



Episode 30 Transcript

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Bikini Redefined with Amy Updike

Nick Collias: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the ecliptic edition of *The Bodybuilding.com Podcast*. I was in a raspberry patch eating a turkey sandwich during the eclipse yesterday.

Heather Eastman: I was in the Path of Totality. It was pretty exciting.

Nick: Oh, good for you! Up in the hills?

Heather: Up in the hills.

Nick: Amy Updike, IFBB Pro, [NLA for Her](#) Athlete. Where were you?

Amy Updike: I was here at Bodybuilding.com headquarters.

Nick: Out on the patio?

Amy Updike: Yes.

Nick: Wearing the glasses?

Amy Updike: Absolutely, and we were listening to "Total Eclipse of the Heart". It was amazing.

Heather: We were trying to get that to play, we didn't think ahead and download it beforehand, so ...

Nick: My favorite local radio show did a dramatic reading of the lyrics of "Total Eclipse of the Heart" while Pink Floyd was playing, which was, I thought it was an interesting effect.

As we were just discussing before we started recording, you are a mother of two, nurse also, still, yes? IFBB Bikini Pro. Breast 'explanter'. There's a lot of things we can talk about, but also you are the carrier of some of the cooler tattoos I have seen.

Amy Updike: Oh, thank you.

Nick: I was wondering, are you the most inked up person on stage when you're competing, generally?

Amy Updike: You know, I feel like tattoos have gotten much more common to see on stage, nowadays and I would definitely say there are girls on stage that have more than I do, some do.

Nick: But you have a bigger one.

Amy Updike: I have a lot more-

Nick: She's got this tree on her back.

Heather: That's right. I've seen that in some of the photos.

Amy Updike: Yeah.

Heather: It's becoming a little more accepted too. It used to be that you couldn't really compete with tattoos if you wanted to get the higher rankings but now there's-

Nick: Now you have to have them.

Heather: They're so ubiquitous that you kind of overlook those, you know?

Amy Updike: Right, almost everyone has one.

Nick: Do you have to tone them down at all or is there a strategy?

Amy Updike: Well, no, the spray tan really does kind of wash them out and kind of makes them blend in.

Nick: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Amy Updike: But, no, I don't do anything else, I don't cover them or anything.

Nick: Did they predate your whole competitive life?

Amy Updike: Yes. I actually didn't get into fitness at all until I was about 27 years old and most of my tattoos came from my early 20s.

Nick: Oh, okay.

Heather: Makes sense.

Nick: Yeah. Speaking of getting into fitness though, we have an athlete profile video of you on Bodybuilding.com that gives a little bit of backstory. I bet that was really interesting because you are a Pediatric Nurse. Pediatric ICU Nurse, also?

Amy Updike: Yeah. So, I actually worked in Salt Lake City at the Children's Hospital there for eight years and I did what we call the float pool, so I floated around to the different units but was primarily in the Pediatric ICU, Newborn ICU, and ER.

Nick: Okay. This is a high energy, long shifts, intense circumstances. I have a friend who's a PICU Nurse and, you know, it's most of what she has energy for, I feel like. Is that what you were like or were you thinking like, "I still have a lot to burn, a lot to give outside of that."

Amy Updike: I think, getting into fitness gave me more energy.

Nick: That makes sense.

Amy Updike: Because before I got into fitness, I really just didn't have a lot of energy to do other things after my 12-hour shifts. On my days off, I was a new mom, I mostly just stayed home. Didn't really do a lot of other extracurricular activities. Getting into fitness, I feel like, gave me a chance to be more motivated, set more goals and really just be more energized about life.

Nick: What was it that really kind of kicked it into gear?

Amy Updike: Being 12 months post-partum and still wearing maternity pants.

Nick: Mm-hmm (affirmative). They're comfortable though.

Amy Updike: They were comfortable but I was like, "I have got to do something about this." So, yeah, hence how I got into fitness.

