



The Spanish face of Ms Figure Australia

BY CRISTINA JIMENEZ

It takes a great deal of commitment and an abundance of motivation and energy to get where Rosa-Maria Romero is currently sitting: number one Figure Competitor in Australia, Fitness Model, Dancer, Presenter, Personal Trainer and with additional projects up her sleeve. She is the only Latina at her level in the body building circuit nationally and a single mother of two young children to boot. It takes a firm believer of your dreams and never losing sight of them. It also apparently takes a lot of eggs: "My mum's like: Huevos again! Cuantos huevos (eggs). She closes her eyes, she can't look: You don't eat the yolk, what a waste!" Rose laughs.

At the first fleeting look at Rose's website, I am greeted with various pictures of her spectacular body, photos with poise of muscle and dynamism, others in sizzling swimwear where she shows off her perfectly toned body. When we arrive at her Spanish style abode in the Eastern Suburbs, there at the door appears a lively, charming and feminine woman with a resemblance to Oscar winner, Reese Witherspoon.

"When people meet me they say: you look so feminine!" When I flex my muscles you can see them", she says presenting an arm that would put most men to shame, "but when I stand normal, you can't see them. I look feminine. I don't want to get any bigger. I want to be able to wear a dress. If I want to go back to Flamenco one day I want to be able to go out there and look ok", she laughs again.

Rose first got a taste for moves, when she was still a flowering bud, at the age of three, where she danced Flamenco, the powerful and passionate dance of her native Spain. She also danced Latin, Jazz, Ballet, Tap and Character yet it was Flamenco that kept her moving and at sixteen, Rose launched her own Flamenco School, Spanish Rose Dance Studio. Subsequently, she moved on to becoming a certified Fitness Trainer and Aerobics Instructor and taught Aerobics at a number of Health Clubs and schools.

Flamenco came to a halt around six years ago, just after Rose got married and started a family. She was also working as a Flight Attendant and doing the midnight shows at La Campana, in the Spanish Quarters in the CBD, then up at the crack of dawn to work at the Intercontinental on a Sunday. "It just got too much. And my husband wasn't into Flamenco. He was Australian; we're not together anymore. Finished!" she laughs.

Fitness was always part of the agenda and as a gym enthusiast Rose recognised it could take her to soaring heights. In 2003, after she gave birth to her two boys, now six and four, was when the Body Shaping flourished. It was one day when she accompanied her friend who was competing... "They (girls) came out in their heels and bikinis and I thought: ooooh! They looked so beautiful", she squeals with delight. "I met a girl at the show who was doing it at the time and said, I would really like to compete and two weeks later I got back from a trip I had done with Qantas. I got myself onto a training program. I started learning about heavy weights and six months later I competed for the Australasian Natural Bodybuilding Federation (WNSO-ANB) Short Class Figure National Title, which is natural and is drug tested and I won that one, came first in Australia. I went, wow, ok! I had such a good time". Following that, Rose competed in the NPFC/IFBB NSW Championships and then the Nationals. She won the NSW Championships and came second in the Australian Championships by a mere two points. In 2004 she competed in the Australasian Championships and was placed second. Last year saw Rose win the NSW & Australian Body Shape Titles and at present is sitting as the Ms Figure Australia for the NPFC/IFBB. It does not stop there. Rose will be making us proud when she heads over to Spain for the 2006 World Championships.

To say that she is completely elated to enter the Worldwide Competition in Barcelona on 21 -23 September is an understatement. "I am so excited! I feel confident because that's where I am from. All my family is going to be there. I don't feel daunted. Everyone's always freaking out about Spain; it's so hard, the judges are so hard. I am excited", she expresses again enthusiastically. "I can't wait to meet them: soy de Australia and make sure you get me in the top ten!" Rose mimics speaking to a judge. I tell Rosa, Spain might claim her as their own. She replies laughing, "I wouldn't mind. It's nice to represent Australia but gees; you've got to be good to represent Espana."

"I am telling you I am going to get at least in the top six, because I know I am. Australia's never won because the girls they send from here are too big! The girls from Spain look like girls. I've looked at the top six and I fit in there.

I know that I will get in the top six", she declares confidently. "If I get in the top ten that means I'll get my Pro Card so I can become professional in the world. I will do well, trust me". Her brother, who is an avid supporter of Rose says: "we're not going there to get second or third; we're going there to get it."

Sure, it takes plenty of confidence to achieve great results however, what winning a title requires is discipline.

While everyone is asleep, Rose gets up at 6.00am, has a coffee and straight on to the step machine for her cardio work out of half an hour. Close to competition it increases to forty five minutes to an hour a day, then perhaps more cardio in the afternoon and weight training, which she tells me keeps your energy and fitness levels. Weight training is forty five minutes to an hour. "You don't have to overdo it. People overdo it and wonder why they are not getting results. Let the body rest; sleep when you're tired. You grow in your sleep".

