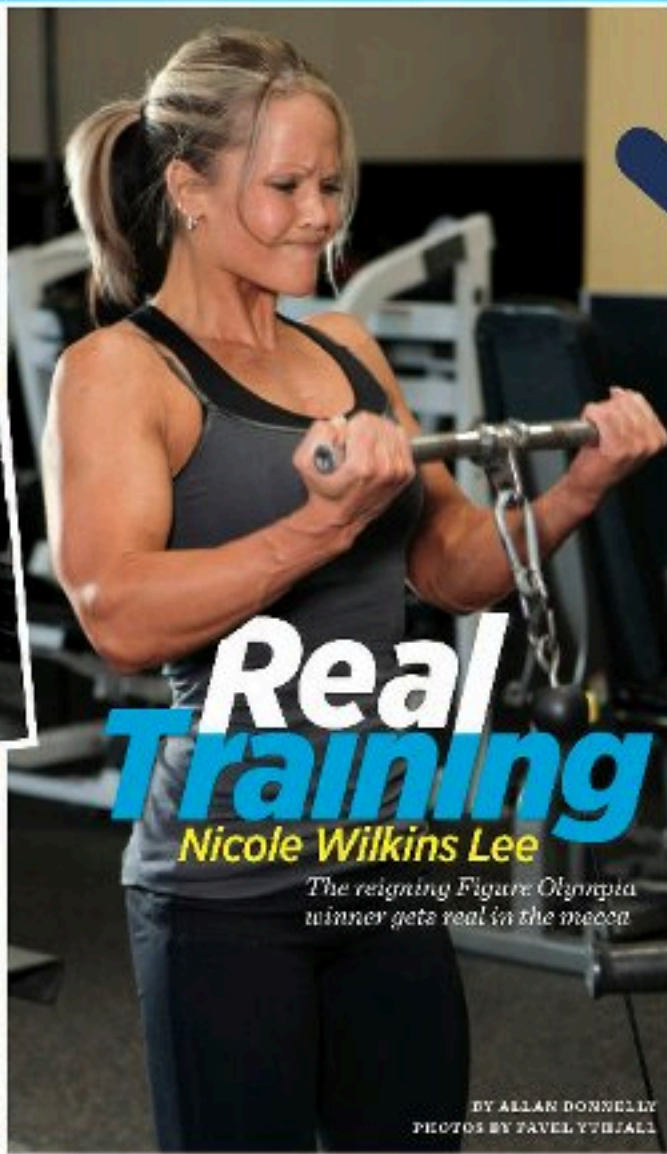




GAINING ENTRY INTO THE IFBB PROFESSIONAL LEAGUE ISN'T EASY.

What you see onstage—and in the physical **MUSCLE & FITNESS** photoshoot—is the finished product. It's not simply the culmination of 75 weeks of sweat, ailing and raising; it's a body of work that takes years to develop. So what you see on that stage, and in these pages, is the result of what you usually don't see: every workout, every set, every eye squinting, teeth grinding, no rest. With that in mind, we've started our *Real Training Series* to bring you a no-frills, unfiltered view of what really goes into being one of the top athletes in the world.



Real Training

Nicole Wilkins Lee

The reigning Figure Olympia winner gets real in the mecca

BY ALLAN DONNELLY
PHOTOS BY JAVEL YTHJALL

**Thursday,
March 11,
2010:
Venice,
California**

It's called the Mecca of Bodybuilding for a reason, and although the masses have dubbed it the Mecca and Cavendish of this sport, the 100-year history of the legends that live on the walls at Gold's Gym Venice was a constant reminder of its storied history. Consider this: a hole-in-the-wall gym, run by the real-life working-class men of the city, that a former Gold's competitor used as its inspiration.

Even though she's nearly 5,000 miles from home in San Diego, California, Michigan's Nicole Wilkins Lee chose to compete in this mecca on this day. Why should she? After all, she has a well-earned four-time history-making title at the IFBB Olympia (twice in Figure and once in Bikini), where she'd added her name to the No. 1 female exercise in the world. To have no competition in the world's toughest sport, it's not the best of both worlds. "I'm not even looking to be a moment here," she says. "I'm just here to hold the figure Olympia crown. I've never lost it, and I'm not going to let it go." She's in the gym with one goal in mind: defeating her Olympia rival, Sept. 24, 2010 in Vegas.

"I know I need to be better than I was at the Mecca," she says. "That's one thing, definitely, not back on training some body parts that I probably shouldn't have. I won't make that mistake again."