Nick: Okay. Now, there from the stage though, those are two entirely different worlds-

Amy Updike: Right.

Nick: But, you made that transition fairly quickly, right?

Amy Updike: I did. I did not intend to compete when I started working out. I did not intend to compete at all but it was kind of an exciting thought and a bucket list thing that led me that direction and I just didn't realize that I'd actually be really good at it. It was really exciting to find something I was really good at.

Nick: So, you just feel like your body responded immediately, "Oh, this is what I really want to do."

Amy Updike: Right, my body responded really well and then it turned out that, genetically, I guess I was a little bit gifted as far as the way that my muscles were shaped and just the symmetry of my body. Then, also, maybe my personality was kind of fun to get on stage and kind of be able to shine

in a different way.

Nick: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Did you jump right into a competitive style training split, that advanced sort of stuff?

Amy Updike: I kinda did, yeah.

Nick: I remember hearing, I think, in the video, watching the CrossFit Games that initially sorta kicked you, which that's a totally different thing than this-

Amy Updike: It is totally different. I think I was more inspired by the athletic look of the women on the CrossFit Games but I hired a personal trainer who was a bodybuilder competitor, so he-

Nick: So, that was part of the dialogue for the story.

Amy Updike: Yeah, so he really led me that direction and I really started to be interested in that so that's how it went that direction.

Nick: Okay. So, it was kind of love at first lift then?

Amy Updike: It really was, I think, it was just so challenging in a new and different way for me. I had never lifted weights before. I've done yoga and hiking, that was my background and so lifting weights was exciting and challenging and it was just a little bit different. A new way for me to push myself every day.

Nick: I'm sure you hear from women all the time who are like, "You know, I struggled with this for years, years and it just never quite clicked for me." It clicked for you right away, what do you tell them?

Amy Updike: That's hard, you know, a lot of women are scared to even just lift weights because usually it's men all in the weightlifting room but I don't know, just challenge yourself and just see what you are capable of. Try to overcome that fear and make yourself feel empowered and strong. Weights did that for me.

Heather: You had such a rapid transformation but did you get any pushback as you started lifting weights and started getting more muscular, you know, we kind of hear that a lot from competitors or from people who don't really understand what competing is.

Nick: Even internal pushback where you're like, "Ah! This is-"

Heather: "This is a lot of muscle really quickly, what's going on?"

Amy Updike: I had zero pushback from myself but I definitely had pushback from family and friends. Absolutely, yes. My family, my parents, my siblings were all, "What are you doing? Why are you doing this? Don't get too big!" Friends that kind of were like, "Wow, now you just go to the gym and so, we don't have a lot in common anymore."

Heather: Have they kind of come full circle? Are they more supportive now?

Amy Updike: I feel like most of them have, yeah. Most of them have kind of seen that it's become such a big part of my life and that it's been something that's brought me a lot of joy and passion in my life. So, they are much more supportive.

Nick: But after that first one, you had your bucket list item, you went pretty whole hog after that, right?

Amy Updike: I did. You know, it was so exciting! I couldn't help myself.

Nick: I think I heard you say something somewhere about competing five times in six weeks of something.

Amy Updike: Oh, I did do that in 2014 for my Pro shows. It was more like, "Well, I'm getting into shape, might as well just bang out all these shows."

Nick: Okay.

Heather: Very cool. Nick kind of mentioned you did something very recently that's the opposite of what a lot of competitors do.

Amy Updike: Right.

Heather: And that's the explants, I think, is what you called it?

Nick: That's the term that I got right off of your Instagram.

Amy Updike: Yeah, yeah. No, it's called breast explants, so instead of a breast implant. I got breast implants after about nine months of competing ... No, no, not even nine months, six months.

Nick: Not in preparation for competing?

Heather: Did you feel like you were pressured to do that?

