

# 2017 Best Self Atlanta Magazine Courage Award Finalist

# HAYLEY MIX

BEFORE • Starting Weight: 190



AFTER • Stage Weight: 143, Body Fat % 14.5%



**M**y journey began at rock bottom. I hadn't always been there of course, it had been a series of choices and beliefs about myself over a period of about 5 years that landed me there.

I had gone through a painful divorce. I had survived rape. Yet, in the aftermath of everything I had faced, it was the lack of belief in my own self worth, my own terrible body image, and my own critical mind that would never allow me to measure up, that took me down the hardest.

My job had me traveling which isolated me even further. While living on the road all week, I ate and drank, to soothe the pain of the woman I no longer recognized in the mirror. In November 2015, the scale had climbed to a dangerous 190 pounds on my 5:7 frame, and I had reached a place where I hated myself, and I wanted out. Of life. I contemplated heavily on ending it.

Yet, somewhere inside, I still had the small voice that said, "but you've fought and won so many times, what if you got back up and really started fighting instead of just existing." Fighting every body-shaming, worth-crushing lie you tell yourself. Fighting every doubt that your diligence and efforts can't prevail. Fight living small. Fight comfort zones. Fight everything that stands in the way of overcoming depression with a fitness dream and challenge goal to compete in my first bikini competition. November 2015, I said yes to me. Yes to fighting. Yes to life. Yes to achieving greatness.

Year one was based on a lot of accountability groups and doing workout DVD's from hotel rooms; checking in daily for accountability and encouragement, and following 4 strict rounds of the Whole 30 Diet to feed my body the nutrition it was missing. I just kept going and I lost 30 pounds in 2016!

.....  
"I had chosen to fight,  
and as a result: I had  
my life back..."  
.....

January 2017, I began a 17 week prep for the 2017 NPC Eastern Seaboard in Atlanta on a ketogenic diet and a training regimen from a friend who competed before and was willing to do long-distance coaching.

The workouts got more intense, fears began to rise, my exhaustion was pressing in on me, but I kept digging deeper with my favorite Rocky mantra. "It doesn't matter what this looks like to other people. If this is something you have to do, DO IT. FIGHTERS FIGHT." And I'm so glad I did. I took the stage for the first time ever and faced every body image fear I had and stood proudly in the 17 months of hard work.

I placed 3rd in both novice and open categories that day in my first NPC show, which was just icing on the cake. I had chosen to fight, and as a result: I had my life back, I had achieved a dream, and I now believe in myself, my worth, my fighter, and my future.