



Danielle Demski

High octane and renaissance woman of sports, television, and film, red carpet host, actor, writer and producer, Danielle Demski. She is currently the host of *Fit to Hit* on the Tennis Channel.



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We understand that you grew up in a very sports-oriented family. Would you tell us about your family?

“My dad was a college and pro athlete who later coached high school football and wrestling. And my mom played competitive tennis through NTRP, and actually won the state championship in doubles. I grew up playing softball, volleyball, tennis, and dancing, so sports and competition was just a way of life in my house. I still love playing beach volleyball when I can and since I started working on my new show on the Tennis Channel, I’ve gotten to play tennis a lot more often!”

You have done so much. Tell us about being a USO (United Service Organizations) dancer. Did you go overseas? If yes, can you tell us about that experience?

“I toured with the USO on and off for three years and it was such an incredible experience! I performed for hundreds of our American soldiers and traveled to military bases all over the country and overseas. I got to see places like Germany, Bosnia, and Kosovo, and meet so many of our soldiers stationed abroad.

“It was quite an eye-opening experience to see what our military does up close and personal and it has given me an even stronger sense of respect for what they sacrifice on a daily basis. I also got the chance to ride around in Chinook helicopters, Humvees, and even a tank!”

You also made the finals in the Miss USA contest. Could you tell us what it is like to participate in a pageant?

“Winning Miss Arizona USA was so exciting and then going on to be a semi-finalist for Miss USA was just icing on the cake! Being in a pageant is truly a whirlwind, but it can be great for refining interviewing skills, giving confidence in public speaking situations, and providing a platform for important issues.

“I think being Miss Arizona USA was a great springboard for my career in entertainment! I was constantly at public speaking events, making TV appearances, getting involved with charities, and I met so many inspirational people.”

What is the most difficult part of pageants?

“I would have to say the most difficult part was keeping up with the schedule at Miss USA. All 51 contestants, including myself, were living in a hotel together for almost three weeks — that alone could be a reality show... [laughs]! On

top of that, the schedule was non-stop; we had several events, TV appearances, and rehearsals for the live telecast every day. You become very good at napping anywhere and everywhere. In a car, on the floor, standing up in your four-inch stilettos... But it was such an amazing experience and all completely worth it!

“Have you ever heard of butt glue? I hadn’t until I competed in Miss Arizona USA. So here’s the deal: When you’re walking around on stage in four-inch heels and a bikini, you don’t want your swimsuit to ride up, so you spray your butt with glue before you put your swimsuit on. The glue makes the fabric stick to your skin so your bikini will stay in place. Well, apparently I put too much glue on and when I ran back stage to try and change from my swimsuit in to my evening gown, it was stuck hard to my skin. I had to take a deep breath and rip it off! It came off, but I ended up with a huge red welt on my butt! [Laugh]”

Good to know. We’ll try to stay away from butt glue [laugh]. You started modeling at age 15. What was your



On the set of Fit to Hit



first modeling job like?

"My very first modeling job was a print campaign for Adidas. I was really excited to be on set for the first time, but didn't really know what I was doing yet. On top of that, the photographer and most of the clients I was working for were from Germany and spoke very little English so they couldn't even direct me. It was pretty funny! By the end of the day we had become really good at sign language and using an interpreter, and I had learned that I loved working in front of the camera."

Will you model in the future?

"Once I graduated from Arizona State University with my degree in Broadcast Journalism, I got pretty busy with my career in TV and started to focus on that more. But I'm always open for a new adventure; if the right thing comes along, I'm in!"

Is modeling as difficult as it seems?

"I always thought modeling was pretty fun and a great way to make money — especially for a high school and college student. Plus I've always enjoyed playing around on camera."

"All that said, there can be difficult situations. I remember having to shoot outdoors once in a snowy location and being absolutely freezing! But of course, you have to pretend like you're comfortable and completely enjoying yourself even though you can't feel your face anymore."

You were also an NFL cheerleader for the Arizona Cardinals. Could you tell us about it?

"I was a cheerleader for the Arizona Cardinals for four years while I was in college and I loved every minute of it! I got the best "seat" in the house to watch the game every Sunday from the sidelines, met amazing friends, and traveled the world."