Amy Updike: Absolutely. Yeah, I was noticing on the national stage, "I'm the only girl here without boobs." It was just kind of hard, it was kind of one of those things I think a lot of girls feel super self-conscious about, when you get low body fat levels they go away. Especially as a mom, that also hindered my ability to maintain what I had there, so I got implants and had a lot of problems with them. I had two other revision surgeries to try to fix the problems. I had what was called Capsular Contracture scar tissue build up, it was painful. I could never lay on my stomach. Totally impeded my lifting, I was never able to lift chest again. Wasn't able to ever feel like I was full strength on back day. So, yeah, there was a lot of drawbacks to having them.

Nick: You were on the national stage without them as well. It's not like you were not able to even crack the local stage.

Amy Updike: It's true, it's true. No, I actually placed second on the national stage without them.

Nick: Interesting.

Amy Updike: So, yeah, no, I think there's a lot of things-

Nick: It's a complicated decision.

Amy Updike: Yeah. Right.

Nick: Having seen many, many transformations on our site, it's something that a lot of fit women do, but it's not part of their story necessarily when they talk about it. Like, it's just something that's there but it's almost unspoken.

Heather: It just kinda happens naturally.

Amy Updike: Oh, yeah.

Heather: You see a competitor that's gone for more than two years, eventually it's gonna happen.

Nick: Yeah, and sometimes we look at these before and after pictures and we go, "Wait, this isn't the same person." She doesn't discuss it, but you're being super open about it. Were you that other person before where you're like, "Oh, I have this, I just don't really talk about it."

Amy Updike: About getting them?

Nick: Yeah.

Amy Updike: I never wanted them until I got into competing but when I did get them, I made like a kinda, it was supposed to be funny, like a Transformation Tuesday like, "Hey, this was me a couple weeks ago, this is me now!"

Nick: Okay, so you owned it?

Amy Updike: I wanted to put it out there. I didn't want to pretend like I didn't do anything, it was very obvious, I mean, it was obvious.

Nick: "I've been working a lot of chest in the last two weeks everybody."

Amy Updike: Yeah, the gains have been incredible!

Heather: If you think of something interesting, which is you almost have to sacrifice your ability to lift heavy because it affects all of your upper body lifts, your chest, shoulders, back. Like you said, you feel like you can't really get that full range of motion.

Amy Updike: True.

Heather: It does, even though on the one sense it will help you aesthetically when you're up on stage, it does kind of hurt you in the long run and I think that's something a lot of competitors don't think about.

Amy Updike: Right, yeah. The women I think who continue to lift really heavy, after getting implants, will notice that they look distorted, they don't look as appealing as they probably want them to look,

and otherwise, I feel like ... Well, for me, I really loved that feeling of being really athletic and really strong and being able to lift. The way that I was lifting was the most exciting to me so when I got the implants and not being able to lift that way, it made me sad.

Heather: Yeah.

Nick: Do you feel like kind of liberated, now?

Amy Updike: I do.

Nick: Is your training just completely different, as well?

Amy Updike: Yeah, I'm able to train chest now and I love it when I have a sore chest now, I'm just like, I tell my husband, "I'm so excited! I have a sore chest from lifting on chest day!" It's just really, it's fun. It feels good and I like being more athletic looking vs the girl with big boobs.

Nick: I imagine, having looked at a couple of the videos you've done about this, women have to have just reached out to you, plenty of them, to share their story, as well.

Amy Updike: Yeah, I get messages or emails almost daily about it. Women who are suffering from breast implant illness, women who have had complications, as well. Even women who are considering getting them, still, just kind of wanting to kind of hear more about why I decided to remove mine.

Nick: It's easy to just sort of pull back and say, "Oh, if you really want to do it, do it," as opposed to taking a stand like "No, do it or don't do it." Do you feel like you fall into one sort of advice or the other at this point?

Amy Updike: Yeah, I do. I feel like I've become very biased and I kind of compare it to like, say, you go to a restaurant three times or four times and you get food poisoning every time you go to this restaurant. Would you ever recommend that restaurant to anyone ever again? No. You wouldn't because you've had bad experiences four times. That was my experience with breast implants.

