



Newsletter Article

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BEAUTY AND 'THE BEAST' AMERICAN NINJA WARRIOR - PART 2!

By Michael Beird

ABOUT THE AUTHOR(S)

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Introduction

If these terms above seem odd to you, it's likely you don't follow the summer's most popular show on NBC Monday night...American Ninja Warrior (ANW). We know that a banking industry newsletter seems like an odd place to discuss a television show, but the response from readers after last year's interview with BankersHub Web Manager (and my daughter) Allyssa Beird was overwhelming and we thought we would update everyone on what's happened since last season!

Allyssa first competed last year on Season 8 of ANW in Philadelphia and made history by being one of 4 women who advanced to the city finals and subsequently onto Las Vegas for the season finals on "Mount Midoriyama". What makes the insane obstacle course so formidable for females is that they must overcome the same obstacles and challenges that confront their male counterparts. Only the top 30 athletes in a city qualifier move on to the city finals and Allyssa, along with three other women, was among the top finishers!

Allyssa has made it again onto ANW Season 9 this year, competing in Cleveland qualifiers (July 10, 8:00pm ET on NBC) and we were pleased to have a new interview with her and her boyfriend, James 'The Beast' McGrath!

ABOUT BankersHub

BankersHub was founded in 2012 by Michael Beird and Erin Handel, 2 Financial Services professionals dedicated to educating and informing banks, credit unions, solution providers and consultants in the U.S. and worldwide. BankersHub delivers best practices, research insights, opinions, economic trends and consumer views through online web education, virtual events and conferences, live streaming activities, custom training and content development.



BankersHub's Web Manager

Allyssa Beird

Monday, Aug 14, 2017

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Cleveland Finalist

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Background

During the day, Allyssa Beird works full time as a 5th grade school teacher at the Henry Burkland Elementary School in Middleborough, MA which, as many teachers would attest, is probably exhausting enough. However, Allyssa has also been the Web Manager for BankersHub since 2012, a role that typically consumes her evenings. As a former gymnast and pole vaulter, though, she was anxious to stay in shape so she started working out at night and that is how she came to know some of the athletes associated with the television show, American Ninja Warrior.

Since she first appeared on the show last year, her life has both stayed the same and changed in many ways. First, the opportunity to compete on television's most popular summer show meant that she is probably the most recognizable elementary school teacher around, especially among the students in Middleborough. Second, she recently competed in the National Ninja League, a series of national competitions that culminated in the US Finals in Oakland, CA earlier this year where Allyssa finished in First Place! She has also been competing on the ANW Team Ninja competition which wraps up with her team competing for the top prize on USA Network, Tuesday June 27 at 10pm ET!



Finally, if you or your kids follow the show, you may recognize her boyfriend, James "The Beast" McGrath who has been a regular competitor on the show since season 2!

We were thrilled to grab some time with Allyssa and James to get updated on what's been happening since last year.

Teacher By Day...Ninja By Night

BHub: This is your second year competing on ANW. What are some of the ways in which this year has been different in preparing for the upcoming season?

Allyssa: I've changed up my training a bit this year. Last year, I was new to all obstacles, so I was training a lot of specific obstacles and trying to master how they worked and moved. This year, however, I've focused more on training my body, instead of training the obstacles. I'm varying up my training more throughout the week: a few ninja gym days for some obstacle work, some climbing, a few leg days and some sprinting, and a lot of pull ups and core work in between! I also feel like I'm paying more attention to what I'm eating and trying to support organic, healthy, natural food options.

I've also started dating James McGrath, so it's been great to have a seasoned ninja veteran off of whom I could bounce training ideas and get some great training support!

BHub: What was the biggest surprise you had from last year? Anything really take you off guard that you weren't expecting?

Allyssa: I think the fact that I ended up qualifying to city finals, and then earned a wildcard spot in Vegas, took me by surprise. I was honestly just so excited to have gotten the initial call to be on the show that

everything that came after that was just a bonus. It was like, “Oh, I made it to city finals? That’s awesome!! Oh, they want me as a wildcard to Las Vegas finals? I’m there!” As far as obstacles go, I wasn’t really taken off guard by anything specifically, but moreso used some of my weaker points in my runs to start making a mental list of the things I wanted to work on for next year.

BHub: What has been your biggest focus in training this year? Finger grip, stamina, cardio, etc.? Was that different that preparing from last season?

Allyssa: I haven’t really focused my training in any one area this year. It’s been pretty well-rounded, I think. I’ve made sure to focus more on becoming stronger as an athlete, rather than focus on becoming better on specific obstacles (which is what I did last year!). Rock climbing has helped with my grip strength and upper-body stamina, sprint drills have helped with my explosiveness and leg power, pull up sets have helped with my upper body strength in general, etc.

BHub: Any insights on how you balance the workouts with the demands being a school teacher?