"I remember going to try out for the first time when I was 18 years old. There were several hundred girls there to try out for 26 spots, yikes! I was SO nervous but I worked hard and, ultimately, I was thrilled to hear my number called as one of the new cheerleaders that year! I had been dancing since I was 5 years old, so getting to continue that at a professional level with so many other talented girls was really exciting. On top of that, I'm a huge football fan, so I loved becoming a part of the NFL family!"

What is it like to step out on that field?

"It's such an exhilarating feeling to run onto the field with music blasting, fire works going off, and the fans cheering! The best part was performing a new routine that had just been choreographed. The Cardinals fans really keep up with and are very involved with the cheerleaders so they are always excited when there's a new routine. I've got to admit, I miss

that! During a game when Arizona was losing pretty badly to Washington, I ended up spraining my ankle while dancing on the field. While the medics took me over to the sidelines to check out my ankle, one of the cameras came over to get a shot for the national broadcast. The broadcasters started talking about, "How badly "the Cardinals, AND the Cardinals Cheerleaders, were getting beaten up today..." My friends and family saw me on TV getting my ankle taped up during this segment and thought it was hilarious. I didn't think it was so comical at the time, but looking back it was a pretty funny TV moment."

Tell us about your family.

"I'm an only child, so no brothers or sisters who are performers. My parents are divorced but I'm very close to both of them and get to see them quite a bit. My mom lives in Arizona and my dad lives in Colorado — two of my favorite states! My mom has always been very in to musical theater and has performed in many local community productions. Both my parents have always been very supportive of my career choice and always encouraged me to do something I love for a living...which I am!"

"I've been married for a couple years now so I still consider myself a newlywed and married life has been wonderful! My husband also works in entertainment as an actor and voice-over artist. I think it's nice that we both work in entertainment because we both understand the crazy schedule our jobs entail and are always supportive and push each other forward. I'm also a doggy mommy to my four-year-old Brittany Spaniel named Zoey. We rescued her from a shelter a few years ago and she's brought so much joy to our lives! Now I donate and volunteer time with rescues in the area."



Was your family surprised when you decided to become a TV host?

"No, I think they would have been surprised if I hadn't become a TV host [laughs]!" I loved performing and being on camera from a very young age and by the time I was in junior high school I was writing reports on working in TV and production. Then I got my degree in Broadcast Journalism from Arizona State University and started hosting my first show right after graduation, so I had a pretty clear path of what I wanted to do."

What do you love about hosting and producing?

"I love working on camera and have gotten the chance to interview many interesting people over the years. I also love writing and producing my own pieces. I usually have the opportunity to be pretty creative in my



work, which is so rewarding.

"Working on *Fit To Hit*, my new show on the Tennis Channel, has been great! I've been traveling all over the country meeting and interviewing tennis greats, nutritionists, trainers, and brain health experts to find out cutting edge techniques to improve your fitness level and your tennis game. Whether I'm on a tennis court or the red carpet, I feel like I'm always learning something new or meeting tons of interesting people."

What was your first professional performance? Can you tell us about it?

"I started modeling and doing commercial work when I was 15, so I have been working "professionally" in entertainment since I was a teenager. But when I graduated from ASU, I started working with the Phoenix Suns and that was my first reporting job. I love sports, so it was loads of fun to be court-side for every game interviewing the players and interacting with the fans. I'm 5'9", so I don't often feel short, but working with the NBA was one of the few times I've felt very small doing interviews."



On the set of *Let's Make A Deal*

What has been your most interesting audition experience?

"I was in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, this year over the holidays and I got a call from my agent saying I needed to put myself on tape for a producer immediately! At that moment I was sitting on the beach in Copacabana with a drink in my hand and I didn't have time to go back to my hotel room and change. So I taped my audition right there on the beach in Brazil, sent it off to my agent, and actually booked the job! I love technology!"

Is it true you are a poker player?

"I do love playing poker and have hosted a couple poker shows. I hosted *Three Card Poker Championship* for two seasons on GSN and I worked with ESPN on the *World Series of Poker* giving hourly updates on the players and all the different events. Both of these shows were so much fun and also improved my poker game."

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What was it like to host *The World Series of Poker* for ESPN360?

