



Photos: Claire Keefon

From ballet dancer to body builder

From ballet dancer to body builder, Lynda Delpont is in top form. She was recently placed fifth when she represented South Africa at an international body building championship.

A 40-year-old mother of two children, Delpont has been national champion in the middleweight division (52-57 kg) for three years in a row. She also won the Southern African Championships and the Grand Prix last year, before taking part in the Mr and Ms Universe competition in Wales earlier this year. The South African team beat eight countries to take top honours.

She started body-building eight years ago, after seeing photographs and reading articles about the sport. "I liked the fact that you can change the shape of your body. You can improve weak parts of your body and can make cer-

Body building is a good sport for women, says South African body building champion, Lynda Delpont. Claire Keefon spoke to her

tain parts of your body balance up with other parts. You cannot do this with normal exercise."

In the beginning, body building was just another way of keeping fit. "I told my trainer I was against building muscle. I wanted to make my body firm and get fit. But, in less than a year, I was very involved in the sport. I am competitive by nature and soon started taking part in competitions."

After one year of body

building, Delpont entered the first women's championships and won it. She has not looked back since then.

But she says body building is a difficult and demanding sport. "It is a lonely sport and not many people have the concentration needed. I must motivate myself because I train mostly on my own."

Delpont says she is stronger than many men, which proves how strong women can become when they train with weights. "There are not many men who train at the gym who can keep up with me."

Success depends on the right combination of training and nutrition.

When the sport is out of season, Delpont trains for up to two hours daily. In season, she trains for twice that time. Training involves the use of weights and exercises.

She uses a split routine of

training, where the chest and legs are trained on one day, for example, and the next day the back and shoulders. Each body part must have 24-28 hours to rest from one session to another.

"You must be very self-disciplined. It is not relaxing. The training and dieting is very stressful. Your body can only take so much. You must know when to stop."

Before a competition, Delport follows a very strict diet for ten weeks by eating no salts, sugar and fats. "It is a very plain food. That is how you bring down the fat in your body to bring out the muscularity and definition of the body.

"We starve in the last week and cut down on drinking water on Wednesday or Thursday if a show is on Friday. You need to dehydrate to draw the water out from under your skin."

In the competition, participants go through basic set routines to show their muscles — their size, proportion and symmetry (balance) — and

they do a dance-like routine to music.

Delport says, when the championships are over there is a camaraderie (friendship) between the women contestants, who talk to each other and exchange information. "I have never experienced women being nasty to each other. With the male body builders, there is often a lot of tension between them."

One problem is the use of steroids (drugs) to build muscle strength. Delport says this is common at the top level. "It is a big problem. And it is not going to get easier or better."

Body building gives Delport a lot of satisfaction, and her family is proud of her. When she is not training, she works as a body therapist in East London, advising on nutrition and training.

Delport says, "Body building should be more popular and should be promoted more as a sport. It is neglected when you compare it to sports like cricket and rugby. Body building is a good sport for women."



Body building champ and mother of two, Lynda Delport: "There are not many men at the gym who can keep up with me."

