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Vanessa Williams in the Gym, On TV, and Sharing Her County Secrets

By: Andrea Barbalich



Westchester's Beauty and Ugly Betty's Villain

Vanessa Williams is an actress, singer, mother, and unabashedly proud Westchester resident. Her latest role is Wilhelmina Slater, creative director of Mode magazine, on the ABC mega-hit Ugly Betty, which kicks off its second season Thursday, September 27.

Andrea Barbalich interviewed her to get her thoughts on playing a villain on the show, enjoying Westchester, staying in shape (see her workout on page 78), and that grueling Chappaqua to L.A. commute.

how vanessa gets that body

Vanessa Williams's personal trainer, Sal Gaglio, doesn't believe in cardio. Really? So, is that how Williams stays looking so great—no cardio?

Not exactly. The Chappaqua mom of four is still a fan of the treadmill, the Stairmaster, and—her favorite cardio activity—salsa dancing. But she limits those activities in favor of three-times-weekly weight-training sessions with Gaglio, the owner of Fitness for Health in Briarcliff Manor. "If you want to do cardio, go ahead," Gaglio says, "but no more than two days a week, twenty minutes max. Cardio depletes you and makes you hungrier." Gaglio's approach centers on weight training, which he says does a better job of boosting the heart rate and defining the body.



Williams uses another trainer when she's shooting *Ugly Betty* on the West Coast. But since a friend referred her to Gaglio three years ago, she's been loyal to him whenever she's in New York. The reason she cites is simple: "Results." In one hour with Gaglio, Williams does a full-body workout that strengthens and tones her 5'6" body and has put her in the best shape she's ever been in. (How much does she weigh? "I don't weigh myself," she says.)

Williams says she appreciates that Gaglio pushes her to reach her potential. But the responsibility is hers, too. "There is no magic pill," she says. "To stay defined, healthy, and strong, you have to move—especially after having kids. Sal can guarantee results if you listen and do what he says, but it's about working hard too. Having a trainer forces you to show up, and I do."

Take a look at Williams in action on the day we dropped in on her workout.

1. the warmup



A five-minute warmup gets Williams moving and helps prevent injuries. Shown here with her trainer, Sal Gaglio, she uses the Arc trainer, which works her quads, hamstrings, and glutes.

2. lunges



Williams begins her lower-body workout with lunges, which work her quads, hamstrings, glutes, and inner thighs. She does two sets of 30 reps, alternating legs.

3. squats



This move works the hamstrings, quads, and glutes. Williams does two sets of 30 reps.

4. the hamstring blast





This three-part move works the hamstring and core. First, lying on her back with hips raised and feet on the physio ball, Williams moves her hips up and down for 15 reps. Then she moves the ball toward her and away from her (not shown) for 15 reps. Finally, with her feet against the ball, she moves her hips up and down 15 times.

5. rockers



Gaglio created this move, which he says is one of the toughest exercises for abs. In a crunch position, Williams keeps her elbows touching her thighs while Gaglio slowly rocks her body up.

“Most people cannot do this exercise,” he says, “and a beginner is lucky to do two or three reps.” Williams does 15 to 20, closing her eyes the entire time. “It hurts,” she says. “Try it and you’ll feel my pain.”

6. pushup row



In this upper-body move, Williams works her chest, back, core, triceps, and delts. From a pushup position on the floor, she keeps one arm straight while pulling the other back, holding a 12-pound weight. Then she places that arm back on the floor for 15 reps. She does two sets, one on each side.

7. single arm row with lateral raise on physio ball



Seated on the physio ball, Williams sits tall with her right arm holding the handle of a 60-pound cable crossover. As she pulls the handle toward her body, she raises her left arm out to the side (holding an 8-pound weight) until it's parallel to the floor. Working her upper back, rear delts, side delts, and core, she does two sets of 15 reps.

8. squat curls



Starting in a standing position and holding 12-pound weights, Williams squats down on a Bosu, stands back up, then curls the weights to her shoulders and presses them overhead. This move, done in two sets of 15 reps, works the quads, hamstrings, glutes, biceps, anterior delts, and core.

9. posterior delt





From a pushup position, Williams gets her body into a tripod position, keeping her legs wide with one arm stiff on the floor. She lifts a 7.5-pound weight laterally with a straight arm, lifting the arm slightly above parallel. She does two sets of 15 reps.

10. tricep extension with physio ball



Lying on her back on the ball and holding a 12-pound weight, Williams extends her arm straight toward the ceiling. Lowering her hand, she locks her elbow into a 90-degree angle. Doing two sets of 15 reps, she works the backs of her arms and her core.

11. wood chop





Seated on a ball while pulling a thick rubber band, Williams simulates a wood chop. With both arms holding the band's handle, she crosses her body and brings the band toward her opposite foot.

The move strengthens her trunk rotation and spinal flexion, working the abdominal wall and obliques. She does 20 reps on each side.

12. ab crunch on physio ball



Lying on her back on the ball, Williams keeps her hands behind her head to support her neck. As she crunches up, she aims her chin to the ceiling and pushes, driving the small of her back into the ball for 30 reps. For Williams, this is a recovery exercise between other moves.

13. wings



Hanging with her upper arms in leather straps, Williams raises her legs straight out as high as she can and then lowers them. She does 10 reps with her legs out and 10 with her knees bent, working her abs.