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BUILD ARMS LIKE THIS!
The Stath’s Own Training Secrets For Growing Stronger With Age

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“SLY’S GOT 20 YEARS ON ME AND STILL LOOKS GOOD” JASON STATHAM, 49

50 BEST & WORST DRUGS FOR MEN

HARD MUSCLE FAST!

SPRING STYLE TOOLKIT
The New Trends, Translated

HOW TO GET FIT AND RICH (Both At The Same Time!)
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THE ART OF PERFORMANCE

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THE EXPERT PANEL

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THIS ISSUE IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY...

18 PERSONAL TRAINERS
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9 TOP TABLE CHEFS
5 LUMBERJACKS
4 DRUG DOYENS
3 UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS
2 STRONGMEN

TOTAL 59 EXPERTS
Jason Statham is 10 years older than I am, give or take a few months. A slightly receding hairline aside, I don’t look much like him. To be fair, physique-wise, few people in their thirties bear a passing resemblance, let alone men in their 50th year. Put simply, the man is ripped. Indecently so. And all within just 10 years of claiming his free bus pass.

This is the fifth time Jason has graced our cover and it’s fair to say that this is not exclusively down to his contributions to the silver screen (though, admittedly, many in the MH office will concede a Fast & Furious predilection). Rather, it’s because this is a man who has not just defied time but actively erased age. It is because he is the living embodiment of what we have long preached: that with the right attitude, the application and the effort, you can achieve far more than you thought was possible.

There’s another thing I especially admire about the man. And no, it’s not his voiceover work in Gnomeo & Juliet. The vast majority of Hollywood actors do not like talking about their bodies. No matter that their success as film stars is often interdependent with them being in good shape, the implicit view is that to discuss the means by which one acquired the action hero six-pack is to discredit the work. This is categorically not so with Jason Statham. The man will talk about L-sits and mobility workouts until the cows come home.

But that’s because physical fitness is a hugely significant facet of his life. It’s not just part of the prep; a laborious condition of playing the role. It’s essential to who he is. And, as Jason told MH in this month’s exclusive interview, he’s still learning, grafting and progressing, even as he approaches 50: “I’ve realised that you don’t have to grind so hard. It’s not about quantity; it’s about figuring it out, the refinement of the movement – that’s where the benefit really lies. Before it was about getting the work done. Now I train depending on how I feel each day. And I’m always trying new things.”

Try recalling these words the next time you find your fitness motivation waning, or your body aching. Take a look at our pictures. Perhaps even consider whether the girl on your arm at the same age will look quite as good as the one on his. And then, when you’re done thinking, get on with it.

Toby Wiseman
BSME EDITOR OF THE YEAR
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Q
I’VE READ THAT THE UK RANKS POORLY FOR CANCER SURVIVAL RATES. WHAT CAN A CONCERNED BRIT DO?
EVAN, WREXHAM

It’s true that we’re trailing behind our neighbours. According to a study in the European Journal of Cancer, we actually have the worst survival rates in Western Europe. On the world table, we sit between Czech Republic and Croatia – in the bottom third – and are at risk of further relegation. NHS naysayers are wont to point the finger at drug access. They’re not entirely wrong. Immunotherapy – promising pills that teach the immune system to kill cancer cells – is harder to access in the UK than in many countries. Some believe this is due to the pricetag. While it’s proven to save lives, those holding the purse strings for our cash-strapped health service are reluctant to loosen their grip. But there are also legitimate concerns about the side effects: “The research is exciting,” says Dr Justine Alford of Cancer Research UK. “But it can send the immune system into overdrive, which can be fatal.”

The truth is our drug review body, NICE, is approving more treatments all the time, albeit at a molasses-slow pace. But this is almost a moot point when we Brits are prone to fall at the first hurdle: diagnosis. Our collective stiff upper lip means we’re still tardy about visiting the GP, often showing up too late for effective action. Cancer needs to be beaten early doors. The best option that you have is to knock at your doctor’s a lot sooner.

THE DRUGS WORK
The immunotherapy drugs fighting back in the UK

SKIN
The most effective immunotherapy treatments so far have been for skin cancer. A drug called Yervoy is available on the NHS for melanoma.

KIDNEY
Opdivo has recently been approved for use treating some renal cancers, and it has shown improvements in both survival rates and quality of life.

LUNG
The drug Keytruda has been exciting researchers. Initially for use against melanoma, it is now being examined for lung cancer, too.
Q | PUT ME OUT OF MY MISERY: SOME GUYS JUST CAN’T HAVE SIX-PACK ABS, RIGHT?

MICHAEL, HAYWARDS HEATH

Are you looking for reassurance or a solution, Michael? A visible six-pack requires two things: less fat and more muscle. But genetics play a role too. “Two guys with the same body fat and fitness program rarely look exactly the same,” says Dr Christine Mermier, exercise scientist at the University of New Mexico. So maybe you don’t shed fat easily, or perhaps you’re just wired to store it around your belly. In which case blame your DNA, age, or just poor lighting. However, the truth is most men can get their abs to show if they’re in a calorie deficit and train hard. And don’t listen to 50% of PTs who say it’s all about body fat. Targeted abs moves – such as those in the manual accompanying this issue – will bulk-up your abs as if they were biceps. If they still don’t show, at least you now have the right excuses.

Q | WHERE IS THE MYTHICAL ‘LACTATE THRESHOLD’, AND CAN YOU TAKE ME THERE?

LIAM, STOKE-ON-TRENT

Certainly. Lactate is produced in your muscles during intense exercise. This leads to an increase in acidity, which is what causes you to ‘feel the burn, bro’ and possibly want to vomit over your trainers. Your lactate threshold is the maximum effort your body can maintain for a period of time. It’s also your most accurate predictor of fitness. But while your body can only handle a limited amount of time working at your threshold, not getting there at all is like tapping a nail with a pencil instead of a hammer. “Try incorporating fartlek runs into your workouts – endurance runs with a mix of fast and slow pacing, which bring you above then back below the threshold,” says Dr Mark Peterson, a professor of physical medicine at the University of Michigan. Or if you want to monitor your threshold like the pros, the BSXinsight (bsxinsight.com) wearable is as accurate as a blood test. No needles required.

Q | WHAT’S THIS I’M HEARING ABOUT WHOLE MILK BEING GOOD FOR ME AFTER ALL?

OLLIE, BRIXTON

Well, it was never bad for you in the first place, loaded as it is with crucial vitamins such as B12 and D. “Outdated science argued that milk’s fat would hurt your heart. Today, a whole new body of data is debunking that,” says nutrition advisor Dr Mike Roussell. “The irony is whole milk doesn’t even have that much fat – it’s more than 96% fat-free. Skimmed, 1%, 2%, and 3.25% fat milk (AKA whole) all have their own flavour.” In conclusion? Drink what you damn well please.

GOT MILK ALTERNATIVES? The non-dairies worth sinking, and those to pour away

COCONUT

Loaded with healthy fats, potassium and vitamins, pure coconut milk is nutritionally worthy, albeit somewhat calorific.

SOY MILK

While the jury is out on soy, some scientists argue too much can block calcium absorption – not what you want from a milk.

ALMOND

Made with just almonds and water, a quality almond milk is hard to beat. It does out a decent hit of vit E and magnesium, too.

RICE MILK

Made from rice syrup, this milk tends to pack more sugar than its nutty counterparts, and lacks vitamins. Stick to cow juice.
the new intense fragrance

paco rabanne
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DRIVE TOGETHER

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The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the Mazda Range: Urban 28.0 (10.1) - 74.3 (3.8), Extra Urban 51.4 (5.5) - 88.3 (3.2), Combined 39.2 (7.2) - 83.1 (3.4). CO₂ emissions (g/km) 167 - 89.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results obtained through laboratory testing. These are provided for comparability purposes only and may not reflect your actual driving results.

Models shown: Mazda CX-5 165ps 2WD Sport Nav, OTR from £25,895. Model shown features optional Soul Red Metallic paint (£680). 2017 Mazda3 120ps SE, OTR from £17,795. Model shown features optional Soul Red Metallic paint (£670). Mazda6 Saloon 150ps Sport Nav Diesel, OTR from £26,595. Model shown features optional Soul Red Metallic paint (£660). On-road prices include 20% VAT, number plates and 3 years European Roadside Assistance. *Mpg and CO₂ figures apply to the 2017 Mazda3 105ps Diesel. ^The BIK value is at 20% rate based on a 2017 Mazda3 105ps SE Diesel with non-Metallic paint and is valid from 01.01.17. Details correct at time of going to print.
The up-and-down movement of your average abdominal exercise is as stale as it is fraught with risk of muscular imbalance and, worse, injury. Not only that, it will do little to develop the lower abs you need to upgrade from a four-pack, or the obliques that will give you ‘the full Bruce Lee’.

Fortunately we have a two-in-one solution. The DTTWCP (we’re trying here, OK?) provides your body with plenty to think about, requiring you to squeeze a ball between your knees while simultaneously raising a dumbbell. Meanwhile, the single-arm press that follows adds a considerable upper-body pump to proceedings; orthodox abs work this is not. “By making your lower body move while your shoulders stay locked to the floor, all the emphasis is on your core,” says PT Lee Boyce. “Performing three sets of 10 reps in each direction is not only a great six-pack workout, but a solid way to activate your trunk for lifts later on.” Do just that twice a week at either end of your workout for six weeks to reap rewards in strength as well as in the mirror. The name might not be anything to shout about, but your abs – and back – will appreciate the new twist.
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The Fiat Professional Fullback isn’t just a pretty face. With a best in class 5.9m turning circle, up to 1 ton load capacity, full leather seats and a 6.1” touchscreen DAB radio with Bluetooth and SatNav, the only thing that’s more impressive is the £199 per month finance offer.

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Fuel consumption figures for the Fiat Professional Fullback EU5 in mpg (/100km): Combined from 42.8 (6.6), CO₂ emissions 173g/km. Fuel consumption and CO₂ based on standard EU tests for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. BUSINESS CONTRACT HIRE. Above rental based on Fullback 2.4 180 HP Double Cab LX 6 Speed Manual Euro 5+ (incl. metallic paint at £400 excl. VAT) with an initial rental of £1,791 followed by 23 monthly rentals of £199. All Rentals exclude VAT and maintenance, based on 8,000 miles per annum. Excess mileage charges apply. Offer valid for vehicles ordered from 5th January 2017 and registered by 31st March 2017. Subject to terms. A guarantee or indemnity may be required. T&Cs apply. Fiat Professional Contract Hire, SLI 0912.
It is quite likely that, by now, the fervour for your new year diet has started to wane. In fact, we’re willing to guess that the only thing still keeping you on the macro-nutritional straight and narrow is the fear that packing it in for even a day will result in you losing all your hard-won progress.

Well, we’re here to tell you to take a break. Because while the ability to out-train a poor diet has long been contested, a recent study from the University of Michigan may have justified a guilt-free diversion from dietary dogma.

Their research found that adults who increased their calorie intake by 30% for one week, but also spent at least 150 minutes doing aerobic exercise – that equates to a very manageable 30 minutes on weekdays with the weekend off – managed to avoid all of the spikes in insulin and inflammation you would expect after an unscheduled dive from the dietary wagon.

In delicious opposition to recent scare-mongering headlines which claim that just five days’ indulgence in junk food can alter your metabolism and increase the likelihood of long-term weight gain, the Michigan scientists discovered that regular aerobic exercise mediates insulin’s role as a ‘lipolytic hormone’ (it shuttles fatty acids and glucose to your cells where they are stored as body fat). All of which happily means that one week of ‘work out, pizza, sleep, repeat’ will have no lasting effect on your physique.

So, if your motivation is on the decline, don’t be afraid to sate your cravings once in a while. So long as you’re not throwing in the gym towel too, you can bin the macros without sacrificing your body goals in the process. Don’t worry – the lean turkey mince and alfalfa sprouts will be waiting for you.

To improve your insulin response, run at 70% effort for 30 minutes, advises a study in Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism. Then, if the finish line happens to be a pub, you’re covered.

Pop vit D and magnesium, says Simon Inman, PT at The Dorchester. They blunt insulin spikes and reduce levels of the stress hormone, so you can chill out about those second helpings.

Enjoy a proper ‘recovery meal’ of chips soaked in vinegar. The condiment helps to balance blood sugar after a high-carb meal, reports the American Diabetes Association.

In dire need of a holiday from your eating plan? Ease up for an all-inclusive way to stay lean.

Vacate your diet without the guilt trip.

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THE HEALTH SNOB’S GUIDE TO

poke

Lean bowls of protein are crossing over from Hawaii, brimming with raw nutritional power. Say aloha to the strongest streetfood to reach our shores.

01 HAWAII ONE-O-ONE

The country that brought us floral shirts, ukuleles and the now sorely missed Barack Obama is serving up the food trend of 2017. Poké literally means ‘to dice’. In Hawaii, this traditionally refers to cubes of tuna on a bed of rice, but anything goes. And with a plethora of fresh ingredients – plus minimal added fats – it’ll give you a head start toward grass skirt-ready abs, too.

i) MAHI MAHI

So good they named it twice, this tropical fish is low in calories – just 85 per 100g – but high in protein. It’s also swimming in inflammation-fighting nutrient selenium, so your body won’t flounder after a tough week’s training.

ii) SALMON

Commonly served ‘lomi lomi’ (rubbed in salt or spice), a portion of salmon provides your RDA of vitamin D. Almost a quarter of Brits are deficient in the nutrient, which is crucial for boosting testosterone. Call it sunshine on a plate.

iii) AHI TUNA

The poké staple has a protein-fat ratio of 20:1, plus it’s packed full of B vits to help you metabolise carbs. A study in Food Science & Technology found that frying or canning tuna reduces its omega-3 by up to 85%. Raw wins out.

iv) GOLDEN BEET

Break from the theme and swap your surf for some earth. These beets pack all the stamina-boosting benefits of your garden variety, but in a sweeter package. Plus the yellow roots have more disease-fighting carotenoids.

02 SLICE AND DICE

If you don’t live within strolling distance of Waikiki beach, a good fishmonger is a must. The supermarket wet counter won’t cut it here: “Ask for sashimi-grade fish,” says James Gould-Porter of Island Poké in London. Push the boat out with super-frozen tuna, which is kept at -60°C for a fresher taste and more nutrients. Ask for a side of salmon, too, and skin it using a long knife with flex: “Cut deep to remove the grey membrane, which is less appealing when eating fish raw.” Then dice with a sashimi knife (£29.50 souschef.co.uk) in a single motion, for clean edges – presentation is key.

When it comes time to assemble your dish, adopt a Japanese ‘chirashi’ style, in which foods are scattered, rather than mixed. Be sure to let the rice cool first; if it’s warm, it’ll cook the fish. Finally, grab some chopsticks (£3 thejapaneseshop.co.uk) – or a fork if no one’s watching.
03 BOWL ‘EM OVER

When prepping your poké, dress the cubes of fish in a chilli-shoyu sauce, made with ginger, tamari soy, sesame oil and togarashi pepper mix. Add to taste – you want to flavour the fish, not drown it. Now try these recipes from Island Poké. You’ll be hooked.

1) TAHITIAN POISSON CRU POKÉ & CHIPS
SERVES 2
• White fish (monkfish, mahi mahi or cod), 160g
• Lime juice, cup
• Tomatoes, 2
• White onion, 40g
• Coriander, handful
• Red chilli, ½
• Coconut milk, to taste
• Corn tortilla chips, 150g

METHOD
“This first recipe has a Tahitian influence,” says Gould-Porter instead of using shoyu dressing, you’ll soak the fish in lime. Cube it small, so the citrus cures more of the flesh. After an hour max, you can find in East Asian food shops. Dress your cubes of tuna with the shoyu-chilli sauce, then place them on top of your rice. Serve with pineapple salsa (rich in muscle-repairing bromelain), wakame and crispy shallots.

2) LOMI LOMI SALMON & YUZU MANGO SALSA
SERVES 2
• Short-grain brown rice, 200g
• Sushi vinegar, 40ml
• Salmon, 160g
• Chilli-shoyu dressing (see above)
• Mirin, dash
• Yuzu juice, dash
• Mango salsa
• Edamame beans, 80g

METHOD
Cook the rice and mix with sushi vinegar. Slice the fish into 2-3cm cubes, then add the chilli-shoyu, mirin and yuzu juice. “This time, add the dressing just before you serve, so the citrus doesn’t cure the fish,” says Gould-Porter. Garnish with mango salsa, then sprinkle on edamame beans for a top-up of iron and calcium.

3) CLASSIC AHI POKÉ & PINEAPPLE SALSA
SERVES 2
• Sushi rice, 200g
• Sushi vinegar, 40ml
• Yellowfin tuna, 160g
• Chilli-shoyu dressing
• Pineapple salsa
• Wakame seaweed, 80g
• Crispy shallots, 35g

METHOD
Cook the rice, then add the sushi vinegar. If you’re craving an extra kick of flavour, Gould-Porter adds furikake seasoning, which can find in East Asian food shops. Dress your cubes of tuna with the shoyu-chilli sauce, then place them on top of your rice. Serve with pineapple salsa (rich in muscle-repairing bromelain), wakame and crispy shallots.

FRESH INSPIRATION
Too cool for kale? These Hawaiian superfoods will shake things up

• BREADFRUIT: This starchy spud-alike is rich in illness-ending vitamin C and potassium. Sauté it in butter or use the flour to make gluten-free pancakes.
• LIMU: Hawaii’s manifold edible seaweeds are rich in the mineral iodine, which plays a vital role in metabolic function.
• ARROWROOT: You’ll spot it in powder form on supermarket shelves. Use the root to thicken sauces and stews for a bonus blast of B vitamins.
• KUKUI NUT: Roast, crush and sprinkle these nuts over the top of your poke bowl for added crunch, as well as a dose of heart-healthy fatty acids.
SURVIVAL FOR THE FITTEST

Bleeding-edge ketone ‘esters’ are the cardio supplement of the future; but we know how to score a new PB today.

Searing lungs and leg muscles leaden with lactic acid – taking your fitness up a step often means elevating your pain threshold to new heights. But it’s no longer necessary to beast your body in search of superior stamina. Clinicians at the University of Cambridge have been harnessing a new fuel source to be taken as a supplement: ketone esters. In rat studies, these organic chemicals increased both time to fatigue and mental sharpness over a snack of fats or carbs. Usually it takes the physiological stress of starvation to kickstart ketone production – a process called ketosis, whereby your body goes into ‘survival mode’, breaking down internal fat stores to provide fast energy to muscles and mind. But now that we’re no longer hunting woolly mammoths, scientists are looking for an easier way to tap into this state.

Though human trials are in their infancy, Oxford University recently tested a ketone-based drink on 39 cyclists. They found this supplement – a simpler form of its ester cousin, similar to the ‘bulletproof’ oils beloved by wellness biohackers – helped the body to switch from burning glucose for energy to fat, boosting riders’ performance during an endurance test by 400m. This could prove invaluable when you crash into the wall with the finish line in sight. While you’re waiting for consumer science to catch up, we have detailed some of the endurance-enhancing ingredients that can help you handle the hard yards right now.

> EXPERIMENT FROM HOME

No access to a lab? The following are proven to lift ketone production and boost your stamina.

**TOP UP YOUR OIL**

MCT oil (that’s the kind Silicon Valley types add to coffee) contains medium-chain triglyceride fats, which provide fast fuel, stabilise blood sugar and help the body to produce ketones.

**RAISE THE STEAKS**

The muscle-builder’s MVP, a high-protein, high-fat slab of beef will help you increase the percentage of calories you obtain from fat. Hit 66%; ideal conditions for the creation of ketones.

**SPREAD THE LOVE**

Butter is 7% pure MCTs, making it one of the best foods for creating ketone bodies. Any excuse for a slice of toast has our approval.
It’s time to be a gentleman.

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This is the official watch of the RBS 6 Nations Championship. Like rugby players, the watch is precise, robust and classic. It has an engraved caseback with water resistance up to 20 bar (200 m/660 ft).

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HEAVY WEIGHT CONTEST

Whether you squat or snatch, press or curl, the kettlebell and barbell are the big hitters of resistance training. MH performed some weighty statistical reps to find out which workout tool is the champ.

KETTLEBELL VS BARBELL

100 vs 456

The number of calories you stand to burn with just 5min of KB swings, says the American Council on Exercise.

12KG

The world squat record in kilograms, set by American powerlifter Ray Williams. That’s almost half a tonne.

CARDIO

Perform kettlebell circuits three times a week and you’ll pump up your VO2 max by this amount in just under a month NSCA’s TSAC Report.

6%

STRENGTH

The increase in lower-body strength you can earn with barbell squats – one more reason not to skip legs day California State University.

14%

ENDORSEMENTS

“KBs are best for swinging to develop your posterior chain. As these are your body’s biggest muscles, you’ll also torch calories”

PT Rob Blair, The Commando Temple.

“Even the heaviest KBs aren’t big enough for deadlifts. Barbells offer a broader range of exercises, plus the ability to load far heavier”

PT Christopher Quinn, Physical Culture.

MAKE GAINS

Faster fatburn

Improved endurance

Fitness class-friendly

Easy bulking

Impressive PBs

Olympic ticket

POOR FORM POTENTIAL

Lighter weights

Bloody knackering

Hard on joints

Limited cardio

Bench-press queues

TURKISH GET-UP

Though it’s a fairly complex move, once grasped, the get-up provides total-body strength and conditioning.

MASTER MOVE

THE MH VERDICT: BARBELLS WIN!

There’s no denying the kettlebell will boil away fat, plus it offers alternative movement patterns to quash boredom. However, with unlimited weight variations and a focus on multi-joint compound exercises, the barbell guarantees growth and progression. Those who disagree don’t know squat.

THE COST OF STRENGTH

Lighter weights

14%

Versus

Barbell

Heavy weight contest

Barbells offer a broader range of exercises, plus the ability to load far heavier – one more reason not to skip legs day California State University.
The Fast Pace Sneaker
www.russellandbromley.co.uk
THE MAN BEHIND THE WOLVERINE

PT David Kingsbury made it his mission to forge mutant abs. Adopt his work ethic to build your own

David Kingsbury is a tough man to pin down. Hardly surprising for someone who has earned a reputation as one of the hardest-working names in fitness. If he’s not training clients at his gym, nestled among the iconic film sets of London’s Pinewood Studios, you’ll find him writing online training programmes and diet plans, building workout apps, or on location fine-tuning the physiques of the likes of Ryan Reynolds, Jennifer Lawrence and the cast of The Wolverine.

Just listening to him describe his schedule is exhausting. “I’ve always been competitive,” says Kingsbury. “Not necessarily competitive with others, but with myself, to be as good as I can be at something.” And when he puts his mind to a task, he generally succeeds. At 18, he made his mark as a muay thai boxer in Thailand, training for five hours a day to prepare for fights. More recently, having already established himself as one of the most sought-after PTs in film, he dropped 30kg in weight by cycling 200 miles per week. He placed 20th in the national time trial championships, clocking a sub-20 minute 10-miler. These days, he’s back to strength training. “It’s about challenging myself,” he says. “And when I feel like something isn’t challenging me anymore, I take on a new challenge.” Little wonder, then, that his squat PB sits at 240kg.

There are few greater tests as a PT than sculpting the physique of an A-list actor. “They might only have their shirt off for one scene in the entire movie – one day’s filming – but you feel the pressure for three or four months.” No one, after all, wants to see a member of the X-Men sporting a dadbod. The reward when it all comes together is a huge sense of pride, and it goes without saying which cast he’s most proud to have chiselled.

“I’ve done six or seven films, but for The Wolverine my work was the poster.” Not that Kingsbury has time to bathe in glory. He’s got places to go, clients to see, new challenges to obliterate. It’s enough to sharpen even the dullest willingness.

HOW YOU BUILD YOUR BODY

Tagg Kingsbury’s triceps finisher onto the end of your workout to sculpt arms of X-Man proportions. Perform 12 reps of each move back-to-back, three times. Rest for 90sec and repeat.

**SKULL CRUSHER**

With hands shoulder-width apart, hold a weighted bar above your chest (A). Slowly bend your elbows to lower the bar to your forehead (B), keeping your arms tucked to your sides. Push back up.