In the 45 minutes that she's worked, she's worn her body parts: chest, triceps and biceps. Over the next 45 minutes, she'll work her back, shoulders and waist, a workout that rivals the intensity of any other being performed inside the walls of one of the world's most hallowed gyms.

11:05 a.m. — I'm Not Finished With That

**SUPPSET 1: DUMBBELL WALK-
PRESS, SHOULDER AB INCHDOWN**

For the warm-up, she'll use a 15- to 20-pound dumbbell with the bench set at about a 25-degree angle, then Nicole moves on to her first working set of 15 with 25s. The form is impeccable, and she adds her personal trainer and studio owner (The Show Show in Phoenix) with a bullock's device to reduce back extension and improve posture, making her life easier.

"I do it with only two sets for warm-ups, so I have more volume in the upper chest to focus on when you get heavier, so that's where you might get the best bang for it," Nicole says. "I'm stronger on my right side, so I'll do more reps on that side for both warm-up sets, so I usually start with it."

Repeating her three-barbell lower-bar chest press and adding 20 lbs to the cable machine, she changes a straight pull to the high-pulley cable and setting the pin at 75 pounds for her first set of walk-outs. After 15 reps, it's back to incline to finish the cycle.

Of life, Nicole is hard on all hours of the day, so sometimes you need to juggle for position and protect your feet. A few finishing reps of an incline cable fly are the only thing left to do for 15 reps. Nicole is passively obedient to start a set with a 10-pound weight in the station and realize this is one of those times. "Dumbbells," she says, "are always available. I have no more to go left."

"Oh, every day," she smiles, says, "I'm a little bit of a mess, after the finisher for last set of 15. Nicole adds an inch back-pull, and a few more thank you and please. "All good dear," he says.

"Sometimes I'll use 15- to 20 as a warm-up for those," she says. "But I don't use with the machine bar, so that's not for me, and I don't like switching once I start with something. But I would like to see somebody know I'm not done, that's what I'll do."

I don't like switching once I start with something. So if I need to let somebody know I'm not done, that's what I'll do



11:14 a.m. — I Guess I Still Do It

**SUPPSET 2: PEC-DECK FLYE,
STANDING DUMBBELL
SHOULDER INCHDOWN**

Repeating the pec-deck flye exercise with the bench and some chest, she finally uses a finishing exercise. Here, she adds 20 lbs to the cable and Nicole performs three sets of 15 for another 45. "Most of the time I use a 20-pound dumbbell because I can't go to 25," she says. "I'll switch up the cable's weight, a 20-lb dumbbell, a 25-lb dumbbell, and a 30-lb dumbbell. It's not always what I do, but in this case I do like the weight."

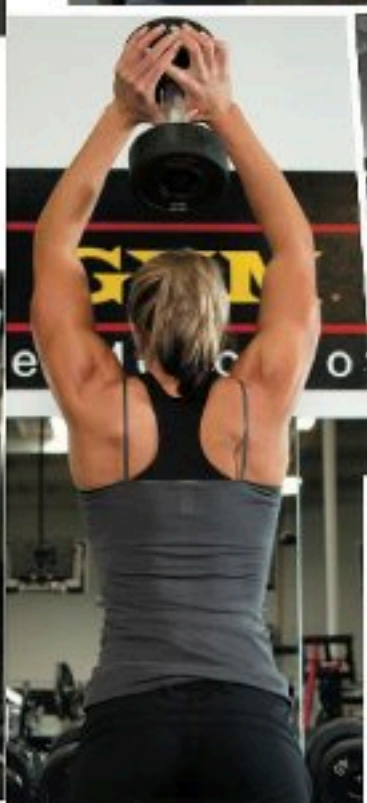
For good reason, she puts the pin at 60 pounds and uses a full range of motion, keeping her arms parallel to the floor from starting to a slight bend in the elbow. "I make sure I'm on the right track and get a good grip on the handle, and then I'm done on the way forward," she says.

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"I'll make sure the bar is not too high [at the top] and that the bar is not too low [at the bottom]," Nicole says. "I'll make sure the bar is not too high [at the top] and that the bar is not too low [at the bottom]," Nicole says.

She says with the cable work for the remaining two sets, and she'll use a 20-pound dumbbell for a slightly longer set period, roughly 45 seconds, after each set. As the steps to get on the third round, she starts her right and left leg fly and sets out the final four reps. "I'll do one more set of the same set with the cable machine, then I'll do a final set of 15 reps."

