

The author with her trainer, Mike Donovanik, at the beginning of her six-week boot camp.

No Pain, No Gain

A SUREFIRE ROUTE TO LOOKING YOUR BEST FOR YOUR WEDDING: ENLIST A TEAM OF PROS. BRIDE-TO-BE **NORA ZELEVANSKY** TONES UP FROM HER CALVES TO HER SCALP WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM THE GURUS.

"I'LL NEVER BE *THAT* BRIDE." THAT'S THE MANTRA I'VE mumbled religiously during the wedding-planning process.

You know *that* bride: the one who thinks the fate of the modern world rests on the success of her hair extensions? The one who attacks wedding-day grooming prep as if it were a covert military op and ends up looking emaciated on D-Day?

But lo and behold, I'm wholly consumed. And, perusing engagement-party photos with dissatisfaction, I envision my body more toned, my skin more porcelain and my hair more shampoo-ad lustrous.

With my wedding to Andrew only six weeks away (thirty seconds in bride time), my mission is clear: enroll in some of L.A.'s most hard-core "bridal boot camps" to whip every element of me into shape, pronto. With the help of these three guided regimens, I hope I'll be all that I can be: for my skin, Bridal

Beauty at Kate Somerville Skin Health Experts (8428 Melrose Place, Suite C, Los Angeles; 323-655-7546; katesomerville.com); for my body, Mike Donovanik's Wedding Workout/Bridal Bootcamp at the Gym on Nemo (9041 Nemo St., W. Hollywood; 310-754-6080; theweddingworkout.com); and for my hair, Bridal Conditioning at the Román Salon (818 N. La Cienega Blvd., W. Hollywood; 310-854-1030; romansalonla.com). So move over, Private Benjamin. Here comes *that* bride.

6 WEEKS OUT

Consulting with my respective "drill sergeants" is like going to confession. Forgive me, for I scarf carbs and salt; work out—hmm—never; flat-iron my hair obsessively (thus obliterating the ends); forget my sunblock; and yes, it's been months since my last facial or trim.

Today, Mike, my trainer, measures me like a cow for slaughter, pinching my excess with a metal tool—a necessary evil, but still evil. Turns out I'm five foot four and 119 pounds of mush; 28 percent body fat, to be precise.

Sheri Román, owner of the Román Salon and head colorist, pronounces my hair “on the dry side.” But at least I get to sip Perrier under chandeliers while she breaks it to me sweetly. Plus, she immediately sends me home with a Kérastase regimen and a promise of biweekly conditioning treatments, colorings and dry runs of my wedding style.

Down the street in the new VIP White Room at Kate Somerville Skin Health Experts, aesthetician Lili Mineni and registered nurse practitioner Melissa Hal-oossim examine my face under blinding light and prescribe a highly strategic weekly attack. Fortunately, the plan doesn't involve hospital corners or scrubbing “the hole” at 5 A.M. But my skin is fair, acne prone and oily under the surface, and at thirty years old, lines are emerging, so we have work to do.

4½ WEEKS OUT

It seems that the sweet cottage-housed Gym on Nemo is actually a house of pain. Mike looks innocent, conscientiously checking in and thoughtfully developing varied daily workouts, but he's really a twenty-something slave driver.

Though Mondays (chest and back, with that strapless gown in mind) and Fridays (arms, arms, arms) are tough, I deeply dread Wednesdays, as lower body equals squats galore. Abs are every session.

Today I scoffed at three-pound dumbbells and a bench-press bar with no weights, but three reps later I am not laughing. Faced with a twenty-five-pound barbell for curls, I beg for mercy. I never noticed how much Pilates machines resemble medieval torture devices. Maybe looking a little plump in my dress would be nice? Sort of a 1950s theme? Real women have curves?

36 HOURS LATER

Okay. I can't walk. I'm so sore that I have to hold onto the railing with two hands as I jerk like a geriatric down my apartment steps. But Mike said to walk thirty to forty-five minutes or run twenty minutes on off days (which, sadly, are only Tuesdays and Thursdays, plus weekends) to get exercise and combat soreness. So I hobble out on a jaunt today. To Whole Foods. To buy *dulce de leche* ice cream. What?



From top: Lien Scherr styling the bride-to-be's hair at the Román Salon; a facial treatment in Kate Somerville's White Room.

Still, is it my imagination, or does my body already look better?

I limp to the Román Salon, where Lien Scherr styles a dry run of my Veronica Lake hair at the exact time we plan to do it on my wedding day. It looks so pretty and modern (in a retro way), but after a few hours the curls fall a little, so we know we have to set it closer to the event.

3 WEEKS OUT

Saw my girlfriends for the first time in weeks last night, and they freaked about my new, narrower physique. Workouts have been a bit less torturous as well. Time to actually listen to Mike and to cut out salt, not have carbs after 4 P.M. and start eating breakfast. Today I admit to having cheated. I must drop and give him twenty. *Three sets* of twenty!

To get my teeth whitened, Mike, who also gives clients gift certificates to Kinara for massages, sends me to Ora Dentistry Spa (421 N. Rodeo Dr., Beverly Hills; 310-273-0848; ora.dentistryspa.com), where dentist Sâm Saleh creates custom boot-camp regimens for bridal smiles. Entering amid green and gold mosaic walls and meditation-themed treatment rooms, I imagine having the world's first relaxing dental experience. Nope; it kind of hurts like hell. But I am transformed almost instantly into a new woman, with a much improved smile.