**TRICEPS PUSHDOWN**

Clip a rope attachment onto the highest pulley of a cable machine and hold with an overhand grip (A). Keep your back straight as you pull the rope to your hips, locking out your elbows (B), then return.

**DIAMOND PRESS-UP**

Get into a press-up position with your hands in a diamond position (A). Lower, keeping your elbows in and your core braced for stability (B). This hand position recruits more of your tris for faster growth.
Getting stacked starts and finishes with nailing your nutrition. Scale up Kingsbury’s plan for a muscle-building calorie surplus, or trim it down to fit into overly snug spandex.

**BREAKFAST**

**EGGS ROYALE ON RYE**
Whisk three eggs with 80ml oat milk and scramble in 2tsp butter over a medium heat. Serve on toasted rye with 80g smoked salmon and half a chopped spring onion.

**LUNCH**

**CURRIED CHICKEN & MASH**
Microwave a sweet potato for 6min. Fry 150g chicken in a dash of oil and 1tsp curry powder. Stir in yoghurt and parsley, and serve on the sweet potato with spinach.

**SNACK**

**APPLE & ALMOND BUTTER**
Slice an apple and spread with almond butter – much higher in cell-protecting antioxidant vitamin E than the more popular peanut version.

**DINNER**

**CHICKEN & CASHEW STIR FRY**
Fry a chopped chicken breast with spices for 5min on a medium heat. Add half a red pepper, green beans, cashews and soy sauce, stirring until chicken is cooked through.

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PUT FERTILITY WORRIES TO BED

If you’re fretting about starting a family, you’d be better off sleeping on it. The solution may be lying between your sheets.

British men are in the grip of an epidemic. And that grip is tightening, increasingly uncomfortably, taking your hopes of fathering children by the balls. Research carried out by the University of Copenhagen reveals that fewer than 25% of young European men have good-quality sperm (and no, Brexit doesn’t excuse you from this stat). What’s more, in the space of 40 years levels have halved in some areas, all of which makes for unhappy bedtime reading if you’re fostering dreams of siring your own #fitfam anytime soon.

Happily, the solution is altogether more appealing. A recent study by Boston University found that sleeping for more than six hours a night can save you from a 42% drop in your chances of conception. But when turning in early isn’t an option, you need to focus on sleep quality. That’s because similar research found improving the depth of your shut-eye not only offsets the losses caused by poor rest, but boosts the quality of your sperm. In fact, men with a high level of ‘sleep disturbance’ have sperm concentrations almost a third lower.

With the reliability of expensive fertility treatments being called into question in recent months, it’s reassuring that an alternative solution lies closer to home. As well as avoiding the usual sleep distractions such as alcohol and late-night caffeine fixes, use these tips (right) from the top mind in switching off to help you sleep soundly and escape the nightmare of Britain’s fertility crisis. Sweet dreams.
It takes a BIG HEART to find perfection in small things

We never put any additives in. You never get anything but goodness out. That’s the balance at the heart of everything we do. Naturally.

NEW LOOK PACKS IN STORE
New recipes on Tilda.com
INVEST IN THE LONG TERM

When it comes to your health, playing the long game always trumps short-lived rewards. Use the latest research to keep time on side.
For men who pride themselves on nailing their nutrition plan with a menu more diverse than the moribund merry-go-round of chicken, broccoli and sweet potato, kitchen gadgets have become the boy’s toy of choice. Investing in the best counter-top tech will not only help you conquer clean-eating tedium, but elicit jealous stares from colleagues eyeing up your al desko lunches.

However, when it comes to selecting the best meal-prep mixologist, the quality of goods on offer varies greatly. When the loudest voices come from daytime shopping channels or the over-enthusiastic clerk at your local Currys, it’s hard to know which source to trust. To help you in your endeavours, we enlisted the nutritional nerds at the Men’s Health Lab to put our pick of the best five blenders through their paces. Motors were revved, digits damn-near lopped off, and innumerable perfectly blended protein shakes consumed – all in the name of science, of course. Pour over the results.

**THE CUTTING EDGE**

**Performance**

**Design**

**Ease of use**

**STAR PERFORMER**

**Performance**

**Design**

**Ease of use**

**THE CUTTING EDGE**

83/100

Panasonic MX-ZX1800 Blender
£400 from amazon.co.uk

**Performance**

**Design**

**Ease of use**

**STAR PERFORMER**

91/100

Ninja Kitchen System BL682UK
£180 from argos.co.uk

**Performance**

**Design**

**Ease of use**

**SOUPED UP** The 1200w motor on this powerful blender allows it to crush ice, slice veg and puree whole fruit in seconds. It also features a two-tier, six-point blade system, six programmed settings and touch controls – plus an ice sleeve to keep its contents chilled. All singing, all dancing, all blending, essentially.

**EXPERT VERDICT** Even on a low setting, the Panasonic packs a lot of power. It doesn’t so much crush ice as obliterate it. The soup setting is useful, heating your blends up to 90°C in eight minutes. The touch controls are very simple to use and, because the jug has no set position, it’s comfortable for both lefties and righties. One downside: the jug is plastic, not glass, so may stain if the soup du jour is tomato. Still, we feel it’s a cut above most.

**MH WINNER**
SHAKE UP YOUR DIET

Bamix Hand Held Food Processor
£136 from amazon.co.uk

**Performance** •••••••• ••

**Design** ••••••• ••

**Ease of use** ••••••••• ••

**NUTRITIONAL PAYLOADS** For those looking to assert their gastro cred we present this throaty blender, which comes with multiple blade sets, as well as soup and smoothie settings to take the guesswork out of your meal prep. However, a tool from Vitamix doesn’t come cheap.

**EXPERT VERDICT** ‘Robust’ is the most apt word for this behemoth. The 1200w motor will pulp any fruit foolish enough to stand in its way, affording you plenty of choice when selecting your vitamin source. If the Ninja System is a high-performance car, think of the Pro500 as a tank. Oh, and the seven-year guarantee ensures you get at least 14 months of service for every £100 spent. Although that still feels sharp.

JTC OmniBlend V Blender
£200 from jtcnoniblend.com

**Performance** •••••••• ••

**Design** ••••••••• ••

**Ease of use** •••••••• ••

**OMNI POTENCY** This blender has an impressive capacity, with three timer settings and a pulse option. It’s also one of the best looking of the bunch and comes in three colours, should you plan to give it pride of place in your kitchen.

**EXPERT VERDICT** Well designed to handle larger, tougher foods, the OmniBlend is ideal for adding more substance to your post-gym shakes. The powerful blades go about their work relatively quietly, too. Just be careful not to overfill it as there was some leakage, and hold on at high speeds – the non-slip feet don’t quite live up to their name.

Vitamix Pro500 Blender
£599 from vitamix.co.uk

**Performance** •••••••• ••

**Design** ••••••••• ••

**Ease of use** ••••••• ••

**MEAN MACHINE 81/100**

**NUTRITIONAL PAYLOADS** For those looking to assert their gastro cred we present this throaty blender, which comes with multiple blade sets, as well as soup and smoothie settings to take the guesswork out of your meal prep. However, a tool from Vitamix doesn’t come cheap.

**EXPERT VERDICT** ‘Robust’ is the most apt word for this behemoth. The 1200w motor will pulp any fruit foolish enough to stand in its way, affording you plenty of choice when selecting your vitamin source. If the Ninja System is a high-performance car, think of the Pro500 as a tank. Oh, and the seven-year guarantee ensures you get at least 14 months of service for every £100 spent. Although that still feels sharp.

**THE UPPER HAND 80/100**

Bamix Hand Held Food Processor
£136 from amazon.co.uk

**Performance** •••••••• ••

**Design** ••••••• ••

**Ease of use** ••••••••• ••

**LIGHT WORK** Designed to whisk, mince, blend and chop with ease, the Bamix Deluxe is marketed as a fuss-free tool for the modern kitchen. It may not pack the power of its bigger brethren, but it excels in function as well as form.

**EXPERT VERDICT** Unobtrusive with an intuitive design, it performed well at both blending and chopping, only coming unstuck with harder ingredients like ice. If you’re willing to put your hand in your pocket, there are tools with more power at a premium price. For most kitchens, though, Bamix should fit the bill.

**STRONG SILENT TYPE 81/100**

JTC OmniBlend V Blender
£200 from jtcnoniblend.com

**Performance** •••••••• ••

**Design** ••••••••• ••

**Ease of use** •••••••• ••

**OMNI POTENCY** This blender has an impressive capacity, with three timer settings and a pulse option. It’s also one of the best looking of the bunch and comes in three colours, should you plan to give it pride of place in your kitchen.

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WWW.FragranceFoundation.org.uk
**I TAKE STEROIDS?**

We get to the finer points of a very bad habit to help you train safe and put paid to the idea that bigger is always better.

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**01 CRASH COURSE**

Many a naive man has been tempted by shortcuts on the road to Mr Olympia muscle. But whether taken orally or via a needle, the risks are real. Anabolic steroids travel through the bloodstream to your muscle cells where the hormone can interact with your DNA. And once in the bloodstream, steroids affect everything from your brain to your reproductive system.

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**02 EXPANSION PLAN**

If your natural testosterone response can be described as a steady stream, steroid use is like lobbing a stick of dynamite at the floodgates. “It increases the anabolic potential of the muscles, so they grow beyond genetic disposition,” says Professor Greg Whyte*. Instead, he advises an early night: a lot of muscle adaptation occurs overnight. Big sleep, indeed.

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**03 WASTE MAN**

While your muscles swell, the rest of your body suffers. “Your T-levels will be above what the body has evolved to deal with,” says Whyte. This toxic environment stresses your body’s waste disposal units: the liver and kidneys. If your liver already needs rebooting (a few mid-week socials can do that...), serve a side of cauliflower at dinner. It helps you process toxins.

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**04 SMALL CHANGE**

Manly though you may feel, steroids are making you biologically more feminine. “Oestrogen is a byproduct of steroid use,” says Whyte. “Elevated levels can trigger testicular atrophy, so by chasing after the masculine aesthetic, you risk the loss of fertility.” Quit the juicing and eat brazil nuts instead. Their selenium and fats have been linked to testosterone production and virility.

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**05 DEFLATEGATE**

Put a pin in the notion you can get away with a brief dabble for long-term gain. “The training adaptations are short-lived,” says Whyte. Once you ditch the drugs, your artificially generated mass shrinks. The damage, however, lingers. Scoring testosterone from external sources drives down your natural production, leading to fatigue and low mood. Flex some sense and steer clear.

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WHAT PRICE HAPPINESS?

In our new column, MH’s Ed Vanstone examines the stumbling blocks on your road to a mental-health PB. First, let’s talk about your pay cheque.

Money matters. When people are asked what single thing they feel would have the greatest effect on their quality of life, the most common answer is as banal as you’d expect: more cash.

In truth, at an everyday mood level, the amount of dough you’ve squirreled away has remarkably little bearing on your sense of contentment. We are capricious, hormonal creatures, and factors such as sleep, hunger and the number of likes on your new Instagram post have a far larger influence on your moment-to-moment glee levels than the billions you do – or don’t – have sequestered in Zurich. The overworked number cruncher in his cubicle about to enjoy an al desko lunch is happier – in the purest sense – than his gilded, fine-dining CEO, stressing over profits 50 floors above.

However, in terms of that illusive reward system ‘life satisfaction’ – in other words, how pleased you are with the way your life is going, rather than how happy you feel at this very moment – your pay cheque does make a difference. It might not be able to buy you love but money can, it turns out, purchase happiness.

Unfortunately, acquiring joie de vivre is not a transaction that comes cheaply. In a study using polling data from hundreds of thousands of people across 155 countries, economists Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers found that, no matter where in the world you reside, higher household income correlates with higher contentment levels. No surprise there. What’s more interesting, though, is just how savagely the law of diminishing returns hits into the happiness gains that more money provides.

Put simply, every time you double your income, you gain about 0.5 in life satisfaction on a scale of 1-10. So, for example, a young sales exec, starting out on £18k with a self-reported life satisfaction rating of 6/10, would have to secure several promotions, and another 18 grand to up his cheerfulness score to 6.5. Beyond that, he’d need a £72k director-level position to reach a chipper 7, and a staggering £576k annual paycheck to pull himself all the way up to an exultant 8.5. Whoever said that number crunching was joyless?

Given that, outside of the murky realms of investment banking, hedge funds, and a handful of casino professions, £576k jobs are a little thin on the ground post-Brexit, those seeking a psychological windfall might be better off pursuing alternate routes. For starters, why not – and you may well have thought of this already – look after your health a bit better and find a partner that you like.

Economic researchers Kateryna Chernova and Richard Ball have calculated that, for the average single individual, the happiness spike incited by getting married is equivalent to a 767% increase in income. Improving your health significantly delivers a happiness boon that even 20 Swiss bank accounts could never match. Of course, it’s not quite as elementary as all that. Everyone’s different. You might hate exercise. You might love Fabergé eggs and gold-plated sports cars. You might be so hopelessly infatuated with your 22-year-old first love that, to be honest, you’ve entirely forgotten money exists. You might, on the other hand, be a lazy, misanthropic father whose loathing for his third wife is mirrored, every day, in the derision meted out by his five volatile children. In which case, yes, all things considered, you might as well try to get rich. At least you’ll be able to afford a nicer lunch.

Everyone else: don’t stress too much about your next raise. The sad truth is that happiness can indeed be bought, but it’s often poor value for money.
HIT PEAK FITNESS WITH A NEW RUN

If your boring workout regime could do with a lift, at the Snow Centre in Hertfordshire, every day is legs day.

Full disclosure: working out can be a drag. Endlessly swapping between Boosts and Metcons, sprints and squats – it’s monotonous for even the most dedicated among us. Finding an activity that scales the twin peaks of function and fun is an endurance event in itself. Which is why we suggest taking your training off-piste.

Prior to 2009, The Snow Centre was a dry ski slope – Hemel Hempstead has a skiing heritage, believe it or not. But that certainly doesn’t mean it’s outmoded. “We’re one of six snow facilities in Britain,” says Pete Gillespie, head of snow sports. “But as the newest we have an edge because we use all the latest chillers and snow guns to create the best conditions.” Yes, it’s real snow. “Water is pumped out at high pressure into a cold environment, where it crystallises to create snow flakes,” explains Gillespie. These are conditions to match Val d’Isere – minus the bill for your après-ski refreshment.

It’ll elevate your fitness, too. Because the slope is only 160m long, you can’t meander for miles looking suave. The emphasis is on drills involving tight turns or skiing on one leg. “Balancing on one leg is an isometric hold to increase lower-body strength, while the instability also shifts emphasis to your core,” says Gillespie. That’s a strong set of quads for when you swap the salopettes for shorts, plus a six-pack. Accuracy here is paramount. Much like the time-under-tension that builds strength during a slow squat rep, a controlled descent accelerates muscle development.

If you’re new to skiing, worry not. The team is equipped to take you from black diamond in the rough to indomitable snowman, with a rolling roster of 100 instructors, some of whom are qualified to elite Level 4. And so, if yet another session at the squat rack has you running for the hills, head for Hertfordshire. It will put your gym-based boredom on ice.

THE BEST GYMS IN THE WORLD

Part with this sum (little more than your local gym membership) and you’ll gain unlimited access for a month. Last year the centre sold 31,000 passes.
The number of calories you can burn in an hour on the slopes. Not as much as some fitness classes, but we guarantee you’ll be smiling while you sweat.

600 kcal

The amount of real snow – created by spraying water through super-cold air at a height – that covers the entirety of the slope to a depth of half a metre.

7000 tonnes

The Snow Centre is used as the training venue for ITV’s celebrity ski jumping show. If they can teach the Towie lot, you should be up to speed in no time.
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**ALL BASES COVERED**

Kicking off a new series, we present the only four recipes you’ll need for any nutritional dilemma, courtesy of Homeslice.

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### THE IMMUNITY DEEP-PANACEA

**SALAMI, ROCKET & PARMESAN**

**INGREDIENTS**

- Pizza dough
- Garlic, 2 cloves
- Chilli, to taste
- Tomatoes, 2 cans
- Mozzarella, ½ ball
- Salami slices
- Parmesan & rocket

**METHOD**

1/ First up, the dough: put 110ml of cold water with 1g of yeast in a bowl, before adding 250g of strong bread flour and a pinch of salt. Form a dough, add more water, then mix for seven minutes. Leave in the fridge for 24 hours.

2/ For the tomato sauce, fry chopped garlic – it raises your infection-fighting T cells – and chilli before adding the chopped tomatoes.

3/ Heat the oven to 240°C then roll out the dough to make a 12in base, before spreading the sauce on top. Top with torn mozzarella and salami, then bake it for five minutes. Done? Sprinkle it with parmesan and rocket; the greens’ sulforaphane is a powerful immune-booster. Grab a slice and get stuck in.

---

### CURD YOUR ENTHUSIASM

**BEETROOT & COW’S CURD**

**INGREDIENTS**

- Wholemeal pizza dough
- Tomato sauce, 150ml
- Cooked beetroot, 2
- Shallots, handful
- Brussels sprout tops
- Cow’s curd, 150g
- Fresh mint & marjoram
- Lemon juice

**METHOD**

1/ Make the pizza dough as before, so you end up with a 12in base. This time, use wholemeal flour. The lower glycaemic impact means it will drip-feed – rather than flood – your body with carbs for longer-lasting energy.

2/ Ladle on the sauce and spread it evenly over the base before heating the oven to 240°C. Slice your beetroot, shallots and brussels, the latter of which dishes out vitamins B6 and B9 to help convert food into energy.

3/ Toss the beetroot (it’s rich in nitrates, which widen blood vessels and optimise your oxygen intake) with the shallots, brussels, cow’s curd and herbs. Season with salt, oil and lemon, top your pizza and bake for five minutes. Call it a pre-workout, if you must.
GO GET FIT
TONE UP. EAT WELL. ENJOY SPRING.

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CUSTOMER REVIEW
“Great dumbbells, compact to store, easy to adjust. Highly recommended!”
Mens Health Adjustable Dumbbell 26kg
Desmond, Fife, UK

CUSTOMER REVIEW
“Well made strong and sturdy, I am impressed with the ZR10 series of equipment. I would recommend”
Reebok ZR10 Exercise Bike
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**THE BIG DOMS TAKEAWAY**

**LAMB & RED WINE-SOAKED CHEESE**

**METHOD**

1/ Goat’s cheese is full of body-repairing calcium, phosphorus and magnesium. Soak it in wine for a couple of hours because, well... do you need a reason? Then add some thyme for extra flavour.

2/ If you want your pizza on the plate faster, speed up the dough-making process by leaving it to rise for three hours out of the fridge. Now for a roll-out that won’t make your abs ache: flatten your 12in base, then bake it for five minutes. Meanwhile, season the protein-packed lamb fillets by rubbing them with oil, salt, pepper and cumin.

3/ Sear the fillets in a hot pan, about three minutes each side. Remove the pizza from the oven before slicing the lamb into strips, adding them to the base along with crumbled cheese and fresh watercress. Slice, eat, relax.

**INGREDIENTS**

- Goat’s cheese, 200g
- Red dessert wine, 300ml
- Fresh thyme, handful
- Pizza dough
- Lamb neck fillets, 2
- Olive oil
- Salt, 2 tsp
- Black pepper, 2 tsp
- Ground cumin, 1 tsp
- Watercress, handful

**NUTRITION**

- 782 calories
- 34g fat
- 70g protein
- 47g carbs

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**EARNING A CRUST**

**CAPRESE PANIZZO**

**METHOD**

1/ To pack your lunchbox full of smarter fuel, swap your usual floppy discs for something a little more desk-friendly. This time, stretch the dough into a loaf shape, flattening it slightly.

2/ Once more, heat the oven to 240°C, add the dough and bake it for about five minutes so you end up with a shape that’s similar to focaccia. Meanwhile slice the onion, mozzarella and vitamin-toting tomatoes. Cherry tomatoes’ carotenoids, in particular, are shown to boost cognitive function and support eye health.

3/ Finally, slice open the loaf – much like you would a baguette – and ladle in some of the tomato sauce before liberally adding as much of the filling ingredients as you can squeeze in. This probably isn’t the best day to wear your smartest white shirt.

**INGREDIENTS**

- Pizza dough
- A red onion
- Mozzarella, ½ ball
- Cherry tomatoes
- Tomato sauce, 75ml
- Fresh basil

**NUTRITION**

- 474 calories
- 11g fat
- 73g protein
- 19g carbs
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**01 / FLYING START**

Work one side of your body at a time, pulling with your arm and pushing with your leg in short, sharp reps. You’ll be working in intervals, starting with a sprint section (pick your splits from the timetable below). Keep your head steady – if the countdown clock is a blur, adjust your form.

**02 / RHYTHM & REST**

By the time your first rest period clocks in, your leg muscles will be full of lactic acid and crying out for respite. Resist the urge to bail and keep moving, making each stride longer. Slowing your stroke rate will help you get a handle on your hammering heart, just in time for the next sprint.

**03 / KEEP IT UP**

Begin furiously pumping your arms and legs again for round two. Don’t allow your tired core to fold as you fatigue. Brace your abs and keep your backside tucked to ensure your spine remains neutral, avoiding injury. The only searing pain should be in your leg muscles.

**YOUR TIMETABLE**

Gauge your fitness level by tackling these splits, then share your sweaty selfies with #MHGauntlet.

- **GROUND ZERO**
  - 30s / 60s, 6 ROUNDS
  - Work for 30sec, rest for 60sec and repeat six times. You’ll climb 300ft while sprinting in this split – nearly the height of Big Ben. You’re on the climber for 9min, so pace yourself.

- **BASE CAMP**
  - 30s / 30s, 6 ROUNDS
  - By halving your rest times, this set of splits is shorter but sharper. The sprints alone will burn 70kcal with 3min of work. Which goes some way to explaining why it hurts so much.

- **DIZZY HEIGHTS**
  - 30s / 15s, 8 ROUNDS
  - Force a smile. By cutting your rest periods and adding two rounds, you’ll have ramped up your fitness. VersaClimbers beat both treadmills and rowers for elevating stamina.

- **PEAK EFFORT**
  - 40s / 10s, 18 ROUNDS
  - This is the type of split employed by pro MMA fighters during camp. The climber also strengthens your quads, improving your squat strength. Next up, the weights room...

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**THE TASKMASTER**

Luke Worthington is a strength and conditioning expert and head of trainer education at Third Space gym. “The most important thing about performing intervals on the VersaClimber is that work means work – go totally flat out.”
Hollywood’s most authentic action hero is about to hit 50 like he hits everything else: with a bang. But this graduate of the Brit school of hard knocks is still being taught a few lessons – by the world’s smartest trainers, by his hero Sylvester Stallone and, most importantly, by his own body.
THE BEST THING ABOUT TALKING TO JASON STATHAM

is that it’s exactly what you’d hope talking to Jason Statham would be like. The voice that makes gravel sound like sand. The almost poetically geezerish turn of phrase that led director Guy Ritchie, nearly two decades ago, to cast the former street trader in *Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels*, then promote him to the lead in *Snatch*. The only unexpected bonus is the chuckle. This partly explains Statham’s enormous popularity, and why his upcoming slate continues to be packed with sequels: *Spy 2*, *The Expendables 4* and *Fast & Furious 8*. OK, so he’s only been in three of the latter, but still, the point remains: audiences, whether cinemagoers or Men’s Health readers, want more of him, because what they see is what they get. Unlike the dodgy watches he used to flog, Statham is legit. Kosher. Proper.

Of course, a large part of this enduring appeal is down to the spectacular athleticism that has seen Statham triple-pike into the best seat at Hollywood’s action-hero table. Impressively knowledgeable and enthusiastic about his training, Statham can teach even professional fitness writers a thing or two. But even if he appears to have everything figured out, with the approach of his 50th birthday (yes, really), Jason Statham is the first to admit that he’s still learning as he goes.

For the benefit of the reader, can you explain how we came to be photographing you in New Zealand? Sure. I was over there shooting a film for Warner Bros about a big shark [*Meg*, out in 2018, which sounds ridiculously brilliant, or brilliantly ridiculous]. I’m very excited about that. And the good fortune was I was able to get a great house there and set up a nice gym.

