



IFBB ELITE PRO Shelby Neaves

Wins at Arnold Classic Africa on her Pro Debut

Muscle & Health Southern Africa recently had the chance to interview IFBB Elite Pro Shelby Neaves after her recent Pro Debut at the Arnold Classic Africa Pro bodybuilding show.



Muscle&Health: How many times have you competed at the Arnold Classic Africa?

Shelby Neaves: I have competed at the Arnold Classic Africa three times. My first two times were as an amateur bikini fitness athlete and my third time was my first time standing as an IFBB Elite Pro.

M&H: Did your prep for your Pro Debut differ from your amateur shows?

SN: Yes, it did! This wasn't something that my coach and I planned. My off-season leading into my Pro debut was the best off-season I have ever had. I maintained a comfortable and relatively lean look throughout my off-season, which made the process of dialing in for Arnolds 2019 much easier.

M&H: Tell us about your overall Arnolds weekend experience as a Pro competitor?

SN: I had one of the most amazing weekends of my life. It was a dream come true to be able to share the Arnolds stage with the other Pro bikini fitness girls. I got to see Arnold Schwarzenegger up close and personal - which was of course another dream come true.

The entire event was so well-planned and put together. Everything ran so smoothly and the whole vibe was awesome! If I could re-live that weekend I would do it over and over again!

M&H: How did it differ from your experience as an amateur?

SN: The Elite Pro athletes we were given some wonderful opportunities such as 5-star accommodation for the weekend, being able to be a part of Arnold's private speech and to ultimately share the stage with other Pro athletes. The experiences I've had as an amateur are still very



special to me - make no mistake - things were just heightened this time round.

M&H: What was it like to share the stage with other Pros? Did you get to interact much with other competitors?

SN: Yes, I did interact with the other competitors, and it was fascinating to speak to them and hear how some of them prep, how far they travelled to be at the Arnolds Africa event and how long some of them have been competing for. To be able to share the stage with each and every one of those bikini fitness girls was an absolute honour, which I cherish so much!

M&H: How did it feel to get first call-outs? And then to take 1st place at your Pro Debut?

SN: So, I actually never heard my number being called out backstage for the semi-final round! After all the bikini fitness girls went on stage and came off, we had to wait backstage to hear the official read out of the numbers of the girls who had made it through to the next round. I paid close attention (or so I thought) but somehow never heard my number. I saw some of the girls I stood with leaving the backstage area as required and I knew those must have been the girls who were eliminated so I thought to

myself "It's okay, it was your first Pro show and it's a goal achieved to just be here". But something in me told me to go and find an official to confirm that the numbers of the finalists had been read out. The official re-read the girls who had qualified for the next round and my number was in there! I still double-checked just to make sure!

To try and put into words how it felt to take first place is something that I really struggle doing. When people ask me how it felt I just don't know what to say. It felt unreal, and I just burst into tears and everything that I had put into that prep and the sport as a whole ran through my mind in a matter of a few seconds. I couldn't see through the tears, but I could see my coach's face somehow. It was the most overwhelming feeling.

M&H: What is next in store for you? Any plans to compete this year again?

SN: Yes! I qualified for the World Championships in Spain, which is towards the end of the year. I am also very humbled to have received an invite to participate at the Arnold Classic Europe in September, the day before my birthday actually! The plan is to do both, so I am working with my coach towards that.

M&H: Who or what has been your source of inspiration/support on your journey thus far?

SN: Definitely my coach, Tarryn Zelow. No matter what time of the day or night, I know she is always there for me, as she is with any of her girls. If I need that extra push or when that sheet of self-doubt that feels as if its suffocating me comes by, she is always there to put my mind at ease. Basically, she is the fuel to my fire.

I'm very blessed to have such supportive people in my life. Everyone who is close to me has always been there for me and understood the process and lifestyle this sport requires. The messages and showers of encouragement most often from people I don't know personally, really stand out for me. I've said this before, but I feel like I can't emphasize enough how much even a four-word sentence of encouragement or kind words can inspire me and for that I am so thankful and appreciative!