Meanwhile, I've had weekly treatments at Kate's clinic, but today, after three high-tech hours there, I feel like a mad scientist's creation: a facial with extractions (thank goodness for gentle Lili); Laser Genesis (a hot magic wand, which makes noises like Ms. Pac-Man, being waved near my face) for texture and tone; DermaLucent

white light (red every other week) for plumping; and an IPL (intense pulsed light) for sun spots. Wandering outside afterward, I immediately receive a compliment on my “glowing skin” from a stranger, who promptly walks in and makes an appointment. Is she a plant?

2 DAYS LATER

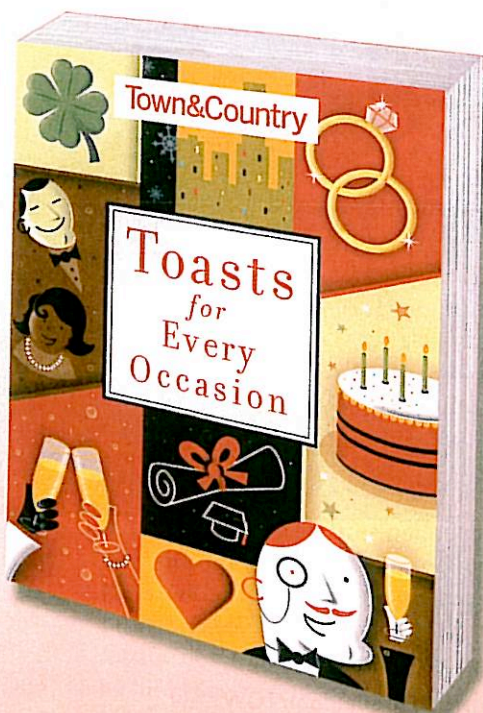
Now I know why people always lose weight when they cut carbs out of their diets: there's nothing to eat! It's not as if you can have a quick snack of meat.

Andrew called me a stress monkey, so I head to the Román Salon for Corey Powell's conditioning hair treatments. After rubbing the Complex 5 cleaning concoction (which smells like lemon verbena) into my scalp, Corey suggests I use honey on it to fight allergic dryness. (Though Corey is no longer at the salon, stylist Jennifer Bish offers a similar treatment



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that uses jojoba and avocado oils for shine.) I'll repeat this with Corey the day before the wedding.

2½ WEEKS OUT

Mike tells me to do a posture check and throw my shoulders back every time the phone rings so I won't slouch my way down the aisle. He also texts me reminders: "Stand up straight!"

After all this hard work and time commitment, I am craving immediate gratification. Enter Kate's laser vascular treatment. Melissa cools and zaps my face for just fifteen minutes, and though I channel a Beverly Hills plastic-surgery victim as I leave, holding mini ice packs to my face, all my broken capillaries instantly disappear. Later at dinner, my father, cynic of all cynics, *also* remarks on my glowing skin!

2 WEEKS OUT

Lien gives my hair a healthy trim (so the cut can settle). Now, when styled for the wedding, the thicker curls will sit poised on my shoulders. I love! Sheri transforms my fading color to a deep auburn and follows it up with a Kérastase Pixelist treatment to lock in color and brighten my tresses. An hour later, a supermarket checkout woman tells me I look like a young Julianne Moore. *Merci.*

WEEK OF

My dress is custom-made, so I have my final fitting at the last possible moment. The shop owner remarks on my new Mike Donovanik body without prompting. In the morning I do ten full male push-ups, and Mike tells me I should be proud. I couldn't even do the girl ones when we started. Blushing under his praise, I realize that pleasing a trainer may be the real source of bridal glow.

After my last Muscle Lift & Restoration facial (with electrical currents to stimulate muscles), DermaLucent Phototherapy for collagen and Laser Genesis for texture, I am getting compliments constantly. I'm serious. *Constantly.* Kate's famous eyelash extensions are the last step on the way to gorgeous. If I look bad, I have only my genes to blame.



Perfectly in shape at her final fitting.

REHEARSAL-DINNER DAY

Lolling in the Román Salon's magnolia-tree courtyard with my mother, sister and future mother-in-law and sister-in-law, I am relatively relaxed. My hair is re-Corey Powell-afied and then blown out; never rewash day of, they say. And Sheri sends me away with a Honeymoon Hair Kit (sun-protective products and flyaway treatments) so I can maintain myself post-wedding. My final weight: 109 pounds, at 24 percent body fat.

D-DAY!

At my hotel, Lien comes by to prettify my hair. Of course she was right: the length is perfection. I opt to do my own makeup, since my skin looks so damn good, but she helps; then she leaves. And with that my bridal-boot-camp training officially ends. The actual battle has arrived.

Farewell to Mike, whom I adore. Goodbye to those early-morning treadmill climbs. So long to Melissa's lasers and Lili's facials (well, actually those I'll keep). Goodbye to the conditioning treatments, and to Perrier. Goodbye to the single life.

Once fully coiffed and ready at the wedding site, I prepare to walk down the aisle. Miraculously, I remember to stand up straight and throw my shoulders back. And all the while, I can think of only one blissful thing: I can finally eat carbs. ✘