

A regime of arduous training and strict diets isn't just a way of life for some – it is their life. Here, a navy diver, a model, a triathlete, an actor and a mountaineer explain how they stay in shape. By Claire Scobie.

FIT FOR THE JOB

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY DIVER

Todd Adamson

The course to qualify for the Royal Australian Navy diving school was “full-paced total body punishment”, according to one of its survivors, Todd Adamson.

After joining the navy in 2007, the former animal trainer at Sea World, on Queensland's Gold Coast, applied to become a member of the elite unit that deals with unexploded underwater mines.

First, Adamson underwent a two-week clearance diver acceptance test, which he says “sorts out the men from the boys”, before he was admitted to the 33-week clearance diver course. “The course takes you to the absolute edge,” he says. “We survived on two hours sleep a night – deliberate sleep deprivation – so you were running on almost empty.” Instructors set mental and physical challenges for each team to see how they would cope – timed group tasks that vary from setting up a dive site to “towing a Steber [13.1-metre boat] back to the training school with all the divers pulling the rope.” When things became tough, he says, “you count on your teammates.”


Since joining, Adamson has faced “nothing nasty;

no real-time jobs”. Still, his unit – among the fittest in Australia's defence force – has to be “switched on” at all times to deal with mines or any underwater threat.

His daily diet is modest. Breakfast is Weet-Bix and juice; lunch is pasta or a stir-fry and dinner is crayfish or kangaroo meat (“high in protein and low in fat,” he says). Snacks include a muesli bar or nuts and for an evening treat, chocolate and a Weis ice-cream. Adamson doesn't drink during the week, but he does enjoy a few beers on the weekend.

Aside from training for 90 minutes a day before work, Adamson's weekly routine includes dives, carrying heavy weights along the seabed and playing underwater hockey. Gym work focuses on core strength training. “We do super-sets or circuit activities designed to bring up the heart rate and muscle fatigue during the workout: six sets of varying repetitions, with heaves, dead-lifts or push-ups in between,” he says. Friday is a “mental rest” day with a game of touch footy.

With such a hectic schedule, Adamson says it can sometimes feel as if work and life “meld into one”, so Adamson likes to surf on the weekend: his answer to meditation. “In the waves, it's peaceful.”



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SUPERMODEL

Elle Macpherson

"The best part of my life has been the past five years" – that was when Elle Macpherson decided it was time to give up her rock-chick lifestyle. "I had a life where I did drink and smoke, and ate food that wasn't organic," says the woman nicknamed The Body. "I'm not a virgin to all that. I just decided when I turned 40 to live my life differently. I stopped running and started doing yoga, stopped eating meat. I have a much more relaxed approach."

For Macpherson, breakfast consists of blueberries and yoghurt with two spoonfuls of a flaxseed, sunflower seed and almond mix, and Chinese tea or herbal tea with lemon "for balancing my chi". Lunch and dinner is vegetables, sometimes with fish. She drinks three litres of water per day.

Meanwhile, the 182-centimetre, slender-limbed icon has wolfed down a big plate of sushi during our chat. While some models may go to extreme measures such as not eating for three days in preparation for a shoot, it's not surprising to hear her say: "I just turn up and do it. I prepare mentally, and try not to do everybody else's job for them."

The London-based supermodel organises her schedule around her sons Flynn, 10, and Cy, 5. "I tell the boys to look after their bodies," she says. "They go to acupuncture. It's easy with children if we educate them not from a 'You can't have it' perspective, but a 'You can have anything you want, but how does that make you feel?' way. That's conscious parenting – being able to parent my children with wisdom. Simply because I'm 45, I've gotten to know myself, and to parent with more command, grace and love."

Macpherson read Dermot O'Connor's *The Healing Code*, which charts his journey from being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis to healing himself through a mind-body approach. "His philosophy and mine are similar," she says, "the combination of Eastern and Western medicines. So often we focus on trying to look beautiful on the outside, but forget that we need to enhance our lives from the inside."

Exercise is Bikram yoga, "which I love, or Kundalini, which is about breathing". Macpherson has acupuncture "every two days if I can. I don't do beauty treatments. I prefer 'wellness' treatments – iridology, diagnostic and balancing. If you feel good, it will show on the outside. Even if you are not particularly beautiful, it doesn't matter. We want to feel contented and at peace with ourselves."

Dierdre Mulrooney →



Photography: ABPH Nadia Morreth; WireImage. Elle Macpherson story originally appeared in *Image* magazine.



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Erin Densham

OLYMPIC TRIATHLETE

Erin Densham

How do you fit in six hours of training a day? For triathlete Erin Densham, who lives in the Melbourne suburb of Richmond, it means exercising almost anywhere, and all in the name of gold. “I run on roads, it doesn’t matter where,” she says. “As I have three disciplines [swimming, cycling and running], my regime varies. One day I may do a combination of a five-kilometre swim and a 70-kilometre bike ride for up to two-and-a-half hours. Another day I will do three two-hour sessions [including a 10-kilometre run]. That can be a pretty big day.” Rather than taking Sunday as a day of rest, Densham heads to the gym and goes for an extra 18-kilometre run.

Densham started racing professionally in 2005. In 2006, she unexpectedly won the world under-23 championship in Lausanne, Switzerland. A year later she had three major wins, including her first Australian sprint title in Hobart.

Her partner, Jonathan Hall, is also her coach. “For the past two years this has worked for us,” she says, “but it has its moments.” Up until March 2007, Densham worked as a part-time cashier at Big W – “not for the money”, but for a work/life balance. She quit to focus on last year’s Beijing Olympics and to train full-time. “Socially, it can be hard,” she admits. “But this is what I have chosen to do and I love it.”