The bustling Rose holds an eventful schedule. She still works for Qantas part-time as a flight attendant, NSW Marketing Manager for ASN-Advanced Sports Nutrition, a contest-prep writer for Oxygen Magazine and personal trainer preparing girls for competitions.

"When I started there was no information out there; no books, nothing. I didn't know where to go and I get a lot of e-mails from girls asking to start.

My aim is getting them started and getting them inspired, so it's all good. I have eleven girls competing this year and a few more enquires. Five of them

are competing in four weeks

time. It's exciting to see them

transform. They come to

you, they're overweight,

they're not sure if they

want to compete. I get

them on a diet and on a

training program, then six

weeks down the track they

look sensational!" she

enthuses with pride. "Some

girls have competed before but

most it's their first competition.

It's taking the first step. Their

whole body just transforms.

There's one girl that when she

started she had no confi-

dence. And I train her today

and she's doing shimmies".

Smiling, "She's really happy

with herself. I love that. I love

inspiring others to have a go.

Because that's what it is all





Photography Gary Phillips

Fitness Magazine and will be returning for the next issue. At the end of May, Rose will be in an infomercial, filmed in LA and going live nationally in the USA. She is involved with Fashion Brazil and Naughty Girl labels, who sponsor her. She is also sponsored by gyms, Titan Fitness in Rockdale and Riley's Gym in Seven Hills. "It's good to have help. It's an expensive sport. There is so much involved. Bikinis can cost anywhere from \$250 to \$1200 depending on how elaborate you want to go. The shoes are \$200. Then you've got all the colour, all the supplements, the food. So much chicken", she chuckles. "Very different to what I used to eat when I danced Flamenco. I was very thin, size six and I used to eat a lot of pasta."

"I like it. I love my life now. I am having a good time," she adds.

Rose walks me through the process of a competition, whilst on stage and informs me that they are required to do a ninety second choreography of their choice and I am tempted to ask her if she's ever danced Flamenco? "I haven't. I've used moves I've learnt in the past in my routines and a lot of people say: she's very graceful, because I use a lot of my hand movements. All the moves that they use are blunt. It brings out confidence and you look good on stage." I suggest sporting the traditional long flowing dress topped with flowers in her hair. "Why not, then you can strip off on stage," she adds. "The Latin American touch is also popular. Everyone loves it. It's the music."

We get chatting on our mutual love for the country we both hail from, Rose being from Malaga, in the south of Spain. "People don't think I am Spanish because of the blonde hair. La sangre la tengo Espanola y eso no me lo quita nadie," meaning, my blood is Spanish and no one can take that away from me. "What you have in here", she points to her heart, "it's a different mentality. I used to go there every year before I was married but I am going to start going again and take the kids. It's a good lifestyle in Spain. It's fun. They live for each day. It's very different. In Spain you see the men that are retired from work and they are all sitting around at 6.00pm, playing dominos and cards and you don't see that here. My dad wants to go back but

about. If you're doing your best, you've achieved."

If you were ever at home during the day, flicking channels then you might have seen Rose on Channels 9 and 10 starring in infomercials, promoting fitness and beauty products. Most recently, she just returned from New York where she did a photo shoot in "record time" for Muscle and



my mother doesn't want to. I love it. I miss it."

Look out for more of Rosa-Maria Romero in February where she lends her expertise in a Reality TV Show, where she is the Fitness Consultant, training girls into worldwide competition shape. More details when they come to hand, check in her website: www.fitrose.com.

"I am making the most of what I have achieved now. This year my aim is to do really well in Spain, not only for Australia but also for my family and friends. And for myself and my sponsors. I want to get my Pro Card this year. I am going to get my Pro Card this year!" Rose guarantees us. "I am a firm believer if you are confident and you believe you are going to do something, you do it. You just can't let days go by. You've got to take advantage of what's happening. I'm number one in Australia now, I'm not going to go back, I am just going to keep going". The sky is the limit, I add knowingly. "The sky's the limit!" she repeats flashing that winning Reese smile.

ROSE AT A GLANCE

PERSON YOU MOST ADMIRE: My mother and we don't get along! No, we're both strong minded and very different but we share the same values and beliefs. Family comes first.

FOOD: Caprice Pizza – capsicum, ham, pineapple with no anchovies at Charing Cross Pizza.

LAST FILM SEEN: Last one with Jennifer Aniston and 'Pumping Iron' with Arnold Schwarzenegger, that gets me motivated before a show.

MUSIC: Mariah Carey, Latin and Dance – depends on what mood I'm in.

COLOURS: Blue, black and red.

STAR SIGN: Virgo / Rabbit

FIRST THING THAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK OF.....

CHAMPIONSHIPS: Number one. Winner – I'm very competitive.

FITNESS: Something that I love and I incorporate in to my lifestyle. Being healthy, feeling good – anything. Could be walking, gym, going to a café and having a nice juice, breathing in the fresh air. Living life.

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