It looks a lot fancier than the set-up you had last time we spoke [for the June 2015 issue of MH]. Back then you’d been filming *Mechanic: Resurrection* in Thailand and training with barbells made out of old car axles...

Ha! Yeah, this was a little bit more streamlined. I had a framework put together in the backyard, this sort of bar workout area where I could mount some gymnastic rings. I’ve been using rings as part of my training now for the past 12 months. If you can find a place to string them up, there’s so much benefit that can be had in terms of shoulder mobility and real, usable strength. I really like them because you’re always trying to learn a new skill, which makes things more interesting rather than just repeat, repeat, repeat. It’s such a difficult piece of apparatus to master. I’m getting better, but I need a bit more time in the saddle before I can show you pictures of the iron cross...

During our last conversation you were quite adamant about not working with a PT. Are you still training yourself? Yeah. Over the last couple of years I’ve started to look really closely at doing things correctly. When you’re on your own, you can do a lot of examination of your movements and how good or bad they are. There’s so much information on the internet now. You can acquire the knowledge to figure out exactly how to do the big lifts and other stuff correctly while avoiding injury. It’s been good. I’m really enjoying the studying and putting it into practice.

What kind of moves have you nailed? Well, luckily I have a bit of a gymnastic background from back in the day. So I can get an L-sit, I can get a handstand. But the things that are very beneficial are the muscle-ups and the rotations through the shoulder: hanging upside down, moving around and almost creating a kind of flow. You’re developing strength, but you’re also developing mobility at the same time. A lot of people throw around heavy weights but they don’t take the shoulder joint through its full range of motion, which is a key problem for most guys.

That kind of training might be great for that one position, but the shoulder is a complex joint that requires a fair amount of maintenance. The rings are perfect for that.

**THE BODY IS LIKE AN ADAPTATION MACHINE**
CALISTHENICS TRAINING HAS STATHAM RUNNING RINGS AROUND ACTION HEROES HALF HIS AGE
And you’re still training by feel rather than following a programme?
It’s funny, I did so many years of set things: cardio this day, weights this day... Some people need structure, and to write everything down. For me, I’ve been there and done that, so I’m happy to make up my workouts depending on how I feel each day. I’ve learnt that the body is like an adaptation machine: whatever you throw at it, it finds a way to do that particular thing and you never make any more gains from that. Doing my own thing in the gym each day gives me variety. I’m always trying new things. And it’s a way for me to figure out how to fix those old ailments that I’ve gathered over the course of my silly career.

Plus you don’t have the peer pressure of the gym to put another plate on the bar and do yourself a mischief.
There are benefits to both. Some of my better days were when someone was hanging over me and really pushing me. But that’s what I was trying to do at that time, and I can push myself in different areas now. A trainer sometimes comes with their own ideas and it’s hard for them to understand how I got all my fucking injury problems. By training yourself, you can be really responsive to how your body feels and adjust accordingly. It suits me at the moment. But who knows what I’ll be doing next year? Training’s part of my life and it’s always changing in some way.

Is there anything that you always do?
I always train in the morning. I’ve always been a morning person, back from my days as a diver. When you train in the morning, you can never make the excuse that you ran out of time, or this meeting came up, or you couldn’t get back from work. Those things don’t apply. If training’s first on your list of things to do, it never gets compromised.

Do you have any guiding principles for how you put a session together?
I tend to combine some kind of Olympic lift with gymnastic training. And it depends on the acuteness of that training. If I do heavy squats or deadlifts on the Monday, I’m not going to do anything like that again until Thursday or Friday. Recovery is a key issue that I’ve always overlooked. In my earlier years it was all about quantity and making sure you got tonnes done, even if you felt tired: just get in there and get it done.

You’ve obviously got some skills: levers, handstands...
Yeah, I see a lot of the calisthenics stuff that’s all over the internet and these people make it look so good. And their physiques... I’m always impressed by people who make a muscle-up look that easy. They’re the movements that I want to do.

Everything has to work in unison for you to perform those static holds.
Exactly. Bodyweight training really allows you to find your weaknesses rather quickly [laughs]. You need all the components: flexibility, explosive power, the lot. You can build a good physique just lifting weights down the gym. But that doesn’t necessarily give you the athletic agility. And for what I do, agility is more usable than just sheer brute strength. So that’s what I tend to lean toward.

So doing handstands on the parallel bars is more than just showing off?
[Laughs] I actually do handstand dips on those! You get big powerlifters who can lift a car above their head; for me, to do a handstand dip, and get right deep into that dip through the bars, that develops great, usable strength. And I always enjoy executing a skill at the same time. It’s very hard to develop bad technique with a handstand dip.

I saw you had some kettlebells in your set-up, too. What do you do with those?
Again, the kettlebell is a fantastic piece of equipment. You can get a whole workout...
done with just one of those. There’s that guy, he’s done a couple of books, I forget his name now…

Pavel Tsatsouline?
Pavel, yeah! He’s great. I’ve listened to him in a couple of interviews, I think it was on Tim Ferriss’ podcast. There are some great people on his podcast. Charles Poliquin talking about strength training, too. Joe Rogan’s another smart guy who I listen to regularly. Really informative. They’ve all got different ideas about training, so you get a real slice of their experience and then you can take it or leave it.

Fast 8 is out next month. What can you let us know about that?
What can I tell you about the storyline? Not much – I’m sworn to secrecy. What can I tell you about the process of making it? It’s a big beast. They spent a lot of money on it. The stunts are great. Everybody gets stuck in. I love working with the Rock. We’re just about to start all the promo, so you’re going to hear about it. People all around the world love that franchise, so here’s another one. And it keeps going.

Speaking of keeping going, you’re turning 50 this summer…
[Laughs] I am! That’s right.

How do you feel about that?
You know what, I feel pretty good. I’m in decent shape. I’ve been harbouring a lot of injuries and I’ve almost cured them all over the past year. When we speak next year, I’ll be giving you my road map to recovery! But yeah, I’m moving better than I used to. I’m feeling pretty nimble. It’s about the whole thing: training, eating, sleeping... all of those have a massive impact on how you feel. And I’m doing better at all of those things. Sly Stallone’s got 20 years on me and still looks good so he’s part of my inspiration.

The Expendables 4 is in the works.
I sat and had a meeting with Sly before I went away. Any opportunity to work alongside that man is a great one. He’s got such a reputation and a charisma. What he stands for in the movie business, and the fitness world... he’s been an inspiration to so many people. He’s a man that you can’t say no to. So when he comes to me and says, ‘Listen, I want to make..."
another *Expendables*, it’s like, ‘OK, I’m in.’ He definitely wants to do one, so it’s real. But there’s no concept yet; it’s still pie in the sky. We’ve got to figure out what the story is – and who comes to the party.

**What have you learnt from Stallone?**
It’s hard to pinpoint a philosophy. It’s more of an intuitive thing. He has a lot of confidence, and great ideas about how things will play out. He doesn’t work from a textbook and he didn’t learn it from film school. He is Rocky. That’s what he’s like. Everything he does seems to be with a natural swagger. And, like in any kind of business, when you see someone doing their thing so well, you become a sponge. You soak it up.

If you asked someone to think of a ‘real man’ or a ‘tough guy’, they’d likely think of you. Who would you think of?
Ha! These public labels, the things the media like to paint you as, I don’t really look at them. I see myself as a pretty standard sort of chap, really. I keep a lot of my pals close to me and I think that keeps my feet on the ground. I don’t know if they’ll say the same thing! But we all come from the same place. Some of us have certain jobs and some of us don’t. Hollywood has a caustic effect on a lot of people. It’s a cruel business. You can get a big head about things. But what goes up must come down.

**People inevitably confuse you with the characters that you play, but you’re indisputably an action hero for this generation. Who were your heroes?**
Bruce Lee graced my brother’s bedroom walls when I was a nipper. He was a massive inspiration and he’s never had anyone who could get close to him in terms of physical ability and confidence. He was very, very special. And he could probably take on 10 guys for real. Today, you’ve got to put on a pair of tights and a cape to be able to do that. He was authentic and I think that’s the key word. Muhammad Ali was exactly what he was, too. These people are inspirational because they’re not pretending to be something that they’re not.

**Are you still doing a good amount of martial-arts training?**
Yeah. That’s what I have to give most of my time to these days: training for what I have to do in terms of providing action in an authentic manner. If I’m trying to show something on screen, I want to be able to do that and not rely on special effects or a bunch of other chaps who can do it better than me. When I talk about authenticity, it’s people like Jackie Chan and Jet Li, and even Sly himself, he gets stuck in. These are the people that I like to work alongside because there’s an authenticity to those chaps.

**Your old mucker Guy Ritchie is a black belt in jiu-jitsu, and brown in karate. Do you ever spar together?**
I remember when we started out, we’d go on a press tour for *Lock, Stock*... and we’d be moving all the furniture out of the way in the hotel room, trying to choke each other out.

**That’s one way to keep all those interviews interesting...**
Exactly! You turn up with a scrape on your head and the interviewer is like, “Where did that come from?” They probably thought we’d stumbled out of a bar and had a fight with the pavement. I’m a huge...
Statham’s training is all about range of motion and joint stability. PT James Crossley takes The Stath’s mantra and creates a full-body session. Do the giant set 4 times, resting 60sec between sets. Drop one rep off each move every set.

**THE FORMULA**

Statham’s training is all about range of motion and joint stability. PT James Crossley takes The Stath’s mantra and creates a full-body session. Do the giant set 4 times, resting 60sec between sets. Drop one rep off each move every set.

01/ PULL-UP
10 REPS, 10SEC REST
A fundamental of the movie star’s training is mastering his own bodyweight, and there’s no better move to do that than the pull-up. Hanging from the bar with straight arms (A), squeeze your back and pull your chest up toward the bar, making sure your head goes over the top (B), then slowly lower back down to the start. This will make hanging from helicopters light work.

02/ SLED SPRINT
20SEC, 10SEC REST
To build functional power in his lower body, Statham pulls heavy metal. Not only does this tax his leg muscles, it gets his cardiovascular system working just as hard. Attach a sled to your waist and set up in a sprinter’s stance (A). Now run as fast and furiously as you can (B), before pausing and returning. Grit your teeth and pump your legs to cut fat and build Statham-like strength.

03/ BENCH DIP
10 REPS, 10SEC REST
The Stath’s triceps stack up against Dwayne Johnson’s in *Fast & Furious 8* and we can see why. He uses parallel bars for dips, but a bench works too. With hands behind you, arms and legs outstretched (A), bend your elbows as far as you can (B) before pushing explosively back up. Make it harder by placing a 20kg plate on your lap. This move will also improve your elbow joint stability.

04/ FARMER’S WALK
20SEC, 10SEC REST
The actor uses this classic strongman lift to carve out a V-shaped back. It’s deceptively challenging – the walk is guaranteed to have your shoulders and traps on fire, lungs beating out of your chest and grip strength skyrocketing. Hold two heavy kettlebells by your sides (A). Keep your arms strong and walk short, quick steps as fast as possible (B). Turn around and walk back. Simple, but brutally effective.

05/ HANGING LEG RAISE
10 REPS, 10SEC REST
A staple in Statham’s workouts, this move has been used by gymnasts for decades, which proves its effectiveness for building serious core strength. Gripping a bar overhead with straight legs (A), tense your core and raise your legs off the floor until your body forms an L-shape (B). Hold for a beat, then lower slowly. Statham also employs the L-sit as a tool for improving his hip and shoulder mobility.

06/ ROWING MACHINE
200M ROW, 60SEC REST
Statham finishes his giant set by blitzing body fat on the rowing machine, rather than the treadmill. That way, he protects himself from potential knee-joint pain. Keeping your core tight, shoulders down and arms stretched, initiate the push with your legs (A). Just before they straighten, retract your shoulders (B). Return by extending your arms, then bending your legs. Go the distance. Then start again.

**As we mentioned, you’re about to turn 50... What do you know now that you wish you’d known when you were 20?**
You don’t have to grind so hard. It’s not about quantity; it’s about figuring it out, the refinement of the movement: that’s where the benefit really lies. Before it was about getting the work done. But even when I was diving, the coaches really knew nothing about how you can generate the most power, and how the movement is essential to that. What I’ve learnt is that I’ve missed out on so much. Every detail of how you do an exercise is key to how you progress and get really good at something. And that translates all the way down, from Olympic lifts through to the gymnastic skills, everything. If I’d have known then what I know now, I’d have gone back to the basics a lot, lot sooner. 📖 *Fast & Furious 8* is out on 14 April

- Image 1: Jason Statham
- Image 2: Hanging leg raise
- Image 3: Farmer’s walk
- Image 4: Bench dip
- Image 5: Pull-up
- Image 6: Sled sprint
- Image 7: Hanging leg raise
- Image 8: Rowing machine
For a portable **high protein snack** that combines great flavour with maximum benefit, Men’s Health Beef Jerky is the perfect choice. Made with **100% British and Irish silverside beef**, it’s marinated with herbs and spices for a brand new and improved taste!

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Eating ‘breakfast like a king’ is the most hallowed of nutritional edicts. And it’s sound advice if – like the monarchs of yore – you have helpers on hand to prepare your meals and a leisurely morning schedule. But for those of us with hour-long commutes, 8am staff meetings and a less regally appointed larder, it’s impractical. Yet thanks to researchers from the University of Munich, the common man needn’t be condemned to a life of burgeoning waistlines.

Their two-week study of obese and healthy volunteers found that a lighter breakfast was associated with a leaner daily food intake and lower overall bodyweight, with the scientists advocating cutting calories in the morning as a smart fat-loss strategy. It seems those who enjoy their first meal in the manner of a rotund royal continue in that vein for the rest of the day.

So, should a hectic morning routine make a cooked breakfast impractical, don’t feel bad about settling for a post-gym shake or pauperian bowl of oats at your desk. Instead, save your appetite for a hearty dinner. Insulin sensitivity is lower in the evening, so if you fill up on carbs after a big evening workout, more of what you eat will be stored as muscle instead of fat. Consider this your royal pardon for a proper supper.
You've likely heard it said that your weekend G&T is medicinal – usually by the guy already on his fifth glass. Winston Churchill even declared that: "The gin and tonic has saved more Englishmen's lives, and minds, than all the doctors in the Empire." He was, of course, referring to tonic water's malaria-fighting properties, rather than the tipple's ability to ameliorate an awkward Sunday lunch with the in-laws. However, new research suggests mixing an elderberry-infused G with your T could protect you against seasonal illness. Recent reports from Griffith University in Queensland, Australia, found that the quercetin and anthocyanins in elderberries reduce cold duration by two days, as well as significantly curbing the severity of symptoms. Subjects who took an extract of the fruit in supplement form recovered faster than those who popped a placebo. This builds on previous animal studies which show that concentrated elderberry juice increases the level of natural flu-fighting antibodies and can even prevent viral infections from taking hold in the first place.

Now, naturally a tart glass of elderberry juice would be your most expedient prescription. But, when faced with a deadly office epidemic, a splash of the hard stuff does certainly seem to stiffen one's resolve. Make ours a double.
Instagram has a lot to answer for – selfies, belfies and swolfies spring to mind. But the pervasive, all-consuming, ‘rise and grind’ ethos of wellness is perhaps its most mind-frying; the idea that the only route to a long and healthy life is via multiple daily workouts and a hypoallergenically clean diet. It’s a theory MH does not ‘like’. Which is why we were happy to hear a kick-around at the weekend can be as potent as seven days of self-aware fitnessing.

An analysis into the exercise routines of over 60,000 adults in England and Scotland found that cramming your weekly workout quota – 75 minutes – into one or two weekend sessions is equally beneficial to spreading it across the week. In the study, those who met the physical activity target by exercising daily saw their risk of death from cardiovascular disease drop by 41%, with a 21% lower chance of cancer death. But the weekend warriors’ overall mortality risk barely differed, with their chance of cardiovascular and cancer deaths lowered by 40% and 18% respectively.

Which means a football match – followed by a beer and a sausage and beans tea, naturally – easily racks up enough to score you the cancer-reducing results. Now that’s what we call #squadgoals.
Work too often seems like the longest of slogs. With meetings, reports and deadlines stretching out before you, it can feel like a marathon rather than a sprint. But for those chasing after a mental boost in the office, long-distance efforts are exactly what you should be running toward.

Because new research from the University of Arizona has unlaced the science of the long-lasting effects of the runner’s high. By comparing brain scans of young adult cross-country runners to those who don’t engage in regular activity, they discovered that long-distance endurance athletes possess greater connections between areas in the frontal cortex – the principal area for decision-making, planning and multitasking.

In other words, everything you need to take the lead in the race for your next promotion.

But before you pull on your flats for a self-flagellating 26.2-mile cardio commute, your knees will be relieved discover that the same study found 60 minutes on the run was sufficient to garner the professional performance-boosting rewards of an ultra-marathon. And, one can assume, with a lot less chafing, too.
60 SECONDS TO POP DEPRESSION WITH A VITAMIN PILL

Tabloid health news is a fickle mistress. Today’s magic bullet so quickly becomes tomorrow’s bête noire and the honest-to-goodness multivit has not been immune to its vagaries. But if you find that depressing, know this: research shows that a daily multivit can raise your mood to effervescent levels.

In an Australian study, 58 healthy adults were given either a daily multivitamin or a placebo. When, after four weeks, mood and blood biomarkers were assessed, the participants popping vits every day had a significantly brighter disposition and much lower reports of depression than those on placebos. This was attributed to an increase of vitamins B6 and B12 in their blood, which play an important role in the production of brain chemicals that regulate mood.

But while B vits are accountable for your perkier outlook, it’s the other micronutrients in multivit supplements that are essential in enabling complex biochemical pathways to function. Conveniently enough, all of said nutrients are found abundantly in Men’s Health Lab Multi-Fit capsules, although other brands are, of course, available. Plink, plink for more fizz.
YOUR PERSONAL TRAINER ON THE MOVE

GREAT REASONS TO GET THE DIGITAL EDITION
Subscribe to the digital edition of Men’s Health and save up to 20% on the cover price. Packed with expert advice on improving every area of your life, from health & fitness to grooming, style and sex & relationships.
Pancakes tend to be lumped in with fried bread and doughnuts in the nutritional stakes. But that says less about the food per se and more about our lack of alimentary nous. So, just in time for Lent, we’ve escorted the pancake out of stodge city and into your PT’s good books. It’s time to win the toss...
ver in Trump town they drown them in syrup and call it breakfast. The Japanese serve them as okonomiyaki – a versatile savoury concoction translating as ‘how you like’. Us Brits? Well, there’s that Tuesday before Lent and, um…

Not for the first time in matters of real import, we’ve got this all wrong. The Shrove Tuesday tradition – load up on carbs before embarking on a 40-day fast – has resulted in us viewing the pancake as pure gluttony. But this represents a serious lack of imagination.

“With ingenuity, the pancake is the perfect vessel to provide the ideal balance of protein, carbs and fats,” says Alex Ferentinos, nutrition consultant to the British Lions. “Choose the toppings wisely and it forms the perfect base for rounding out your daily macros.”

In order to help you stay the hand holding the Nutella jar, we asked a trio of health-conscious chefs to come up with ways to not just upgrade the pancake, but to make it one of the most virtuous dishes in your repertoire. The resulting recipes are good for you, but no less gourmet for it.

With one eye on your waistline and the other on your palate, we’ve crafted a dozen towers of flavour, all under the watchful eye of our nutritional foreman, Ferentinos. Call it a 12-point plan for your pan. We’ll see you on the flipside.

**The Pan Slingers**

BERWYN DAVIES
MICHELIN-STARRED HEAD CHEF OF THE GLASSHOUSE, KEW

ANDREW BREDON
FOUNDER OF FAST FOOD RESTAURANT BEL-AIR, SHOREDITCH

ANTHONY DEMETRE
VENERABLE CHEF PATRON OF WILD HONEY, MAYFAIR
-01
Hone Tuesday
Pork Loin, Avocado & Maple Pancake Rolls
BY BERWYN DAVIES

01 In this dish, pork loin and avocado combine to bring the perfect protein-to-fat ratio for muscle repair. Wrap them up in a carby pancake and you’re serving up a macronutrient Venn diagram that even the greediest strongman would appreciate. To that end, grill the pork loin for 15 minutes, turning it over every five. Meanwhile, crush the avocado with lemon juice and a pinch of salt. Then blend the batter mix and leave to stand for 30 minutes.

02 Cook the pancake mix by warming a large frying pan and adding coconut oil. Add the mix bit by bit, aiming for small, thin pancakes to ensure they roll well at the end.

03 Once you have two pancakes prepped, spread them with maple syrup, avocado, sliced red onions and roughly pulled pork. Devour now, or, if you can restrain yourself, store in the fridge and pig out during the optimal protein synthesis window: 40 minutes after your next workout, bro!

INGREDIENTS
(MAKES 4)
BATTER
• PLAIN FLOUR, 60G
• SALT, PINCH
• AN EGG
• RICE MILK, 140ML
FILLING
• PORK LOIN, 200G
• AVOCADO, %
• A LEMON, JUICED
• MAPLE SYRUP, 20G
• RED ONION, %

-02
Rescue Packages
Fried Egg, Kale & Cheddar Crepes
BY ANTHONY DEMETRE

01 A show-off both in health benefits and appearance, a stack of these packs enough leafy greens to see you bounce back from the gym, flu, or a heavy Friday night. To begin, work up your batter mix, as before, while bringing a pan of salted water to the boil. Soften the kale in the pan and then pop it in iced water to stop its nutrients from being wilted by the heat. Just one serving has 684% of your RDA of cancer-fighting vit K, plus vitamins A and C.

02 Next, sweat the chilli, fennel seeds and garlic in oil. Chop the kale and chuck it in. Season with salt and pepper and cook for 10 minutes more. Add this to a ladle’s worth of pancake mix and pour into the pan. Cook as usual, cracking an egg into the centre. Artfully fold over the edges to create a square shape, like you’re a TV chef. Pop it in the oven at 200°C to finish the egg. Top with cheese and sample at your leisure to feel 20% more human.

INGREDIENTS
(MAKES 4)
BATTER
• WHOLEGRAIN FLOUR, 300G
• BUCKWHEAT FLOUR, 90G
• EGGS, 3
• FULL FAT MILK, 375ML
• SALT, PINCH
FILLING
• CURLY KALE, 200G
• OLIVE OIL, 1TBSP
• CHILLI FLAKES, PINCH
• FENNEL SEEDS, PINCH
• A GARLIC CLOVE
• EGGS, 4
• CHEDDAR CHEESE, 20G
**03 All-American Energiser**

**Peanut Butter & Jelly Stack**

BY BERWYN DAVIES

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**INGREDIENTS**  
(MAKES 3)

**BATTER**

- A BANANA, MASHED
- AN EGG
- BICARBONATE SODA, PINCH
- OATS, 30G
- SALT, PINCH
- WATER, 10ML

**FILLING**

- STRAWBERRY JAM
- PEANUT BUTTER, 1TBSP
- CRÈME FRAÎCHE, 30G
- A BANANA, SLICED
- ROASTED PEANUTS, 20G
- A LIME, JUICED

---

**01** Yes, your pancake batter has a banana in it this time round. No you don’t need to do anything differently. Combine the batter ingredients in a bowl, then leave it to stand for 30 minutes so you can get onto the good stuff – by which, of course, we mean prepping the high-energy, sweet-tooth-friendly filling.

**02** As before, cook the batter in a hot pan using coconut oil. You’re going to use a third of the mixture at a time here, for a more robust base to power you through the next cardio grand slam.

**03** Once you have your triple stack ready, spread one with jam (or mashed berries, if you’re feeling virtuous) one with peanut butter and one with crème fraîche. Mix banana, crushed nuts and lime juice, then dollop the mixture on each pancake as well. Tuck into an American-inspired race-day breakfast that’s packed with glycogen to ensure your burning muscles won’t go hungry on the road to victory.