Allyssa: It’s definitely not easy. I have my training days worked into my schedule so I guarantee everything gets done. I hit the ninja gym on Mondays and Tuesdays, I rock climb either Wednesday or Thursday (depending on if we have a staff meeting or grade level meeting on Wednesdays), and I try to rock climb at least once on the weekends as well, followed by a track sprint day on Sundays. I work better with a schedule and under a bit of stress, so having a lot going on actually makes me more productive! I know I have deadlines for lesson plans, grading and classroom work, so I efficiently use every moment I can at work and after work until it’s time to hit the road for the gym!

BHub: How have your 5th graders reacted to having an American Ninja Warrior for a teacher? Did many of them see your performance from last year before they came into your classroom this year?

Allyssa: I think most of my students had seen me compete on season 8 before coming into my classroom this year. On day one this year, a handful of them wore the “Team Beird” t-shirts that I’d helped create for a fundraiser with the PTA last year to buy new recess equipment, so that was cool! They had a lot of questions up front, but then it was business as usual after that. When it came time to start filming for my application video for season 9 there was definitely a renewed interest in my experiences on the show, but it’s pretty normal classroom-stuff most of the time! I’m sure it’s pretty cool to have a ninja for a teacher, but I definitely experience many of the same frustrations, moments of pride, and crazy stories as every other teacher!

BHub: Can you describe what working with and around the other athletes in ANW has been like? Do the athletes get along as much as they seem to on the show?



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Allyssa: The whole ninja community is absolutely a family! We all support each other and want the best for each other, and we use our training together to push each other in friendly competition. If I'm running speed courses with other ninjas, you better believe I'm cheering them on and helping them through the course as best I can so they can do their best, but I also want to beat their time when I'm up! This goes both ways; we use each other as inspiration and friendly competition to constantly push ourselves and our fellow ninjas to continually become better. There's also very little drama, which is fantastic!



BHub: In addition to competing on last season's ANW, you also finished first in the Woman's Division on National Ninja League, as well as competing currently on Team Ninja (Tuesday nights on USA Network). Have these other events helped or hurt your daily training focus? How do you squeeze those events into your schedule?

Allyssa: The actual American Ninja Warrior show is such a small part of the year. Imagine setting a goal for yourself 8 months in advance, and working toward that goal for those entire 8 months with no "checkpoints" in between. It'd be extremely difficult to keep up the work and dedication needed to reach that goal that far in the future! Luckily we have the NNL off-season that starts up shortly after the show has ended and finishes up just before the next season starts. Because there are competitions from July through March, then the show from March through June, it's just constantly training all year with "accountability checkpoints" sprinkled throughout the year in the form of ninja competitions. Team Ninja Warrior fit nicely into this schedule, too. The training for all of these events are basically the same, so it was a fun addition to the end of the summer. As far as NNL goes during the school year, competitions are on weekends, so I don't need to take time off of work. Team Ninja Warrior was luckily still during the summer, and my principal and superintendent are incredibly supportive and I'm able to use my personal days to compete on American Ninja Warrior in the spring!

BHub: Are fans recognizing you at all in public?

Allyssa: Not quite yet! At ninja gyms and other ninja events, there are always some kids and parents that want some photos (which still feels a little weird to me), but in the general public, I'm just...me! There was a girl at the rock climbing gym the other day that asked for a photo, which was probably as far outside of the ninja world as someone has recognized me, but it still all feels ninja-related!

BHub: You and Allyssa have become an item since last season. Any thoughts on how dating a fellow Ninja changes your workout routine? Any ribbing from fellow Ninjas, like former roommate Drew?

James: I've been injured/recovering since we met, so I haven't really had much of a workout routine.



BHub: You've been on American Ninja Warrior since Season 2. Which obstacles stand out in your mind as having been the most challenging?

James: The double helix from season 7. By itself it was a difficult obstacle, but placing it 9th in the order of obstacles is what made it super challenging. By the time you get to it, you're already sufficiently tired.

BHub: Any suggestions for fans who might be considering making a run at competing in future seasons? Training? Diet? Gyms?

James: I would say the best advice I can give someone who wants to compete would be to work on endurance. I would tell people to go out and sit through a taping of it as part of their training just to get a feel of what it's really going to be like. A lot of people just don't know what they're getting into.

BHub: Your nickname "The Beast" has become a real staple of the show every season! Can you speak a bit on how you adopted that moniker?

James: When I was new to the sport, Matt Iseman started calling me that every time I ran the course. Eventually it just stuck!

Bhub: Any seasons stand out as particularly exciting or memorable? Why?

James: They're all exciting. Every year it's a new experience. The course is always changing so you never know what you're going to get! Whenever you're challenged in a new way it's always exciting.



If Allyssa conveys the youthfulness, strength and endurance your brand seeks in its Marketing
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