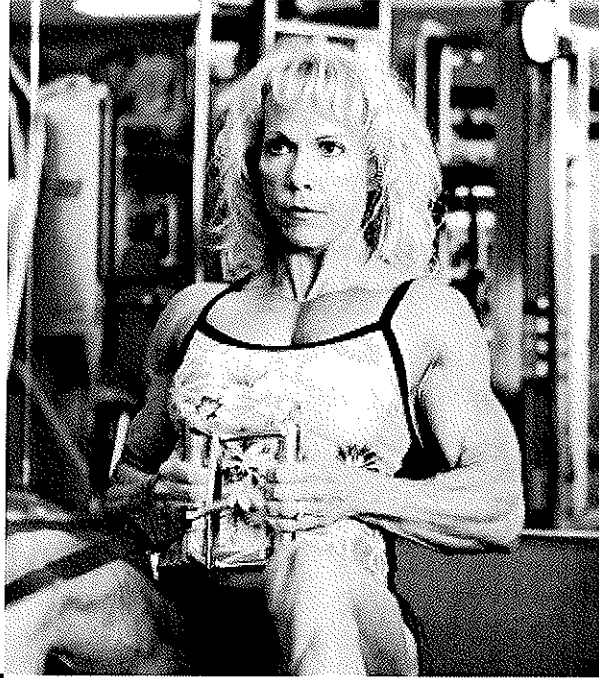


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## Bodybuilder's dedication pays off

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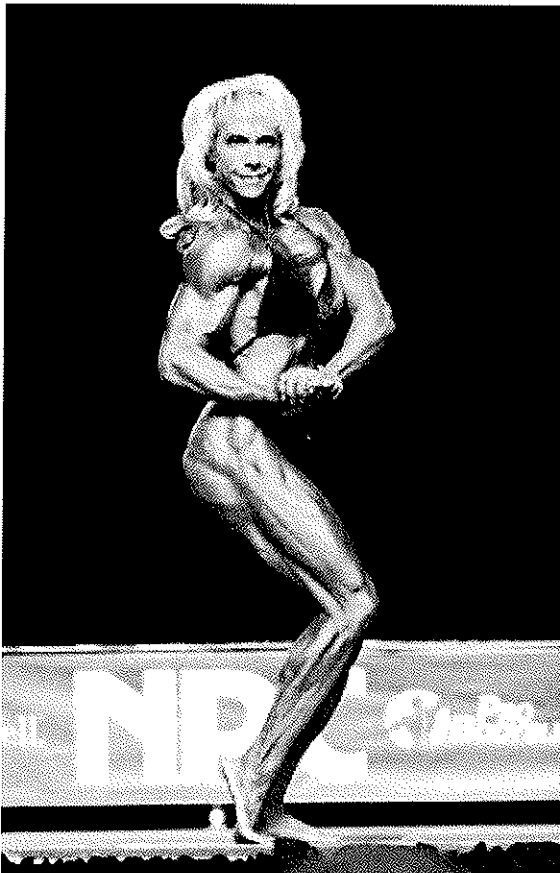
### Bodybuilder's dedication pays off

Janet Kaufman of Lewiston trains at Gold's Gym in Lewiston. After 24 years of sculpting her body, Kaufman earned her pro card last month in Pittsburgh.

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[Bodybuilder's dedication pays off](#) By Kevin Gaboury of The Tribune The Lewiston Tribune | [10 comments](#)

The road to becoming a professional bodybuilder is long, arduous and wrought with sacrifice.



It's one Janet Kaufman of Lewiston knows all too well.

After 24 years and thousands of hours pumping iron in the gym, the 45-year-old finally earned her International Federation of Bodybuilders Pro Card last month. In the mostly male-dominated sport of bodybuilding, it's the pinnacle of her years of dedication.

"I've been trying for that for 24 years, and that was like the monkey that finally got off my back," she said. "It was almost surreal, because I had been trying so hard for so long."

Kaufman competed in the National Physique Committee Masters Nationals on July 22 and 23 in Pittsburgh. The competition is one of many International Federation of Bodybuilders pro-qualifying shows across the nation. To become a professional, Kaufman had to take overall in her age group, meaning she had to not only win her weight class, but beat contestants in all other weight classes.

"I'm just like any professional athlete now," she said. "Like Tiger Woods or an NFL player." As far as she knows, she's the only native Idahoan professional female bodybuilder. She's definitely the only one from Lewiston.

She's been extremely close to her goal before, which makes the accomplishment even sweeter. At nationals last year, she missed her pro card by one point.

"I came in second probably the last six competitions that I've done, so I was right there," she said. "I've been so close ... I'm still trying to let it sink in."

Standing at about 5 feet, 2 inches, Kaufman is a bubbly blonde with a stunning physique sculpted by years in the gym. But her body wasn't always in its current rock-hard condition. Her journey began in 1987 with a little tough love from her brother. She was attending North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene and had gained what she calls, "the freshman 15."

"I came home and my brother just happened to mention, 'You're getting kinda heavy and your butt's getting kinda big,' " she said. "It made me mad."

The two attended a bodybuilding show at Washington State University, and after seeing the physiques of the competitors on stage she was inspired - and hooked.

"I said, 'I'm going to do that next year,' " she remembered. "So I went home and started lifting with him, and I've been doing it ever since."

Her daily routine starts at 5:30 a.m. at Gold's Gym in Lewiston - where she's also a personal trainer. Each day, she targets a different muscle group - Monday is hamstrings, Tuesday is back and arms, Wednesday is chest, Thursday is shoulders and Friday is legs again. She does cardio in the evenings and rests on Sunday.

Possibly the most important aspect of her routine, though, is diet. About 16 weeks prior to competition, Kaufman adheres to a strict low-carb, high-protein diet.

"That's where you strip off all the body fat to show what you actually did in the off-season," she said.

Kaufman qualified for the national level in 2000 and competes in about two events every year in the 125-pound middleweight class. She said one of the biggest challenges is maintaining her weight - similar to what a wrestler faces. Before a competition, her body fat can drop to as low as 4 percent.

There's also the internal conflict. In a sport where you're being judged solely on your body, you can become your own worst enemy.

"All bodybuilders know that your head starts messing with you," she said. "You're constantly self-checking in the mirror because it's one of the few sports that you are judged on your physique. You really have to surround yourself with people that are going to give you a subjective opinion."

Being on stage in a bikini, in front of 11 judges, can also be a nerve-wracking experience.

"The first show I ever did, I was so nervous I had to have a glass of wine before I went on stage," she said. "The butterflies don't really ever go away 100 percent; I don't think with any athlete they ever do."

Kaufman works as a purchasing clerk for the Lewiston School District and lives in Lewiston with her husband, Gene, and two dogs. Many of her sacrifices for the sport have been theirs.

"There's a lot of things that were sacrificed in the 24 years I've been competing and having kids was one of them," she said. "He's very supportive, but I know he has to deal with a lot."

Kaufman has no intention to quit while she's ahead, either. She plans to compete in her first pro show in July 2012. Weight classes are eliminated at the pro level, so Kaufman said she's going to have to work even harder.

"People have asked me when I'm going to quit, and I said, 'I don't know how,' " she said. "I sit back and I think 24 years is a long time. ... But I love the sport and I love being in here and I think that's what drives you. You've gotta love it, because you're not making money at it."

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