

You In Shape

Jump for joy

America's most decorated gymnast still scores perfect 10s—now as a champion of women's health.

By Mallory Creveling

Shannon Miller literally jumped into gymnastics: After she received a trampoline as a present and quickly mastered a front flip, her parents—concerned about their 4-year-old's safety—signed her up for classes. Ten years later, in 1992, the pint-sized powerhouse competed in the Barcelona Olympics, where she won five medals—the most of any U.S. athlete that year. At the 1996 Summer Games in Atlanta, Shannon scored the first American gold for balance beam and led the “Magnificent Seven” to the U.S. women's first-ever team gold. She semiretired the following year, but continued to tour with other Olympic gymnasts, even after she began college full-time in 1997. “It was hard to leave a sport I enjoyed so much and spent most of my life doing,” says the 37-year-old.

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THE FRESHMAN 40

When she switched her focus from athletics to academics, Shannon's gym time dwindled from 40 hours a week to practically zero—but she didn't stop eating six full meals a day. In just a few months, she went up four dress sizes. "I burned tons of calories training, so I didn't think about my diet," she says. "Gaining weight was a big wake-up call." To drop the pounds, Shannon kept a food and fitness diary, which made her realize she needed to cut back on high-cal carbs and pack in more lean protein and produce. She became more active too, by running and figure skating, and satisfied her competitive spirit with sports like squash. Though her weight-loss efforts were paying off, Shannon ignored the number on the scale and concentrated on how she felt. "That improved my self-image and made it easier to maintain a healthy lifestyle," she says.

CHANNELING HER PASSION

After graduating from law school and getting married in 2007, Shannon yearned to launch a career in a field she felt as passionate about as gymnastics. Motivated by the appreciation for eating

BALANCING ACT

Shannon successfully juggles family life and work. Tune in to her radio show Saturdays at 4 p.m. EST on 104.5 FM WOKV.

well and exercising she'd gained in college. Shannon started writing a book while in school on achieving perfect abs. In early 2009, she finished the text. Once she learned she was pregnant with her son, Rocco, she booked a photographer to shoot the cover and inside moves. By the end of the year, *Shannon Miller: Abs To Go*, a collection of 40 exercises, hit the market. That was the first step in building her brand, Shannon Miller Lifestyle: Health and Fitness for Women, which includes a website (shannonmillerlifestyle.com), pre- and post-natal fitness videos, three more books, and a free Walk-Fit program that rewards users for taking more steps.

A CANCER SCARE

In December 2010, when planning for another baby, Shannon saw her doctor for what she thought would be a routine checkup. Instead, she learned she had a mass on her ovary and needed surgery to remove both the cyst and the ovary. At that time, Shannon was diagnosed with a rare form of ovarian cancer. "I was fortunate it was caught early," says Shannon, who realized she'd missed the subtle symptoms. "Looking back, I should have been more in tune with my body—I had lost weight and felt bloated, but

"I want women to understand that making health a priority is not a selfish act."

I chalked that up to being a new mom." After nine weeks of chemotherapy, Shannon got a clean bill of health and has remained cancer-free since May 2011.

PRO ON THE GO

Shannon, who got pregnant in 2012 and welcomed baby girl Sterling last June, lives in Jacksonville, FL, and travels the country talking about what she's learned from her career as a pro athlete, getting back in shape, and fighting cancer. She hosts a radio show devoted to wellness too, for which she interviews physicians on topics like heart disease and diabetes. "I want women to understand that making health a priority is not a selfish act," she says. "Taking care of ourselves is critical—and important to those who depend on us."

