BRIDAL FITNESS

As told to Michelle McIvor

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON T. JASKOT
Hair and makeup by Josephine and Victor Castro at Pelo Salon in Hoboken, NJ; www.pelosalon.net

SASKIA WITKAM'S WORKOUT

• Weight training
Leg extensions, leg curls, pull-ups, sit-ups on abdominal crunch machine, arm dips, shoulder presses.

• Kickboxing
"All the classes were motivating and great," Saskia says. "They pretty much followed the same routines, with different instructors. Some were definitely more drill-sergeant like than others, but they were all tough!

• Cardio
When not attending kickboxing classes, Saskia did 30 minutes of cardio on the elliptical machine or treadmill. "I tried to do other forms of cardio every so often, but usually I just stuck with the kickboxing," she says. "Those classes were challenging enough!"

■ *Editor's Note: Saskia and her fiancé, Rich Valentine, met five years ago at their former jobs in telecommunications. They will be married in Port Jefferson, N.Y., in early September.*

When Saskia Witkam realized she had one year to get in shape for her wedding, she sought out a team of experts to help her lose those inches. "I had dieted before, and I used to work out on and off, but I've never been satisfied with my weight nor with my love handles," she told us after finishing the Bridal Fitness Plan at her local kickboxing gym, Club KO in Hoboken, N.J.

Fresh out of the 10-week program, this 5-10, 158-lb. bride-to-be is in great shape, and has experienced both physical and mental gains. "During the program, my energy levels were up," she says. "This helped me mentally – I felt better about myself." Here, Saskia tells us in her own words how she slimmed down, shed fat and has achieved her sexiest, healthiest body yet . . .

My initial motivation to do the program was – as it is for most women – to lose weight. I had time before my wedding, and I told myself I needed to do this. It was extremely difficult to stay motivated, especially when I reached a physical plateau halfway through.

To combat this I wrote down how I felt after a good workout, and used to read it to myself at 5:30 in the morning to help me get out of bed and get to a 5:45 kickboxing class. Also, knowing I had months to lose the weight motivated me. I had time to get where I wanted to be – If I did it right, it would be easier and more effective than finding a "quick fix."

The 10-week program included weight training, cardio kickboxing classes and nutritional consultations. The gym recommended I take at least three kickboxing classes each week, write down everything I ate and weight train once a week. Each week, my trainer, Jill, would look at my diet notations and e-mail me whether I was eating the right quantity and types of foods. This was a big help, since many foods I thought were healthy really weren't. For example, whole wheat is not as healthy as whole grain. And those Lean Cuisines and Smart Ones are full of sodium and carbs.

This made me change my diet to low fat, low carb and high protein. For someone who loves to eat, this took time and effort! I used to finish my fiance's meals. Now, I eat half or three-quarters of my plate and then throw salt on the food or ask the waiter to remove the dish, so I really don't eat any more than my body actually needs to stay healthy.

It only took about 14 days into the program for me to start seeing results. After 10 weeks I lost 15 lbs. total, which had been my goal going into it. I knew if I pushed myself I would get results, but I also realized how easy it would be to give up. I now know what many people go through while losing those last 5-10 lbs. Every woman's goals are different, and *(continued on page 160)*