Nick: You mentioned breast implant illness, this is something that I just learned about very recently. Tell us a little bit about what that actually means.

Amy Updike: Breast implants, silicone or saline, are both made out of a silicone shell and that silicone shell will seep into your body as your body is warm and it warms up these chemicals and women are either ... Like, my body was just rejecting this foreign body, I don't think I was necessarily like sick, sick from the implants but there are thousands of women who have silicone leaking into their body, into their bloodstream and making them extremely ill, so causing auto immune diseases, like chronic fatigue, even certain organ issues, like, I know a girl with kidney failure. It's gotten more and more extreme, there's a huge list of symptoms.

What's sad is a lot of them can be chalked up to, say, Lupus or other kind of unknown auto immune diseases and doctors will a lot of the times say, "Oh, well you just have this auto immune disease," and it's like "Well, I don't have a family history of this, I didn't have this before I got the implants," you know. I think a lot of women just don't know about breast implant illness and so they don't look into it any further to think, "Is this my implants that's causing me to be so ill?" Some women are literally unable to get out of bed each day because they're so sick.

I don't know, I feel like with the amount of illness it can cause, I feel like it just doesn't seem like it's worth it.

Nick: Right.

Heather: Right.

Nick: It is something that once it's in you, it's easy to just think of it as not a foreign object, but it totally, it is a foreign object made of something that is not in the human body.

Amy Updike: Right, and being from the medical field, any type of grafting or a foreign joint ... I used to work in Orthopedics so any sort of thing that's not natural to your body, your body is gonna have a high chance of rejection. With that said, a lot of people are on immunosuppressants and things like that do prevent their body from rejecting so I think that's just something to think about. You're putting something in your body that's not yours.

Nick: Sure. Have you competed since then or are you thinking of competing again?

Amy Updike: I did do one competition on June 3rd, so just a couple months ago, without the implants and you know ... I didn't do well, but I think there was other factors to play in there and my body not peaking the way that I wanted it to peak but yeah, I think they try to encourage women who don't have implants and say, "Hey, still compete, we don't judge on that," but I think it changes your overall package, the overall look.

Heather: They don't explicitly judge on it but it does help with the aesthetics.

Amy Updike: Right, the overall appearance.

Nick: Just looking like other people up there, it always seems like you're up there with people.

Heather: There's no box that you check, as a judge, that says, "Has implants," you know, you don't check something off but you're looking and it adds to the overall look and I think it's very explicit that female competitors are kinda told, "Hey, if you want to move up, get implants."

Amy Updike: Exactly, it's a more of a wink, like, "Yeah, it's not like a-"

Heather: "If you want to do this ... "

Amy Updike: "Don't say it, but ..."

Nick: Having looked at some of the standards, the difference between how bikini competitors are judged vs figure competitors, part of it is leanness as well. If you have implants, you're not going to look as lean, necessarily, so maybe you can add more size without meeting the leanness where they'd kick you into physique, otherwise. Am I wrong in this?

Heather: I don't know, it varies so much from organization to organization, as far as like who wants leanness, some people like ... Some organizations prefer the softer look and the rounder shapes so you'll definitely have an advantage in those competitive arenas but I don't know, I think aesthetically, just overall, it contributes to the overall because you are getting so lean, you're right, I mean, you

drop down to nothing.

I've had girls that I've put on stage where we've had to pad them with three or four pads just to kind of give some shape to make it look like there was something there and yeah. You know, you're wearing a bikini top, people want to see it filled out.

Amy Updike: Right, right, I know.

Nick: Has this experience changed how you view the project of competition and the culture of competition beyond that one aspect?

Amy Updike: I do feel like it has kinda changed my feeling on competing a little bit. Also, I think more than anything, I feel more motivated to train and to take my athletics a different direction, based on just what I want, to please myself, to make my body look the way I want it to look vs trying to make it the way a judge wants it to look.