"A lot of people don't realize that *WSOP* isn't just the main event. There are 45 events taking place over a few months and almost \$200 million in prize money up for grabs leading up to that main event! Poker players from all over the world travel to Vegas to buy in to these events."

"I basically lived at the Rio Hotel in Vegas during this time reporting hourly on each event throughout the day. It gets very exciting once it's narrowed down to the final table and I got to watch everything happen up close and personal!"

"The majority of my time working for *WSOP* was really fun, very interesting, and I loved hanging out with all the poker players."

"As the final table narrowed down, I was conducting exit interviews — which can be a pretty tough job depending on the temperament of each individual person leaving the table. One of the final four players got knocked out so they brought him over to do an interview with me on his way out. He clearly did not want to talk to anyone and was really angry he didn't make it further, but I tried to do the interview anyway. I got one question out of my mouth and he got really mad, threw up his hands, and walked away in the middle of our live broadcast. I just kept moving and didn't lose my cool. Losing millions of dollars can be a very emotional situation, so I just moved on to my next interview."

Tell us about your current project as host of *Fit to Hit* on the Tennis Channel.

"*Fit To Hit* has been a very fun and interesting show to work on! Over the last few months I've traveled to New York, Florida, Palm Springs, and other locations to meet with tennis greats, trainers, nutritionists, brain health experts, and best-selling authors to find out the secrets to staying fit mentally and physically while improving your tennis game."

"The best part of the show is that anybody can use this info to improve their fitness level and their tennis game. There's something for everybody, from your weekend warrior to a pro tennis player. It's been exciting to meet, interview, and train with some of the biggest names in tennis like John Isner, Tim Smyczek, and Ryan Sweeting. But I can't give away everything... You'll have to watch the show starting August 16th for all the details!"

What was the set like?

"We were constantly in different cities and locations while shooting *Fit To Hit*, so the set was always changing. One day I'd be shooting on the Brooklyn Bridge in New York, and the next week I'd be on the beach in Florida. But everyone I'm working with on the show has been amazing"



and makes every location enjoyable. One time, we were shooting a segment on paddle-boarding in Tampa Bay, and were out on the water with three cameras rolling. It was such a warm, sunny, gorgeous day outside. Then suddenly, the wind picked up, the clouds rolled in, and it started to pour! I was trying to maneuver my board back to the dock but the wind was so intense that it was blowing me in to boats and rocks. It was pretty crazy and funny to watch everybody scrambling to get back to land while keeping the cameras dry! I definitely got an arm workout that day!"

Tell us about hosting TNT's live pre-show for the SAG Awards three years in a row.

"I've worked as a host for many TBS and TNT shows over the years and love working with them. I also really like hosting live TV, so when the producers of the SAG Awards decided to produce their own live, two-hour, red carpet pre-show they came to me, and it's been a great fit! The SAG Awards is one of my favorite award shows because it has such a fun and casual atmosphere, and I love that the awards are voted on by the actors themselves.

"There have been many great red carpet moments! Some of my favorites include Dick Van Dyke sharing the intimate story of how he met his wife for the first time at the SAG Awards — they are such a cute couple! And then there was the time when I asked Michael Douglas what designer he was wearing and he began taking off layers of clothing to try and find a tag... He's such a nice guy and so genuine. The after party is always a blast because you're sure to find the cast of Modern Family busting a move on the dance floor!"

Can you tell us about the location?

"The SAG Awards are held at the Shrine Auditorium in L.A., which is a stunning building with a rich history. I love being able to stand on the stage and walk through the halls where so many talented people have walked before and so many amazing events have taken place over the years. It feels very glamorous and old Hollywood!"

Tell us about your role on CBS's CSI: Miami.

"I'm a huge fan of the CSI franchise, so it was really cool to work with the cast on an episode! I played an investigative reporter, looking in to drug cartel activity in Miami. We shot in Long Beach, which surprisingly, looks a lot like Miami with all the bright colors and art deco buildings. I had a great time on the set hanging out with Jonathan Togo and Adam Rodriguez at craft services munching on an array of candy!"

You have been a correspondent and panelist on entertainment shows like Extra, Mark Cuban's AXS Live, Lionsgate Entertainment's Epix News, Logo Networks The Gossip Queens, TV Guide's Hollywood 411. Can you tell us about those experiences?

