



Seeing



Five years after his last cover, WWE Superstar Triple H offers M&F an exclusive look at his chest and back workout, and discusses his training, favorite steakhouses and his daughters' patty-cake sessions with his 500-pound friends

TRIPLE H



By Jon Finkel
Photos by
Ian Spanier



Daddy, who's gonna push you down tonight?"
 This isn't a question the average father expects to hear from his 2-year-old daughter before heading off to work, but this daddy isn't average. He's 6'4" and weighs 255 pounds, and when he gets pushed, he pushes back. It's more likely that he'd give you a facebreaker knee smash, falling neckbreaker, spinning spinebuster or, if he really wants to finish you off, his signature Pedigree move: a double-underhook facebuster. Have you figured out who Daddy is yet?



We'll forgive you if you haven't. After all, Daddy does run counter to his other pseudonyms. Monikers such as The Game, The Cerebral Assassin and The King of Kings don't exactly conjure up paternal thoughts, but since we last spoke with Triple H for his M&F cover story in May 2004, there have been some big changes in the life of Hunter Hearst Helmsley.

The biggest, of course, is that he has become a father to two girls. "My oldest daughter is 2 and she's just getting to the age where she [recognizes] me in the ring," Triple H says. "She has been to some live events and has seen me backstage with the guys. When we're about to head out for a match, I just tell her that Daddy and his friends are going out to play."

By "play," he means slam the hell out of each other in front of a packed arena of 15,000 screaming fans. When it's over, however, they really are still friends.

"My wife [Stephanie McMahon, daughter of WWE Chairman Vince McMahon] grew up around this business and was really close to many of the wrestlers," he says. "It's cool to see our daughter have the same relationship. One minute she's meeting [WWE Superstar] Hornswoggle and the next she's playing patty-cake with [WWE Superstar] The Big Show."

» **The Big Show is 7' and weighs almost a quarter-ton, which makes the aptly named World's Largest Athlete also the World's Largest Patty-Cake Player.** But while he trades light handslaps with Triple H's daughter, it doesn't preclude him from lighting up her father in the ring; even though The King of Kings now has a couple of heirs running around, he's still a top dog in the WWE and thus has a bull's-eye on his back every night. To take on all comers, he needs to be in the best shape of his life. For that, he relies on two things: diet and training.

"I train in the same style I always have — just smarter," he says. "The thing is, because I'm so busy with traveling and my family, I need to plan every workout. Sometimes I have five straight days to train, so I do one bodypart per workout. Other weeks I might be in five cities in five days so I have time to train only once. If that happens, I'll train my whole body in one workout."

If this sounds like the sign of a man who has reached maturity in both life and lifting, it is. After all, Triple H tore his quad clean off the bone a few



“There's a gym everywhere as long as you have the intensity”

THE WORKOUT

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
CHEST		
Incline Bench Press	4	10,8,7,4
Flat-Bench Dumbbell Press	2	8,6
Hammer Strength Press	1	to failure
Dumbbell Flye	2	8-10,6-7
BACK		
Pull-Up	2	10 (bodyweight), 6-7 (weighted)
Smith Machine Bent-Over Row (overhand grip)	3	10,8,6
One-Arm Dumbbell Row	2	10,6 (each arm)
Hammer Strength Row	1	to failure
Back Extension	2	12 (bodyweight), 8-10 (45 pounds)

If Triple H trains chest and back in the same day, he does so in a circuit.



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chicken sandwiches and throw out the buns.”

This isn't to say that being on the road is a never-ending parade of low-grade drive-thru fare. There are some benefits to traveling, such as getting to eat at some of America's great steakhouses on a semiregular basis.

“I love steakhouses,” Triple H says. “When I'm in Chicago I know there's a Gibsons that's open late. 13 Coins at Sea-Tac Airport in Washington is a gourmet restaurant I love. When I'm on the road, restaurants are like gyms: I know where I want to be in each city. In Chicago I go to Powerhouse and on Long Island I go to Bev Francis [Powerhouse Gym].”

