

MF GETS JACKED

LOSIN' IT!

Our fitness editor got in **the best shape of his life**—in just 12 weeks

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAN SPANIER

↳ GETTING RIPPED ISN'T AS hard as you think. First, you need a reason to start—a reminder of why you're getting up an hour earlier and doing cardio on an empty stomach or running sprints in the snow. For me, I just wanted to get fitter than I'd ever been before, to prove to myself that I could get there. You also need an end date, a deadline. This helps you remember that every day counts. You'll also know you won't have to stay on a superstrict regimen forever.

Finally, you have to have a plan—a viable, proven, achievable plan—because getting into great shape doesn't happen by accident.

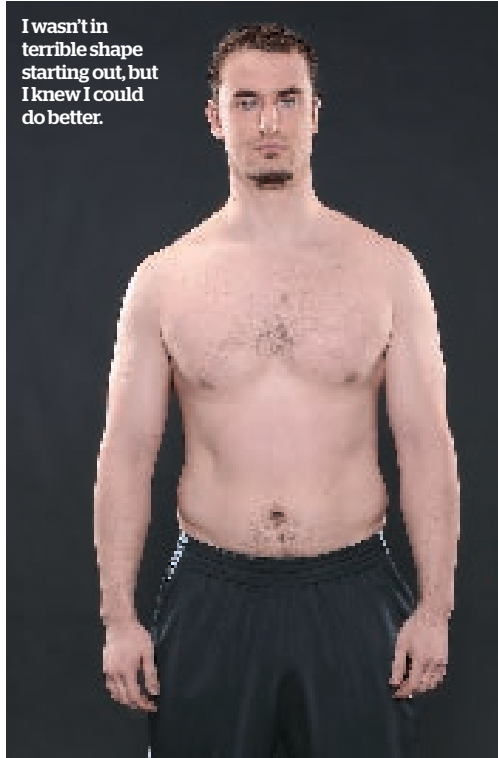


THE NUMBER OF CRUNCHES I PERFORMED IN MY WORKOUTS

AD 1/3V

TRAINER MF GETS JACKED

I wasn't in terrible shape starting out, but I knew I could do better.



TALE OF THE SCALE



> BEFORE

Weight 240 lbs

Body fat 20%

Waist 42 inches

Squat 355 lbs

> AFTER

Weight 205 lbs

Body fat 11%

Waist 36 inches

Squat 405 lbs

My reason for transforming myself was sheer curiosity. I've been on the front lines of *MF*'s fitness coverage for the past six years, yet I didn't feel as though I were carrying the mantle of fitness editor as well as I should have been. I also knew that with a little more discipline, I could be in much better shape—and that made me wonder, "How would I look if I really made the commitment to eating better? How much could I lift if I concentrated on getting stronger? What would it take to be at my absolute best?"

I have access to the top fitness experts in the world, but I haven't always taken full advantage of it. By putting myself to the test, I could not only find out more about my own abilities, but also get a better understanding of how to help you be your best as well.

My program would last 12 weeks—the fitness-industry standard timetable for body transformations. It's a long enough period to see a night-

and-day difference physically, but not so long that deprivation causes you to snap and wipe out your family. I called in *MF* training adviser Jason Ferruggia, a top-level performance coach with 16 years' experience training everyone from athletes to fashion models. I trusted him to create a program that would get me lean and keep me sane.

I had two goals: to lose 20 pounds of body fat and add serious poundage to my lifts. This would be a tremendous challenge, since weight loss so often zaps your strength. My diet would, of course, have to be strict. Red meat, pork, cheese, bread, and alcohol were all forbidden, and I would cycle my carb intake, increasing and decreasing the amount I ate based on my workout for the day. Low-carb diets work well in a short time, but if I was going to hold on to muscle mass and increase my strength, I couldn't cut carbs entirely. Two days a week, I had almost none—a piece of fruit in the morning or a sweet

potato. One day a week, I carbed up, eating starchy foods to replenish the stores in my muscles and, best of all, to give my mind a break. I ate the bulk of my day's carbs at breakfast and around workouts. In the afternoons and evenings, I focused on protein (including whey, casein, and hemp protein shakes), leafy greens, and healthy fats.

Was I miserable? Not really. Just when my cravings for something sweet got intense, it was time to indulge a bit on a high-carb day. I almost never felt lethargic or hungry because I was still eating at regular intervals. I never cheated.

My training had little in common with most fat-loss protocols you see in the gym. I wasn't about to do light, high-rep circuit workouts. I also never went above five reps on the squat, bench press, or deadlift, since using heavy weights is essential for avoiding muscle loss. I did no crunches or situps to make my abs pop, focusing instead on exercises that forced my entire core to brace

my body while I targeted some other muscle group (such as a triceps extension using my body weight rather than a barbell). Ferruggia's program maximized efficiency—all my workouts lasted less than an hour.

I did very little cardio of the long, slow, hop-on-a-treadmill variety. Instead, twice a week I ran sprints up a hill, which was actually fun—except when it was snowing. I jumped rope and did intervals on an exercise bike. Short bursts of all-out intensity followed by short rests gets your cardio done in half the time. I usually went no longer than 20 minutes.

So how did I do? See the pictures. I eclipsed my own expectations, losing 35 pounds—far more weight than I even thought I *had* to lose. Meanwhile, I added some 50 pounds to my squat for a new personal record. I've never felt better.

You can't really understand something until you walk the walk yourself. Having done that, here are a few things I learned that you can trust to help you reach your goals:

- **Cut way back on carbs on days you don't lift weights.**
- **Make fruit, sweet potatoes, brown rice, and quinoa your primary carb sources.**
- **Embrace fat, especially unsaturated sources like olive oil and nuts. It keeps you from getting too hungry—and it tastes great. (I feel as if I owe almond butter my firstborn child.)**
- **Remember that your diet is the biggest factor in losing fat, and no amount or type of training can offset a poor one.**

As for staying motivated, I can only say that if you've decided something is impossible, it must not be important enough to you. Find out what pisses you off enough to want to make it different and then have at it. Or make an appointment to have your before and after photos published in a national fitness magazine and then see how easy it is to roll back over when the alarm clock goes off. It worked for me.

Twelve weeks later, I even surprised myself.



The Schedule

MONDAY

- > Lifting (a.m.) and sprints (p.m.)
- > 100-150 grams carbs

TUESDAY

- > Jump rope intervals (a.m.)
- > 30-50 grams carbs

WEDNESDAY

- > Brisk walk, 1 hour (a.m.)
- > 30-50 grams carbs

THURSDAY

- > Lifting (a.m.) and sprints (p.m.)
- > 100-150 grams carbs

FRIDAY

- > Off or walk (a.m.)
- > 30-50 grams carbs

SATURDAY

- > Lifting and Prowler push* (p.m.)
- > 300 grams carbs

SUNDAY

- > Jump rope, steady state (a.m.)
- > 30-50 grams carbs

*The Prowler is a type of sled that weight can be loaded onto. Sean pushed it the length of the gym and back.