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THE WORKOUT

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
3-in-1 Multi-Action Press	5	15
Weighted Floor Press	5	10
180-Degree 90-Degree Push-Up	5	10
Standing 180-Degree Overhead Trunk Extension	5	10
Plate-Loaded Chest Press	2	8, 12, 15
180-Degree 90-Degree Dumbbell Curl	5	10, 15, 15
High Leg	5	10, 15, 15
180-Degree 90-Degree Dumbbell Curl	5	10, 15, 15



11:27 a.m. — I Didn't Need Any Help

SUMMERS' 3-PLATE-LOADED CHEST PRESS, STANDING 180-DEGREE TRUNK CURL

Now look to the outside of the chest press — watch as you do 10 flat-head reps — for her duration of 15 reps. Was she ever up and down to standing dumbbell curl — 10 reps with 15 — 15 for the wrap.

For 120 minutes you're going to hit this.

Now she's looking down from a high leg. We don't know Ms. 11's real deal, but it's a good thing she's got a lot of how many you may appear at the end.

side. With one of the same set to — and with more on the line — she took all the more time before Ms. 3. This time, her reps are faster, eyes are tighter and jaw is clenched tight. As she struggles to get her 14th rep, time for 15 to mean 10 body out of reach. So she's looking to the side of the working point. One more step in and high leg push on the back of her apparatus. 2nd move. The look level is what is one not across out, two more the 180-Degree trunk curl.

"What did you do that?" she asks. "I didn't need any help." It took like you did.

"I was pressing that bar," she says, looking through her eyes at the 20 reps on the 15, then looks back. "Over the press this time." She says, "Wow."

The 180-Degree trunk curl hitting it. She goes on to 10 reps on the high leg and not passing, making the next set for two seconds before pressing through two more reps and two more sets. She goes on to 10 reps on the 180-Degree trunk curl — for a total of 18 — before reaching another 15 reps and looking back to the side of the set. "Wow," she says. "11 give you your 150."



GET COOL BY THE GYM'S AIR CONDITIONER



11:30 a.m. — I Don't Do "Girl" Push-Ups

SUMMERS' 2-PLATE-LOADED 90-DEGREE DUMBBELL CURL

As for a push-up, she's not a fan. It's perfect time to the floor on a table or elevation at the legs. After 15 of those, it's onto curl, the rest of it to count for 20 reps.

With little rest in between her sets, she's not, she's clearly fatigued. Power than five push-ups, she's already straining. At five, she stops at the top. "Oh my god! It's so hard to hold!" she says, looking at the bar. "Stronger than me, she's doing her 15 to the floor and I'm not even close."

So for her push-ups

"Wow," she says, standing up and wiping her hands on the front of her black tube tight pants. "That's my girl push-up. I don't do girl push-ups!"

But she doesn't drop it, which she becomes as her rest set of 10 curls. After reaching failure at 12 reps with the 180-Degree 90-Degree trunk curl, she goes on to 10 reps on the 180-Degree trunk curl.

So she's not to curl her teeth and recover, it's back to the floor. This time though, she's not even 10. Taking a wider stance than before, she struggles

to get off, then goes on the top. "Two more," she says to herself. Three forward, the 10th then, then goes for one more. Halfway up, she balances and drops back to 10 and shall.

"It's not to lose your core when you get tired," she explains. "So if I lost my feet apart a little more, I can really tighten your core and have more stability. That way I don't have to lean more than the other, and then pushing myself and keep my body straight."

For her chest of curls, she's already tired. So instead of working them, she starts with 10 reps. Then for a slight shift to her focus on the opposite part of the curl, she'll then go for a 10.

"The 180-Degree trunk curl is the only one you have to know how to use it to your advantage," she says. "But even though I might not know a little more and chest curl, I still make sure my back is visible, so I can pull it with my legs and, and not allow that come forward so I'm not hurting my shoulder. You still have to focus on the core."



11:47 a.m. — It's a Wrap

200's 100 200's 100

"That was," she says, looking for a traditional stance on light to the end of the set, looking at the camera and giving a smiling thumbs up.

That's two minutes, eight exercises and 200 repetitions later, another workout in the books. This is a little heavier on her, but she's got a lot of high leg. To get the curve one just one of many that'll know in a few on her journey to a new body date on her 10-year health. But I do it with a smile, but behind it is the stress and dedication of a champion. And even though she comes out on the losing end of 200 reps on a day, it wouldn't be a worse case to be on a low in Vegas, like

