

# Connie's Tips

*Figure Competitor and award winning hair stylist Connie Gallo has taken time out of her training for the Emerald Cup this spring to provide some down to earth tips on beauty and presentation for competitors. Whether its your first time on stage or your hundredth, her reminders will allow you to put your well trained physique on stage in the most polished and professional way you can!*

I'd have to say, there are few things out there more appealing than a well toned physique showcased by impeccable presentation. Imagine if you will, 12 weeks of consistent hard training, 12 weeks of diligently preparing every last meal, 12 weeks curfew time of 9:30pm, 12 weeks isolation from everything friends and family say is 'fun' just to have one fleeting moment on stage. One moment for a panel of judges to make their first impression! So what's it gonna be? A gorgeous firm tanned body gleaming head to toe with all of your hard work displayed perfectly, or some buff rough rendition of a has been after a bender?! Now that may be an exaggeration, but I have seen some beautiful bodies outshone by bad tanning colour, inappropriate make up, and my favorite, more hardware in their hair than you'd find at a nine year old girls birthday party.

So let's break this down shall we?

## **Tanning....**

There are many tanning products available these days. It is really difficult to say which ones work best. But I can tell you that they all look infinitely better when used over top of a good base tan. The result is more bronzed and much richer. If you are concerned about ultra violet rays and damage to your skin stick to self tanners. I do not recommend that you wait for the last week before a show to "test drive" a tanning product. I do recommend that you begin your tanning regime about 6 weeks out from an event. Start off slowly with 5 minutes in a tanning booth twice a week and gradually increase your time. I strongly recommend using a sun block on your face. Let's face it, none of us need any help speeding up the signs of aging. After a couple of weeks you will start to see what kind of colour your skin type will turn. The tone you want to achieve is a natural believable colour. At this point I suggest trying different self tanners. I generally use one product per week. After 2-3 applications of the self tanner I take a picture of myself in a bikini. This is a great way to really see what colour you are turning. Preferably bronzed and glowing, not orange... and trust me if you see orange, so do the judges! Some product lines come with a sponge applicator, I recommend using rubber gloves and rubbing the tanner on this way. It's much faster and doesn't cause streaking. A bronze paste applied as a finishing touch looks fabulous when done properly. Bronzer is best applied when your suit is on by putting a dollop in your gloved hands, emulsifying it a little and 'patting' the paste on your body. Do NOT rub it in, pat gently. Do not use a powder bronzer with shimmer as it reflects the light and will make those areas appear lighter. Always remember that your on stage color will appear far too dark to the average person, but under stage lights your best efforts can be washed away by the brightness if you aren't a nice chocolate color.

## **Make Up....**

The idea here ladies is *pretty* so unless you are a make up artist or have some kind of make up application know how I would strongly urge you to get the help of a professional. Some product companies offer make up application classes with the purchase of product. Stage make up is much different than regular make up and most certainly not to be confused with the "more is better" idea. Keep in mind that your skin colour will be much darker on show day and your foundation needs to be

the same shade. What I found to work well is about a week before the show go to a reputable make up counter and ask the sales person for help. Explain to them what you are doing and that your skin colour will be a couple shades darker than you appear. The trained staff will be able to match your skin tone and will more than likely recommend a darker bronzing powder for show day to richen or deepen your foundation colour. This is a very good idea. When it comes to tanning my face I mix my self tanner in with my moisturizer. This makes my face colour appear much more natural and streak free. The sales staff will be able to come up with a look for you in a colour palette that will compliment your facial structure and best accentuate you features. Choose colours that enhance your features not drown them and when choosing colours don't do the matchy matchy thing with your swimsuit colour. On show day false eyelashes are a must, and opting for a darker lipstick shade will make your pearly whites even whiter. Once you have met with your make up person have them write it all down step by step so you can take the information with you show day. This will help keep away the backstage chaos and keep you organized and on track.

### **Hair...**

Ahhhhh, my favourite!! Hair is the one accessory you can't remove so it needs to be an asset and not a distraction! On stage you want to look like the epitome of health and wellness. This look is something that is created from head to toe... literally. If you choose to wear your hair down, make sure you have been to the hairdresser recently. A good trim and a conditioning treatment are a must. The trim to rid your locks of snarly ends and the treatment for shine and fullness. Ask your stylist to give you a lesson on blow drying and consult with them on a style that will give you the polish on your hard earned physique. If you plan to wear your hair up, remember that it has to remain consistent with the overall look. Hair pulled back too tightly will make you look too severe, and if you happen to have a pea head (don't laugh... I have a pea head!) tightly pulled hair will make your symmetry seem off. So keep it a little soft. Also note that sparkly things in hair are a huge distraction on stage! I remember once I was at the *Arnold Classic* watching the prejudging for women's bodybuilding, and one of the competitors had an arsenal of shiny things in her hair. She had obviously worked extremely hard or she wouldn't have been there, but all I can remember is the ridiculous sparkly butterfly hair barrettes! The moral is use hardware sparingly, less is more. Competition day is a long day when it comes to hairsprays, I recommend a professional brand. You will be changing your hair many times during the day and then, re-doing it for the evening event. Use a working spray and not a finishing spray. Finishing sprays can be a little too strong and with all the nervous energy buzzing through you, you are bound to go a little overboard! Working sprays are just that. They are a softer touch than finishing sprays but tend to have more 'memory'. Spray liberally, they will never get too sticky and you will be able to re-work your style without causing any breakage. I like to end off with a shine spray, opt for the aerosol kind with silicone. The silicone will help ward off the effects of humidity and is much lighter than its oil based counterpart. This and it gives shine factor 10!!

Stay tuned for the next installment when Connie helps put the rest of the package together!