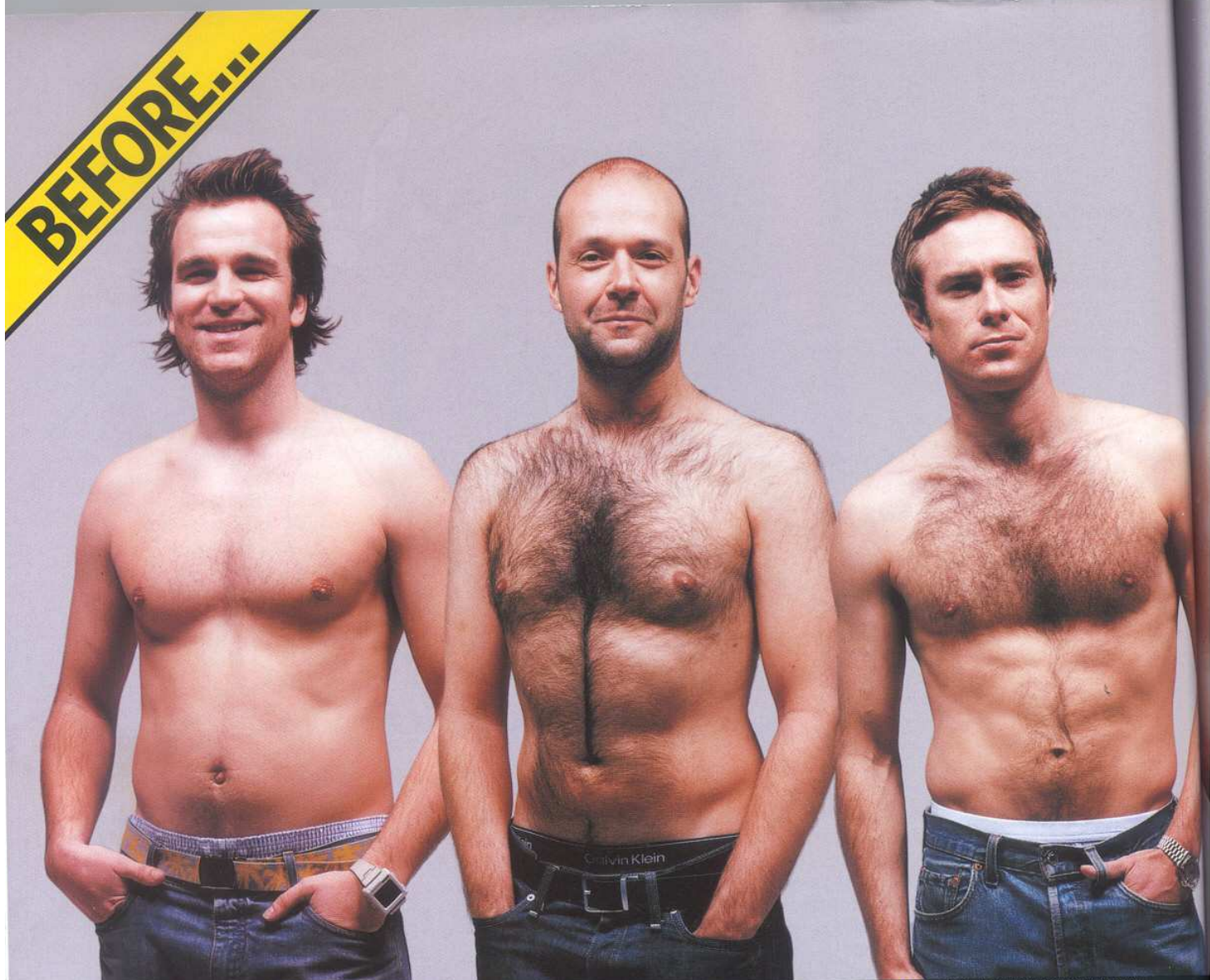


BEFORE...