When preparing for a major event, the 23-year-old will start with “long aerobic training”, aiming to get plenty of kilometres behind her before shifting up a gear to increased intensity – such as 400-metre track running or hill repeats on a bike – as the countdown approaches. Mentally, she visualises the desired outcome. In 2008, a bout of flu forced her to pull out of the World Cup in Madrid and four weeks out from the Beijing Olympics, Densham caught another virus. “It wasn’t ideal,” she says. “I finished 22nd. I was disappointed.”

As part of Densham’s weekly routine, she has massages “to flush out the legs” and help prevent a build-up of lactic acid. Twice weekly she has ice baths at the Victorian Institute of Sport in Melbourne – alternating between a plunge pool of ice and water at 10 to 13 degrees and a hot spa – to aid muscle recovery.

When she rises at 4.50am for a swim, Densham has a cappuccino and toast with peanut butter and jam. Breakfast comes later – muesli, yoghurt, nuts, prunes and black tea. After a gym workout it’s a protein shake, lunch is usually a salad and for dinner she likes chicken or salmon, or a frittata with baked vegies and salad. Because keeping hydrated is crucial during training to maintain proper body salt levels, Densham forces herself to drink three or four litres of water per day by mixing it with light cordial.

ACTOR

Hugh Jackman

At screenings of Baz Luhrmann’s *Australia*, the audience has been known to break into applause during the scene where Hugh Jackman removes his shirt. However, to achieve such an Adonis-like physique requires work. In 1995, when the then 28-year-old was fresh out of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in Perth, he was given a trainer to beef him up for his role as Gaston in the musical *Beauty And The Beast*. Jackman’s weight shot up from 78 to 90 kilos.

Over the past 10 years, Jackman has learned that “seventy per cent is your diet and only 30 per cent is training. What you eat is everything. I just always thought it was about lifting harder, heavier, longer,” he says, “but I think you have to eat more and eat leaner. Bland, really.”

Jackman will work out at the gym four or five times a week for anywhere between 50 and 90 minutes. When filming *Wolverine*, he upped the pace and mixed hard aerobic sessions and jogging with strength and endurance training – bench presses, barbell lunges and light squats. Jackman aims for intense, explosive lifting and regularly changes his workout to keep the routine fresh.

For his diet, the 40-year-old doesn’t do carbs after midday and has sugar-free periods. “For *Wolverine* I was eating every three hours, which got a little crazy,” he says. “I was waking up at 4am to eat.” When training for *Australia*, he lost four kilos. “Drivers are strong but lean. They don’t eat that much, mainly protein,” he says.

Playing the drover was “probably the most physical part I have ever played, more physical than *Wolverine*”. Jackman went to Texas to learn from the toughest cowboys he could find and by the time he was filming in the Kimberleys, he could ride alongside 1500 stampeding cattle.

Aside from his physical disciplines, Jackman also has a daily spiritual practice. Since 1993, when he joined the School of Practical Philosophy, he has meditated every day. “It changed my life,” he says. “I can let go of everything.” →



“Going to the gym is incredibly boring. I prefer my outdoor climbing gym – the rocks themselves.”

Tim Macartney-Snape

Photography: Nick Cubbin





MOUNTAINEER

Tim Macartney-Snape

With two ascents of Everest and a dozen climbs in the Himalayas behind him, it's no surprise mountaineer Tim Macartney-Snape takes a solitary approach to fitness. "Climbing is like meditation," he says. "It is about figuring a sequence of moves to get you from A to B."

Six months before any serious climb, Macartney-Snape starts to prepare by visualising every aspect of the ascent and any potential pitfalls. Freak weather conditions and avalanches are normal, and as a veteran World Expeditions travel group leader, he cannot afford to put a foot wrong. "If you go unprepared and you haven't psyched yourself up, a problem is much harder to deal with," he says.

Mountaineers need cardiovascular strength and full-body athleticism to manoeuvre among tricky rock formations, but the 53-year-old refuses to do any exercise he doesn't enjoy. Jogging on city streets is out, while going to the gym is "incredibly boring," he says. "I prefer my outdoor climbing gym – the rocks themselves."

Macartney-Snape, who lives in the bush near Mittagong in the NSW Southern Highlands, gets his exercise by jogging and mountain-bike riding across hilly terrain, and bouldering – "scrambling around on rocks at a low height". He aims for "a plateau of fitness" and exercises for 30 minutes to one

hour per day, followed by 15 minutes of stretching.

With such pressure to continually perform, accidents and injuries are par for the course. "I've been lucky," Macartney-Snape says. "I've never had frostbite, but I did break my back once when I was skiing in Europe in 1992. I went climbing for practice and the person who was holding my rope let me fall." Then, while climbing last November, he tore his left bicep tendon.

Macartney-Snape describes himself as a "fussy eater who won't eat junk food", so wherever possible he chooses organic and mainly vegetarian fare. For breakfast, it's fruit and yoghurt with LSA (linseed, sunflower seeds and almonds), and toast with honey and tahini; lunch is a cheese salad or sandwich, and dinner is rice and dahl or a stir-fry. He doesn't snack, but drinks copious amounts of tea. Keeping hydrated helps with adapting to high altitudes and, like triathlete Erica Densham (see page 18), Macartney-Snape finds consuming enough water the most challenging aspect of his diet.

Aside from leading expeditions, Macartney-Snape has a business that supplies outdoor equipment and climbing gear to shops. "Going climbing is half work for me," he says. "It's a balance – if I don't exercise and don't keep fit, my imagination suffers." And for those struggling to keep up the New Year's resolution, his advice is simple: "Find a physical activity you enjoy doing. Staying fit is easy then." ●