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**MACRO TRACKER**

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**04 Anti-Heart Attack Stack**

**Buckwheat Pancakes With Avocado & Shrooms**

BY ANDREW BREDON

---

**INGREDIENTS**  
(MAKES 4)

**BATTER**

- ALMOND MILK, 200ML
- BLANCHED ALMONDS, 75G
- BUCKWHEAT FLOUR, 100G
- RICE FLOUR, 100G
- BAKING POWDER, 2TSP
- SALT, PINCH
- AN EGG

**FILLING**

- A GARLIC CLOVE, THINLY SLICED
- THYME, SPRIG
- SMOKED PAPRIKA, 1TSP
- OLIVE OIL, 1TBSP
- CHESTNUT MUSHROOMS, 200G, QUARTERED
- AN AVOCADO
- LEMON, ½, JUICED
- FLAT LEAF PARSLEY, 1TBSP, CHOPPED

---

**01** Not only a delicious lunch, these slices of fried gold are designed to maximise heart health. You know the drill by now: combine the batter ingredients, slowly adding the milk until smooth.

**02** Sweat the garlic, thyme and paprika for two minutes in a hot pan before tossing in the mushrooms. It’s a potent concoction: garlic is nature’s statin due to its antioxidant allicin, which improves circulation, while mushrooms deliver vitamin D and calcium to flatline your risk of cardiovascular disease. Roast them at 200°C for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, crush the avocado and mash it with lemon juice.

**03** For the pancakes, heat a non-stick frying pan with a splash of oil, using 3tbsp of batter per cake and waiting for it to bubble before flipping. The buckwheat flour is the star player here, lowering both cholesterol and blood pressure. When golden, remove from the pan and pile on the avo, shrooms and parsley.

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**MACRO TRACKER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAT</th>
<th>PROTEIN</th>
<th>CARBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11g</td>
<td>10g</td>
<td>49g</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
- 05
The Midweek Mind Flip
Spiced Chickpea Pancakes
BY ANTHONY DEMETRE

INGREDIENTS
(MAKES 6)
BATTER
• WHOLEGRAIN FLOUR, 300G
• BUCKWHEAT FLOUR, 90G
• EGGS, 3
• FULL FAT MILK, 375ML
• SALT, PINCH
FILLING
• AN ONION, CHopped
• GARLIC, 3 CLOVES
• GINGER, 1IN, GRATED
• A CORIANDER ROOT, FInELY CHePPED
• BLACK CUMIN, 2TSP
• TURMERIC, 1TSP
• CHILLI POWDER, 1TSP
• A BAYLEAF
• CAN OF CHOPPED TOMATOES
• CAN OF CHICKPEAS

01 This flash-in-the-pan stress buster is more than a quick fix. Cumin is proven to reduce tension and improve memory, while ginger soothes headaches. Finely chop the onion and garlic, and sweat in butter with the ginger and coriander root. Add cumin and cook for five minutes, then throw in the turmeric, chilli and bayleaf for another five.

02 Drop the tomatoes – linked to a lowered risk of neurological illness – into the pan. Reduce the liquid, then tip in the can of chickpeas. Israeli scientists have likened chickpeas to Prozac due to their abilities to boost serotonin, a hormone that regulates mood and appetite. What’s more, the pulse’s carb content helps its mood-boosting amino acids pass the blood/brain barrier, making it even more effective.

03 Cook your pancake batter as usual while the tomato mix simmers for 30 minutes. Pour it over the cakes and garnish with coriander to toss out work stress for good.

- 06
Drop-Kick Hunger
Peanut Butter & Cacao Nib Drop Scones
BY ANTHONY DEMETRE

INGREDIENTS
(MAKES 6)
BATTER
• WHOLEGRAIN FLOUR, 300G
• BUCKWHEAT FLOUR, 90G
• EGGS, 3
• FULL FAT MILK, 375ML
• SALT, PINCH
FILLING
• A BANANA, SLICED
• CACAO NIBS, 1TBSP
• CHUNKY PEANUT BUTTER, 1TBSP
• DARK CHOCOLATE, 75G

01 These American drop scene pancakes dish up US-style indulgence, without the associated calorie extravaganza. Start by slowly adding the wet batter ingredients to the dry, whisking to stop lumps forming. Don’t be a drip: skimmed milk might be lower in calories, but you lose the healthy fats and vitamins, plus it’s far less satiating. Make a big batch of this mix; it can be frozen for future use.

02 Heat a non-stick pan with coconut oil, add a spoonful of the mix and quickly colour both sides. Drizzle with chocolate to flip hunger on its head.

- SUGAR CRAVINGS THEIR JUST DESSERTS
-07

Batter Man Flu
Maple & Apple Buttermilk Pancakes
BY ANDREW BREDON

INGREDIENTS
(MAKES 4)

BATTER
• PLAIN FLOUR, 100G
• BAKING POWDER, 2TSP
• BAKING SODA, 1TSP
• BROWN SUGAR, 1TBSP
• BUTTERMILK, 200G
• ORGANIC BUTTER, 1TSP
• AN EGG

FILLING
• APPLES, 2, PEELED AND QUARTERED
• MAPLE SYRUP, 2TBSP
• BLACKBERRIES, 8
• GREEK YOGHURT, 50G

01 With minimal preparation, these pancakes will help you sideline sickness at breakfast by overhauling your immunity before you’ve stepped out the front door. To start, craft the batter as per the previous recipes then set aside for later.

02 Sweat the apple quarters in a frying pan with the butter. The benefits of a daily apple are well known, but it’s maple syrup that’s the lesser-known hero here, providing a third of your manganese RDA, along with a sweet checklist of antioxidants to boot. When the apples are softened, add the syrup and simmer for a further seven minutes.

03 Meanwhile, heat a greased frying pan and add 3tbsp. of batter per pancake. When they start looking good, add three halved blackberries to each before flipping for a bonus of illness-abating vit C. Top with the apples and a spoonful of yoghurt to swat that office bug into oblivion.

-08

Spice Of Longer Life
Cinnamon & Apple Strudel Pancakes
BY BERWYN DAVIES

INGREDIENTS
(MAKES 4)

BATTER
• PLAIN FLOUR, 75G
• SALT, PINCH
• AN EGG
• RICE MILK, 200ML

FILLING
• AN APPLE
• FRESH GINGER, 4G, PEELED
• CHESTNUTS, 50G
• TRECACLE, 30G
• ALMONDS, 30G
• RAISINS, 30G
• CINNAMON POWDER, PINCH

01 Start by grating the apple. In a University of Western Australia study, pink ladies were found to boast the highest amount of lifespan-extending flavonoid antioxidants. Opt for these to enjoy an even rosier outlook.

02 Shred the ginger and halve the chestnuts. Caramelize the treacle in a saucepan, then add the almonds, cooking for one minute. Add the ginger, chestnuts, apple, raisins and cinnamon powder. Cook on a low heat for 10 minutes then leave to cool. This dish may be a little sugary, but by going heavy on the spices – particularly polyphenol-rich cinnamon – you can balance out your blood glucose, meaning less of a spike and a lower reading on the guiltometer, too.

03 Make your pancakes as usual. Once you have four, add a spoonful of the topping mix into the middle, then fold the pancakes in half and into quarters. Scarf the parcels down for a stabilising strudel packed with long-lasting core benefits.

MACRO TRACKER

FAT  PROTEIN  CARBS

BATTER

6g  9g  68g

FILLING

7g  8g  47g
- 09
No-Crash Crepes
Blueberry, Raspberry & Flaxseed Pancakes
BY ANTHONY DEMETRE

INGREDIENTS
(MAKES 6)
BATTER
• WHOLEGRAIN FLOUR, 300G
• BUCKWHEAT FLOUR, 90G
• EGGS, 3
• FULL FAT MILK, 375ML
• SALT, PINCH
FILLING
• RASPBERRIES, 2TBSP
• BLUEBERRIES, 2TBSP
• LINSEEDS, 5G
• MAPLE SYRUP, 1TBSP
• MASCARPONE CHEESE, 1TBSP

01 Make up the batter as before, or use any mix left over from previous recipes. These cakes will seriously sharpen your brainpower, so use up the time you’ve saved with a serious mental workout by trying to discern why Mary Berry always looks so sour faced on Bake Off.

02 That done, crush the raspberries with a fork, and add to the batter with whole blueberries, linseeds and a spoon of the maple syrup. Linseed is packed with omega-3 fatty acids, including ALA, which your body uses to balance your mood and curb fatigue. You’re also adding a hit of nitric oxide, proven to improve memory.

03 Add a large scoop of the batter to your pan and cook quickly on both sides. Top with a dollop of mascarpone cheese – it packs 8% of your RDA of eye-protecting vit A, to better prepare you for another day staring at a screen. Slather in maple syrup and enjoy a sweet treat that won’t leave your mind feeling sticky.

- 10
Duck Out Of Fatigue
Duck, Black Pudding & Teriyaki Rolls
BY BERWYN DAVIES

INGREDIENTS
(MAKES 2)
BATTER
• OATS, 30G
• PLAIN FLOUR, 50G
• SALT, PINCH
• RICE MILK, 180ML
• AN EGG
FILLING
• DUCK BREAST, 100G
• BLACK PUDDING, 30G
• BROWN SUGAR, 10G
• APPLE VINEGAR, 2TBSP
• SOY SAUCE, 2TBSP
• SPRING ONIONS, 50G
• HEAD OF BABY GEM LETTUCE, QUARTERED

01 If there’s one thing your body loves almost as much as protein, it’s good fats. Which is why duck is the perfect poultry upgrade; it has both in spades (18g of the former, and 15g of the latter) meaning you keep your growth-inducing testosterone levels high while the protein feeds your muscles.

02 Meanwhile, grill the energy-fortifying, iron-rich black pudding until crispy. Now you need to make a teriyaki sauce by dissolving the brown sugar in a pan before adding apple cider vinegar and soy sauce.

03 Cook your pancakes in the same way as before, throwing in a flip if you’re feeling fancy. Once you have two pancakes ready, spread them with teriyaki, add chopped spring onions, baby gem lettuce, sliced duck and black pudding. Now, roll up and duck out – this isn’t a wrap you’ll want to share with friends.
**Pan For Gold**

**Buttermilk, Almond & Coconut Bananacakes**

**BY ANDREW BREDON**

01 From coffee to crepes, everything’s better with butter. That’s triply true when you’re using three kinds to top up your fuel levels ahead of a testing day on the trails. Start by sifting the dry batter ingredients with a pinch of salt. Whisk the egg whites until stiff. Separately mix together the yolks, buttermilk and melted butter, then whisk it into the flour mix until the batter is smooth.

02 Carefully fold the egg whites into the batter. Set aside. Slice the bananas and toss them in lemon and honey. Add 3tbsp of batter to a hot pan until bubbles form, then flip.

03 Top your pancakes with almond butter, the bananas in honey and a sprinkle of coconut chips. Your golden disks now cover all energy bases: both the instant fructose hit from honey and banana, and the slower, sustaining ultra energy from the fatty dairy and nuts. You’ve no chance of stacking it on the toughest of runs.

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**Jacked Stacks**

**Salmon & Yuzu Wholegrain Pancakes**

**BY ANDREW BREDON**

01 Gains are made in the kitchen, you know. And by packing protein, fats and muscle-filling glycogen into breakfast you’re priming your body for growth. To start, combine all the dry batter ingredients, then add half the buttermilk. Beat until smooth then stir in the remainder. Set the batter aside for 10 minutes while you start work on the protein payload to come.

02 Combine crème fraîche with Japanese fruit juice yuzu. Season the mixture with salt and pepper, then deseed the chilli pepper, chop it up and chuck it in.

03 Heat a splash of oil in a non-stick frying pan, then add 3tbsp of batter per cake. When cooked, top with smoked salmon – not only is the fish swimming in omega-3 fats, it also boasts a good hit of testosterone-raising vitamin D. Slather with your yuzu crème fraîche and sprinkle with chilli, coriander and plenty of black pepper to spike your metabolism. Second helpings encouraged.

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**MEN’S HEALTH 73**
STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

Away from the compression tights and almond shakes, a grittier fitness movement is gathering pace. Strongman training sees men hunting for a cruder, more visceral experience. But with the threat of injury never far away, can the benefits outweigh the bruises?

WORDS BY DAN MASOLIVER – PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID ELLIS
of independent gyms swapping out squat racks for Atlas stones is rising; and they’re seeing their attendance figures swell as fast as their members’ muscle mass. The Welsh national team used similar training drills to prepare for the last Rugby World Cup and it’s Chris Hemsworth’s method of choice when it comes to getting his Thor on. In short, strongman training is now a big deal.

But is it a deal you want in on? When it puts such brutal demands on the body, is strongman training really a sensible option for the weekend warrior in search of a change-up? And can it provide huge results without breaking you? To find out, I am embarking on a strongman regime of Valhallan proportions.

BLOODY BUT UNBOWED
My quest for strength begins in the Commando Temple gym, occupying two railway arches in Deptford, southeast London. One of the best-equipped and most highly respected strongman facilities in the country, it looks more like a salvage yard than a gym. Beer kegs share shelf space with stones plucked from Welsh quarries; circus dumbbells rest alongside anvils with painted-on nicknames like ‘The Beast’; and next to the collection of Atlas stones arranged in ascending order of weight sits a box of 6in nails for people to work on their grip strength... by attempting to bend them.

The strongman principles are simple: you do your best to lift, carry or pull stuff. Heavy stuff. Unorthodox, uncomfortable stuff. Not just barbells, with their evenly distributed loads and carefully engineered hand holds, but rocks, anchors, trucks, tree trunks, people, planes. The sort of stuff that bashes your shins, bruises your joints and tears up your palms. It’s the physical manifestation of the idea that what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.

“Strongman is pretty sexy,” adjudges Rob Blair, the ex-Royal Marine commando who has seen newcomers flocking steadily to his gym in recent months. “You’re thinking: ‘My god, I get to throw all of this crazy kit around.’ As a training method, strongman is so mixed and varied, you just can’t get bored of it.”

Certainly, my sessions with Blair over the following weeks are anything but dull. The first time we meet, he drops a 40kg stone at my feet, telling me to grab it and thrust it up onto my shoulder. Back in my regular gym I can barbell deadlift three times this weight, but with all of its awkward angles and irregularities, I struggle to even get a firm grip on the rock. My sorry attempts leave my hips and clavicles with painful black-and-blue mementos of my ineptitude.

While men of a certain character have long been drawn to battles with inanimate objects, it’s the nature of the weight we’re shifting that is changing. The number
“You can’t just throw a half-tonne tyre or some natural stones into a commercial joint and tell people to get on with it,” says Blair. “They’d rather have a £4000 Cybex running machine that everybody knows how to use, and that everybody’s going to be safe using. Here, we don’t want to be seen anywhere near the running-machine crew. A lot of independent gyms are now setting themselves apart by having these toys available.”

To Blair’s mind, strongman offers an antidote to the green juice and scented towels of modern fitness culture. He believes it appeals to the innate human desire to test ourselves against the world. “For thousands of years, people were using odd, unconventional objects to build up strength, and they didn’t even think about it,” he says. “Men used to go out hunting, fighting and building for a living. But the way life is going, we’re becoming more desk-bound, more sedentary. Some men go with it and degenerate. Others want to go out, get dirty and thrash around the place a bit.”

If all that sounds too red-blooded for your taste, you might want to chew on this – a recent YouGov poll found that just 2% of young British men would describe themselves as ‘masculine’. Can it be mere coincidence, then, that so many of us are trying to reconnect with our inner caveman? “There’s something really satisfying about flipping a tyre, throwing it to the ground, hearing that loud noise and thinking: ‘I just did that’,” says Blair. “It makes you feel powerful. And physical power is very addictive.”

HEAVY MONEY

If power really is a jones, then there’s a particular breed of human who acts as the ‘junkie’ of the strongman world. This group is so devoted to the pursuit of strength that they’ll put their health on the line to secure their next fix. For decades, the World’s Strongest Man competition has been as much a fixture of the Christmas TV schedule as The Italian Job or a Morecambe & Wise rerun – fondly regarded yet rarely more than half-watched. To all but a devoted few, the spectacle was often seen as more novelty sideshow than serious sporting contest. However, over the past 12 months, that has begun to change. And this is thanks in no small part to 29-year-old Eddie Hall, six-time winner of UK’s Strongest Man.

Last summer, Hall made history by becoming the first person to deadlift 500kg. The video of the heavy-metal-bearded, mohawk-sporting Hall pulling half a tonne of weight up his oak-thick thighs, locking out the lift, then collapsing in a 28-stone heap on the floor in front of the assembled masses, went viral and captured the imaginations of millions of viewers, myself among them.

To glimpse Hall in the flesh, I head to Newcastle’s Metro Radio Arena to watch him compete in the inaugural Ultimate Strongman World Championships. The brainchild of the five-time UK’s Strongest Man, Glenn Ross, this event is intended to break the World’s Strongest Man franchise’s vice-like grip on professional strongman competitions and to capitalise on the mounting mainstream fascination with size and strength.

Ross believes that just as Usain Bolt’s title of World’s Fastest can sell out stadia
and bring in hundreds of millions in sponsorship money, so too can the World’s Strongest. “Strongman doesn’t have the recognition that it should, but that’s partly because it hasn’t been staged with the required gloss,” says Ross. He wants to grow the Ultimate Strongman brand into one that rivals arena-filling titans like UFC or WWE. “In future, the plan is to do 20 global events, with thousands watching, and create a proper series, just like Formula 1. I want this to become the number one sport in the world, because as far as I’m concerned, it is.”

**TEARING DOWN WALLS**

It’s an ambitious goal, perhaps, yet here in Newcastle a capacity crowd has turned out to watch Eddie Hall compete alongside some of the sport’s biggest names. These include six-time World’s Strongest Man, Zydrunas Savickas; two-time champion Mikhail Shvilyakov; and the in-form Laurence Shahlaei, the reigning European champion from Cheltenham who last summer beat Hafþó Björnsson (AKA The Mountain from Game Of Thrones) to the title. The fans roar as each man enters the arena with all the audiovisual fanfare of the pay-per-view UFC bouts Ross wants to emulate.

The 12 competitors toil through five events, including a super yoke walk – a 20m dash against the clock with 450kg of railway track hanging from their shoulders – and the iconic Stones Of Strength, where five orbs, from 115kg up to an obscene 175kg, are lifted onto shoulder-high barrels. The size and shape of the athletes’ muscles – arms thicker than most men’s thighs, traps up to their ears, 60in barrel chests – borders on the cartoonish.

To the shock of the crowd, Hall has to bow out just 2m into the yoke walk after tearing a muscle in his leg. Four gruelling hours of lifting, pressing, sprinting and flipping later, it’s Hall’s fellow Briton Shahlaei who comes out on top. Afterwards, I introduce myself to him. As we shake, my hand is lost within the prodigious paw he uses to press 200kg above his head.

The 34-year-old is buoyed by his victory. “Strength sports are becoming more and more popular,” he says. “People are fascinated by how strong someone can be, and we do some crazy stuff. You’ll see us flipping cars, pulling airplanes – stuff which for the normal person is just insane. We’re big guys and the whole thing is larger than life. As a kid I was fascinated with superheroes, and I think that’s part of the appeal for people watching the sport today.”

Shahlaei’s 25-stone frame is the product of seven meals and 7000 calories a day – the minimum amount required to maintain his phenomenal muscle mass. “I’ve become bigger to try to keep up with some of the huge guys [Hafþó Björnsson is 6ft 9in and almost 30 stone], but once I’m done with strongman,” he pauses and allows himself a laugh, “I’m going to do CrossFit. I love training, I love sport, but I don’t want to be 25 stone forever.”

The sport takes a huge toll on athletes’ bodies. “I’ve torn ligaments, tendons and multiple muscles,” says Terry Hollands, a veteran with a cockney accent as thick as his neck, who dislocated a finger during the evening’s tyre-flip event. “It’s just part of it, and we accept that. When you’re pushing your body to the limit, things will break down eventually. And unfortunately the tendons and the ligaments don’t get as strong as quickly as the muscles do.”
Hall, meanwhile, suffers from sleep apnoea. This is the likely product, say experts, of over-training. He has to wear an oxygen mask to sleep in case he stops breathing. Strongmen may be growing bigger and stronger – and growing the sport’s fanbase – but at what cost?

**STRONG BONDS**

Back in the relative discomfort of the Commando Temple, sleep apnoea is not my most pressing concern. That would be the 70kg Atlas stone that keeps escaping traditional resistance workouts, and another adopting strongman principles and apparatus – then measured changes to their strength, speed, agility, stability and power over time. Each group bested the other on certain performance markers, but there was one key area of difference:

“The strongman group had an increase in muscle mass which wasn’t seen in the traditional group,” says Winwood.

“Most of what we do in the gym is lifting weights in a vertical plane – up and down movements – and isolating one muscle or muscle group. But take a strongman exercise like a farmer’s walk: it’s a loaded gait pattern. There’s carrying, you engage all the core musculature, and that works in synergy with a host of other muscle groups. More muscle mass being used means more lactate being created, and probably more growth hormone and other anabolic hormones being created, which may have influenced that muscle mass.”

And that is the beauty of strongman training: picking up unorthodox objects and carrying, flipping or pulling them around engages every muscle in your body. While pressing a barbell overhead does wonders for a handful of mirror muscles, the same lift using a half-full keg that sloshes and shifts throughout will force you into a full-body workout.

So, is strongman training objectively better or more useful than your usual weights-room routine? Not necessarily. But it is a hell of a lot more fun, and when it comes to a sustainable long-term training plan, that goes a long way. “One thing we didn’t measure – and I really wish we had – was the psychology of the two groups,” says Winwood. “The training culture in the strongman group was phenomenal. They palpably felt that they were part of something special; they worked hard and bonded really well as a group. We didn’t see that in the traditional training group.”

