

DETAILS

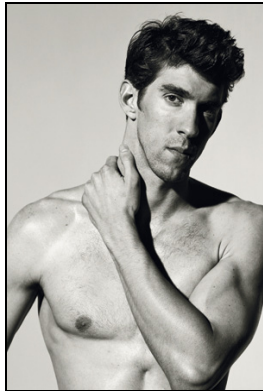
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MICHAEL PHELPS: THE GREATEST AMERICAN HERO

AFTER THE SCANDALS AND THE SETBACKS, THE GREATEST SWIMMER EVER IS RECHARGED, RELAXED, AND READY TO TAKE HIS FINAL SHOT IN LONDON. THE INSIDE STORY OF HOW A SKINNY KID FROM BALTIMORE ASSEMBLED THE BEST BODY OF WORK—AND BODY—IN U.S. OLYMPIC HISTORY.

BY SELENE YEAGER,
PHOTOGRAPHS BY NORMAN JEAN ROY

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Age: 27
Height: 6'4"
Weight: 195 lb
Hometown: Baltimore

Most athletes follow a regimen that builds endurance, strength, and power over the course of a year. Under coach Bob Bowman, the mastermind of the long-term view, Michael Phelps mapped out a 16-year plan for world domination—the entire duration of his career. In the years before the 2004 Athens Games, Phelps focused on building a massive aerobic capacity, logging 50 miles a week in the pool. Leading up to his record-smashing performance in Beijing in 2008, he added four days a week of weight-intense dry-land training—Keenan Robinson, Phelps' trainer, rotates through a bottomless bag of routines to keep Phelps at the top of his game—and 10 pounds of water-slicing muscle. Fourteen gold (and two bronze) Olympic medals later, he's all about power as he prepares to storm London. In addition to knocking out four sets of five pull-ups while wearing a 40-pound vest, "I'm doing more Olympic-style lifts, like power cleans and snatches and plyometric push presses and box jumps, to get explosive power for jumping off the block and pushing out of turns," Phelps says. "At this point in my career, everybody has caught up. So I'm fine-tuning the little things that add up to make a huge difference."



DETAILS: So what do you do for recovery?

Michael Phelps: My trainer, Keenan [Robinson], uses Graston tools, these little metal crowbars. He carves them into my shoulder blades, my back, my knee, my hamstrings—wherever I'm really tight—to loosen things up. It's pretty intense. Obscenities fly out of my mouth the whole time, and I'm usually bruised for two days after it. I also use ice tubs. And when I'm back home, I sleep in an altitude chamber set to about 8,000 feet. All these things help me to be close to my best every time I jump in the water.

Michael Phelps' Workout Tips

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOVERY

"Compared to Beijing, I think the biggest thing is just trying to find ways to recover faster. Going into the weight room three times a week, it can be harder to swim, it can be harder to get up and to feel fresh and do this. So it's like you have to find different exercises or different routines that you go through."

Here are some of Phelps' activities.

Graston Technique®

A modern yet medieval-looking form of soft-tissue manipulation in which the practitioner, in this case Phelps' strength trainer, Keenan Robinson, uses a series of stainless-steel instruments to comb over muscles, find adhesions, and break down scar tissue and stretch connective tissue and muscle fibers. "He takes those little crowbars and carves them into my shoulder blades and I go crazy, letting obscenities fly the whole time," Phelps says. "I bruise for two days. It's pretty intense." But it works. "We used it before a mid-season meet in Missouri in 2007," Robinson recalls. "He was locked up through his rhomboids and lats and external rotators. We went in there and worked it out and he broke the world record in the 200 butterfly. It's amazing."

Click to [read the full story](#).

Note to patients: While Phelps treatment results in some discomfort and bruising, this is not a typical response for GT treatment to be successful. We encourage you to talk with your clinician during treatment.