Canadian poker pro Daniel Negreanu has a body that's cost him $200,000. However, with poker winnings in excess of $30 million, Negreanu can afford it. The bang Negreanu's gained for his 200,000 bucks includes cardio equipment in his Las Vegas home, fees at the upscale “Look better naked” David Barton Gym, and four years of personal training with IFBB Bikini Pro Tiffany Boydston. It also includes a $20,000 payout to fellow poker pro Ted Forrest, who Negreanu lost a bet to earlier this year, when he weighed in at over 170 pounds.

Daniel Negreanu is a professional high-stakes poker player, so he had no problem wagering a hefty chunk of change that he'd never hit a certain weight. But 16 years later, when the scale read 170 pounds, he had to pay up. Here's the story of his uber-expensive but totally worth it fitness transformation.

BY SAMANTHA REA
TRAINING PHOTOS BY NEIL STODDART / POKERSTARS

Negreanu confidently made a bet with Forrest 16 years ago that he would never reach 170 pounds. In poker circles, wagers like this — known as “prop bets” — are par for the course, but the odds are typically no more than 4-1. Negreanu gave Forrest odds of 20-1, meaning that Forrest risked just $1,000 of his own money, to win $20,000 from Negreanu. According to Negreanu, Forrest believed that at some point, Negreanu would want to gain muscle. Negreanu, who's five-foot-six, weighed 136 pounds at the time. He'd never worked out a day in his life and had no intention of starting — neither did he envision gaining weight any other way. Negreanu says he told himself, “I'm too disciplined to get fat, and I was turning vegetarian the next day, so it seemed like a safe bet.”

I first met Negreanu in Monaco, at a poker tournament in May of last year. By this time, he was vegan, and muscle mass he'd gained from training with Boydston meant his weight was up to 160 pounds. I was interviewing him for a food site, and he gave me free reign to rummage in his fridge, which he'd filled with fruit, coconut water, almond milk, and a head of lettuce.
the size of a medicine ball. He showed me his sink, filled with food lodged in ice, in lieu of a second fridge, which the hotel had declined to provide. As I'd had a spell as a personal trainer myself, Negreanu took me to the gym, where he demonstrated some of the exercises he did with Boydston, and I took him through the stretches I'd done with clients at a private members’ gym in London.

I interviewed Negreanu again back in October of last year, and he told me that his weight was up to 165.4 pounds. He'd weighed himself that morning, as part of a weekly routine he’d developed in light of the bet he had made so many years prior. He told me at the time that “If I lose this bet, I pay. I’ve been up to 168 pounds — that’s the highest! I’m not aiming to be 170 pounds or more. If I add a lot of muscle, that could be a healthy weight, but I want to cut my total body fat percentage, and be around 160 pounds and ripped.”

Despite Negreanu’s intentions, he lost the bet in February of this year, when he weighed in at 171.4 pounds. He made the announcement on Twitter, declaring that he was “stronger than ever.” I got in touch to ask Negreanu how he felt about losing $20,000 to Forrest, to which he says, “I’d been flirting with the edge — I’d get up to 168.6 pounds and then I’d be like, ‘Oh boy, I’d better eat some salads today!’”

Negreanu wasn’t disappointed that he’d lost the bet, though. In fact, he was kind of happy because the change that put him over the 170-pound-limit was a positive one. “I’m lucky in that the amount of money I lost doesn’t change my life — and I wanted to add muscle to my frame, so it was worth it,” he says.

And his trainer feels the same way. Boydston says she has absolutely no regrets for nudging him past the point that cost him $20,000.
“I don’t feel guilty at all!” she says. “I’m very proud because it’s all muscle. He was very skinny when he started working out with me, and now he’s got the result he wanted. I never let the prop bet influence Daniel’s training — I always tell people not to pay attention to the scales!”

Boydston says she can recall the very day that Negreanu lost the bet. “He came into the gym excited and laughing,” she says. “It was funny — he was like, ‘So I lost my bet!’ We both just laughed about it.”

When asked if the body he’s got today is worth the money he’s put into it, Negreanu doesn’t bat an eye: “Oh yeah! I can do pull-ups now, like a real man. It’s exciting!” He says that, while his whole body has developed, he’s happiest with his arms and his chest.

“My arms are completely different,” he says. “Before, I’d look in the mirror and try to flex but nothing would pop out. Now I go, ‘What the hell is that?!’ And my trainer’s like, ‘That’s a muscle — it’s a good thing!’”

Negreanu is now lifting more than his own body weight for bench press — something he’s incredibly proud of — and says that the move leaves him feeling shred ded the next day.

Currently 42 years old, Negreanu plans to be in even better shape when he’s 50. “The key area for me to improve upon is the love handles — the little tummy,” he says. “I want to flatten my stomach and have popped-out abs. I know it’s harder to have abs after 40, but I think that it’s doable if I really commit myself. I really believe it’s mind over matter.”

Having gained muscle, Negreanu’s goal now is to reduce his body-fat percentage. He’s playing soccer three times a week — which is “great cardio,” he says — and he’s aiming to do two more hours of cardio during the week, at 20-minute intervals.

After 16 years of weekly weigh-ins, the pressure is finally off Negreanu. While he still weighs himself occasionally and does have a goal to eventually get down to a lean 165 pounds, he is beyond proud of where he’s at today.