

## **SMA TRANSFORMATION ESSAY**

### **Ben Brown**

On November 2, 2019 looking across a stage covered by 50 athletes at a time, deep tan, cut up, and each one hoping to pick a Professional Bodybuilding Card from 8-time Mr. Olympia, Lee Haney himself. Where was I? Backstage, 288 lbs, 40% body fat, working as a stagehand. As I sat there with all the other stagehands, joking about all the weird poses, debating on if we would be better as a “toe up” or “toe down” ‘Abdominal and Thigh’ poser, a deep thought began to sink into me.

*I can't imagine being on that stage.*

There was a former high school classmate and a friend from college competing and I was impressed by each different category. By the end of the night, we loaded out the show. I met some professional bodybuilders, and jokingly took a leftover 5<sup>th</sup> place medal nameplate from a sticker sheet in the trash. I went home questioning how I was living.

By Monday November 4<sup>th</sup>, I met one of those friends from the competition at our local gym. I left barely being able to walk; I had a full week of work ahead of me and I couldn't move my legs! When I got back from that job, I hired a trainer. Tré was one of the biggest reasons I was able to accomplish my weight loss. He was there every morning at 6am smiling ear-to-ear, ready to take on the world and kick my ass. He did. By day 200, I had lost 80lbs.

The highest weight I ever saw was 305lbs in October. I was addicted to God's Chicken (Chick-fil-a), Satan's Chicken (Popeye's), and the nectar of the gods, Coca-Cola Classic. Everything I ate was fried or sugar. I knew I had to make a change, so I started a mantra: NVR AGN. This idea was built to guide my physical, mental, and spiritual future:

“Convince the mind, the body will follow.  
Where the body follows, the heart will end up.”

These words are backed by scripture in 2 Peter 1:5-9. For the last 20 months, this mantra has guided me to this very day, as I walk on this stage as a competitor. Down from 305lbs with 50% of my body content being fat, to adding a mass of 25lbs+ of muscle, sitting at 205lbs shredded with less than 10% body fat, eight pack, spray tanned, and showing of parts of my body I thought the public would never see. I know I have a long way to go, but this is the beginning of a great journey!

I would like to thank my wife: Rebecca for putting up with the bodybuilder lifestyle and diet. My parents: Ken and Susan for making me into the man I am today. My workout partners: Brett, Caleb, Tyler, and Jarrod for always pushing me and wanting to die with me. Lastly, I'd like to thank my coaches: Tré, Andy, and Andrew.

And as for that 5<sup>th</sup> place medal nameplate sticker from the trash? It just happens to be the very class that I'm competing in as a classic physique athlete today.