▶ THE PLAYBOY
DAN ROOKWOOD, COMMISSIONING EDITOR

▶ THE BEGINNER
JOHN VILLE, DEPUTY EDITOR

▶ THE SKINNY MAN
JOE MACKIE, FEATURES EDITOR

SIX-PACK IN

If you walked into the *MH* offices you might get a bit of a shock. There's the smell, of course, then there's the fact that — *gasp!* — we don't all look like our cover models. We're just ordinary blokes, facing the same time constraints as you — and the same

**▶ THE OLDER MAN**

MICHAEL JOHNSON, PRODUCTION EDITOR

▶ THE PLATEAU MAN

GARRY MEARS, ART DIRECTOR

▶ THE INJURED MAN

DAVID WATERS, STYLE EDITOR

SIX WEEKS

pie-and-pint temptations. We tell you again and again how you can banish your bellies and build your abs. But can we practise what we preach? Six weeks, six *MH* staffers and six elusive stomach muscles. This is how we did it, and how you can too ▶

AFTER!



THE PLAYBOY

DAN ROOKWOOD, COMMISSIONING EDITOR

THE BEGINNER

JOHN VILLE, DEPUTY EDITOR

THE SKINNY MAN

JOE MACKIE, FEATURES EDITOR

AGE	25	
HEIGHT	180 CM	
STATS	BEFORE	AFTER
WEIGHT	79.1 KG	76 KG
WAIST	34 IN	31 IN
BODY FAT	15.9%	14.8%

THE PROBLEMS The nightly temptations of the capital had Dan downing at least 20 pints of calorie-packed lager a week, plus a few more sophisticated tipples. Coupled with a fondness for fine dining and fast food, his "calories in" column was soaring.

Dan had been fairly inactive, squeezing in the odd Sunday football game, and consequently squeezing into his jeans ever more tightly.

THE SOLUTIONS Booze, poor food choices and lack of sleep were all out. New to the weights

game, Dan started with total body circuits, then moved on to isolation training, using ab routines 1, 2, 3 and 4 three times a week. To lose his covering layer of fat, Dan went on a vigorous aerobic regime – running, cycling or rowing for at least an hour, five days a week.

THE RESULTS With youth on his side, Dan's body responded dramatically to the weights and cardio work. The biggest "loser" in the group dropped three inches from his waist.

THE NEXT STEP His muscles are already clearly defined; to keep them he needs to do regular abs conditioning and cardio work – at least three times a week.

AGE	33	
HEIGHT	178 CM	
STATS	BEFORE	AFTER
WEIGHT	74.6 KG	70 KG
WAIST	33 IN	32 IN
BODY FAT	15.8%	12.5%

THE PROBLEMS Not the best genetics and no fondness for the gym had left John with a low level of fitness, high body fat and a lot of work to do. He works long hours and plays in a band (Callaghan) twice a week, and both sap his time and energy. Plus, John's weakness for red wine, cheese and curry spelt dietary disaster.

THE SOLUTIONS John followed the basic beginner's principles, gently easing into a training regime. He alternated between abs routines 1, 2 and 3 with

40 minutes of aerobic work and a light total-body workout for two weeks. In the last four weeks he added isolation training for chest and triceps, back and biceps, shoulders and legs.

John trained in the early morning and the afternoon so evenings were free for rock stardom. And without starving, he cut down on booze – and cheese.

THE RESULTS John saw a dramatic change in body shape, dropping an inch off his waist and adding muscle all over.

THE NEXT STEP Rumour has it his band's next gig is topless.

THE NEXT STEP He needs to keep integrating workouts into his life. Consistency is key, and further results will come.