Heather: Yeah, it's almost like the pendulum swung over here and you're kinda letting it find a little bit more natural range for you.

Amy Updike: Exactly. Yeah.

Nick: What does that entail for you? What is that focus on that athleticism and all that, how do you express that in your training?

Amy Updike: Well, maybe by like, loving lifting upper body a lot. I love lifting upper body and bikini, that's not ... It's kinda frowned upon to have bigger arms or to lift chest a lot, it's just not necessary or wanted. Of course, I still love lifting lower body and I still want to build the good glutes and everything that kind of, I was inspired by with the bikini competing, but I feel like I want to be a little bit more athletic, more well-rounded vs just the small waist, big glutes, bikini competitor.

Nick: Mm-hmm (affirmative), okay. Your last article that you contributed quotes to, for us, that had great Instagram posts had nothing to do with competing, nothing to do with bikini, it was about trail running and hiking, right?

Amy Updike: Yay!

Nick: There's part of that in there as well, you're not just in the gym, is that fairly recent or you say you've always been a great hiker?

Amy Updike: I grew up hiking, I grew up going to a cabin in southern Colorado so every summer of my whole life growing up hiking. Then, I lived in Salt Lake City for 15 years, which has amazing hiking.

Nick: Right.

Amy Updike: Recently, I mean, I have two little kids. I don't get out to go trail running or go hiking every day, that's for sure, but whenever I'm in a place that has great trails, I love to try to do a little bit of trail running, it's kinda my escape, like if I have someone to watch my kids for an hour, I'll sneak off and do a little trail running.

Nick: Okay, you don't drag them up the trail with you?

Amy Updike: I do, occasionally, if it's gonna be short enough that my five-year-old can hike it and I can carry my son on my back. My son weighs almost 30 pounds so he's a nice weight.

Nick: How old is he?

Amy Updike: He's just turned two.

Nick: And he's 30 pounds, that is a human kettlebell right there.

Amy Updike: He's a large boy.

Nick: Interesting. I have a five-year-old and a two-year-old, as well, and we somehow got this idea, my five-year-old got this idea in his mind that when he's five years old, he should be able to hike five miles and his brother whose two should be able to hike two miles. So, they've adopted these goals I wasn't pushing them, but we went out camping in the desert for a few days and oddly enough, they're quite capable of it, you know. The two-year-old, he strutted up the trail for two miles like nothing. It's funny with kids, like the same is with adults, it's just a question of believing if they can do it, right? Because, if a kid doesn't believe it, they'll start whining like crazy after a hundred yards, I'm you've experienced at least once.

Amy Updike: Yeah.

Nick: But, if they believe it, then they just keep going and going and going.

Amy Updike: So true, and when it's their idea.

Nick: Yeah, exactly. Having it be their idea and having some snacks in there helps as well.

Amy Updike: Yes.

Nick: Okay, so what are your goals shaping up like now?

Amy Updike: My current goals are just to kind of ... Well, with my past of competing, I really found that struggle between trying to stay as lean as possible and wanting to eat everything I saw.

Nick: Right.

Amy Updike: So, that was a struggle for me, for a little while there and after having my second baby and getting back into shape, it became much more of a natural balance for me and that's been something I've been really enjoying. Then, doing this last competition, kinda reminded me of, "Oh, I don't want to be that crazy person who's unable to stay balanced," and really just the balance factor has been such a huge priority in my life, I do more macro counting now vs doing that strict dieting I was trying to kinda do in the past. Really enjoying that flexibility and just making this truly a lifestyle, staying in a shape that I feel proud of, year round. Then, just training because it brings me so much happiness. I love training, I love lifting and being able to do that without having to be pressured for a show is kinda a different challenge but I'm loving it.

Nick: Great. Yeah, just the time commitment of training for a show is so crazy, too.

Amy Updike: It is.

