

Working the stage

In this edition Muscle & Health Southern Africa had the opportunity to speak to Natasha van der Walt, Head Judge for IFBB Mpumalanga. Natasha is an On-Stage Manager for IFBB SA, and shared some of her experiences in working on an international stage.

Muscle&Health: Tell us a little about yourself

Natasha: I am a mom of two girls and happily married to Juan van der Walt. I have loved bodybuilding from a young age; my role model was actor Jean Claude van Damme and I think that's where my love for the sport started.

Muscle&Health: What do you do at IFBB SA?

Natasha: I am a provincial judge and also the head judge for Mpumalanga. I am currently an On-Stage Manager for IFBB South Africa as well as the Arnold Classic Africa.

Muscle&Health: How long have you been involved in IFBB SA?

Natasha: I competed in IFBB SA in 2013 and 2014 in the Ladies Beach Bikini and Bikini Fitness divisions. I have been judging since 2014.

Muscle&Health: You are an On-Stage Manager for IFBB, can you explain what this entails? What exactly does an On-Stage Manager do?

Natasha: An on-stage manager manages all the athletes whilst they are on stage. This involves ensuring the athletes stand in the correct place on stage, correcting their posing, if required, and also moving the athletes to different positions on stage, as requested by the chief judge. This is to facilitate and assist the judging panel to be able to judge all the competitors in the line-up.

Muscle&Health: How did you become a Stage Manager? Did you do any training or course to become a Stage Manager?

Natasha: I didn't do any courses, but I received on-stage training at my first Arnolds Africa

in 2017. I was asked by Wayne Price in to assist Hennie Hurter on stage at the 2017 Arnold Classic Africa for the first time. I was super excited but scared because I had no idea what to do. Hennie gave me training as we worked on stage and from there on, I have been asked to assist so far every year. I love to work on stage because you meet so many athletes from different countries.

Muscle&Health: Tell us about some of opportunities you have had within IFBB as an On-Stage Manager?

Natasha: I have been working on the Arnold Classic Africa stage since 2017 and at the 2018 event, IFBB International President, Dr Rafael Santonja asked me to work on his international stage in Bialystok, Poland in October 2018. This was a dream come true; I enjoyed every moment on that stage and learned so much.

Natasha van der Walt

OCCUPATION:
Planner at
Sasol Secunda

I would love to work on an IFBB International stage again. This year at the 2019 Arnold Classic African I had the opportunity to meet Arnold Schwarzenegger himself, and he asked me to work on his Arnold's stage in Los Angeles. I am so excited but still waiting for the formal invite!

Muscle&Health: What are some of the challenges in being an On-Stage Manager?

Natasha: At Arnolds and in Poland I learned that the language barrier is very hard, as not everyone understands English this can sometimes makes things difficult, but I learned that sign language also works and that helps.

Muscle&Health: What personality traits are important for an On-Stage Manager?

Natasha: For me it is treating the athletes with respect. They work hard to be on stage, and so I am always friendly and strict, but with a smile.

Muscle&Health: Any advice for someone wanting to become an On-Stage Manager?

Natasha: Just be you. If you have a passion for the sport and people, this will be ideal for you. And always smile as that helps the athletes to calm down and not be so nervous on stage.

