A full-page photograph of a very muscular man, likely a bodybuilder, flexing both of his biceps. He is shirtless, has a tanned complexion, and is smiling at the camera. His skin is glistening, suggesting he has applied oil. The background is dark and out of focus.

TOTAL TRANS FORMATION

Photo by Brandon McGill

LOCAL TRAINER PUSHES TOWARD FIRST-EVER BODYBUILDING COMPETITION

BY ART MARTORI

VITAL STATISTICS

**FTM Fitness World
Annual Conference**

Oct. 2-4

Atlanta

ftmfitnessconference.com

Looking impossibly composed despite the 105-degree August heat, a guy wearing black gym shorts and a grey T-shirt draped across a yoke of shoulder muscles saunters through the front door of Hob Nobs Café & Spirits. He sets down a large jug of water next to my half-empty IPA.

He casually points to my beer, “Oh, you’re drinking the good stuff?”

Trey Sheidler, 31, offers a faint smile before politely turning to the counter for coffee, and then apologizing as he sits down. Between operating his own personal fitness practice and training for his compete as a transgender bodybuilder, he’s a little spaced out. When he’s not working with clients as the owner-operator of Transform Fitness, Sheidler works on him-

self. *Damn.* Sure you don’t want that beer?

His blue-green eyes crinkle as a result of an apologetic smile and his aquiline features contrast his carelessly stylish patches of stubble.

“I can’t,” he almost acts embarrassed, “I’ve gotta cut my carbs.”

Outside his busy work schedule, Sheidler has until Oct. 2 to drop some 20 pounds to make weight for the upcoming FTM Fitness World Annual Conference in Atlanta. An array of workshops is scheduled over three days, with topics ranging from transgender-specific physiology and metabolism, to fellatio techniques for female-to-male genitalia.

But for Sheidler, it’s all about the first-ever FTM bodybuilding competition.

And Sheidler plans to ride

the momentum into a cisgender contest later this year, where competitors probably won’t know who they’re up against. For now, though, he’s focused on making the 165-pound lightweight cutoff at the Atlanta event. It’s a goal he set only three months ago, after a friend mentioned it.

“He says, ‘Hey, this would be something you’d be into,’” Sheidler remembers. “I was like, no, not really.” It took didn’t long for him to reconsider. “I’m very good with goals,” he added. “If I become focused on something, there’s a good chance I’ll get there.”

That subtle determination, expressed almost as an afterthought, defines his character. Over the next few weeks as I struggle to keep up, catching only a glimpse of a support network and complex system of

values that run as deep as his *kaizen*-esque approach to life.

CAN'T STOP

When I next see Sheidler, it's only half past six the following Saturday. But the sun is already doing its thing over the Phoenix College football field. Late-summer mugginess is made muggier by turf freshly watered ahead of a football scrimmage. Sheidler checks in with coach and nutritionist Derrick Clark, co-owner of Ultimate Health and Nutrition.

"Remember, once you start, you can't stop." Clark stands, hands on hips. Sheidler has the look of someone who knows what's coming, which makes perfect

telling you, "Why are we doing this?" and you will leave. But if you have someone there that you have to be accountable to, then you can push through that."

Then the hour is up. Sheidler is so sweaty he must have bathtub thumbs. We agree to meet up again in about an hour at a north-Phoenix gym.

NO BREAK

Apparently, it's not a good day until Sheidler drops at least one F-bomb on his trainer. Today is arm day: 60 nonstop minutes of curls, triceps extensions, skull crushers, dips and numerous other activities that push him past the point of exhaustion — and restraint.

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— TREY SHEIDLER

sense, as he's led a few boot camp workout sessions himself. The goal this morning is to burn fat with a full hour of nonstop cardio, which means a combination of sprinting, "butt kicks" and bleacher lunges and runs.

It's already pushing 100 degrees and humidity is hanging just below 50 percent. His coach paces below, seeming to know when resolve is waning.

"He's extremely exhausted. I know he's tired," Clark tells me, pausing to encourage his profusely sweating client with a *PUSH!-PUSH!-PUSH!* It's about empathy and accountability, Clark resumes.

"You have to keep motivating them. Your mind is always going to tell you that it doesn't want to cause your body any harm," says Clark. "As soon as you feel the onset of discomfort, your mind has a way of just

"If I'm not getting an *F-U* within the first 20 minutes, I'm not doing my job," laughs trainer Monica Fink, politely summarizing the last few remarks directed at her.

Under her guidance five days a week, Sheidler pumps serious iron. Between sets, he practices bodybuilding poses to showcase his muscles' size, symmetry and proportion. What bodybuilding judges look for, Fink explains, is like the letter X: A broad upper body, a slim waist, and strong thighs and calves.

"I want to burn out his triceps, so when we get to the biceps, there's nothing left," this from Fink only 20 minutes in.

Supporting all his weight above the floor, Sheidler bends his elbows, and then pushes on his triceps to return upright.

See Total Transformation, page 42

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Total Transformation, from page 41

Nothing crazy, standard dips, but a difficult exercise nonetheless. I lose count around 10 reps.

Fink matter-of-factly instructs him to dip deeper for another set. No break.

At some point, a guy who obviously lifts lots and lots of weights unplugs his phone from the gym PA, cutting off the music. Sheidler strongly encourages him to reconsider.

"Why don't you come on my leg day?" the antagonist sneers. "I will," comes Sheidler's instant reply, "when I need a break!"

MAKING LISTS

A week later, Sheidler invites me to meet him at Maizie's for brunch with his friends Jen and Aiden Sismondo. We slide into a long table in front of the bar, with the couple on one end. Jen, 29, is casual with her pink

T-shirt and a brown pixie cut. Aiden, 31, is smart in a neon-green collared shirt and rolled-up sleeves. He has a bird tattoo and a handlebar mustache that matches his auburn hair. Their friend, as always, is in gym clothes.

The trio started hanging out around 2009. Sheidler and Aiden met online in an FTM chat room, just after Aiden's gender reassignment surgery. Sheidler had spent his last couple years as a woman enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and friendless after being transferred to Arizona around the time he started to define his gender identity.

"I was miserable," Sheidler remembers, "I was still in the military, and wanted to get out. I knew where I wanted to be, and knew I'd have to wait a long time."

The friendship went offline one night at Cash Inn Country.

For Sheidler, things were starting to fall in line at that time.


By July 2010, he was out of the military and preparing for his new life. He enrolled in exercise science courses at Glendale Community College. A couple months later, he started testosterone treatment. His top surgery was scheduled later that year, during the brief winter break from college. Sheidler's relief and sense of accomplishment were obvious, Jen remembers.

"He was just excited to get those things off. But some things never change," she says, describing her relationship with Sheidler as a friend and personal trainer.

Aiden offers a snarkier take. "It was fun to watch you reaching for things," he teases, reminding his friend of the recovery they both endured.

Sheidler says getting through

it just took a singular mindset and a systematic approach, just like anything he decides to do. "I make lists just to make lists," he explains.

OK, I counter, but for some people it's hard enough keeping a carwash on the list when the monsoon hits. Then comes Sheidler's always-easy smile and laconic reply, "But you don't need a car wash to feel comfortable in your own skin." 

Art Martori is a Phoenix native who writes for various newspapers and magazines.

MORE ONLINE

For more photos of Trey Scheidler and more information on FTM Fitness World Annual Conference, visit echomag.com/total-transformation.



My favorite quote is from J.R.R. Tolkien "Little by little, one travels far."

Meet Erika Evans

Community Advocate, and a student of a Maricopa Community College



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