The following evening, as the commuter trains trundle overhead and my partners and I flip that half-tonne of rubber for the 15th and final time of the night, I feel every bit of the bond Winwood describes. The group at the Commando Temple is made up of salesmen and paramedics, teachers, students and businessmen, but for the 90 minutes we spend together, toiling over the tools of the strongman trade, we are brothers. We are warriors. We are men.
THE 50 BEST & DRUGS FOR
From performance-enhancing supplements to life-improving medications, and every tablet, powder, capsule and tincture in between, drugs don’t always come as prescribed. Our annual audit separates the unlikely panaceas you need from the commonplace placebos you don’t.
01 PrEP
After a long legal to-and-fro, the UK Court of Appeal ruled in November that the burden of funding this HIV preventative lies with the NHS, striking a possibly deadly blow against the disease. Already available to buy online, it’s the RX to end Aids.
CLASS B

02 MODAFINIL
Touted by hipsters as a ‘nootropic’ (AKA smart pill), this narcolepsy drug boosts mental performance, say scientists at Oxford Uni. Just don’t overdo it. After-effects can include anxiety and the urge to brag about your fixed-gear bike.
CLASS C

03 TALTZ
Psoriasis – itchy, red patches on the skin – is about as welcome as a certain president. An 80mg injection of this freshly FDA-approved drug soothes the most common form, plaque psoriasis. If only all irritants were so easily cured, eh?
CLASS B

04 GLYCINE
Taken before bed this amino acid encourages a restful night and helps build lean muscle mass and speed recovery while you slumber. According to supplements peddlers Myprotein, sales rose by 500% in 2016, so don’t be caught snoozing.
CLASS B

05 OPTYGEN
Rhodiola rosea and mushroom cordyceps sinensis are the star players in this performance enhancer. As well as aiding oxygen transfer and lactic acid clearance, it reduces mid-race cortisol levels by 26%, according to South Dakota State University.
CLASS A

06 PSilocybin
A recent study at the University of New Mexico linked therapy using this natural psychedelic compound found in certain shrooms with significant positive outcomes in the treatment of alcohol addiction. Sounds like magic.
CLASS B

07 PYCNOGENOL
A shot in the arm for those not keen on needles, this extract taken from the bark of pine trees is swallowed in tablet form. A study in the journal Phytotherapy Research found it can cut the risk of type 2 diabetes and stroke.
CLASS B

08 ASPIRIN
You recognise it from the morning after the night before, but aspirin is actually an all-round curative, with the US Preventive Services Task Force advising that a daily dose cuts your risk of contracting colorectal cancer. Cheers to that.
CLASS B

09 LITAGLUITIDE
This hormone-mimicking diabetes drug slows the progress of kidney disease by 22%, according to the University of Erlangen-Nurnberg in Germany, which in turn cuts cardiovascular complaints.
CLASS B

10 VITAMIN K2
Another reason to eat your greens. Already an ally against prostate cancer, the MCG Research Institute at Augusta Uni are picking over the results of a 2016 trial, in the hope of confirming that it helps reduce lipid levels in the blood.
CLASS B

11 MONTMORENCY CHERRY
Wave goodbye to DOMS. The Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition report that dosing before and after an intense session reduced muscle catabolism and inflammatory stress, for faster post-gym recovery.
CLASS B

THE 25 MOST BENEVOLENT HIGHS
Gym bag wonders, preventative pills and ‘celebratory’ capsules: meet your curative chemistry set

MH DRUG CLASSIFICATION
Class A Athletic performance-enhancer
Class B Medicinal milestone
Class C Biohacking brain-trainer
Unclassified Tomorrow’s cure

MENSHEALTH.CO.UK
LEUCINE
As part of the holy trinity of BCAAs, leucine’s muscle-building benefits are famous. But the journal Trends in Pharmacological Sciences reports it also helps cut bodyweight and up the metabolism of fats and glucose – while maintaining muscle mass. Amen.
CLASS A

FEVIPIPRANT
Having to reach for your inhaler minutes away from smashing a new PB is frustrating. Researchers at the Uni of South Florida claim this drug will cut asthma-related complications, including fatalities, by a quite frankly breath-taking 66%.
CLASS A

COCOA
A valid excuse to add a tbsp to your morning pats – a meta-analysis of 19 studies by Brown University found cocoa flavanols are adept at boosting cardiometabolic health. And the occasional square of dark chocolate bestowed the same benefits.
CLASS B

NAD+
Natty acronyms aside, nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide is now in its second stage of human trials, the first of which backed a Harvard Med study and linked it to a reversal of cellular ageing. Growing old might finally have met its match.
UNCLASSIFIED

MDMA
Ecstasy is gaining clout as a way to treat PTSD, thanks to several US and UK studies. It isn’t the euphoria that helps, but the ability to talk (and talk) it out. Though any meaningful progress is still unlikely to be made at 4.30am in the corner of a club.
CLASS C

Melatonin
The best weapon in your fight against sleepless nights, taking 3mg of melatonin nightly over a year also cut test subjects’ body fat by up to 9% in a recent Clinical Endocrinology journal study, while increasing lean mass by nearly 6%.
CLASS A

Metformin
A cure for death? Not quite, but this wonder drug has been proven to increase lifespan in mice by 40%. Human trials are now underway at California’s Buck Institute, where they believe it may be the world’s first ‘ageing vaccine’.
UNCLASSIFIED

Selenium
Not only does it have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and immunity-boosting properties, but a Swedish study found that when taken with coenzyme Q10, selenium slashes your risk of cardiovascular-related mortality by up to 50%.
CLASS B

Oyster Mushrooms
Athletes from David Haye to the GB America’s Cup team use these to quash their risk of the respiratory infections linked to intense training. Buy from your health-food shop in pill form or grow your own to be a real fun-gi. Sorry...
UNCLASSIFIED

Guglielmo D’Alessandro, MD
Vasalgel is a new contraceptive male gel that blocks sperm without halting ejaculation. It’s a game-changer, and the first male contraceptive since the condom is on the brink of FDA approval. Applied via injection under the scrotum, this reversible procedure blocks sperm without halting ejaculation. Don’t be squeamish about it – it’s just a little prick.

CGRP Antibodies
A new class of antibody promises a pre-emptive strike against migraines. With researchers at Leiden University in the Netherlands and the Mayo Clinic in Phoenix on the case, you can mark this down as one headache taken care of.
UNCLASSIFIED

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A new class of antibody promises a pre-emptive strike against migraines. With researchers at Leiden University in the Netherlands and the Mayo Clinic in Phoenix on the case, you can mark this down as one headache taken care of.
UNCLASSIFIED

Melatonin
The best weapon in your fight against sleepless nights, taking 3mg of melatonin nightly over a year also cut test subjects’ body fat by up to 9% in a recent Clinical Endocrinology journal study, while increasing lean mass by nearly 6%.
CLASS A

Metformin
A cure for death? Not quite, but this wonder drug has been proven to increase lifespan in mice by 40%. Human trials are now underway at California’s Buck Institute, where they believe it may be the world’s first ‘ageing vaccine’.
UNCLASSIFIED

Selenium
Not only does it have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and immunity-boosting properties, but a Swedish study found that when taken with coenzyme Q10, selenium slashes your risk of cardiovascular-related mortality by up to 50%.
CLASS B

Oyster Mushrooms
Athletes from David Haye to the GB America’s Cup team use these to quash their risk of the respiratory infections linked to intense training. Buy from your health-food shop in pill form or grow your own to be a real fun-gi. Sorry...
UNCLASSIFIED

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THE 25 SHAKIEST LOWS

Antagonistic to body and mind, or simply overpriced, don’t prescribe yourself these potions

MH DRUG CLASSIFICATION

Class A Potential health risk
Class B Mental minefield
Class C Could do better
Unclassified No evidence

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26 PMMA
Pink pills stamped with the Superman logo, this dodgier alternative to MDMA is kryptonite to your health. After a spate of festival deaths, a Dutch mental health and addiction centre issued an official ‘red alert’. Stick to the over-priced cider instead.

CLASS A

27 CRYSTAL METH
It’s hard to just dabble in crystal meth, what with it rotting your body from the inside out. Yet its use is on the up again, and linked to increased rates of HIV and other STIs. Don’t be a fool – even Walter White lost out to it in the end.

CLASS A

28 PROBIOTICS
Sadly for wellness hipsters, the Universities of California and St Louis have joined the dissenters claiming there isn’t enough evidence around gut bacteria to justify the health claims. Probiotic pills suddenly feel harder to swallow.

UNCLASSIFIED

29 KETAMINE
Like stonewash denim, special K is back, with the tabloids claiming it as a migraine cure. The original Uni of Chicago study, though, gives it only a 50% chance of success. As it also definitely causes amnesia and heart problems, best leave it in the past.

CLASS A

30 VALIUM
Addiction charity The Bridge Project suggests 250,000 people in the UK are developing dependencies on mood stabilisers such as Valium. DrugWise calls the overprescription of such drugs a “public health disaster”. A far from tranquil prospect.

CLASS B

31 TRAMADOL
Pro cyclists’ use of this painkiller has caused controversy, but after 33 civilian deaths from abuse of the drug in Northern Ireland alone last year, moves to get it upgraded from Class C to A status are now slogging slowly uphill.

CLASS A

32 BOTOX
We don’t imagine Botox has a major spot in your grooming routine. But apparently UK men are signing up to have it injected into their nether regions with a view to giving scrotum wrinkles the sack. And they’re paying £3000 for the pleasure. It’s nuts.

UNCLASSIFIED

33 FLAKKA
‘N-bomb’ made headlines after an Aussie backpacker took the drug, had a paranoid episode and was found dead two weeks later. Drug experts Talk To Frank say an average dose of the psychedelic is just 0.0001g, making an accidental overdose terrifyingly easy.

CLASS A

34 PARACETAMOL
The NHS spends £87 million per year on the analgesic, which is a pity since a Cochrane Library review found it’s basically useless. The review stated that for almost all users, paracetamol is no better than taking a placebo. Aspirin, anyone?

CLASS C

35 NBOMe
Aspirin, anyone? It’s no better than a Cochrine Library review found it’s basically useless.

UNCLASSIFIED

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THE CAMPAIGNER
PROF FIONA MEASHAM
Co-founder of drugs charity The Loop and professor of criminology at Durham University

THE PSYCHIATRIST
DR ADAM WINSTOCK
Consultant psychiatrist and founder of the Global Drugs Survey

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MENSHEALTH.CO.UK
**CLASS A**

**DMT**
Nicknamed 'businessman’s lunch' because of the short, intense high it gives when smoked, the Global Drugs Survey says use of DMT is on the up. The seizures associated with big doses mean this hallucinogen is not a safe replacement for your trip to Pret.

**ISOTONIC DRINKS**
The UK sports-drink industry is worth £260m a year, but the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* found that just drinking water when thirsty was enough to maximise cyclists’ performance. Pour us a bottle of your finest tap, please.

**FINASTERIDE**
The folically falling are often desperate to regain their hirsute glory. Which is where Finasteride comes in. Sadly, Pharmacotherapy journal found the baldness-battling drug’s side effects include ‘sexual dysfunction’. Just shave it off, man.

**CARFENTANIL**
Created to sedate elephants and banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention, opioid carfentanil will get you mashed – if you order it from China, where it’s still legal. The DEA calls it the world’s most 'potent commercial opioid'. Best avoid.

**AYAHUASCA**
The Amazonian psychedelic is trendy with gap-year kids from Islington looking to go ‘the full Brice Parry’. Recent deaths – including a fatal allergic reaction – suggest that finding yourself isn’t always painless.

**NIOTROUS OXIDE**
According to the Global Drugs Survey, newly illegal nitrous oxide is now the world’s seventh most popular drug. Which is no laughing matter since 10% of users have reported concerns about their mental health.

**LISDEX-AMFETAMINE**
A nervous-system stimulant used to treat binge-eating and ADHD, this phenethylamine and amphetamine 'prodrug' has just been banned under WADA’s 2017 guidelines. Which is bad news for overweight athletics fans.

**PIRACETAM**
Another nootropic. In 2016, the FDA ruled piracetam could no longer be sold as a dietary supplement after a review found its benefits are mild at best – unless you’re already in cognitive decline. Your post-lunch slump doesn’t count.

**GSH**
This supp’s active ingredient, glutathione, fights cell-damaging toxins. However, Oregon State Uni found the useful compounds are largely lost when broken down in the gut. N-acetyl cysteine tablets are more efficiently absorbed.

**PROTON PUMP INHIBITORS**
This heartburn medicine is one of the most commonly prescribed drugs, but research from Stanford University and others have linked it to a raised risk of heart attack, dementia, kidney disease and stroke. Ask your GP.

**CARFENTANIL**
LSD in pill form.

**ADDERALL**
An amphetamine gaining ground as a work aid, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health has linked Adderall to a rise in depression, bipolar disorder and cardiovascular issues, making its users possibly the most attentive men in A&E.

**2C-B**
The Global Drugs Survey reports that users of this synthetic cannabinoid are 30 times more likely to need emergency treatment than those using regular skunk. A Northern Ireland party-goer reportedly “tried to eat the pavement” after taking it.

**NACHO-MORPHINE**
On WADA’s 2017 naughty list, this opioid analgesic is three times as potent as morphine but just as addictive, side effects include respiratory difficulties, itching and nausea. Less *Chariots of Fire*, more *Trainspotting*. A nervous-system stimulant used to treat binge-eating and ADHD, this phenethylamine and amphetamine 'prodrug' has just been banned under WADA’s 2017 guidelines. Which is bad news for overweight athletics fans.

**ISOTONIC DRINKS**
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Anarchist. Child psychologist. Professional wrestler. Jeff 'The Snowman' Monson is many things, the latest of which happens to be Russia's new 'youth ambassador' and confidant to one all-American cage fighter become Russia's most powerful and controversial sportsman? MH travels to Moscow to find out.
BE IT IN POLITICS, BUSINESS OR THE OCTAGON, MONSON WON'T SHY FROM A FIGHT.
It is 6pm on a December weeknight in central Moscow. The Russian capital’s glitzy promenades throng with wealthy gentlemen in velvet; well-manicured women in fur cling to their arms. The thermometer reads -15°C as MMA legend and A-list Russo-American celebrity Jeff Monson lumbers into the lobby of the city’s plushest shopping centre.

Stooping at the glass entrance, he scans the crowds outside. The 46-year-old from Minnesota — whose career has seen him win three gold FILA World Grappling Championships and a haul of ADCC and IBJJF titles — is an 18-stone sack of contorted muscles, inoperable bone injuries and painful soft-tissue contusions. Once upon a time he was considered to be among the best cage fighters in the world. Now, he’s contemplating how best to exit a press conference organised in his honour — to mark his appearance on Russia’s version of Dancing with the Stars — without attracting too much media attention.

Pulling a cap over a clean-shaven pate, hewn with quasi-anarchist tattoo art and scars from years of bare-knuckle punches, Monson assesses the gridlocked traffic near the Kremlin with a glacial scowl. Only 10 minutes earlier he was ably performing a complex rumba routine with his dance partner for a horde of TV executives. Now he’s late for a meet-and-greet with dissident diplomats from the exiled government of Palestine, just one of many diplomatic appointments he has undertaken since renouncing the US and setting up camp in the former USSR.

In the eyes of some states (including his homeland) the kind of soiree that Jeff Monson has planned tonight is tantamount to an endorsement of terrorism. It’s enough to get the average Joe deported by Uncle Sam. But Monson cares little. As a committed anarchist and communist, Monson — who fights as The Snowman — has fast ascended the ladder of Soviet celebrity to become one of Russia’s most powerful sportsmen. In the process, he has initiated his own Cold War.

ON THIN ICE

MH was invited to meet and spend time with Jeff Monson in Moscow over two days at the end of 2016 as he readied for the final fight of his colourful career.
Eventually, the pull of the octagon became too powerful to resist. After competing in several large-scale MMA shows, including the Abu Dhabi Combat Cup, Monson decided to pursue a fighter’s life and in 2000 signed a contract with the UFC. It was in these days that Monson earned his nickname after beating four Brazilian fighters in a row. The Brazilians dubbed him ‘The Snowman’ because he was white, compact and gathered more and more momentum as the contest went on. The momentum didn’t stop there. Over the next seven years, Monson won numerous medals – notably at the ADCC World Wrestling Championships, FILA Grappling World Championships, Pan-American Jiu-Jitsu Championships and IBJJF Jiu-Jitsu Championships. In 2006, he even had a shot at the UFC World Heavyweight title, narrowly losing on a technical decision after five rounds.

Shortly thereafter, Monson’s latent beef with the US administration became increasingly public. His career was taking him to different third world countries – not least Brazil – where he was appalled by the poverty he witnessed. Meanwhile, the credit crunch was beginning to turn the screw on ordinary Americans. Seeing big banks and corporate institutions as the culprits, Monson fell in with an anarchist group and faced down riot police at the 2008 Republican National Convention. That same year he spray-painted an anarchy symbol on the Washington State Capitol building and was charged with malicious vandalism.

Monson’s stats prove he’s not to be trifled with, broken legs and all.

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Despite multiple surgeries, Monson does not believe in ‘recovery days’ and IBJJF Jiu-Jitsu Championships. In 2006, he even had a shot at the UFC World Heavyweight title, narrowly losing on a technical decision after five rounds.

It is a befuddling trajectory, but then, very little about Jeff Monson is predictable. Monson talks fervently about both the plight of children in eastern Ukraine and the sports academy he’s helped them found as a youth ambassador to the Russian Communist Party. In areas where the local economy is dire, he explains, there is little for young men to do; the stark alternative to sport is war. By promoting wrestling, he reasons, Monson gives these men a means to work out stress within defined boundaries. As he dives into this topic, Monson’s syncopation remains soft as he delivers diatribes against the US. He is unrelenting yet considerate and humble. He is at once a gentle hulking giant and an intimidatingly eloquent orator. Monson’s love affair with Russia began on 20 November 2011, a moment he recalls on our journey to his next appointment. Jet-lagged and disheveled, he left the US to fight Fedor Emelianenko, a heavyweight mixed martial artist widely considered to be the best fighter of his generation. When Monson took him on before 20,000 spectators in Moscow, Emelianenko was one of the most feared men in the sport. The spectacle that unfolded was beyond brutal. For 35 minutes, Emelianenko struck at Monson, using a powerful roundhouse kick to break his leg, targeting the area of the calf where the sciatic nerve is closest to...
the skin, before pounding at his face and torso like an overzealous chef tenderising an octopus. After hearing his bone snap, Monson fought on stubbornly until the referee declared a unanimous victory in Emelianenko’s favour. As Monson was carried from the ring, Vladimir Putin stepped in to congratulate the victor. Putin was booed by the full-capacity stadium. The spectators wanted less of the president, and more of Monson. “They reckon it’s the first time Putin’s ever been booed in public,” Monson says. A black-belt jiu-jitsu enthusiast himself, Putin was immediately impressed by Monson’s resolve. “He called me in my hotel room afterwards,” Monson says. “I was lying there in pain, with a splint on my leg, when Putin told me I have a Russian soul because I never give up. Then he told me that I’d always be welcome in Russia.”

This presidential stamp of approval placed Monson on route to mega-stardom. He has since led a procession to the mausoleum of Lenin alongside the chairman of Russia’s favourite football club, AC Milan.]

For many souls, such occupations would prove a distraction from the day job. But Monson remains first and foremost a fighter, dedicated to maintaining his principal weapon for change: his body. When we arrive back at Monson’s hotel that evening, he hits the gym where he works out until the early hours. Following that, he returns to his suite to continue an insomniac lifting session, swinging a 32kg kettlebell until well after 5am.

COLD RESOLVE

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The next morning when he is awoken, Monson feigns surprise that fellow guests might have been able to hear every rep of his workout. In his room – which is informally referred to as The Monson Suite – he kneels on the floor, elbows pivoted at right-angles on the bed, and stretches the back which has suffered years of irreparable damage during high contact cage-tussles. “It’s just the lower part of my spine,” groans Monson, as he pushes his diaphragm upward. “It’s all these aeroplanes,” he says, explaining that he knelt in the aisle for the entire duration of a recent trans-Atlantic flight because sitting caused too much pain. He passionately. “If wrestling in Palestine did some good, then sure, I’d go tomorrow,” he says. “I’d set up a school, just like I did in the Ukraine. You get it. No problem.”

Playing the Field

Monson isn’t the first sportsman to get political. These five got it right

01 Arnold Schwarzenegger
As governor of California, the former Mr Universe passed the first greenhouse emissions cap in the United States.

02 Bill Bradley
A former democratic senator for New Jersey, Bradley won two championships with the Knicks and an Olympic gold medal for basketball.

03 George Weah
Named African Football Player of the Century in 1996, the Ballon d’Or winner used his success as a springboard to run for president of Liberia.

04 Pelé
It was a natural fit when Pelé served as Brazil’s sports minister in 1995, later stepping up to take on the role of Unesco Goodwill Ambassador.

05 Jesse Ventura
The WWE Hall of Famer hung up the spandex in 1990 to serve as Brooklyn Park mayor, before becoming governor of Minnesota in 1998.
"I DON'T DO ANY CARDIO. I JUST LIFT. I EAT STUPID STUFF. I TRAIN OLD-SCHOOL."

He may be a pacifist by nature, but Monson's body is a powerful weapon.
A life in the ring leaves marks on the body. And while he can’t remember how he got them all, Monson carries more than most...
Ukrainian border with Russia. He then flew to Oregon where he took on Warren Brooks, a man with a weight advantage of more than 27kg. After just one minute of over-time, Monson dragged Brooks into a rear-naked choke to score another win.

Most recently, Monson brought his talents to bear in an unofficial capacity, shaking down a fight promoter who Monson believes purposefully scuppered his grand exit from the sport by fluffing what was to be a light warm-up match. Monson had been scheduled to fight a native opponent in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg. Shortly before the fight, Monson suffered a bicep tear. Instead of pulling out, the promoter persuaded Monson to take part in a ‘show match’. His opponent was to be briefed of Monson’s condition, therein allowing the two men to explain the nature of the injury to the crowd, perform a sequence showcasing both their abilities, and then return for a re-fight once Monson had recovered. But it seems the promoter neglected to inform the other fighter. Monson does not speak Russian and his opponent flattened The Snowman immediately. Afterwards, when Monson spotted the shady promoter exiting the establishment, an encounter he gleefully describes as a “bitch slapping”.

**WAR AND PEACE**

Unscrupulous promoters are not the only thing standing between Monson and his final foray in the ring. After a drawn-out negotiation, Monson’s last fight, which had been scheduled for the end of 2016 in Ukraine and had warranted MH’s presence, is called off. Unfortunately or not these are compatible is open to question. Yet with the finalisation of his citizenship nearing, Monson thinks it sensible to quit “fighting for communism in the ring [and] transition into activism – or even involvement in politics, proper, if the people want it”.

One thing the Russian people clearly do want is more Jeff Monson, be that Monson the vicious and largely victorious MMA fighter, or Monson the dancing bear of primetime television. Monson admits to having “adored” his time on *Dancing with the Stars* and several primetime series are now on the table. Major networks have pounced survival shows and even cooking ideas. A Jeff Monson-styled sportswear range is being discussed. Unofficial bids have been tendered to produce a Jeff Monson biography, while a restaurant conglomerate has come forward with tentative plans for a Jeff Monson restaurant chain. Even as he frets about his final fight, Monson is already thinking about the menu. And besides light entertainment and dining franchises, Monson’s role as a political pundit on *Russia Today* has recently been formalised, making him a contracted talking head for the Russian government’s latest media project.

At present, it is unclear how the final chapter of Monson’s storied career will pan out. But whether he exits the sport with a glorious win or bows out defeated, he will leave a highly controversial legacy in his slipstream. He is sui generis among fighters of any discipline. He enjoys a greater regard from Russia than all but a handful of his fellow Americans. He has a future in another world, literally and metaphorically. Monson need not be worried by the grubby end game that faces the majority of ex-pro wrestlers.

As we cram into a taxi – Monson lying across the entire back seat to ease the pressure on his back – the wrestler becomes suddenly reflective. “I’ve got a lot of things to figure out,” he says in response to a question about his future. “But the next fight that faces me is a political fight. A fight for Russia. I’m wrestling for Russia. Why am I wrestling for Russia? Well, right now, Russia needs a wrestler on its side.”

Then, during out last moments together, a striking development occurs. Alexander Emelianenko – a hirsute and heavily tattooed bruiser, who happens to be the younger brother of the man who pulverised Monson in front of Putin – enters negotiations. A showdown appears inevitable. Monson, no doubt, will be the perfect opponent.

Then there’s Monson’s unique interest in politics. He has declared his support for pacifism, communism and anarchism at every juncture of his career. Whether the nose-dive in diplomatic relations between Russia and Ukraine doesn’t exactly complement the ticket proposed by the promoter, the event collapses.

News of his final fight’s cancellation hits Monson with what he terms “slow-burning rage and raw disappointment, combined with a resolve to train even harder”. To an outsider, it may seem that Monson is desperate to leave the sport in a blaze of glory. It’s a strange situation. In the aftermath of the cancellation, two fight promoters tender three alternative opponents. Monson would bank a seven-figure sum of over-time, Monson dragged Brooks into a rear-naked choke to score another win.

“Tell me who you think is worthy of a career-capping fight. None are worthy of a career-capping fight. The nose-dive in diplomatic relations between Russia and Ukraine doesn’t exactly complement the ticket proposed by the promoter, the event collapses.”

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Monson would bank a seven-figure sum simply for stepping into the octagon with one, but as far as Monson is concerned, none are worthy of a career-capping fight. “All I’m offered are lamb-to-the-slaughter type wrestlers. It’d make massive money, but I’m a communist and don’t do theatre. I need a guy who will throw everything he’s got at this.” But with his fights often taking place against men at least 10 years his junior, and with many recurring ailments, Monson is running out of time as he awaits the perfect opponent.

Then there’s Monson’s unique interest in politics. He has declared his support for pacifism, communism and anarchism at every juncture of his career. Whether...
Regardless of how clean you live your life today, no man reaches the onset of early middle age without having endured a few scrapes along the way – whether it be too many hours at the desk or too many drinks at the bar. No matter. We have compiled a definitive list of quick-fix antidotes to a gloriously negligent youth. No regrets, now
Reader Advisory
Side-effects may include increases in energy, virility and vigour. Please use responsibly.
01-05. Career Anxiety
OK, a decade at the office coalface can't hold a candle to 10 years down an actual mine (see: Zoolander) but work stress can feel as crushing as a tunnel collapse. Scientists in Canada found career perfectionists have a 51% increased risk of early death compared to their laissez-faire peers. So unearth a healthier working week.

