



As Seen on

6 WEEKS to a HEALTHIER YOU

Lose Weight and Get Healthy for Life!

Cheryl Forberg, RD, Melissa Roberson, Lisa Wheeler, and The Biggest Loser Experts and Cast



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Introduction

What's at Stake

s the editor of BiggestLoserClub.com, I am in touch daily with current and former *Biggest Loser* contestants, many of whom I have known now for years. And I am in constant contact with *The Biggest Loser* team, including the trainers, Dr. Robert Huizenga, and nutritionist Cheryl Forberg, who share their advice for our online subscribers and keep me in the loop with training tips, medical advice, and new recipes. I also visit the Ranch a few times each season to get to know the contestants in person.

The day before the Season 8 finale, I took a colleague to visit *The Biggest Loser* Ranch for the first time and to meet some of the Season 9 contestants. Cheryl Forberg had just taken the group grocery shopping, and they had come back to cook lean beef, slaw, and other delicious, healthy meals. Everyone was chatting in the kitchen, the Ranch's heartbeat as it is in every home. My colleague marveled at Daris George's thick curly hair. She admired Michael Venterella's big blue eyes. She appreciated Sherry Johnston's personality. We were catching up with O'Neal Hampton when a cheer erupted. Coach Mo DeWalt from Season 8 was in the house! Ever the coach, he wanted to drop in on his way to the finale and encourage the new crop of contestants.

"When I got here, I was extremely overweight," he told them. "I was sick, I had diabetes, I couldn't walk to the gym without pain. I was 55, but my body was 70. This turned out to be the journey of my life. This is not about the show," he said. "This is about getting your health back, your life back. You're part of a family now."

As my colleague and I left the Ranch, all hugged and kissed from meeting our new friends, we felt part of a family, too. "What an amazing group of people," she said. "What great stories, what heart and soul."

It's the one thing critics of the show always get wrong. These people don't come to the Ranch for money, they come for love. Sometimes they know it's because they love someone else ("Why do you think I came to this dumb old place?" Bette-Sue Burklund tearily asked her daughter Ali Vincent during Season 5). But often it's because they fall in love with someone else—themselves.

Good health is self-love, in the end. And it's something every single contestant leaves with. Everyone wins. And they win the most important prize of all.

As one of the newest contestants, O'Neal Hampton says, "For me, the prize is my health. Not just about how many pounds I lost in a week. My new healthy lifestyle is the most important thing to me."

And from one of the first contestants, Dave Fioravanti of Season 1, "My weight loss and knowing how to live healthy makes me live in the now and keep it real. I have a whole, loving, healthy life and before the show, it was bedlam and chaos. Today, I live in complete peace."

Cheryl, Lisa, and I—and *The Biggest Loser* experts and cast—hope this book not only gives you the tools to a healthier you but also brings you the life you deserve. It's something everyone should have.

-Melissa Roberson



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Start the Journey

ontestants come to *The Biggest Loser* Ranch for a variety of reasons. Yes, the grand prize (and the bragging rights) provides some motivation, but every *Biggest Loser* is looking to win big in other ways. For the Season 9 contestants—the heaviest cast in *Biggest Loser* history—it's about winning back their health, their lives, and the ability to be the person they've always wanted to be.

At 403 pounds, Gray Team member Koli Palu says he knew he needed to change his life because "death is at my doorstep; it really is." Lance Morgan, the 365-pound Texas rancher, says he felt he had two options: Get healthy or end up in "a pine box." For twins James and John Crutchfield, weighing in at 485 and 484 pounds respectively, coming to *The Biggest Loser* Ranch was about not becoming another statistic in a family that has seen numerous members suffer from obesity-related health issues



such as diabetes, stroke, and gastric bypass surgery.

As the title suggests, this book is about reclaiming health—and *you!* Since the end of Season 8, more than 18,200 pounds have been lost by contestants on *The Biggest Loser*. And when they shed all that extra weight, they also shed things like blood pressure medication, type 2 diabetes, depression, and all the inhibitions that have kept them from living their fullest, best lives—both mentally and physically.

Twenty-five-year-old Daris George, who came to the Ranch for Season 9 with his mom, Cheryl, says that taking off his shirt and showing the world what he had become was one of the scariest things he'd ever done. Change is never easy, especially when you don't recognize yourself in the mirror. But every season on *The Biggest Loser*, we watch as the contestants fight hard to take back ownership of their lives. And once they get a taste of what it's like to feel healthy, happy, and just plain good—they never want to revert back to their old habits. As Season 9's Maria Ventrella says, "Overcoming your fears is so important. If you don't overcome them, you'll just bring them about in a different way."

Brown Team

James Crutchfield

AGE: 30

STARTING WEIGHT: 485 pounds

HEIGHT: 6'5"

HOMETOWN: Orlando, Florida

John Crutchfield

AGE: 30

STARTING WEIGHT: 484 pounds

HEIGHT: 6'5"

HOMETOWN: Orlando, Florida

With a combined weight of almost 1,000 pounds, the Crutchfield brothers nicknamed themselves the "half-ton twins." Brown Team members James and John have been overweight since they were 10 years old. Amazingly, they've always been within a few pounds of each other. Though they played sports in high school, now that they've turned 30 and their weight has reached an all-time high, the twins are no longer able to participate in activities they once enjoyed.

Before he arrived at the Ranch, James landed in the hospital with soaring high blood pressure. He could no longer go dancing with his wife or even take long walks. "This isn't how I wanted the world to see me," he says. John, who has a 1-year-old son, worries about his family's history of diabetes and obesity. Recent deaths in the family haunt him. "My dad died, then 2 months later my grandma, then a sister, then a friend. My mom had a mild stroke and is overweight and wheelchair bound. I felt cursed and turned to food for comfort." The first word



spoken by his baby boy was "Da-da," and John refuses to leave his son fatherless.