AGE	31	
HEIGHT	173 CM	
STATS	BEFORE	AFTER
WEIGHT	68.5 KG	66.9 KG
WAIST	31 IN	30 IN
BODY FAT	13%	11.7%

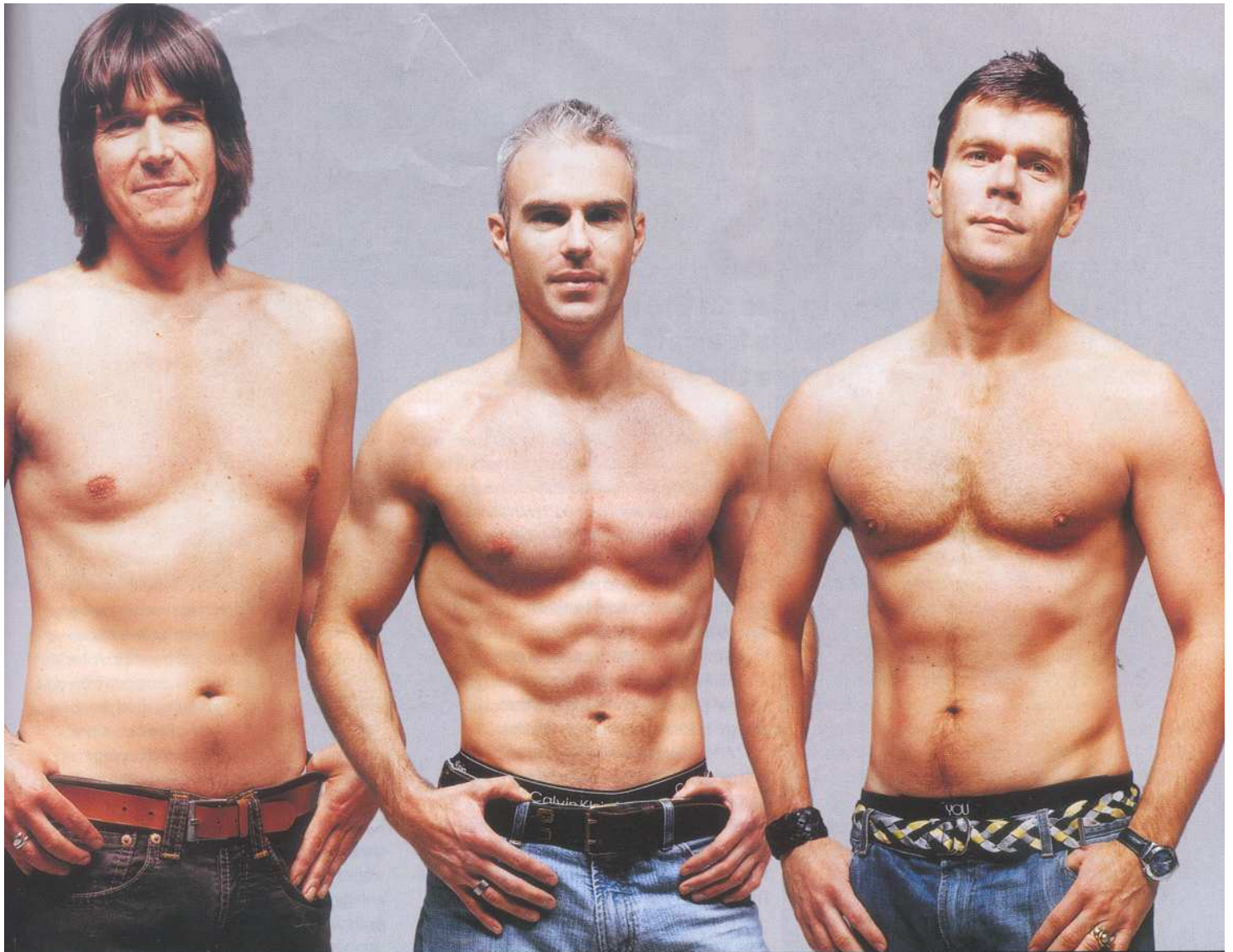
THE PROBLEMS Joe has very little body fat, but could do with adding more muscle to his slim, V-shaped frame. Although a damaged knee has kept him out of running and his usual football games, he's a regular gym-goer. And that meant he'd been in the habit of eating and drinking what he liked with no "gut reaction".

THE SOLUTIONS Regular exercise has given Joe a relatively small yet athletic shape, but he needed isolation training to maximise growth in his individual

muscle groups. His abs got routines 2,3,4 and 5 in rotation three times a week, but his knee cut out his cardio exercise of choice – running – so he concentrated on the bike, rower and elliptical trainer. He kept up a healthy diet and replaced pints with protein shakes to supply his muscles with the fuel they needed to grow.

THE RESULTS Joe dropped body fat and lost an inch off his waist but failed to put on any weight. Regaining his fitness levels and a rock-hard stomach was a nice consolation prize, though.

THE NEXT STEP If he sticks with the muscle-building programme and ensures he gets enough protein each day, he should see more growth.



▶ THE OLDER MAN

MICHAEL JOHNSON, PRODUCTION EDITOR

AGE	43
HEIGHT	190 CM
STATS	BEFORE AFTER
WEIGHT	87.4 KG 85 KG
WAIST	37 IN 36 IN
BODY FAT	16.4% 16.2%

THE PROBLEMS At 43, Mike's body is not as susceptible to change, and his height means he'll never really be geared towards big, bustling muscles. Although he would go to the gym a couple of times a week, his visits weren't exactly torture sessions. Late nights at work often meant hastily prepared evening meals lacking in protein and high on carbs.