"I've always loved working in entertainment news from covering film premieres, to live red carpet events, to going on set for a behind-the-

scenes story. Each of these shows were so different! For *Extra* I did field correspondent work; for *Hollywood 411* I hosted in studio; on *Gossip Queens* I was part of a panel with a live audience. All very different from each other, but I love it all!

"I especially like my work with *AXS Live*. I was not only an on-camera host but I was also writing and producing. I love having a hand in the production side and coming up with creative story ideas while making it all come together. Plus, the show is completely live so there is no "take two," and no editing. The spontaneity gives an element of surprise and thrill to the process.

"I did an interview with Donald Trump for *Extra*, and it was really nice to see him again after competing in Miss USA and be the one interviewing him this time around.

"Also, one time I was back stage for a live interview with Demi Lovato after her concert. She was running late so I was desperately trying to stall for about 10 minutes — which on live TV seems like an eternity! It was pretty funny and definitely tested my improv skills, but all came together in the end."

"There's a lot of rejection in entertainment so you have to believe in yourself, even if nobody else does! Keep working hard, focusing, and you can make anything happen."



We would like to hear about your video on literacy and learning disabilities, A Journey of Gifts.

"I wrote, hosted and produced this hour-long educational video about the struggles of dealing with literacy and learning disabilities in our school systems today. It has since been implemented into several Arizona school systems and is the signature video for the Arizona Literacy and Learning Center. I struggled with a learning disability as a child and wanted to help other children and their parents find the help they needed to overcome these issues. With the right teachers and techniques any student can excel and this video will help people understand and find the right tools to help themselves, their child, or their student."

We would love to hear about working with James Cameron on his documentary *Last Mysteries of the Titanic*.

"I hosted a special interview and Q&A with James Cameron right before *Last Mysteries of the Titanic* premiered on the Discovery Channel. He and his entire team were amazing to work with! I learned so much about Titanic and their Deep Ocean Expeditions and got the chance to preview much of the film and footage at Cameron's personal 3-D theater. It was a wonderful experience! And James is such a professional and an innovator!"



On the set of Fit to Hit

Of all your work, what was the best experience you had on a set?

"I think it would be almost impossible to pinpoint one set or one experience. I think I've been very lucky to work with a lot of great people and situations. Lucky me! [big smile]"

Tell us about working with Wayne Brady on *Let's Make a Deal*.

"Wayne Brady and the entire *Let's Make A Deal* cast, crew, and producers were truly incredible to work with! It is one of the most fun and energetic sets I've ever been on! It was a unique experience for me because there is absolutely no scripted material — *everything* is improvised. You certainly have to be on your toes at all times to keep up with Wayne. He's crazy talented, a really nice guy, and you never know what he's going to throw in your direction...literally or figuratively [laughs]. I've shot over 70 episodes with them, so after that much time together you kind of feel like a family."

You are also a correspondent for quite a few sports shows. Which one has been the most interesting and why?

"I covered the Super Bowl this year for the first time, which was awesome! I got a chance to interview some of the biggest names in sports from Joe Namath, to Colin Kaepernick, to Russell Wilson. I also got to experience events like the Madden Bowl, Super Bowl Media Day, and the Rolling Stone Party where Aerosmith performed. On top of all that, it was in my home state of Arizona so it was great to spend some time there and see the city transformed in to Super Bowl central!"

What is the best career advice you ever received?

"Find something you love and find a way to make a living doing it, then you'll never "work" a day in your life."

Do you have some advice for entertainers in the field that you might share?

"There's a lot of rejection in entertainment so you have to believe in

yourself, even if nobody else does! Keep working hard, focusing, and you can make anything happen."

You are incredibly busy and have done a huge variety of projects. Feel free to tell us about any projects we've missed here. Holy cow you are the renaissance woman of television!

"I love being called the renaissance woman of TV — I'll take it! My new show *Fit To Hit*, premieres August 16th on the Tennis Channel, so be sure to watch!"

For more information about Danielle Demski, go to www.Danielle-Demski.com, Twitter @Danielle_Demski, Instagram @DanielleDemski or Facebook /DanielleDemski1.

Photography by Marc Cartwright