07-10. Social Media Disorder
With the Snooper’s Charter passing into law and potential employers scanning Facebook before they’ve even read your CV, it's time to start giving serious thought to erasing your online footprint. We called on the expertise of internet oracle and social media solicitor Yair Cohen (internetlawcentre.co.uk) to offer his guide to going the full Jason Bourne.

Cheat Days
Unless you’ve spent the last decade eating cleaner than a Michael McIntyre punch line, it’s likely those treats you let slide will have accumulated in the form of visceral fat behind your abdominals, putting pressure on your organs and increasing your risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Fortunately, experts at Japan’s Tenshi College have discovered that a kind of African pepper called malagueta is adept at breaking down this fatty tissue. Pick up a jar online (£4.50 souschef.co.uk) and add it liberally to everything. You'll make losing weight infinitely more palatable.

Be antisocial
Delete all social media. Honestly, your 52 Twitter followers won’t mind. “There’s a difference between deactivating an account and deleting it,” says Cohen. If you’re unsure, accountkiller.com can help you put two in the back of oversharing’s head.

Ship returns
Those irritating ‘bespoke’ ads popping up on every page are based on your browsing history. Start by scanning your email inbox, searching the words ‘password confirmation’ to dig up everything you have ever signed up for. Then erase each account.

Find yourself
Old colleagues/girlfriends/football mates are hosting forgotten photos of you. Sites like imageraider.com can help you find anyone using your photo without permission. A polite email should be all it takes, but if that doesn’t work...

Disappear
“A person can claim his own image under the European Human Rights Act,” says Cohen. Best act fast on this one, then. Send a simple copyright notice (Google can help you draft this) to the person holding that photo of you balancing a tray of Jägerbombs.
11-14. Caffeine Addiction

Ever wondered what 365 pre-office espressos do to your body? How about 3650-plus over 10 years? “Regular caffeine use stimulates the adrenal glands,” nutritionist Alice Mackintosh explains. “Over time this can lead to anxiety and palpitations.” For a morning energy boost that won’t give you the shakes, try swapping your jumpleads for a selection of the below:

Omega man
Add this to your water first thing for a hit of bio-available omega-3 and 6, both proven to support brain health and dampen workday anxiety. **Equi London Fundamental** £55 equilondon.com

Vit don’t quit
Ideal for men with no time to waste, these tablets are focused on increasing mental stamina with the full spectrum of B vitamins, plus magnesium to promote healthy sleep function. **Swisse Ultiplus Energy B+** £20 boots.com

Branching out
As well as knitting together new muscle, branched-chain amino acids are adept at fighting fatigue and raising endurance – even if the heaviest thing you’re lifting this morning is your laptop. **MHP BCAA Energy 10x** £15 allstarhealth.com

Acid trip
These tabs hit you with a high dose of pantothenic acid, a B vitamin shown to support mental performance and increase energy usage on the fly – with no need to brave the Starbucks queue. **Solgar Panthothenic Acid** £9.30 solgar.co.uk

15. Inner Earbud Infection

According to Dr Tim Woodman, medical director of Bupa UK, the best way to restore your hearing after a decade of abuse due to deafening music is to, erm, get better headphones: “To prevent further damage, invest in a good pair with noise-cancelling tech. They’ll block out the sounds you don’t want to hear, meaning you won’t have to crank up the volume to eardrum-shattering levels just to enjoy it.” MH recommends Bose’s QuietComfort headphones, which create an acoustic seal around your ear that will cancel out everything from office chatter to the Monday morning din in your local gym. Handy whether you’re listening to music, or simply want to escape inside a miniature igloo of calm. **Bose QuietComfort 25** £250 bose.co.uk
16. **Squinting At Angry Birds**

If extended screen time has taken its toll, a pint of Guinness come 6pm will work its dark magic on your eyesight. Researchers at the University of Western Ontario found that the antioxidants in dark ales and stouts protect against mitochondrial damage in your eyes, while Boston Uni found moderate beer consumption was associated with a lower incidence of visual impairment than teetotalism. Which is a perfect excuse for a weekend jar or two of the black stuff.

18-20. **The Hunchback Of 9-5**

A decade spent chained to your desk is a threat to health and safety that’s almost on a par with Donald Trump’s newly granted access to the nuclear codes. And it’s not just your back suffering, either. Your chest and hips are also in dire need of a reboot. As head physiotherapist at Kinect Health (kinecthealth.co.uk), Neil Meekings has made sedentary offices his lifelong enemy, with the following three-move solution the first line of defence. Use it at least once a week to undesk yourself in a hurry.

**KETTLEBELL TOWEL HAMMER CURL**

3 SETS OF 15 REPS

“People don’t realise how much input underworked biceps have on tightening the muscles in your upper back and shoulders,” says Meekings. “This take on kettlebell hammer curls benefits both bis and back by igniting the nervous system, helping both your scapula and your chest’s tense pec minor to relax.”

Loop a towel through a heavy kettlebell and grab each end (A). Keeping your spine straight, curl the weight up, with your elbows pressed to your sides and wrists facing in (B). Pull the towel loop apart at the top, then lower to cross off your first rep.

**HAMSTRING TUCK STRETCH**

3 SETS OF 60 SECONDS

Years of sitting with your knees bent has shortened your IT band, putting you tight hamstrings at risk of tearing when you need to push them mid-workout. But there’s no need to quit the day job; instead, add this move to the start of every workout to engage your posterior fascial chain for elastic-like strengthening.

Stand with your feet shoulder-width, hands laced behind your back (A). Bend forward at the hips, tucking your chin and raising your hands overhead (B). Hold for as long as you can before slowly returning to the start position. Try not to fall over.

**BREATHING SQUAT**

1 SET OF 15 REPS

Hunching over a keyboard for years on end has played havoc with your lungs, setting you on the path to a Darth Vader rasp. Meekings’ breathing squats will increase your aerobic capacity faster than any HIIT session by strengthening the respiratory system. Warm up with a few light sets, then add this move to your weekly legs day.

Go weightless (A) or pick a dumbbell that’s not too taxing and do a squat, inhaling as you lower (B), then exhaling as you push up. Pause at the top and take three deep breaths; this opens the lungs, forcing the chest to engage. Now breathe a deep sigh of relief.

17. **Heart Breaks**

Barring diet and exercise, the best antidote for cardiovascular conundrums may well be sleeping it off. According to research published by the American Medical Association, three weekly post-lunch siestas will reduce your risk of heart disease death by 37%.
21. Smartphone Neck

Ever since the Nokia 3310 came on the scene you’ve been craning your neck forward to peer at texts, Tinder profiles and your progress on Snake 2. If the last time you looked up from the screen Keane were in the charts, now’s the moment to dial down phone-to-face time. Meekings recommends working through this chin tuck whenever you get the chance. Just 60 seconds each side will help to elongate the vertebra and free up the smaller muscle groups in your neck to prevent poor posture. Your Instagram fans will see the difference.

22. Lower Back Lifting Pain

That twinge you’ve had for years? Now’s the time to put the final nail in its coffin. And we’re not talking about acupuncture. “If you’ve tried massage, foam rolling and reducing the weights, LBP is likely down to incorrect lifting technique,” says Meekings. “Deadlifts are the key culprit. Try looking up with your eyes instead of raising your head as you rip the barbell off the ground. It switches on the posterior chain to give you extra oomph without the risk of slipping a disk.” You’ll be pain-free inside a week. Well, discounting the DOMS.

23. Carnivorous Habits

Cancer lurks in the periphery of every man’s conscience, especially after a cumulative decade’s worth of 12oz ribeyes and charred barbecued sausages. The answer, happily, may well be to hit the carbs. Researchers at Flinders University have touted cooked-and-cooled potatoes as a way to inhibit the formation of carcinogenic cells in your gut. Which sounds like a thumbs up to your weekly steak night.
**24-26. Fitness Fatigue**

To keep you looking and feeling fresh when you have more years’ worth of workouts under your weight belt than you care to remember, your gym bag needs to contain more than just deodorant and a protein bar. Here are our picks to stop you losing face.

**01**

**Damaged skin**

Moving from cold streets to sweaty gym – not to mention all the extra showers – has worn out your skin as much as your body. Adam Brady of Ruffians barbers advises ditching products that use alcohol and preservatives. Ruffians’ exfoliant is made from willow bark alongside vitamin C to repair damaged tissue. You’ll scrub up nicely.

*Ruffians Daily Facial Scrub*  
£9.95 ruffians.co.uk

**02**

**Tired hair**

Moving to the city might have jumpstarted your career, but it could give your barnet a premature P45. “City living and shampoo containing sulphates strip hair of protective oils,” says Brady. Regain your lustre with a moisturising shampoo that removes impurities while pampering your mop with the manly essence of ginseng and gingko. Because you’re worth it.

*Maintaining Shampoo*  
£7.95 ruffians.co.uk

**03**

**Callused hands**

A rough grip may represent hard graft in the weights room, but greeting your new boss with calluses the size of walnuts is unlikely to make the best first impression. Packed with a fatty-acid emollient in the form of avocado oil and suppleness-restoring shea butter, Kiehl’s intensive moisturiser has you covered.

*Hand Cream 1, Barbell 0*  
Kiehl’s Intensive Treatment  
£21.50 kiehls.co.uk

**28. Commuter Brain Fry**

Hours spent in overcrowded train carriages needn’t be lost time. “Try reframing your commute,” says therapist Akbar Jamil (cognitivepractice.com). “Dedicate that time to doing something you love.” A Social Science and Medicine review found men who read for 30 minutes per day live an average of two years longer. Heinz Helle’s *Euphoria* (£12 amazon.co.uk) – in which a group of friends return from a ski weekend to find the world has ended – is our essential read.

**27. Marathon Excuses**

According to research published in the *Journal of Science in Medicine in Sport*, the solution to years of limping over the finish line is to quite literally walk it off. The German study found that walking one minute for every 1.5 miles of running significantly reduces muscle pain and fatigue, which in turn curbs your odds of developing ‘runner’s knee’. Best of all, their researched showed that runners who took these short breaks didn’t finish later than those who kept an even pace throughout the race. Your shot at a PB won’t be stopped in its tracks.

**29. Full-Body Burnout**

Going hammer and tongs at your CrossFit box year after year may have put you in good stead with the ladies, but overtraining and fatigue will zap testosterone and sex drive faster than the time it takes you to inform a new date that, yes, you have been working out. Luckily, research published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology* points to the cheeseboard as your saviour, with the useful fats in roquefort boosting both your T levels and libido. Just brush your teeth before going out, won’t you?
30. **Just One More Episode**

If you’ve been bingeing on boxsets since *The Sopranos*, your long-term TV addiction has likely had a knock-on effect on your health, with a study from Central Michigan University finding getting stuck into your favourite show encourages “relational aggression” – essentially throwing your weight around like Paulie Walnuts with a bad hangover. To stop a 50-minute indulgence turning into a square-eyed evening, David Brudö, founder of mental wellbeing app Remente, suggests leaving your phone in another room, with the alarm set to go off when the programme ends. A simple audio cue and change in your environment should be enough to bring a real wise guy back to his senses.

31-32. **Jar Head**

You wouldn’t have gotten through the last decade or so without it, but overdoing the sauce is notorious as a contributor to everything from liver damage to heart complications. Here we raise a glass to guilt-free tippling.

**Friday nights**

Rather than swapping every second drink for a glass of water – great in theory, but unlikely to happen – the key to limiting the damage could be less about what you put in your glass, but rather the glass itself. According to intel from the University of Bristol, drinking from a straight rather than curved glass causes us to slow our drinking speed, reducing overall intake and giving the body a headstart at metabolising all that sweet, sweet booze.

**Saturday mornings**

A Saturday hangover may be tradition, but there’s no reason you should suffer unnecessarily. Jittery researchers from the National University of Singapore discovered a double dose of coffee the morning after the party before not only blows the cobwebs away, but reduces your risk of death from liver cirrhosis by 66%. Confine your caffeine habit to weekends for an espresso ticket to reclaiming your mornings.

33-35. **Pavement Pounding**

Getting into running was the best thing you ever did for your fitness, but 10 years later, your feet have taken a PB-threatening pounding. Poorly fitting trainers place the foot under tension, which in turn makes the calf muscles and achilles tendon overwork to compensate for the lack of stability, leading to painful tears. “Poorly fitting trainers place the foot under tension, which in turn makes the calf muscles and achilles tendon overwork to compensate for the lack of stability, leading to painful tears,” explains Emma Kirk-Odunubi, technician at Profeet (profeet.co.uk). To stay on track come race day, Kirk-Odunubi suggests a professional fitting, leaving a thumb’s width between the tip of your big toe and the end of the shoe. To ease aches, place the centre of your foot on a step, then press forward. Keep the calf extended with your toes at a 45-degree angle to your shin. Hold for 30 seconds. Happy trails.
As vocations go, few come more dangerous, taxing, multi-skilled and testosterone-fuelled than that of the lumberjack. Now the best are going pro. MH travelled to the Stihl Timbersports 2016 World Championship in Stuttgart to meet a new breed of athlete coming out of the woodwork.

WORDS BY DOMINIC BLISS - PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHIE HOPSON
But with earplugs firmly inserted, the 5500 spectators watching him on stage in Stuttgart’s Porsche Arena are unperturbed by the noise. Instead, their attention is fixed firmly on the demonstrable power of Wynyard’s 4ft-long, 30kg, mechanical bludgeon, as its teeth accelerate from 0-190mph in less than a second, making short work of a 46cm-thick tree trunk.

This is hot-saw racing, an event that has been described as “a combination of a combustible rock’n’roll show and drag racing”. A thin Plexiglas screen is all that separates Wynyard and his souped-up tool from the audience. It is a seemingly meagre but nonetheless necessary precaution; should the chain snap while operating at this speed, fragments of it would fly like bullets.

Hot-saw racing is the grand finale of the 2016 Stihl Timbersports World Championship. It is a weekend packed with sweat-soaked and testosterone-spiked events, all performed at deafening volume, in which competitors from 22 nations chop, hack and surgically scythe their way through a small forest’s worth of timber. By doing so, each hopes to carve out a slice of the not insignificant €70,000 purse in the process.
Rewarding a combination of power and precision, ‘wood chopping’ – as the sport is known among enthusiasts – requires total-body strength as competitors wield axes and saws with incredible efficiency across six individual and team events. These include: the stock saw (chainsawing two slices from a horizontally mounted, 40cm diameter log); the single buck (cutting a slice of wood off a 46cm horizontal tree trunk with a manual cross-cut saw); and the illustrious hot-saw (racing to slice off three complete ‘cookies’).

The lumberjack lifestyle – featuring long stints in the wild, some serious heavy lifting and an intimate familiarity with weapons of Viking proportions – is ripe for competition. First developed as a way to showcase talent to potential employers on the Australian island of Tasmania, wood chopping has since grown into an unusual sporting phenomenon. Traditionally, lumberjacks would compete at country fairs – now it has gone global. And while Australia and New Zealand dominate, it’s gaining popularity in parts of North America, where ‘Woodsman’ – a grass roots version of the discipline – is now an intercollegiate sport.

AXES TO GRIND

For many competitors, such as New Zealand team member Wynyard, wood chopping has been an integral part of their upbringing. In Wynyard’s case, his father and his grandfather were full-time loggers, felling native kauri and rimu trees on the country’s North Island. Wynyard has been involved in lumberjack sports since before pre-adolescence. Now, a multiple Timbersports champion aged 43, standing at 6ft 4in tall, and weighing in at 140kg, he looks built to dismember tree trunks with startling alacrity.

Backstage, amid the smell of sawdust, deep heat and chainsaw exhaust fumes, the competitors simulate their axe strokes and saw movements. Watching them perform empty-handed, their movements are curiously balletic. Most are built like rugby players. All wear football-style jerseys emblazoned with national colours or sponsors’ logos. Here and there teams huddle together, talking tactics, but most competitors sit alone, sharpening their huge axeheads against whetstones, like warriors preparing to do battle.

Six years ago, at a competition in Australia, Canadian lumberjack Stirling Hart found himself on the wrong end of such an axe, as the scar unwinding from the corner of his eye to his mouth testifies. Hart had been competing in a discipline known as ‘the springboard’ which involves climbing a vertical tree trunk, using flexible platforms wedged into notches, before finally lopping off the top of the trunk. Halfway up, lumberjacks suspend their axes by sticking them into the wood. Stirling’s axe came unstuck, with him clinging to the trunk below.

“I saw the axe fall and there was nothing I could do,” Hart recounts with the measured nonchalance of a man who knows that, had the axe been an inch to the left, he would not be here to tell this story. He shrugs. “Lots of blood and 88 stitches later, here we are. Some of us are the best in the world at what we do, but as in any sport, even the pros can have accidents.”

Surprisingly, wood chopping remains
unregulated by any single governing body. But, like Wynyard, the majority of the competitors have grown up around axes. For many, says Hart, the smell of wood smoke is in their blood. Now 27, Hart was raised in various log cabins in British Columbia, and has been wielding an axe since the age of three. “A big part of growing up was chopping wood,” he says. “I know which kinds of wood burn better; which kinds build houses well. I know the tree surgery business. Anything to do with wood.”

**SPLINTER GROUPS**

The passion may be there, but the sport is not yet established enough for most of the lumber sportsmen to give up their day jobs. In fact, 30-year-old Ohio native and USA team member Matt Cogar is the only person who can be said to be a true professional, having recently abandoned his job as a salesman to embrace the call of the wild. Cogar, his wife and his daughter now live on the small amount of prize money he earns from competitions. This financial pressure, he says, incentivises him. “When you’re a professional woodchopper, the difference is you have to win. If you don’t win, your family won’t eat.”

Cogar spends around 10 hours a week honing his skills, and the same amount of time in the gym. His training is geared toward building strength through endurance. As such, he’ll focus on high-rep, heavy-load CrossFit-style exercises. Kettlebell swings play an essential part in both simulating his axe swing and strengthening his core, with a relentless routine of pull-ups and press-ups rounding out his chest, back and shoulders. Naturally, rotational moves such as Russian twists and cable chops are essential for the power needed to wield the potentially lethal instruments of his sport. Like strongmen, a competitive woodchopper supplements his training by eating as much, and as often, as he can.

The top German lumberjack, Dirk Braun, also spends much of his free time training. After winning the German championships for the eighth time last year, Braun invested €4500 in building a wooden stage in his back garden.

**CHIP & WIN**

09. The British team gets to grips with the single buck event
10. The single block chop. Some athletes wear chainmail socks just in case an axe swings off target
11-12. The crowd-pleasing ‘hot saw’ involves slicing three wedges of wood—or ‘cookies’—at speed
Many of the skills are transferable, but only one sport requires intricate knowledge of a chainsaw motor as well.

Spike Milton is the British team coach. “I’m looking for team players with great hand-eye coordination, power, speed, fast-twitch muscle groups, rhythm, core strength and mental strength,” he says. “And they need a bit of arrogance. They’ve got to have that killer instinct. Plus, they have to know how to look after their chainsaws.”

Back on the stage in Stuttgart, Wynyard’s own chainsaw is at full throttle, spraying clouds of sawdust into the air as he attacks the logs presented to him for dissection. The throbb of the engine makes the air hum as discarded offcuts jump and dance under the vibrations.

To claim the world championship title for his own, Wynyard must place highly in each of the weekend’s individual disciplines, with points from each accumulating in a similar way to the decathlon event in athletics. In the underhand chop (an axe discipline) and the single buck (cutting with a crosscut saw) he scores maximum points. He also fares well in the others, placing third in the standing block chop and fifth in the stock saw. But in the ‘hot saw’ he has Cogar, Hart and a notoriously talented Czech competitor named Martin Komarek with whom to contend.

As the shuddering rattle of Wynyard’s customised chainsaw dies down at the end of this final event, the arena is plunged into silence as the judges reveal the overall scores. Amassing 12 points in the hot saw, and 72 points overall, Wynyard has succeeded in claiming ultimate victory, beating his nearest competitor, Cogar, by nine points. Hart, for his part, places fourth, with 59 points.

As trophies are handed out and brandished overhead by the victorious competitors, Wynyard appears to be so spent that he very nearly drops his off the front of the stage. The huge arms that have spent all weekend swinging biting axes into resilient tree trunks are finally starting to tire. Wynyard’s title has been hard won but – should he wish to make a living out of this growing sport – there will always be another tree to fell, each springing up almost as quickly as he can cut them down. Watching from side stage, it’s clear that, exhausted though they are, this battle between man and nature is exactly what these lumberjacks live for.

With thanks to Stihl GB, stihl.co.uk

CLOSE SHAVE

13-14 In the springboard event, competitors make cuts in the side of the block to hold their boards as they climb the log. Cameras monitor each event closely and judges watch in 100 frames-a-second to check for false starts and infringements.

complete with all the log stands required to practise the various disciplines at home. A former competitive bodybuilder, Braun has also constructed a gym in his basement. With wood chopping events taking place throughout the year, it is vital he maintains his conditioning all year round, although four damaged discs in his back – the combined result of overtraining and the physical demands of working as a lumberjack – have limited what he is able to do. “When I was a bodybuilder it was easier to train,” he says. “Now my body is often in a lot more pain, making it harder to focus on my workouts. I compensate by doing higher reps with lighter weights.”

THE CHAIN GANG

Closer to home, a different problem plagues the UK team. Captain Taff Evans and his teammates mostly hail from local Welsh clubs (Gwynedd, Denbighshire and Powys, as well as Worcestershire) but attracting new recruits is difficult because of the national dominance of rugby.

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A study in the *Journal of Consumer Research* showed that the temperature of the drink we’re holding has emotional power. Participants experiencing ‘heated’ emotions – frustration, guilt, anger – felt notably calmer after grasping a chilled glass. Scientists posit this could help put the brakes on rash decisions by cooling the hot-headed.

For once, avoiding sugar might not be the smartest strategy either. Ohio State University found that people who drank a glass of chilled lemonade showed greater empathy toward others than those on sweeteners. Patience requires mental energy; glucose provides that vim.

So if you suspect your next work meeting might rouse a few tempers, make sure the office fridge is well stocked. But perhaps pop the kettle on, too. You know – in case things really kick off.
The MH SS17 Trend Report

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Male model, TEDx speaker and training pioneer, Roger Frampton is more than just a very pretty face. He claims his movement method changed his life. Now he wants to upgrade yours.

UA: Some people have a plain old training plan. You have a method. Specifically, The Frampton Method (1). Can you describe it in a nutshell?
RF: It’s basically reverse engineering gymnastics. It’s about giving people who are frozen stiff the tools to move like they could when they were kids. In the fitness world muscles are referred to as levers – they literally propel the body. But it’s the other way around; the brain triggers movement in the body, and we move as a result. So my training is about different forms of movement. There’s no need for weights. Weights aren’t bad per se, but there’s so much that your body can do without them.

You had an epiphany of sorts, then?
Yes. Having been training in the gym, I went to a gymnastics class and saw a four-year-old girl doing a perfectly shaped bridge. I couldn’t even get off the floor. I thought: this is crazy, why can’t I do this? Then I began to wonder what I was like, physiologically speaking, as a child. And I did some research and found that all kids in general have this ability. I decided I wanted to get that back.

So you ditched the training gear and opted for a life in Lycra?
Well, not quite. But training my way means you have to think about what you wear. Your clothes can’t restrict you. You’re trying to stretch your body as far as it will go, so a tight pair of shorts won’t help. Something like Orlebar Brown’s Jack shorts (2) are good because they have that give in them. The rest is up to you, but going barefoot is a must.

We’re big fans of Orlebar Brown, but it’s the tailored fit that has always made them so attractive. How does that work with dynamic movements?
I’ve worked with OB for a long time and they’ve always been interested in being active as opposed to just lying on a sun lounger. What’s great about the Jack line is that they have enough flexibility for training but look slicker than most when you’re done sweating.

Is your method really unique?
I started training 14 years ago. Telling a PT you wanted to be a bit slimmer and train without weights was considered weird back then. Guys just wanted to get big. Now it’s a lot more common for men to focus on bodyweight exercises.

How long will it take for the average man to get somewhere approaching proficiency in your style of training?
It takes a few years, but only if you’re consistent with it. At the minute I spend over two hours a day simply stretching. As much as 90% of everything I do is stretching and my strength has gone through the roof because of it.

