#GetCreativeWithPorsche: Keeping fit

29/04/2020 Porsche ambassador, former WEC champion and nine times Formula One Grands Prix winner, Mark Webber, shares his tips for getting fit while on lockdown.

Part 4 of the #GetCreativeWithPorsche series is all about fitness; and who better to turn to in our hour of sedentary need than Mark Webber, veteran of Formula One and Porsche's own record-breaking 919 Hybrid sportscar programme.

Fitness is one of the central tenants of racing, giving you strength, stamina and the abilities to stay focussed and recover quickly. During his career in motor racing, Webber wasn't just at the top of his game, but in peak physical condition, often training twice a day.

"Being taller and heavier than the average driver I had to work harder to stay lean," he says. "It required a lot of self-discipline and being fit didn't just equate to being fast: when you're travelling and taking flights all the time you need your immune system to be firing on all cylinders because you can't afford to get ill.

"By the mid 2000s, the (Formula One) cars were doing extraordinary lap times so the drivers then were at their fittest. To put it simply, the greater the G-forces, the better the shape you needed to be in."

Four years after hanging up his helmet, exercise remains a huge part of Webber's life. He has his own range of performance apparel – Aussie Grit – and maintains a rigorous fitness regime, concentrating more now on the sports he loves and the companionship he tended to deny himself while training in earlier years. "Racing taught me so many principles about how to get myself together, and now I have that for life. I had a really nasty mountain bike accident in 2008 and that was a challenging period of my career. But it also taught me to be patient, which goes against a driver's thinking. It taught me to realise how fortunate you are when you're healthy."

In the midst of lockdown, Webber shares some of the lessons he's learned, along with advice for those wanting to get fit while visiting a gym isn't possible.

Starting out

How you work-out depends on your weight and condition. If you're new to exercise, just focus on moving to start with. You need to take baby steps and have patience: begin by laying some foundations.

If you go all out and push yourself too hard, too soon, you aren't going to want to carry on the next day, and the day after. Now is an opportunity to embrace some changes that you can carry with you through

life.

Start with long walks – or short ones if you have to. Maybe seek out some little hills and as you build up some fitness, turn the walk into a jog. Once you can jog for a couple of minutes, try a run, and alternate between running and walking. Vary the intensity and gradually build up the time you spend running, and decrease the time you spend recovering. This kind of interval training is very effective.

Running is one of the most natural things that we, as humans, can do, but it's still one of the hardest things to master. They say it takes 10,000 hours to become great at something, so don't lose hope if it feels hard at the beginning. There have been times in my career when I've been more or less motivated. I no longer have G-forces to contend with so my fitness doesn't need to be at the same level as when I was heading into a grand prix or endurance race, but exercise will always be a huge part of my life. Without a gym to visit or a personal trainer to keep you in check, you've got to be your own policeman.

Working out at home

With the current restrictions in place, most people's days are going to be largely sedentary but moving – however you do it – is really important.

You might not be able to play tennis with a mate, or visit a gym or pool, but there are plenty of things you can do at home, right now. I've always taken an old school approach to fitness and it's a good place to start during lockdown. If you haven't got any weights or home gym equipment, use your own bodyweight.

Even if you're in a flat with other people there are things you can do to get your heartrate up and a light sweat going – and that's all we're aiming for initially. Try star jumps, push ups and burpees. If you're not sure how to do them properly, Google it. Maybe you can do some pull-ups in the garage. If you're sharing a small space with family members, try a bit of light wrestling. I'm not kidding.

Variety won't just keep you interested but it'll get you fitter quicker too. I like to get some exercise in when I wake up. Maybe you can aim to go for a walk first thing in the morning and to do some bodyweight exercises at home in the afternoon. Find a skipping rope – or improvise. Skipping is a fantastic way to get your blood pumping and you can increase the length of time you do it for as you get fitter.

Diet and nutrition

If you keep chucking big logs on your fire it's going to keep growing. It's true what they say: being in shape is 80 per cent down to how you fuel your body. Think about volume control and be willing to compromise. No one likes a chocolate bar more than me, and I love ice cream and red wine but it doesn't mean I have them all the time and when I was racing I was always very aware of my calorie

intake.

Try to eat lots of colours: when it comes to fruit and veg, get as much variety as you can. I've never been into fasting but I like to eat well. A banana and honey sandwich or a smoothie made from yoghurt, nuts, coconut water and berries is great fuel. I love porridge, avocado, or a chicken sandwich or salad. Dates are underrated: I'm a big fan. Be adventurous with your food.

I like to wake up feeling peckish – I never go to bed after having a huge, heavy meal. When I first wake up I drink water to rehydrate. Exercising before breakfast is a good way to turbo-charge your metabolism for the day, even if it's just a brisk 20 minute walk.

I think a lot of people will be eating more as the boredom kicks in – it's a natural response and even the fittest athletes are guilty of it. The wheels can fall off big-time if you're not careful but instead of reaching for something high in sugar, focus on hydrating and snack on fruit and nuts if you get hungry between meals.

Stay motivated

I always lay my runners out the night before so that when I wake up in a morning my kit is all ready and I've no excuses. If you are prepared, you're more likely to succeed. That's as relevant to fitness as it is to everything else in life. A great sports physio told me once that you should always come home wanting to do a bit more. Exercise is an investment over time, so finish when you've still got a little left in the tank because you want to be back out there again tomorrow.

Training alongside other drivers always brought out the competitive streak in me and it's great for motivation. While you might not be able to exercise with a friend at the moment, maybe you can find a virtual workout buddy and set goals together. Sign up for a 5k or 10k run, or a half marathon, depending on your fitness levels and ultimate targets. Having something in the calendar to work towards might give you that push to work a bit harder.

When I was racing, our body fat would be measured by skin fold calipers. They'd check how much mud you were carrying on seven sites around your body: your calf, quad, at the top of your backside/bottom of your back, your shoulder blades, triceps and biceps. There's no hiding from those kind of tests: the figures speak for themselves. Nowadays I'm not a slave to the scales and you don't need to obsess about distance or time in order to make gains. It's all about 'RPE' – rate of perceived exertion. In a nutshell, it's about pacing yourself and letting your body tell you when enough is enough without fixating on arbitrary numbers or the dreaded bathroom scales.

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