It always comes back to the gyms, which makes sense for someone who

started lifting at 14 years old. Back then, Triple H was a self-proclaimed 135-pound beanpole in Nashua, New Hampshire, who decided to try working out when he got a free one-week trial membership at a local health club. From that point on he lifted every day, packing almost 100 pounds onto his skinny frame before he turned 20. In

fact, at age 19 he got his first taste of fame by winning the Teenage Mr. New Hampshire.

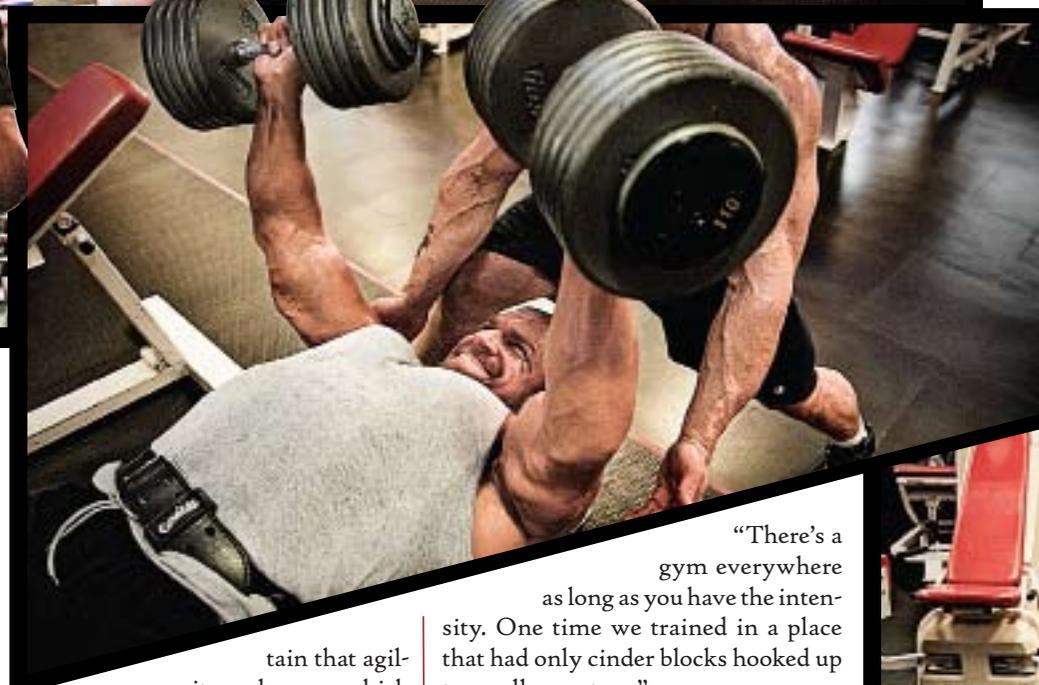
Since then, he has become a WWE Champion multiple times and sure-fire WWE Hall-of-Famer. Outside of wrestling he has starred in the famous Miller Lite “Man Laws” commercials, and appeared on *Saturday Night Live*,

years ago and can't afford to be sloppy with his workouts. His trainer Dave Palumbo makes sure he isn't.

“A guy Triple H's size is always at risk of overtraining,” he says. “Our workout sessions are designed to have him in and out of the gym in an hour. It's low-volume training but with a really high intensity. We now also focus on gearing up for events like *WrestleMania*.”

Triple H does this by treating each year's *WrestleMania* like a bodybuilding show and locking in his training 12–16 weeks out. This differs from his past strategy of bulking up or slimming down depending on how he felt during the year. “It's beneficial for me to be lighter now, somewhere in the 250 range,” he says.