For someone with less time on their hands, where’s a good place to start?
You want to aim to be able to sit in a deep squat as a resting position. So get your arse to grass, feet forward and knees wider than your hips, for at least 10 minutes (3). It shouldn’t feel like work, it should feel like a rest.

You’ve made clear your aversion to resistance training, but what about running, cycling and HIIT work?
I avoid mindless cardio in favour of doing slow stretches where you become more conscious of what your body is doing. When you’re training slowly you feel the sensations much more acutely; if it feels weird you can correct it. So my advice is to slow down and think about where it hurts. The results will follow.
After challenging local gym members to train without using weights, Frampton now juggles a modelling career with training clients and social media output.

“This year is OB’s 10th anniversary and we wanted to develop the range,” says founder Adam Brown. “We love versatility and these shorts will take you from gym to swim.”

Squatting isn’t just sitting down; it’s sitting back, which makes it a resting position. Hold on to a door frame until you find your balance.

FOOTNOTES

01 After challenging local gym members to train without using weights, Frampton now juggles a modelling career with training clients and social media output.

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At a time when tattoos have never been more mainstream, choosing an artist is less about rebellion and more about taste and curation. Urban Active sought out four very different ink specialists to ask what it’s like to live the brand

How would you describe your style? It’s bold and solid tattooing based around American traditional, with influences from Japanese style, hardcore punk, and western esotericism. I enjoy making tattoos like the ones I have on my own body – tattoos that are readable, bright and will look great in years to come.

How have you developed your style? I have an ever-growing collection of reference books. In the age of Instagram I think it’s important for a tattoo artist to have a strong library of references and not be swayed by this week’s popular style.

Describe a tattooist’s life. I’m at the shop five days a week, but most of my work is custom, so I draw every day before and after work, as well as on my days off. Sometimes I might draw a tattoo for six hours before tattooing it. There’s no downtime with tattooing – I’m always surrounded by it, for better or worse.

How would you describe your typical customer? Being so close to shops such as Supreme and Palace, we definitely get an overflow of those moving from overnight queue to tattoo – all as part of the skater, streetwear movement. My background and interest in punk music and the samples of my work on Instagram definitely brings people with that kind of style through the door, too.

Is the increasing popularity of tattoos a good thing or a bad thing, creatively? Popularity has its up and down sides. On the one hand, more tattoos means more opportunity for creativity. My background and interest in punk music and the samples of my work on Instagram definitely brings people with that kind of style through the door, too. On the other, people are now more assertive about what they want and they want to replicate what they see on social media, rather than create. Often what people see and want recreated won’t work – be that practically or stylistically. It’s my job to try to educate them.

What advice would you give a man considering his first tattoo? I’ve lost count of the number of times I’ve seen some model get tiny writing that won’t be legible within a couple of years. It’s important to understand that as your body ages, a tattoo will settle under the skin and soften. If it’s too small or lacks a solid foundation of black, it will look poor quickly.
How long have you been doing this? At 18 I had an apprenticeship custom-painting cars, so I'd always been drawn to doing my artwork on things. As that interest developed, the ultimate thing to draw on became people. It's actually easier transitioning from fuel tanks to people than it is from paper. Eventually the guy tattooing me suggested I might have a future in it, and now Vagabond's doors have been open for five years.

How did you develop your own style? I've always been more interested in traditional imagery and prefer an all-black aesthetic. There is a romance to classic design. I've refined my style by stripping back and simplifying wherever I can. A design often translates best in its simplest form.

How do you improve as an artist? When I was learning to tattoo I would practise on my own legs and anywhere I could reach with both hands. The only way you can see if you're learning is by checking the way it heals and the way it sinks into the skin. People don't realise that the application is just as important as the drawing.

Does your work attract a particular type of client? Since we've been open we've developed a rep for simple, clean tattooing. And with that we've seen a lot of the graphic design crowd, along with those interested in bikes and vintage clothing, come through the door.

When you're inking, do you feel like you're creating art, or like you're working? When a customer commits a large area of skin to you, that trust is very humbling and offers a lot of opportunity for expression. But my favourite kind of tattoo to do is a palm-sized drawing where, while the client has some idea of what they want, they let me have complete creative freedom. It's always incredibly satisfying to complete something in one day that you've been able to pour all of your own style and taste into.

What advice would you give a man considering his first tattoo? Think about placement first then pick a design that works with the body. Don't try and put all your ideas in one piece. The best tattoo will come from the simplest idea.
How did you first get into tattooing? In the late '80s I played in bands and used to come and get tattooed at Diamond Jacks. It’s had an illustrious rock clientele since the '60s. I did an apprenticeship elsewhere but came back and bought the place in 2002. As a kid I was into comic books and music. I got the best of both at Diamond Jacks.

So would you say your style is rock’n’roll? Yeah, I’d say so. There are lots of flames and dice, symbolic man’s ruin-type tattoos. The kind of thing you’d imagine Guns N’ Roses getting on the Sunset Strip in the ‘80s. It’s retro-specific. I like a certain time and style. It’s not very trendy, but then we’re not a very trendy studio!

Has the typical Diamond Jacks customer changed in recent years? When I first started here we had bikers, rockers and druggies coming in after picking up their methadone. Now we’re seeing a lot of skaters come through the door – which doesn’t sound quite as edgy, but I like their style. Skate culture is bringing back the lowbrow images of hot rods and designs from ’60s California rock’n’roll. They want the real deal.

Would you say you’ve given the rock’n’roll style your own spin? Yes, but at the same time I’m not trying to create something new. This style was perfected a long time ago. Mess around with those images too much and they lose their essence.

Is the increasing popularity of tattoos a good thing or a bad thing? In short: it’s a bad thing. People don’t want to be individual, there are less trailblazers and mavericks. The best illustration of this, I think, is the rise of written tattoos proclaiming who people are and the qualities they have. But if they really did have ‘strength’ or ‘power’ they wouldn’t need a tattoo to tell people.

What do you like most about your job? Giving people a great experience. A lot of the old-timers who tattooed me got into it late. They’d been in the forces or in bands; they had life stories. Being an old rock’n’roller, I’m the same. I tell stories and we have fun. It’s not just about creating a great piece of art, it’s about the whole tattoo experience. 

diamondjacks.co.uk

-for Gates, it’s as much about the experience of being tattooed as the artwork itself-
Were you always destined to ink? No, but I was destined to do something artistic, I think. I’ve been taking photographs ever since I remember and began drawing again properly at university. It wasn’t until meeting my husband, also a tattooist, that I realised this was the best outlet for my artistic aspirations.

How has your style developed since then? I need to split that answer in two because the way I tattoo is traditional – bold lines, bold colour and simple. But where the inspiration comes from gets more complicated, like Tibetan artworks or Eastern European and American folk art. It’s very basic, but varied. I had a very long time to pull my inspirations from different places – as an apprentice I spent a lot of time just drawing and making people coffee. You really have to wait it out before they let you pick up a gun.

How would you describe the typical Good Times customer? The benefit of being in London is there isn’t one. With so many style tribes coming through the door, it creates this condensed melting pot where you can be inspired by other cultures that you wouldn’t normally be exposed to.

Is the increasing popularity of tattoos a good thing or a bad thing? I like the idea of everyone going for it and getting tattoos when they want them. But it’s more of a good thing when the people getting tattoos are open to collaborating with the artist. When people put their trust in your opinion and you can work together to create something with longevity, that’s when it becomes rewarding in a creative respect.

What makes a good client? A bit of nervous excitement! Nerves are good. People are more open to being more creative that way, plus the adrenaline can help you to get through the pain.

What advice would you give a man considering his first tattoo? That’s difficult for me to advise because I didn’t think – I just went for it. But come in and be open minded when you talk to the artist. Come armed with an idea and then ask for their spin on it. It’s the best way to ensure you walk away with something original.

goodtimes tattoo.co.uk
While it’s not uncommon for men to fear trends, there’s a big difference between a slavish victim of fashion and someone who knows how to keep his wardrobe durable and on-point. This is our smart man’s guide to leading the spring style peloton.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW WOFFINDEN – Words by MATT HAMBLY – Styling by ERIC DOWN
For men of a certain age, bleached denim is painfully redolent of '80s fashion crimes. But Daniel Todd of online menswear hub Mr Porter thinks of it much more subversively. “So much of fashion is informed by music, and this time it’s punk’s turn,” he says. “Now, smart casual is giving way to distress.”

We’re not promoting DIY anarchy in the wardrobe, of course. Brands from Saint Laurent to Acne, Rag & Bone to Levi’s, will happily kit you out with bleached denim for an artisanal price. “Just be sure to keep it simple,” says Todd. “Acid-washed denim jackets and cropped green trousers might look great in Gucci ads, but are perhaps not practical. Instead, wear ripped jeans with smart boots and a well-cut jacket to strike a more harmonious chord.”

As seen at Topman Design

Wear with

A white T-shirt and black boots
Navy and grey are perennial menswear favourites, especially through autumn and winter, with splashes of colour increasingly employed in recent years via accessories and statement pieces. This season the tables have turned, however, and Selfridges menswear buyer Jack Cassidy is confident that wearing yellow should be your bright style idea for 2017.

“The menswear runways have been awash with colour for some years now, but it’s only recently that we’ve seen men on the shop floor really become braver in their choices,” says Cassidy. “Designers are now reacting to this and in the SS17 collections you could see JW Anderson pairing canary yellow with eye-popping pink, while Gucci’s man of the moment Alessandro Michele showed a bright yellow leather raincoat.”

The runway and the thoroughfare are very different habitats, of course, and if chromatic maximalism isn’t your bag – or, for that matter, your jacket – then there are plenty of options to tone down the shade of yellow to a hue that suits you best. For instance, heavy jackets and overshirts in a burnt amber will work well with blue denim. But, don’t be tempted to cross the streams: “Yellow is far better used once in an ensemble for maximum effect,” says Cassidy.

As seen at
JW Anderson

Wear with
Slim-cut navy trousers
Leopard print can mean many things to many men depending on your frame of reference. To some it’s Rod Stewart circa 1979; to a more callow generation, perhaps, it’s Harry Styles. But to James Lawrence, head of design at Asos, the look is firmly spring 2017, as envisioned by fashion savant Hedi Slimane, former creative director of Saint Laurent. “Print in menswear is huge and animal prints, especially leopard, are a big part of that,” says Lawrence. “It’s a sign that men are becoming more adventurous in the way they dress and looking for something more than a pocket square or a hat to set them apart. We’ve seen this trend across the board, from couture brands to streetwear labels such as Stussy.”

To make it work, think like a leopard not a peacock. The key is stealth, says Lawrence. “A little will go far – so printed socks or fine details are a good start. As you grow more confident you might consider shirts or jackets in full print, only in a darker, more tonal colourway so as not to be so conspicuous.”

MH suggests wearing it with black and avoiding printed trousers, lest you inadvertently ask the question: “Do ya think I’m sexy?” The answer will always be no.

As seen at
Saint Laurent

Wear with
White jeans and a healthy dose of irony
There’s no hiding it, camouflage is back for 2017. So claims Dean Cook, buying manager at the enduring Mayfair fashion retailer, Browns. But don’t let it ambush your tried-and-tested tactics: “It’s in fact one of those fabrics that’s incredibly easy to wear, despite it being quite loud,” says Cook. “Hence, it always seems to sell well.”

This season Valentino, Gucci and Dsquared2 have all gone green, as well as numerous high street imitators, meaning there are options aplenty. But Cook warns against complicating the deal: “Camo is a strict one-item-per-look affair – unless you feel supremely confident.” Outerwear is probably your best bet, since you won’t be veering too far from its original usage or habitat. Elsewhere, from trainers to accessories, less is very much more.

And in terms of bringing the look up to date for 2017? “We’ve been seeing a lot of washed-out camouflage fabrics in more adventurous hues than the traditional green and brown. I’d start with a faded jacket that you can wear over a white shirt or T-shirt and with denim. Start with the basics and the style plaudits will follow.”

As seen at Valentino
Wear with
A plain white T-shirt and jeans
URBAN EXPLORATION #1

Star Of The North

Hop off the hygge bandwagon and head to Aarhus, European City Of Culture 2017, without a woolly jumper in sight.

HORN OF PLENTY
Aarhus is better known for its secondhand shops than high-end menswear (though for the latter, head to Harder harder.dk). It does, however, boast a fine pedigree in design stores. Our top pick, Hornvarefabrikken hornvarefabrikken.dk, sells everything from jewellery to cutlery via homeware, all hand-crafted from cow horn.

DAILY BREAD
For haute Nordic cuisine without the fussiness, head for Hærværk restaurant-hoerværk.dk in the city’s foodie heartland, where the set menu changes based on whatever takes the chef’s fancy that morning. For simpler tastes, the best smørrebrød – Aarhus’s trademark open sandwiches – can be found at Radhus kafeenradhus-kafeen.dk.

GREAT ESCAPE
Dropping kroner like they’ve gone out of fashion is worryingly easy in Aarhus. But you can soak up all the sights and sounds of this culturally rich city – without unpocketing your wallet – on the free-to-hire bikes. Cycle down woodland coastal trails south of the centre and watch the bay of Aarhus’s icy waves lap against bare beaches of pristine white sand.

CULTURED VIEW
For its size, Aarhus punches above its weight in cultural terms, hence its recent European Capital of Culture status. Even if you’d rather watch paint dry than see a world-class art collection, ARoS aros.dk is a must-see for its panoramic city views, observed through coloured glass, and the exceptional food hall. Try the red deer with reindeer moss and blackberries.

LATIN CLASS
To the north of the city’s historic Latin Quarter, Guldmeden Hotel guldsmendenhotels.com/aarhus epitomises unpretentious Danish simplicity. The 27 rooms aren’t ostentatious nor nauseatingly hygge – just laidback luxe, from beds carved out of Danish teak to organic produce at the breakfast buffet. You won’t find a more authentic hotel for the price.

PLAY TIME
Aarhus has no shortage of those looking to make merry with the locals. Play ping-pong while you sip on Danish beer at hipster hangout Shen Mao shenmao.dk, or for one of the more bizarre drinking experiences you’re ever likely to have, head to Cirkuskroen cirkuskroen.dk, where 500 clown puppets and figurines hang from the ceiling of an intimate, little pub.

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The Changing Face Of Hops

He may hail from libertine rock’n’roll royalty, but Logan Plant’s taste for ale is a little more discerning than your average debauchee. Meet the man who is turning the American craft beer revolution into a very British affair.

Photography by LEON FOGGITT – Words by JAMIE MILLAR
LOGAN WEARS

DENIM SHORT £85 LEVI'S
HENLEY £65 SCHIESSER
DENIM JEANS £120 NUDIE JEANS
JEWELLERY MODEL'S OWN.
From its woody brand name to the psyche-apocalyptic artwork that adorns its cans, you might expect to find the Beavertown brewery – one of the driving forces in the transatlantic craft beer wave – beside a creek in heavily wooded North Dakota, or at least a gritty Williamsburg shack. In fact, it sits next to a brook on an unremarkable industrial estate in Tottenham Hale, north London.

With his Red Wing boots and Levi’s jeans, Beavertown founder Logan Plant also looks vaguely American. An accent you might indeterminately describe as Brummie, however, gives him away – as does the Wolverhampton Wanderers mug sat proudly on his desk.

In case you hadn’t guessed from the surname, Plant is the son of Robert, the West Bromwich-born frontman of Led Zeppelin and latterly Grammy-winning bluegrass singer. Having studied sports science at Cardiff University and worked in the decidedly sober arenas of massage therapy and corporate events, Plant Jr also fronted a number of bands through his twenties. Music eventually took him across the pond where, UA suggests, the Beavertown ethos originated…

"Actually, no. The original inspiration came from the West Midlands," counters the boy from the Black Country, now 38. Far from supping American IPAs between sets at SXSW, Plant says he acquired his taste for real beer by drinking Bathams bitter as a 19-year-old. “My friends and I would jump in the car to certain pubs to drink specific beers that were brewed up the road,” he says. “Or to the actual breweries. That was when I started to dissect what beer was about.”

**STRANGE BREW**

As an entry-level lover of real ale and a peripatetic musician, Plant’s rock-star approach to inebriation was remarkably scientific. “Whenever I did any travelling, I’d be taking notes on beers from all four corners of the globe,” he says.

Let’s get this straight: you took a notebook out while drinking on tour?

“Um, yes.” This unlikely dedication continued until a moment in 2011 caught him unawares. Sat in renowned Brooklyn barbecue joint Fette Sau missing his wife and children, the desire to start his own brewery came to a head. "I ate great pulled pork and drank great beer," he says. "It was like an epiphany."

Plant quit the band and bought a 25-litre home brew kit. “It was essentially a tea-urn-cum-picnic-insulated-box, plus a few other paddles and meshes,” he recalls. Then came the experimentation, creating beers that would pair well with the food at his nascent east London barbecue restaurant, Duke’s Brew & Que.

Originally there were just two: a rye IPA named 8-Ball (“Rye is quite spicy and earthy, which goes great with the spiciness of our pork”) and Smog Rocket, a smoked porter (“The smokey, raisin-y characteristics work brilliantly with the beef ribs, which are all molasses and char”). In between, there was a lot of trial and error, reading of internet forums, and questions asked to members of the London brewing network, such as Kernel in Bermondsey, south-east London.

With his early attempts surprisingly successful, Plant upgraded to an 800-litre kit he squeezed into the kitchen at Duke’s. He brewed during the day and served the results over the bar at night, enabling instant feedback: “It was killer for me as a brewer to have strangers come up and go, ‘I really liked this.’ Or, ‘Fucking hell, that is burning the enamel off my teeth.’ In which case I knew it was time to go back to the drawing board.’”

Brewing, Plant quickly discovered, is part science, part art. “You can apply the specific mathematics to the extraction...
and bitterness you’re going to get from a certain hop, or the amount of sugar you will gain from certain grains,” he says. “Then you drink the end product and it’s much more of a sensory thing.” His guiding principle is balance: neither too bitter nor too sweet. “That’s always a good place to start,” he says. “Then you can start to push things by infusing spices or manipulating yeast strains.”

BLOOD, SWEAT & BEERS

Today, Beavertown brews 90,000 litres of ale a week. Aside from its taste, what marks it out is its branding. But this, as with most aspects of Plant’s business, was more happy accident than marketing strategy. A friend suggested the name Beavertown, an old cockney sobriquet of De Beauvoir Town, where Duke’s is located. “And it just happened to be perfect for a UK take on a US brewhouse,” says Plant. “Which was fortunate because I had so many terrible names lined up.”

Meanwhile, the Day of the Dead-style skulls that adorn everything Beavertown – from the cans to the office walls, even the brewery tanks – came care of Nick Dwyer, a waiter at Duke’s who studied illustration at Central Saint Martins art school. Now Beavertown’s creative director, Dwyer devised the livery for the brewery’s most recognisable output, a “tropical” American-style pale ale called Gamma Ray. Featuring UFOs, skeletal spacemen and a bright blue and orange lunarscape, the determinedly avant-garde aesthetic has proved to be its USP. “I remember someone in a bar in Shoreditch saying to me, ‘Everyone just wants the spaceman beer,’” recalls Plant.

Five years ago, you couldn’t walk into a pub and expect to find an American pale ale. Now, the surprising thing is that a) you can, and b) many of them are, in fact, British. So how has it come to this? “The US market prior to craft beer was bad,” says Plant. “There were a couple of big players producing the same yellow fizz. In the ’80s, a few craft brewers came here, drank some amazing ales, then said: ‘Well, this is a bit flat, but it does taste of something.’” Using their own ingredients (their hops are very different to ours), the Americans started creating beers that are, in turn, inspiring a new batch of British brewers like Plant. “Now you’ve got two amazing brewing centres. The US have 4700 breweries and we’ve got about 1700,” he says. “And we’re all about the same thing: producing great beer.”

It would be wrong to call the rise in craft beer – as of last year, a government marker of inflation – a trend. Rather, it represents a bona fide cultural shift in common with the renaissance in coffee and gin before it. There now exists a greater variety, a greater appreciation of what makes it special and a willingness to pay a higher price for the privilege. But thanks to the likes of Beavertown, ale is now accessible and, yes, cool – shorn of its erstwhile connotations with pipes and beards, socks and sandals.

But not everyone is so merry: purists like the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) take issue with Beavertown’s use of carbonation over the traditional method of adding sugar and allowing the yeast to do its thing. “I’m sure at some point there will be a recognition that we’re all batting for the same team,” says Plant, diplomatically. In truth, they should probably be thanking him: at a time when pubs are closing at a rate of 27 a week (according to CAMRA’s own figures), as many as 600 people visit the tap room at Beavertown every Saturday. That’s a lot of prospective CAMRA members.

Despite having to drink beer most days just to do his job, Plant has no belly – an outcome he credits to genes, moderation and knowing his limits. He also tries to have two nights off a week to avoid hangovers. But if all else fails? “Marmite on toast is really good, with all its vitamin B,” he says. “And obviously there’s more yeast too, which is great.”
The Man On The Streets

Long before it became a global fashion phenomenon, the streetwear aesthetic belonged to the B-Boys of NYC. Jamel Shabazz was there to record its genesis.

Sometimes you just happen to be in the right place at the right time. Jamel Shabazz grew up in Brooklyn surrounded by National Geographic images, his father having been a photographer in the Navy during the ‘50s. But it was a spell stationed in Germany with the military that opened the young Shabazz’s eyes to decadent youth cultures and new forms of photography.

Upon returning home in 1980 and being struck by how much his community had changed, Shabazz began shooting all over New York, from his native Brooklyn into Manhattan and beyond, capturing street scenes of kids at play, putative gang bangers and urban dandies. He found himself chronicling the birth of hip-hop as both style and lifestyle, a moment immortalised in his seminal book, Back in the Days.

His methods were unorthodox. Instead of snatching vulnerable, unscripted moments – the modus operandi of the reportage photographer – Shabazz would ask his subjects to shape up for the camera and project themselves the way they wanted to. The youth of the five boroughs did not disappoint. Shabazz’s images are a style menu and a message across the years. This, say the anonymous B-Boys, would-be DJs, MCs and early-days hip-hop heads, is the way you do it.

Who are these particular three guys? We don’t know, but names are not important. What matters here is the raw bravado – the indomitable sense of young men doing exactly what they want, how they want, maybe for the first time. It’s the grammar and glamour of early hip-hop translated into clothing and stance: fat laces on Adidas Superstar sneakers so white they dazzle; a boombox the size of a suitcase; caps and Kangols; jackets symbolically tougher than leather (even if the material was almost certainly more affordable). It’s not often in life that people get it right first time, but this look and style of dressing has informed street style and culture ever since. The mix of sportswear and technical outerwear, the slim legs on the trousers, even the flat cap the guy stood in the middle is wearing are still referenced today by brands including Stone Island, Nike and, of course, Adidas. Even more enduring, however, is the way it makes you wonder what’s in that liquor-store brown bag. You look at the photograph and you want to know what’s blasting out of that radio – the sort which LL Cool J famously couldn’t live without. You wonder where these kids are now.
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Perform each of our abs workouts for three weeks, then progress to the next. Whatever your start point, you’ll race from zero to six-pack.

**P4 TORCH EXCESS FAT**
This quickfire session can be done anywhere and will burn off the layer of stubborn blubber that is masking your midriff. Don’t worry, there’s no treadmill.

**P10 CRAFT A STRONG CORE**
Fat duly stripped, your next phase uses heavy barbell moves to build core strength and stability, forming the foundation for laser-cut definition.

**P19 HOME IN ON EVERY AB**
With the keystones in place, it’s time to make those abs pop. These trisets will work your core through multiple planes of movement. Results guaranteed.

**P26 GET HIGH DEFINITION**
Now that your new six-pack is a reality, you’re ready to take it to the elite level. This final workout will upgrade your core to MH cover-model standard.

**P14 FUEL YOUR FITNESS**
Your battle for abs may be fought and won in the kitchen, but it can still be painless. Here you’ll find 23 foods to cut body fat and power your workouts.

