



# Sarah O'Connor

Photography by Charlie Suriano

## Where do you hail from?

I grew up in country South Australia, then moved to the Queensland Gold Coast to study a Bachelor of Exercise Science. I now live in Hamilton, New Zealand.

## What's the most interesting thing that has happened to you?

At the age of 32, I decided that I wanted to compete in a fitness competition; six months later I won my first state sports model competition. In that same year I went on to win the INBA Universe Overall Sports Model title. The following year I decided I needed a new challenge and stepped up to the Figure division. I finished my second year of competing by taking home the INBF Natural Amateur World Title from America. To top it off, was awarded my Pro Card. Since then, fitness competitions have become a real passion of mine. Last year, I competed 10 times around the world, taking home eight first-place titles and two second-place trophies.

## What did you want to be when you grew up?

I have always been competitive and into sport. I used to dream of being on stage with the spotlights on me. I actually wanted to be a dancer or gymnast. My fitness competitions have allowed me to fulfil my childhood dream of being on stage. I especially love the character rounds.

## What is your relationship to the fitness industry?

I am an exercise physiologist, online personal trainer and competition coach. I have my own online personal training and nutrition business where I get to help hundreds of clients be healthier and fitter. Also, as I mentioned, I am an active competitor in fitness competitions.

## Tell us about an average week in the gym for you.

I train five days per week. I split my weight training into muscle groups: chest and triceps, quads and hammys, shoulders and abs, and back, biceps and calves. In my off-season I tend to keep my cardio to a minimum. I enjoy walking and outdoor sports like beach volleyball. I like checking out new things, too. For instance, I tried board

paddling recently — great fun! When I start to lean down for competition, I add in a few HIIT sessions per week.

## What's your favourite exercise?

Ooh, hard to say. I love weight training and love training all muscle groups. Probably side raises for shoulders and kickbacks for glutes. What can I say? It's all about the capped-out shoulders and the booty gains!

## What do you love most about the fitness world?

I live and breathe fitness. I love feeling fit and healthy and I love learning, training and pushing myself physically and mentally. I also love that I get to pass on this knowledge to my clients, friends and family.

## What do you like the least about the fitness world?

I try to look on the positive side of all things. I think all industries have good and bad. The fitness world is a world of its own. If I am forced to think of a negative, I would have to say that I am not particularly happy when I come across clients that have been put in a very bad position health wise due to uneducated trainers or coaches claiming to be experts in the field and giving the wrong advice.

## Tell us about your diet or nutrition plan.

I follow a custom-written eating plan all year round. I believe that nutrition is the key to long-term health and continuous progression each year. My eating is balanced and contains all food groups. By design, it has the right ratio of macro- and micronutrients for my body type and my goals.

## Do you use supplements?

Yes. I believe in supporting my body to meet my goals. My partner owns a supplements store here in Hamilton New Zealand. He writes my custom supplement plan based on my goals. Off-season I will have different supplements to when I am leaning down for competition.

## What is your favourite male body part?

Abs! I am partial to a six-pack. However, what caught my eye when I first met my partner was his smile.

## What is your own body part that you like the best?

My abs and shoulders. I have been working hard on my shoulders. I am pleased with the progress. I am lucky to be blessed with a good mid-section.

## What advice would you give to someone wanting to start out in the modelling or fitness industry?

Get yourself out there! Book a few photo shoots. Look up Charlie Suriano and book in with the master himself! You will need to stay in shape all year round, so do your research and find a good coach who has the credentials but also keeps your health as a high priority.

## When you get the opportunity to have some time to yourself, what do you usually get up to?

I love going to the movies and taking long walks. Also, I am rather partial to getting away somewhere different to home. My partner and I aim to book at least one overseas holiday per year to get away and travel.

## Who is the person you admire most from the fitness world? Who is your hero?

I don't really have a person that is my 'hero' in the fitness world. I have always liked Erin Stern's physique and what she stands for in the industry. However, I try to draw from my own inner strength and use this to drive myself forward. 🇺🇸

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