“That's something else we work on,” Palumbo explains. “He's a big guy and he's really strong. Keeping his weight around 250 allows him to main-



Trainer Dave Palumbo helps Triple H stay at the top of his Game

tain that agility and power, which is important for wrestling.”

Having a yearlong target weight is another of the many differences between the Triple H of today and that of a few years ago. He admits that in the past, he got lazy and let things slide. These days, not only does he not let his training lag but he also uses it to overcome jet lag.

“No matter where or what time I land, I get off the plane and go right to the gym. If the hotel doesn't have one, I'll find something local,” he says.

“There's a gym everywhere as long as you have the intensity. One time we trained in a place that had only cinder blocks hooked up to a pulley system.”

➤ **As a WWE Superstar you burn through passports faster than Jason Bourne.** On an average European tour, the WWE may hit a different city every night for 2–3 weeks. This makes working out on a consistent basis hard — and eating healthy even harder.

“I get meals when I can or I have protein shakes,” Triple H says. “Being on the road is no excuse for having a poor diet. I don't like fast food, but if I have to I'll order three plain grilled



GROOMING: MICHELLE COURSEY FOR ABTP



The *Bernie Mac Show* and MTV's *Punk'd*. He has also had a successful turn on the silver screen, starring in *Blade: Trinity* (2004) as a vampire enforcer named Jarko Grimwood.

He receives screenplays often but is selective as to what he'll star in next. "One of the roles that my name keeps popping up for is Conan — if they decide to redo it," he explains. "A few years ago there was a draft in which Arnold Schwarzenegger would play Conan and I'd play his son, but he became governor. I also get asked if I'm going to play Thor. I read that a few months ago, but I'm not sure if anything's happening with it. I mean, Ryan Reynolds was in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009) and I almost beat him up in *Blade*. That should count for something."

But Triple H believes none of the TV appearances, movie offers and commercials would have been possible if he hadn't committed to serious weight training at such a young age.

» **"If I hadn't stepped foot in the gym at 14, I truly believe I wouldn't be where I am today," he says.** "The discipline that weight training taught me has really helped throughout my career. I mean, when I was a young teenager, one of the things I loved about pro wrestling was the physiques and the larger-than-life guys. I remember looking at their bodies and thinking, *I want to be like that.*"

This is why Triple H is excited to appear on our cover for a second time: If a kid looks at the photos from this cover shoot and is motivated to get in the gym, then Triple H has done what the wrestlers from previous generations did for him. In essence, he has given back.

"For a lot of guys, being on the cover of *GQ* would be a big deal," Triple H says. "But for me, the bodybuilding magazines are bigger. I have my own workout book, and I've been on the cover of *FLEX* and now *MUSCLE & FITNESS* twice. *M&F* is the best at diet, nutrition and training information, and this is an opportunity to work with some of the top photographers in the world. The photos themselves are justification for all the hard work I've put in." **M&F**

SNAPSHOT

REAL NAME: Paul Michael Levesque
BIRTHDATE: July 27, 1969
BIRTHPLACE: Nashua, New Hampshire
RESIDENCES: New Hampshire, Connecticut
HEIGHT: 6'4"
WEIGHT: 250–265 pounds
WEBSITE: wwe.com
HIGHLIGHT: 13-time world champion



THE SPLIT

DAY BODYPART(S) TRAINED

1	Chest
2	Back
3	Shoulders
4	Legs
5	Arms
6–7	Off

Triple H trains calves and abs in various workouts.

Cardio: 30–45 minutes on a treadmill every day at low intensity, either first thing in the morning or postworkout

If Triple H trains chest and back in the same day, he does so in a circuit.

WATCH IT! *WWE SummerSlam* airs live on PPV, Sunday, Aug. 23, from the Staples Center at 8 p.m. ET



“When I’m on the road, restaurants are like gyms: I know where I want to be in each city”



For exclusive photos and behind-the-scenes video from the shoot and to check out bonus quotes from Triple H, go to muscleandfitness.com