Nick: Do you feel like as you get more experienced, your training is getting smaller and more time efficient?

Amy Updike: Possibly so, yeah. I feel like I wasn't in the gym quite as much for this last competition prep, as I had been in the past, because now this time I had two kids vs one and my time was really more dedicated to being at home. So, I was doing a lot of my cardio at home, I was taking my kids on more walks, taking my dogs on more walks just to try to get the cardio in without having to just be at the gym.

Nick: Yeah, and talking about that nutritional balance is interesting, as well because that seems like it's such a game changing idea for so many people that we talked to and read articles about on our site, just saying, "You know, yeah there's not one magic food but actually just learning how to manipulate the numbers and just kinda figure out where you fit in there."

Heather: Yeah, it does feel like almost every competitor has to go through that really awful prep the first time. You know, just nothing but broccoli and chicken and sweet potatoes or rice, whichever one you choose and then once they do that, they feel like, "Okay, I feel like maybe I can branch out a little bit." Do you feel like that was how it was for you the first couple times with super strict and now ...

Amy Updike: Yeah, like I almost, I didn't understand how I could fit all these other things into my diet, I just didn't think it was possible. Of course, there's something to be said for like eating those super strict, clean foods right at the last couple weeks when you're really trying to dial things in but in general, during my last 12 weeks of contest prep, I was eating toast and cheese every day. I was eating just foods that I liked, you know. I was really just counting my macros, tracking everything but fitting in foods that I loved and I ate out a lot more than I ever had for any other contest prep without binging. It wasn't like I was going out for cheat meals all the time, I was just going out to eat but then eating within my personal goals.

Nick: What about the sodium? The horrible sodium, you'll lose all your muscles.

Amy Updike: Yeah, those restaurants are sneaky.

Nick: Do you feel like the awful prep is a necessary part of it because we've talked to some people and they say, "Yeah, I did these three shows, and it almost killed me and I hated it but I had to learn the hard way, otherwise there was just no way to do it."

Amy Updike: I think I know some girls, I feel, who start out and if it fits your macros or flexible dieting and they kinda just stick with it and it works for them, I don't feel like that's as common as you know, the hard contest prep diet and then switching to macros later but I think some people do it from the get-go and probably do okay with it, especially if they have a coach who's been through that, maybe.

Heather: Who can coach them and teach them and steer them clear of that bad prep.

Amy Updike: Exactly.

Nick: Yeah. So, what are you filming with us these days?

Amy Updike: I just did three different workout videos, which I'm super excited about. We did an upper body day, kind of what I've been liking to do lately, when I'm short on time, I'm not spending as many days in the gym lately with my kids and we just moved from Salt Lake City to Denver, so short on time makes me want to train a little bit more intensely so I'll do like-

Nick: Full upper body?

Amy Updike: Yeah, I'll do a full upper body circuit kind of a thing or lots of supersets, lots of drop sets to keep it really intense. I also did a shoulder day for muscle building and then we did glutes and hamstrings, one of my favorite things to lift.

Heather: Yay!

Nick: Awesome. How do people find you out there?

Amy Updike: So, I'm on [Instagram](#): @fitamysuzanne, or I have a website fitamysuzanne.com.

Nick: You do a lot of YouTube videos too, it seems like.

Amy Updike: I haven't been doing as many lately, I need to do more but yeah I did start getting more active.

Nick: I'm not trying to pressure you.

Amy Updike: Oh, thank you. I'm trying to be more active with [my YouTube channel](#), it was a really great way for me to discuss all of my breast explant surgery decision and kind of the recovery of all that, it was nice to just make a video and post it so yeah I've got a YouTube channel too and I answer lots of questions if people have questions about the breast implant illness or explant.

Nick Collias: Okay. Wonderful, Amy Updike, thanks for coming in and talking with us.

Heather Eastman: Yeah, thank you for being here.

Amy Updike: Thank you so much for having me.



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