

# Mo Knows

**M**arie Ann Newman, known to most as “Mo”, is an athlete, has been a competitor, trainer and prep coach, and is currently an IFBB Pro League, NPC Vice Chairman of South Carolina and North Carolina, IFBB Pro League/National/Local judge, and most would agree, she is a Badass. There is no doubt that Mo is a strong female; instead of falling victim to a bad home life growing up, she says she feels stronger because she learned what not to do in life and that’s half the battle. Mo is a professional hairstylist and owns her own hair business but says becoming a pro athlete helped her become even stronger. She still does hair full time and feels it has helped her as a judge. “I am a professional woman that loves people, loves giving back, and am happily married.” I had the opportunity to talk with her at the 2019 NPC Upstate Classic.

## Challenges

I can’t say that I ever faced any real setbacks, just opportunities to improve. When I started the sport in 1993, Bodybuilding was the only division available for women. Later, I tried Fitness but when Figure was born I looked in the mirror and knew I had the genetics for this new division and felt I could be successful in this division. I was fortunate that I never had any major injuries; I trained smart, however, at that time my main weakness was depth of muscle. My husband helped me develop the muscle maturity I needed and then stay at that top level. Most importantly, I always had fun, otherwise, there’s no point in doing it. I also knew when I needed to be done competing in the sport. Most people ask “Do you miss it”? My answer is no, because I left on my terms and I left at a point when I was happy and I think that when you do that, you’ve left everything out there; there was nothing to be missed.

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## Serving the NPC

Even though I retired from competition, I wanted to continue to be involved in the sport. I love the local and regional levels of the sport – it’s where it all starts. My husband and I worked together training and prepping people but once I started judging more and I saw my role moving in a direction to judge at higher levels, I stepped back from that. As a judge, I felt I could be fair and I also wanted a new challenge for myself. I have been very lucky to have some good people in my life that have helped me along the way, including Tres Bennett, South Carolina &



North Carolina NPC State Chairman, who is a great judge. I’ve also learned a lot from Sandy Williamson, head IFBB Pro League and NPC judge and female representative and the NPC Florida Central District Chairman & IFBB Professional League & NPC Judge Joe Pishkula as well, so it’s been helpful having good people in my corner.

## Long-term Goals

Long term, my primary goal is to keep improving my judging skills and continue to find ways to give back to the sport. Judging has afforded me that opportunity. Having previously been both the athlete and the trainer, and having been on that stage, I felt as a judge I could provide a different perspective as well as provide proper feedback with attention to what is needed to improve. I recall the shows I did where I never got feedback so I make it a point to give feedback to every single person that contacts me from a show I just judged until my next one. I think it’s our job as a judge to give proper feedback because it’s the best way to learn what you need to do to improve; otherwise you’re just lost as a competitor. I look forward to continuing to help guide the sport of bodybuilding for these states and nation and to help make the show experience the best we can for the NPC.

I am passionate about the importance of having a strong mind and would like to pursue a way to help others develop mental strength for a better quality of life and prep. Of course, I also plan to keep up my professional hair care skills, “I do love my behind the chair career”.

In addition, the athletes share a lot through email so I really pay attention to what they are trying to convey in their email messages. Feedback can really tell me a lot about what to share with the show promoter about the athlete’s experience, and what they liked; it seems lately they’ve been really happy and that makes me happy. The athlete meetings also provide another opportunity for athletes to ask specific questions. However, sometimes an athlete may not feel comfortable speaking up at the athletes meeting so you might not hear about something right then and there but putting that little nugget of information in their head may prompt the competitors to provide more feedback in emails later on. It’s the easiest way to get information and push it out there for the promoters and judges to improve the show experience.

## Mentors

In the sport, I’d have to say I consider Sandy Williamson my mentor. I respect her and look up to her professionalism.

## Balance

I’m very organized and structured with my calendar; my husband Jim, always calls it our lifeline. I basically structure myself Tuesdays through Thursdays behind the chair. I work 10 hour days and do what I need to in those three days. This frees me up Friday and Saturday to go to the shows and Sunday & Monday I have for myself, the house, and my husband. I just really plan ahead of time so I know what I’m going to do a few weeks out. Once you know what you need to do ahead of schedule, you don’t fall short. I give a lot but I’m smart enough to know if I give too much I’ll burn out and there won’t be anything left. My top tips for work/life balance – know your limits, keep a tight schedule, be ok with saying no, love yourself, and give to yourself.



## A Healthy Lifestyle Starts With A Healthy Mind.

I truly believe mental strength is the key that has allowed me to get through the tough times, stay positive, achieve my goals and still find balance. I think everyone should work hard all of the time. Having the power to do the hard work is great, but you need to have the mental strength to do something with it. To become anything good you have to be consistent at it. That’s just not possible in 12 weeks. You can’t diet down to be a top figure or bikini athlete. You need the day in and day out of workouts, cardio, and muscle development. It’s a lifestyle.



In today’s world, everything is about instant gratification but I would ask, “How’s that working for you?” Consider taking a step back and recognize you need to be consistent, be true to yourself, but have fun with it. Embrace the process. Realize it’s going to take some time. Like money, changing your body is a compound effect. You don’t make money overnight; you’ve got to build on the interest.

It’s difficult to help athletes understand that even though the goal may be the show, the true transformation is about living a healthy lifestyle dedicated to being your best. Yes, it is a competition, but this sport allows people to showcase themselves and beyond that understand that this journey is more about showing people you can overcome anything. Being dedicated to the lifestyle is about bringing positivity, success and fun to both your training and your life.

Strong is a mindset. If you’re interested in future workshops focused on developing a healthy mind for a stronger you please contact Mo at: [marieann\\_newman@yahoo.com](mailto:marieann_newman@yahoo.com)  
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