THE SOLUTIONS As Mike's work schedule meant he could only exercise three days a week, the focus was placed on heightened

intensity. Every time he visited the sweatbox he hammered the cardio machines, did abs routines 1,2 and 3, plus press-ups, pull-ups and a time-saving super-set of lunges, squats and jump-squats. He also alternated chest, back and biceps workouts.

Mike restricted his drinking to one night a week, upped his quota of low-fat meats and cut back on the bread.

THE RESULTS An inch off the waist and a drop of 2kg left Mike trimmer than he'd hoped. The six-pack isn't there yet, but there's less covering it up.

THE NEXT STEP He needs to stick with the programme. Three days a week isn't a fast track, but in time it will get results.

▶ THE PLATEAU MAN

GARRY MEARS, ART DIRECTOR

AGE	33
HEIGHT	173 CM
STATS	BEFORE AFTER
WEIGHT	70.7 KG 69 KG
WAIST	31 IN 29 IN
BODY FAT	8.4% 6.9%

THE PROBLEMS Despite having the body fat of a gnat and training his abs religiously over the years, Garry had never chiselled a genuine six-pack. He's an Irish patriot on the weekends, chugging down 12 pints of Guinness, plus wine.

THE SOLUTIONS The key was to start training Garry's abs with weights, whereas before he'd always used body-weight exercises. The idea was to shock them into growing. In addition to his regular weight-lifting routine, he alternated between abs routines 3, 4, 5 and 6

three times a week.

Garry also kicked the booze and cycled 8.5 miles to work and back every day. And that's in addition to his regular kick-boxing sessions.

THE RESULTS Garry achieved the kind of sculpted midriff that would make Greek statues go green. Surprisingly, his body fat remained fairly constant, but his abs exploded – the picture speaks for itself.

THE NEXT STEP Now that Garry has built up his muscles, he needs to continually increase the weights he uses to both maintain what he has and to gain even more muscle mass. And luckily for him, no one else in the office will be buying him a pint for a while.

▶ THE INJURED MAN

DAVID WATERS, STYLE EDITOR

AGE	40
HEIGHT	178 CM
STATS	BEFORE AFTER
WEIGHT	84.1 KG 79.5 KG
WAIST	33 IN 30 IN
BODY FAT	20.2% 18.%

THE PROBLEMS

Knee damage suffered on the ski slopes has limited David's aerobic options. Previously a keen runner, his favourite fat-burner had been ruled out. Visually, David's the office Peter Pan, but the body's true age takes no prisoners. The average man's metabolism drops 3% each year beyond the age of 30, so he's found it increasingly difficult to shift the weight put on during his injury lay-off.

THE SOLUTIONS Wisely avoiding London's tube system, David walked the 35 minutes to and from

work each day. Plus, he added vigorous hour-long cardio workouts six days a week, using low-impact equipment: the stationary bike, elliptical trainer and rowing machine.

He also pushed weights for his upper body three times a week, and did abs routines 1,2,3 and 4. He cut out the booze completely.

THE RESULTS Shedding 5kg and 2.5% of body fat, David says he can now fit into his old clothes, which should make for some good office entertainment with the '80s being his era of choice.

THE NEXT STEP He does yoga daily to maintain the suppleness in his joints, and all the cardio he can manage to shed those last few inches.

SIX-PACK STORIES

The *MH* team put their bellies on the line to find out if a fast-track six-pack is feasible. What did that really feel like? Here are their testimonials



THE PLAYBOY DAN ROOKWOOD, COMMISSIONING EDITOR

"Whoever said cheats never prosper was lying to get ahead. I secretly did everything short of surgery to turn my beer barrel into a six-pack. But, like an STD-free porn star, I can now come clean.

I used to be fairly sporty. Then I joined *Men's Health* and quickly published a second edition of my chin. Whoever said there's no such thing as a free lunch had never seen my social calendar. Or my rapidly expanding gut. Although no gymslip of a lad, I'd sucked myself into believing I was quite trim until I saw the 'before' pics. I was even more shocked to see my ridiculous training schedule. I got a good ab workout just laughing at it.