The twins say they no longer want to use food as a source of comfort. And after arriving at *The Biggest Loser* Ranch and embarking on a healthy new lifestyle, they're turning things around.

Today, James says he feels much better. "I am active and go to the gym every single day. I am capable of so much more than I expected. My life has been made better because I realize I can do this. I know what to do. I have all the tools to succeed and live a long, healthy life with my wife. This whole process has brought my wife and me closer."

The twins can now swim and bike long distances and are more positive about their future. "I've gained an understanding of my body and its capabilities," says John. "Eating all that healthy food, it really makes a difference! I have a lot more energy and am more positive and excited for the future. I've gained a new lease on life."

The two continue to push each other to get healthy and to make sure their health causes no further family heartache.

Red Team

Melissa Morgan

AGE: 39

STARTING WEIGHT: 233 pounds

HEIGHT: 5'6"

HOMETOWN: Aspermont, Texas

Lance Morgan

AGE: 37

STARTING WEIGHT: 365 pounds

HEIGHT: 6'3"

HOMETOWN: Aspermont, Texas

Melissa and Lance Morgan are the first to admit that weight has taken a toll on their marriage. "We made a commitment to each other 10 years ago. We need to go back to who we were then, because we're just not there anymore. Our weight is seriously affecting us as a couple," they admit. "We're really at a point where we say things like 'Shut up, don't talk to me.' We don't have respect for each other."

Lance admits that before they arrived at the Ranch, "it had gotten to the point that all we did at home was eat and bicker."

Melissa packed on 40 pounds in the early years of their marriage and added another 20 after the birth of her children. While she was busy with



law school, the family ate takeout. For Lance, his weight cost him his job as a professional scuba diver when he could no longer pass the required physical. "We can't afford to sit back and pretend that our weight is not an issue," says Melissa. "I'm an attorney. I have to project confidence in

front of a jury. And I feel like a moose in the courtroom."

Now that they've embarked on their weightloss journey together, "it's about forever," says Melissa. "It's not so much about the game as it is about health and fitness. This is an emotional and psychological change for me. I'm an emotional eater. And I know that food doesn't fix anything."

Today, the benefits of weight loss are rolling in. "I feel so much better," says Lance. "My feet don't hurt all the time, I can walk for more than 30 minutes, and I can breathe! I am looking forward to getting out and doing things with my kids instead of just sitting around the house with them."

"We made a commitment to our community," Melissa remarks about their weight-loss goals. "We have a huge amount of support back home. We want to bring back what we learn here and get it out to our community in Texas. We want people to understand that you don't need to eat a 44-ounce anything."

Reflecting on her new level of fitness, Melissa says, "Before I came to the Ranch, I refused to

push through to the next level. Today, I know that I have the ability to push through. It's really mind over matter. You just have to find your drive and desire."



Purple Team

Patti Anderson

AGE: 55

STARTING WEIGHT: 243 pounds

HEIGHT: 5'4"

HOMETOWN: Lafayette, California

Stephanie Anderson

AGE: 29

STARTING WEIGHT: 264 pounds

HEIGHT: 5'8"

HOMETOWN: West Hollywood, California

Patti Anderson has the dubious distinction of having about the worst case of diabetes that *The Biggest Loser* medical expert Dr. Robert Huizenga has ever seen. She arrived at the Ranch on nine medications, and teammate and daughter Stephanie was quickly following in her mother's footsteps. Based on her *Biggest Loser* Know Your Number Healthscore, Dr. Huizenga predicted that Stephanie would develop the disease before she turned 36.

Patti battled being overweight as a child and lost her dad suddenly when he turned 55. Today, she wants to enjoy as many healthy years with her family as possible. She truly understands now what Dr. Huizenga told her the first week on the Ranch: Type 2 diabetes is reversible through diet and exer-



cise. "It made me incredibly sad to see what we had done to ourselves," Patti laments.

For Stephanie, the challenge will be finding a balance between taking care of herself and being in a high-pressure job. "I'm going to find ongoing motivation in my friends and family who believe in me," she says. "Those are people who want me to succeed and who support me every step of the way."

Stephanie already feels more energetic now that the weight is coming off. "Mom told me not to limit myself. And I'm not going to."

Gray Team

Sam Poueu

AGE: 23

STARTING WEIGHT: 372 pounds

HEIGHT: 6'4"

HOMETOWN: Rohnert Park, California

Koli Palu

AGE: 28

STARTING WEIGHT: 403 pounds

HEIGHT: 6'1"

HOMETOWN: Rohnert Park, California

Koli Palu and Sam Poueu were inspired by the successful weight loss of another pair of Tongan cousins—Season 7's Sione and Filipe Fa. Coming from a culture rife with obesity-related diseases, Sam and Koli know they have their work cut out for them.

"I'm going to sit down with my family and have a long talk about nutrition, the kind of food we should eat, and the 50-pound bags of rice in the house," says Sam. He and Koli work as bouncers at night and Koli says, "We'd grab the quickest thing on the way to work. I never thought about what I put in my mouth. Now I'm weighing everything and counting calories."

The Gray Team cousins coach football, and Koli

says he used to put his team through some hard workouts that he couldn't do himself. That's all changing. "As a coach, I know our bodies are amazing things," says Koli. "I need my football team to understand that you can go that extra step. This is more of a mental game, a mental toughness. As long as you push yourself, the physical part will be there."

