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## Ali Vincent

### HALF THE WEIGHT, WHOLE NEW WOMAN

by DANIELLE D'ADAMO

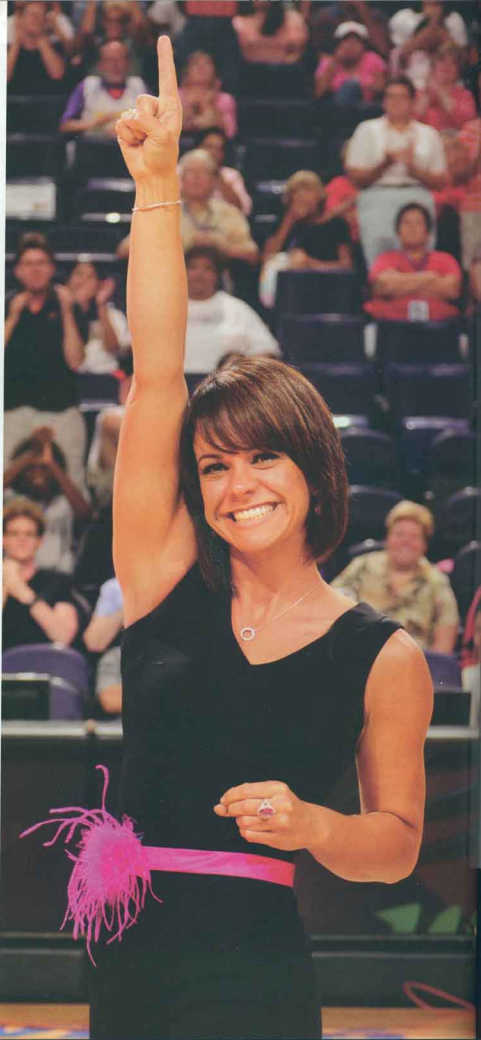
Never tell Mesa resident Ali Vincent something is impossible. Because chances are, she's already accomplished it. Losing over 112 pounds in five and a half months and becoming the first woman to win on NBC's popular show "The Biggest Loser" is a prime example.

The reality of weighing a startling 234 pounds shook Vincent to her core, and she knew it was finally time to regain control of her life. The 32-year old hairdresser had a drive that pushed her to accomplish something no one thought possible.

"I wanted to prove that I could do the impossible," she says. "A woman could actually achieve this. I made the choice to stand on that big scale, practically naked in front of millions of viewers at 234 pounds, and that's when I decided to do something about it. Never again would I be that disappointed in myself."

Her self-determination to turn her life around was an impressive task that over eight

*continued on page 56*





**HOW DID ALI VINCENT BECOME "THE BIGGEST LOSER?"**

- Followed a 1,200-calorie budget broken down with three meals per day at 300 calories and two snacks at 150 calories.
- Always ate within a half hour of waking up and continued to eat every three to four hours to jumpstart her metabolism.
- Tracked what she ate with a food journal.
- Burned 3,700 calories per day, losing an average of .76 pounds daily.
- Used a tool called a BodyBug to help track exactly how many calories she burned throughout the day.
- Exercised with spin classes.

million people tuned in to watch. And despite being voted off in the fourth week, Vincent wanted to prove she could continue to lose the weight at home. In a surprise twist of fate, she was asked to return to the show for another chance to be the first woman with the highest percentage of weight loss. At the show's finale, Vincent weighed in at 122 pounds, losing 47.86 percent of her body weight.

"When I actually sit down and think about losing over 100 pounds, that's so overwhelming!" she says. "I still look back and think, 'Wow, I actually did that!'"

**"I WANTED TO PROVE THAT I COULD DO THE IMPOSSIBLE. A WOMAN COULD ACTUALLY ACHIEVE THIS."**

**FACING REALITY**

Before she was breaking barriers, Vincent had to come to terms with the fact that somewhere along the way she had let herself go. "I was actually a synchronized swimmer when I was younger, and when I quit my sport, I never found a healthy substitute," Vincent explains. "I still had the appetite of an athlete and I didn't back it up with any regular

exercise. I remember gaining those first five pounds and just putting on sweat pants and a big sweater."

As the years crept by, Vincent gained five pounds at a time but didn't think it was a big deal. "I never saw it as 10 or 20 pounds," she says. "I just kept seeing it in increments of five and somewhere in my head, five pounds was controllable. I even put myself at 150 pounds on my driver's license because that was comfortable."

Eventually, the big sweaters and five-pound excuses proved too big to handle. Vincent could no longer fill the voids in her life by turning unconsciously to food as a protector. "I obviously wanted to do something about my weight," she says. "I just didn't know what. I knew I wanted to feel proud about how I did it, and for me, I wanted to do it the 'right way.'"

That meant no tummy tucks, liposuction or crazy crash diets. Her mind was set on losing the weight by following a strict calorie-counting diet and exercise routine. "I realized that things in my life didn't define me and who I am," Vincent says. "I do that. I was just too out of control and didn't know how to get back into control. It was the chance of a lifetime and I wanted to be the first woman to do it."

**STAYING FIT AND FABULOUS**

Unbelievably, it wasn't the grueling eight-hour day exercises that proved to be the hardest obstacle for Vincent. She first had to wrap her mind around the fact that she was living like a child in a state of instant gratification. "My first

reaction was, of course, 'Excuse me?!' Vincent says. "I'm a 30-something year-old woman; who are you calling a child? But they were absolutely right and I had to restructure my whole way of thinking."

Vincent had to begin to view food as a fuel that allowed her body to perform. As this new way of thinking began to sink in, she realized she couldn't simply fix things in her life with the gym and the fridge—it had to come from within.

"While I was on the machines, I would think of all the things in my life that I was proud of and disappointed in," Vincent says. "I realized that I had to forgive myself and be okay with me before I could even begin to move forward and start losing weight. And as I started going through the process, the weight just fell off."

Finding her footing with the help of a personal trainer, Vincent started setting small goals that she knew she could achieve. Little by little, she began losing six, seven and eight pounds a week. "My confidence just went through the roof!" Vincent says. "My trainer helped me realize that I deserve to have whatever I want. Health, love—whatever makes me happy. It all came together and I knew at my core that I could do this."

Learning how to push herself and never settling for anything less than she deserved, Vincent accomplished the "impossible." Her passion and unwavering self-determination is an inspiration to women everywhere. **PH**

Danielle D'Adamo is Managing Editor of Phoenix Woman.