**P24 NOW CAP THINGS OFF**
Lastly, employ some supplementary help in your quest for a six-pack with our edit of effective pills and powders for lean mass and lasting energy.
STAGE ONE: THE FAT-BURNING BASICS

METABOLIC FIREFASTER

Before you can unearth those elusive abs, you need to burn off the layer of fat obscuring them. Thankfully, all it takes is half an hour and the willingness to work. Complete each exercise, rest 30sec and repeat for three rounds total. Do five workouts a week to set stubborn fat alight.

TOTAL TIME 30MIN
LEVEL EASY

01 SHADOW BOXING 20SEC

There’s a reason boxers sport knockout abs – their training focuses on developing power and balance through the core. Set up in a fighting stance, and bounce on your toes as you shadow box (A). For left-handers, jab with your right fist and cross with your left (B). Don’t be hesitant to incorporate hooks and upper cuts too – just make sure your heart’s pumping hard.

THE KNOWLEDGE

EXPERT Faisal Abdalla

ABOUT As a Nike master trainer, Abdalla knows a thing or two about fat loss. His HIIT sessions will see you sweat like no parkrun ever could

CONTACT faisal@pmafithess.co.uk
**02 \ SQUAT JUMP \ 40SEC**

This move will get your metabolism going while building strength in your legs. Sink into a squat, keeping your back straight and eyes up. Stop when your thighs are parallel to the floor and your glutes are about level with your knees (A). Explode up into a jump (B), then sink straight into the next squat. Keep the movement fast and fluid until your 40sec stint is over.

**03 \ PLANK WITH TOE-TOUCH \ 20SEC**

Even conventional planks provide a great way to strengthen your abs, but this move will further destabilise your core and call on your obliques for added definition. From a high plank position – back straight and arms extended (A) – bring your left leg across and under your body to tap your foot with your right hand (B). Repeat the tap on the other side and keep moving.
**04 Lunge Jump**

40 SEC

This next exercise requires good balance, which will force you to tense your midsection. Lunge forward until your rear knee is almost touching the ground with your front leg bent at a right angle (A). Jump up and switch feet in mid-air, bringing your rear foot forward and front foot back (B). Sink into a lunge and repeat. Can’t manage the jump? Step it out until you feel stronger.

**05 Star Jump**

40 SEC

This military move might turn a few heads in the gym but it’s no joke when it comes to melting your body fat. Dip your knees to sink into a shallow squat (A) then explode upward extending your arms and feet out to the sides (B). It might feel easy now, but if you’re not gasping for air by the time your first 40 sec stint is up, then you’re simply not pushing yourself hard enough.
To swap love handles for defined muscle, you need to include rotational movements in your workout routine to target your obliques. Starting in a press-up position (A), raise one hand high toward the ceiling, while turning both your feet (B). Breathe out as you twist and take a deep breath in as you return to the initial press-up position. Repeat the twist on the other side.
Performing this movement will target your lower abs as you crunch your knee to your chest. Set up on the floor as though in a sprinter’s blocks – one foot positioned beneath your waist and the other back, with your leg straight (A). Explosively swap foot positions (B), like you’re jogging on the spot. This should help you build a sweat up.

Sprinters have barely an ounce of fat on their bodies because their high-intensity sessions set their metabolisms soaring. Standing tall, run on the spot as fast as you can, driving through the balls of your feet to bring your knees high (A). Aim to create a 90-degree angle with your raised leg each time. Keep those elbows bent, shoulders down, and swing your arms (B).
**09 BURPEE 40SEC**
Burpees are a well-drilled military staple, strengthening soldiers’ cores to help them carry heavy packs. From standing, jump (A), then drop into a squat and place your palms down. Kick back into a press-up position (B), then jump your feet back in toward your hands. Leap into the air and repeat. See how many reps you can manage.

**10 HIGH-TO-LOW PLANK 20SEC**
Your final exercise combines the press-up and plank – two of the best core-building moves out there. Not for the first time in this circuit, set up in a press-up position (A), then bend your elbows and rest your forearms on the floor (B). Tighten your abs as you rise back up to the top. Completed 20sec? Take your rest then return to the shadow-boxing drills.
BUILD SOLID FOUNDATIONS

All that bodyweight training will have stripped fat from your middle. Now it’s time to develop heavy-duty core strength – which is where these supersets come in. Complete each pair three times, then move on. When it starts to feel easy, add 5kg to the bar. The harder you push, the greater the results.

TOTAL TIME 30MIN
LEVEL MEDIUM

01a ZERCHER SQUAT 8 REPS

With the weight in front of your body, your core is tasked with keeping you upright. Stand with feet shoulder-width, hands clasped in front of your chest with the barbell supported in the crook of your elbows (A). Push your hips back and lower until the bar hits your thighs (B). Drive your heels into the floor to push explosively back up to the start position.

SUPERSET 1

STAGE TWO: THE BARBELL BLAST
01b FLOOR WIPER
10 REPS EACH SIDE

Defined lower abs are hard to come by, but this move targets them directly, along with building your shoulders and arms. Lie on the floor, holding a barbell over your chest, hands wide. Keeping your legs straight (A), raise your feet to the right (B). Just before they hit the bar, bring them back to the start, then lift to the left. After 10 reps each side, return to the zercher squats.

YOUR TRAINER

NAME Steve Kowalenko
ABOUT The founder of Virtus Strength is also one of only three fully certified Gym Jones instructors in the UK
CONTACT steve@gymjones.com
02a \ OVERHEAD WALKING LUNGE
10 REPS EACH SIDE

Hold the bar straight overhead with your feet shoulder-width, knees slightly bent (A). By holding the bar like this, your core needs to work twice as hard to keep your spine neutral. With your right leg, step forward into a deep lunge (B). Your posture should remain upright, your right knee above the right foot. Push off it and bring your left leg through to perform another lunge.

02b \ BARBELL ROLLOUT
12 REPS

For this move, you need to brace your core in order to stop you from falling over as you roll the barbell away from you. Load the bar with 5kg plates and grab it with an overhand, shoulder-width grip (A). Position your shoulders directly over the barbell and slowly roll the bar forward (B). Pause, then reverse the move. The further you go, the harder it gets. Go back to the lunge.
03a | LANDMINE PRESS
10 REPS EACH SIDE
Raise the barbell to shoulder height, with the other arm extended at your side and feet in a staggered stance (A). Explosively press the weight up and out in front of you (B). With the weight shifted to one side of your body, your obliques will be working hard to keep you straight. Pause, then slowly return the bar to shoulder height. Do 10 reps, switch arms and repeat.

03b | SUITCASE CARRY
25M EACH SIDE
Standing with a barbell accomplishes little, but walking with it forces your core to engage in order to stabilise your body as you move. It’ll also leave your obliques and shoulders burning. Grab a barbell and hold it like, well, a suitcase (A). Walk for 25m (B), switch arms and repeat. Go back to the press. Blast through two more sets and you’re free to go. For today, at least...
23 FOODS THAT FIGHT FAT

FUEL FOR YOUR SIX-PACK GOALS

Putting in the hours at the gym counts for little if you aren’t giving your nutrition the same focus. But overhauling your diet needn’t be a drag. Here’s our shortlist of fast, fat-burning foods that won’t leave you hungry. Save sweating it for your workouts then be burned your cells where they can transports l-carnitine. This amino acid transports fatty acids to your cells where they can then be burned for energy, providing extra power for your six-pack sessions.

MINERAL- AND FIBRE-RICH PISTACHIOS

Mineral- and fibre-rich pistachios are lower in calories than most nuts, with a handful containing just 150-odd. Plus, the arduous de-shelling process means you’ll take longer to finish the bag...

BEef up your torso

Red meat gets a bad rap, but beef is a rich source of l-carnitine. This amino acid transports fatty acids to your cells where they can then be burned for energy, providing extra power for your six-pack sessions.

SWEET RELIEF

The anthocyanins that give strawberries their hue have been shown to reduce insulin spikes after eating. Too much insulin triggers your body to store unused glucose as fat. Add them to your shakes for sweetness.

16% IN 1TBSP!

OY, YOUR IRON RDA

Red meat gets a bad rap, but beef is a rich source of l-carnitine. This amino acid transports fatty acids to your cells where they can then be burned for energy, providing extra power for your six-pack sessions.

FAT CONTROLLER

Heed the call of curry night. Shirt-staining Indian spice turmeric blocks the formation of fatty tissue in the body. Because what’s the use of training your abs if they remain buried under blubber?

STICK IT OUT

Cinnamon has been shown to curb blood sugar spikes in healthy people, and helps to maintain steady glucose levels between meals. Sprinkle it on your oats or in your whey smoothies for a go-to gym-day breakfast.
Lay waste to DOMS
Chicken contains the amino acid beta-alanine, which is a building block of carnosine. This reduces muscle acidity during those high-intensity core circuits. Aching abs have flown the coop.

Prawns for brawn
An 85g serving of the seafood staple provides 17g of protein with a lean 90 calories. Prawns also contain the antioxidant astaxanthin, which reduces inflammation and oxidative damage post-workout.

All praise cod
White fish is high in quality protein and micronutrients, but low in calories and fats, making it a perfect post-workout repair package for those looking to cut weight. Just dispense with the batter. And the chips.

An apple a day
Scientific studies into the fruit show that its antioxidants actually help to prevent your body from storing fat. Apples are high in pectin, which binds with water and limits the amount of fat your cells absorb.

Burn away colds
Half a large red pepper meets your RDA of vitamin C. People who are deficient in the vit find it harder to lose fat, plus it fends off energy-sapping colds, keeping you fighting fit to work on your core.

The complete carb
Now that we can all finally pronounce it, use quinoa to fuel your workouts. It contains all the essential amino acids and is naturally devoid of gluten, making it a far smarter buy than any processed 'free from' carb.
MAKE THE RYE CHOICE
Darker and denser than regular wheat loaves – and with more appetite-curbing fibre – rye bread causes a smoother rise in blood sugar, making it the perfect breakfast base for your pre-gym avocado and eggs.

SHROOM TO GROW
Mushrooms are great for bulking out bakes, risottos and stir-frys without adding much in the way of calories. They also contain hard-to-source vitamin D, which has been linked to increased testosterone production.

POTS OF GOLD
The perfect quick-fix snack, Greek yoghurt is full of protein and loaded with natural probiotic bacteria, which studies have shown lead to major improvements in digestion. Take care of your gut, inside and out.

MATTER OVER MIND
People who regularly eat fish such as sea bass have more grey matter in the areas of the brain that deal with memory and – crucially for your purposes – muscle control. A fine catch for your transformation.

CHASE THE PUMP
Raspberries are ripe with antioxidants that boost circulation, vital for efficient muscle contractions. Add them to your oats to help you keep up with the demands of your workouts, and make ‘the pump’ easier to come by.

MORE THAN AN OEUF
A concentrated form of animal protein and fat-soluble vitamins, eating eggs for breakfast is shown to boost weightloss and fullness over carby cereals. Plus, a buttery omelette is more fun than cornflakes.
PICK OF THE BUNCH
Blackberries are nutrient-rich but calorie-poor, with particularly high levels of vitamin K. This nutrient plays an important role in bone health and injury healing. Preparation never hurts.

CHOOSE OUT HUNGER
One medium artichoke contains around 7g of fibre, making the plant very low in digestible carbohydrates. Slice, grill and add to your lunchtime salads to improve digestive health and blunt your appetite.

RAM MUSCLE WASTAGE
Hard training wearing you down? Lamb is rich in healthy fats such as CLA, plus the essential amino acids and minerals you need for muscle repair and growth. You’ll only lose inches where you want to.

GRAIN AND GAIN
Post-workout carbs are essential to build your abs and enhance recovery. Spelt is similar to wheat, but higher in the mineral zinc, which is a key player in maintaining testosterone levels and prostate health.

TAKE UP ALMS
Just a handful of almonds per day lowers ‘bad’ LDL cholesterol, while still maintaining healthy HDL. Plus, they’re stuffed full of vitamin E, which reduces oxidative damage after an intense exercise session.

SLEEP WITH THE FISHES
Among its many benefits, the omega-3 in salmon helps the body make sleep hormone melatonin. Your muscles repair and grow in the unconscious hours, so proper shuteye is key to your new six-pack.
BRINGING THE GYM TO YOU

The MH Active+ range of home fitness kit lets you hit every goal at any budget.

01 32.5KG DIAL DUMBBELL
£129.99
This adjustable 32.5kg dumbbell allows you to gradually increase the weight to give you a more intense workout.

02 GYMNASTIC RINGS
£19.99
Build explosive upper body strength and master multiple moves including press-ups, iron cross and pull-ups.

03 AB WHEEL
£24.99
With hand and foot straps, this lets you perform unlimited exercises to work your core from every angle.

04 PARALLETTES
£39.99
With these bars, master your bodyweight and progress from triceps dips to handstand press-ups and more.

05 CABLE MACHINE £299.99
Perform exercises such as arm curls, shoulder presses and pull-ups. Includes triceps rope, seated row/chin bar, revolving straight bar and two snaplock hooks. Weights sold separately.

06 SKIPPING ROPE
£9.99
Great for cardio workouts, these will improve both agility and coordination. Each handle contains a removable 1.25kg weight.

VISIT ARGOS.CO.UK/MENSHEALTH TO SEE THE REST
STAGE THREE: FUNCTIONAL TRISETS

ABS FROM EVERY ANGLE

If you’ve been working hard, by now you should be a leaner man, with solid core strength. But to sculpt a Spartan six-pack, you need to target your abs using multiple movement patterns – twisting, stretching and crunching. Perform each triset three times and watch those abs begin to take shape.

01a PALLOF PRESS 15 REPS EACH SIDE

Each triset comprises – you guessed it – three moves. This rotational movement has your core working hard to resist the pull of the cable. Grab the handle and stand far enough from the machine that you feel tension in the cable. Press the handle from your chest (A), straight out in front of you (B). Hold it for 2sec, then return. Finish your reps and move on. No rest yet, we’re afraid.

THE KNOWLEDGE

EXPERT Luke Barnsley

ABOUT Barnsley is a PT at Third Space London. With a background in modelling, he knows what it takes to build the core you’re craving.

CONTACT luke.barnsley@thirdspace.london
The next part of your triset is an upgrade on the standard forearm plank, strengthening your shoulders and arms. Position yourself in the top stage of a press-up, placing your hands directly under your shoulders and legs straight out behind you. Contract your abs and glutes to keep your body in line from head to heels. Hold for a full minute. Ignore the shaking.

This pilates stretch is now used by strength coaches as — unlike crunches — deadbugs protect your spine and strengthen your lower back. With knees bent at 90 degrees, hold two dumbbells high (A). Lower your right leg until just above the floor, simultaneously lowering your left arm (B). Reps done? Enjoy 2min rest before going back to the cables for another two rounds.
02a TOES-TO-BAR
8 REPS
This hanging abs move is a true test of your core stability. Grab a pull-up bar with an overhand grip. Create tension in your arms and core by pulling down on the bar as hard as possible (A). Contract your glutes and lift your toes to the bar (B). It’s OK to keep a slight bend in your knees. Once your toes reach the bar, slowly lower back down to the start over a 2sec count.

02b V-UP WITH KETTLEBELL
12 REPS
The key to this exercise is keeping your legs and shoulders off the floor, so you maintain constant tension in your core. Lie on your back and hold the kettlebell with hands hovering just above your abs (A). Sit up bringing your knees in toward your chest (B). Lower back down slowly. Perform your 12 reps, then move on to the last part of your triset without resting.
02c L-SIT HOLD 30SEC
This is a gymnast’s secret weapon. Set the parallettes about shoulder-width apart and position yourself between them. Push your body off the ground, locking your elbows as if you’re at the top of a dip (A). Hold your legs together tightly, and lift them so they’re parallel to the ground (B). Now hold for 30sec – that burn is what progress feels like. Rest for 2min.

03a WINDSCREEN WIPER 3-6 REPS
There’s a reason we’ve kept the rep count low on this one. It’s horribly tough. First, perform a hanging leg raise – overhand grip, legs at 90 degrees with your torso. Then, from here, hold the position and rotate your lower body to the right by bringing your left hip toward your left armpit (A). Now repeat to the other side (B). Just two more exercises to get through after this.

KEEP YOUR TORSO STRAIGHT.
**03b LANDMINE RAINBOW**

8 REPS

This twisting move is one to shout about for its ability to develop your obliques. Start by raising the bar to shoulder height with your arms extended in front of you and stand with feet wider than shoulder-width. Rotate your torso as you twist the barbell down to your right hip, keeping your arms extended (A). Reverse the motion to rotate the weight over to your left hip (B).

**03c CABLE WOODCHOP**

12 REPS EACH SIDE

By moving diagonally, you’re working both your upper and lower abs. Set the cable to the highest position. With your side to the cable, arms extended (A), explosively pull the handle down to your front knee (B). Rotate your torso and pivot with your back foot. Return, under control.

Do 12 reps, rest 2min, then go back to the bar for your second round of windscreen wipers.
HELPING HANDFULS

SUPPLEMENT YOUR SIX-PACK

Yes, fresh, wholesome foods will work too, but life is short and meal prep is boring. Pop these lesser-known supplements to give your abs that extra 10%.

GREEN TEA EXTRACT
TAKEN 1-3 DAILY WITH MEALS
The catechins in green tea activate the body’s natural thermogenic fat-burning activity. Studies show that ingesting catechins can reduce waist circumference and fat mass in 12 weeks.
MyProtein Green Tea
£7.99 for 120 tablets
myprotein.com

HEMP PROTEIN
TAKEN 1-2 TIMES DAILY
Well worth trying if whey has been bloating you out. Lactose-free and packed full of fibre, hemp protein is absorbed quickly by your muscles and is easier on your digestive system.
Neat Nutrition Vegan Protein
£34 for 1kg
neat-nutrition.com

VITAMIN C
TAKEN 1 IN THE MORNING
Research suggests men now buy more vitamins than painkillers. Good job, too. Vitamin C cuts cortisol, a stress hormone that raises fat storage. Pop one before work if you’re fit to burst.
Vitamin C 1000mg
£4.99 for 90 tablets
bulkpowders.co.uk
The hardest part of building a six-pack is sticking to a healthy meal plan. Oats provide a slow-digesting, sustained energy source, curbing your appetite to limit mindless snacking.

**OATS & WHEY**

**TAKE 1-2 TIMES DAILY, AT BREAKFAST OR POST-WORKOUT**
The hardest part of building a six-pack is sticking to a healthy meal plan. Oats provide a slow-digesting, sustained energy source, curbing your appetite to limit mindless snacking.

Optimum Nutrition Natural 100% Oats & Whey £45 for 1.36kg onacademy.co.uk

**BCAAS**

**TAKE 1-3 TIMES DAILY, BEFORE, DURING OR AFTER WORKOUTS**
Getting cut means staying in calorie deficit. Branched-chain amino acids will help reduce muscle loss on a strict diet. The leucine in these acts as an anabolic to signal muscle synthesis.

Maximuscle BCAA 3000 £27 for 500g maxinutrition.com

**UBIQUINOL COQ10**

**TAKE 1-3 TIMES DAILY, ONE IN THE MORNING, TWO AT NIGHT**
If youth isn’t on your side, your levels of antioxidant CoQ10 may have dropped. Research suggests that CoQ10 helps raise exercise-induced fat oxidation and combats fatigue.

Innermost The Strong Plus Booster No1 £24 for 90 caps liveinnermost.com

**SUPP SMARTLY**

For more advice on supplements, visit menshealth.co.uk/building-muscle
STAGE FOUR: THE ENDGAME

RETURN TO SLENDER

By this point in the 12-week plan, your six-pack will have come out of hiding. Now it’s time to elevate it to fitness-model standard. This workout will test your limits by asking you to work to failure. Rest 60sec between sets or supersets and repeat twice a week to really make your abs pop.

01 DRAGON LOWER

3 SETS TO FAILURE

Build a ferocious midsection by taking complete control of your core with the dragon lower. Lie on a flat bench and grab the end, overhead. Bring your knees to your chest (A), then shoot your feet up until only your shoulders are touching the bench (B). Lower back to the start as slowly as possible. Work to failure, take your 60sec rest, then do two more sets.

THE KNOWLEDGE

EXPERT Sean Lerwill

ABOUT Lerwill’s Royal Marines background – and cover-model body – have given him the knowledge to refine your six-pack.

CONTACT seanlerwill.com
Not only will this move activate your obliques, it will fire up your shoulders too. Adopt a side plank, holding a light dumbbell straight up above you (A). Bend your weighted arm to lower the DB, then rotate to bring your chest over the floor and push the weight under your arm (B). Swap sides. Reached failure? Move on to the body saw, without resting.

Foam rolling is usually reserved for recovery sessions but you’ll be using it to stretch your six-pack as your core works to balance your body. Adopt a plank position, feet on the roller (A). Start with your elbows below your shoulders, then drive into your forearms to push yourself back (B). Extend as far as you can, then return. Work to failure, rest, then return to the side plank.
03a **CABLE EXHALE CRUNCH**
3 SETS TO FAILURE
Set the pulley high with a challenging weight. Drop to your knees and contract your abs (A). Keeping a 90-degree angle at your knees, stomach sucked in, bend at the waist until your forehead nears the floor (B). Once you’ve reached failure on the last set, drop the weight and work until failure again. Drop the weight a final time and push out a few more reps. That’s one set.

03b **REVERSE EXHALE CRUNCH**
3 SETS TO FAILURE
No rest yet. Set the bench to a 45-degree angle to target your hard-to-hit lower abs. Take hold of the top of the bench, bend your knees slightly and suck your stomach in (A). Bring your knees as far up toward your head as you can, aiming to lift your hips off the bench (B). Lower over a count of three. After the last superset, rest 10 sec then perform this move to failure once more.
04 HANGING L-RAISE
3 SETS TO FAILURE
Hanging leg raises provide another great way to engage your lower abs. Jump up and grab a pull-up bar (A). Keeping your legs as straight as possible, raise them to form a right angle at the waist (B). Lower over a count of three to increase the time under tension and prevent momentum dictating the movement. Don’t let your body swing.

05 TABATA WEIGHTED PLANK
8 SETS TO FAILURE
Just as when you’re working any other body part, adding weight to an abs move will recruit more muscle fibres, increasing growth. Using a 5kg plate, adopt a plank position with the weight across your glutes and lower back. Brace your core and hold for 20 sec (A), then lower to your knees for 10 sec (B). Repeat eight times, then treat your new set of abs to a very well earned break.
THE IMPOSSIBLE JUST GOT EASIER

Abs aren’t simply for show, you know. Put your new core strength to use by mastering The Flag. Just follow these pointers and you’ll be defying gravity in no time.

01 BUILD THE BASE
The foundation of this move is the triangle you form with your arms. Start by driving your lower hand (thumb down and palm open) into the bottom of the pole. Think about pushing the shoulder through into an ‘open’ position with your body away from the bar.

02 PULLING POWER
With your bottom arm pushing the pole, you now need to pull the bar with your top arm. Using an overhand grip, keeping your arm as straight as possible, retract your shoulder and tense both arms. Your feet should remain supported on the floor throughout.

03 WE HAVE LIFT OFF
It’s time to use your newly honed oblique strength. Place a stability ball under your torso, then grip the bar as detailed in step two. Squeeze your obliques as you try to bring your legs up off the ground. The key here is to raise your hips using the top ‘pulling’ arm.

04 FIND YOUR LEVEL
There are a number of progressions you should tackle before hoisting the full flag. With your arms creating the base, bring your legs into a tuck. Next, try extending one leg, then finally split your legs in a straddle position. Nothing worth doing comes easy.

YOUR TRAINER

NAME David Jackson
ABOUT As co-founder of the School of Calisthenics, Jackson’s mission is to help you best your body weight
CONTACT david@schoolofcalisthenics.com

SWEATPANTS ADIDAS.CO.UK, BORACAY V3 TRAINERS NEWBALANCE.CO.UK
The search is on to find the best buys in sports nutrition and it’s time to have your say. Team MH needs you to vote for your favourite new sports nutrition product in our readers’ choice category, with the winners revealed in next month’s issue. Cast your vote to be in with a chance of taking home all of the winning products, along with £100 in high-street vouchers.

VOTE AT:
MEN'SHEALTH.CO.UK/READERSCHOICE

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