

# Haven't you Herd

Girls track head coach Ericka Herd talks about her career as a teacher, coach, bodybuilder and mother

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We've all been there: wake up early, glance at the clock and consider whether or not to even get up out of bed. But imagine the mental toughness it takes to not only go to an early morning workout, but also to make it to work by 7 a.m. -- all while seven months pregnant.

For freshman English teacher and girls track coach, Ericka Herd, this was a reality.

For the past five years, Herd has been competing nationally as a bodybuilder, and is closing in on earning her "pro card." As of now, Herd competes as an amateur bodybuilder; but as she begins her 2017 season, she hopes to earn enough first-place finishes to be able to compete as a professional, even as a mother.

"Being a mother is difficult," Herd said. "It is tiring; it is taxing. But hopefully what I did will be a message to the other women that are out there."

After her daughter Izabela was born, Herd took four months off to care for her newborn. But once she returned to the lifting mindset, she came back with a vengeance, earning seven pieces of hardware in just three competitions, and dominating the Masters division (35 years and older.)

She finished the season with two Masters Overalls, three Master Class wins and a second and third in the open division, where she competes against women of all ages.

"Let's face it, 20-year-old bodies are different from 40-year-old bodies," Herd said. "For me I always like to challenge myself up against the younger girls."

Ultimately, Herd's main focus for the upcoming season is to win the national competition in her hometown, Pittsburgh. A win at nationals would also give her the opportunity to compete at the professional level.

A lack of determination has never been an issue for Herd, as she has broken down whatever barriers she has encountered. She gives credit to her mother, Shereé, for her steadfast ways, saying she is a blessing and the reason she is able to have time to fit all the things she does into her life.

When Herd ended her 2016 lifting season in November, it was a mere eight months after giving birth to her daughter. With year-round com-

petitions available, she chose to end her season just before Thanksgiving, which allowed her to spend time with Izabela during the holidays.

For someone as dedicated as she is, Herd finds it hard to resist temptations during the holidays. A bag of chips has become a rarity for her, and one can only imagine how hard it is to resist digging into a huge Thanksgiving dinner.

However watching her physique is nothing new for Herd. In fact, she has always taken care of her body, and didn't even start bodybuilding until she was 35 years old. Her cousin, Nicole, introduced Herd to her trainer, pushing her to try a bodybuilding show. Just 12 weeks later, she competed in her first show, and the rest is history.

Herd was understandably nervous her first show. She recalls her legs shaking as she tried to pose. Now, five years later, she is much more comfortable competing. Her poise has helped her earn a large collection of hardware and a chance to compete at a national competition.

Herd's workouts, and a strict diet regimen that comes with it, have been her lifestyle since she began bodybuilding in 2011. During her competition season, Herd lifts six days a week and does cardio every day. Additionally, she performed two-a-days as her competition neared.

Now 40 years old and a new mother, Herd has worked as hard as she can not to become "momified" as she put it. She has worked harder since her daughter was born to not let it consume her life. She has made a conscience effort to not let being a mother keep her from any part of her life.

"You make time for what's important to you, and that's what's important to me, keeping my body intact," said Herd. "You only have one of them."

It was obviously tough for Herd to return to form after having Izabela, but she has only served as a greater source of inspiration for Herd, and it only drives her more to compete and be a role model.

Many people might have given up extra-curriculars after becoming a mother, and made excuses not to find the time. In Ericka Herd's case, being a mother is just another reason to keep pushing.



Herd poses for her bodybuilding career almost a year after her pregnancy. submitted photo

*"Action is the foundational key to all success."*

-- Picasso