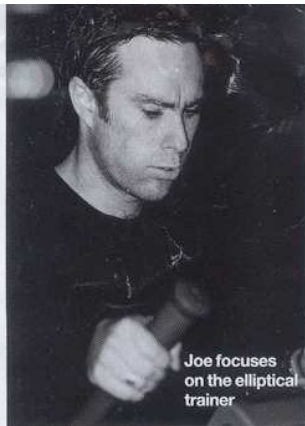
"But I dug deep into my commitment reserves. It was out with lavish lunches and in with the painful crunches. It was a hard, constant battle, but vanity won out over temptation. I had no bad carbs after breakfast, just protein, and fresh fruit and veg. Crucially, I also gave up alcohol almost completely.

"And yes, I had help: six sessions with a brilliant personal trainer called Dave Green (www.aipt.co.uk) and a course of 12 very effective 'vacunaut' sessions (www.hypoxitraining.com), which involved wearing a suit of bubblewrap under vacuum suction while walking on a treadmill. The combination saw me lose three inches off my waist. So, if 'whoever' says you can't get a six-pack in six weeks, they're wrong."



THE BEGINNER JOHN VILLE, DEPUTY EDITOR

"Edging towards a mid-thirties paunch and blessed (thanks, Dad) with a face prone to 'jowling', recent pictures hadn't been pleasant viewing. I also had a general feeling of 'heaviness'... that sensation when your gut spills out over the top of your trousers as you sit down. The time had come to stop putting it off and start sweating it off.



Joe focuses on the elliptical trainer



Dan takes up arms

"Buoyed by the challenge, the first week went well. I'd been warned to go easy as I hadn't been a regular gym-goer for some time... having what my fellow six-packers termed 'motivation issues'.

"My focus was getting my overall weight and body-fat down, then building abdominal definition through sit-ups, crunches and hyper extensions. And that meant CV work: lots of it. I spent most lunchtimes on the treadmill, using interval training to get my heart rate into the fat-burning zone.

"I cut out most booze, cheese, paid attention to what I ate after exercising and discovered the energy-boosting benefits of breakfast.

"After three weeks I started to see a difference. Clothes got looser; the CV work got a little easier. There were setbacks: vodka, lime and sodas are the new slimming drink, and I couldn't resist a curry. I skipped the gym more than once because I was too knackered, but I made sure I was back the next day.

"Six weeks on, I feel so much better. Okay, my abs need more work – I have more of a two-pack than a six-pack. But I have tons more energy, I've kicked most of the junk food, and I no longer shudder when I see my mug in photographs."



THE SKINNY MAN JOE MACKIE, FEATURES EDITOR

"Here's the most important lesson I learned: until you stop hiding behind excuses, your abs will keep hiding behind a layer of lard. For me, the excuse was damaging my knee ligaments last summer. But it could have been work commitments (training takes place in our own time, even at *Men's Health*), family (no tiny feet pattering for me, but there's a stampede of them among my mates), or any of the other pressures life puts on our time as we go into decade three.

"So, step one was admitting the injury was an excuse, not a genuine barrier to staying fit. Step two was deciding what I wanted to achieve. I've always found it hard to put on muscle, but I've always been fit and slim from football, running, snowboarding and a hatred for public transport, which means I walk – a lot. I didn't want a massive

change, just to lose the roll that was starting to appear and get the tightness back in my body.

"To achieve that, I needed to find a knee-friendly routine and dedicate myself to it. I added upper-body weights to my knee rehab work and got very familiar with the rowing machine, bike and, most importantly – the elliptical trainer.

"Rotating between them and upping intensity with interval training gave the kind of workout I thought I could only get through running. I started to feel good, and when that happens it gets addictive. At the end of the six weeks I feel better than I have for months – more energy, better sleep, and generally high on life. And I won't let it slip. No more excuses."



THE OLDER MAN MICHAEL JOHNSON, PRODUCTION EDITOR

"They say that life begins at 40, but so, sadly, does middle-age spread. And my middle was spreading faster than butter on a hotplate. 'Oh, but you're tall enough to carry it off,' people would reassure me whenever I voiced concern. Yet while it may be true that long limbs and cunningly selected clothes can disguise a multitude of midriff sins, when the tops came off for the first photoshoot any words of comfort rang a little hollow.

"Shocked by the pictures, I resolved to coax the muscles I'd last seen sometime in the early '90s out of retirement. My status as office OAP earned me a plan that wasn't too prescriptive dietwise and didn't put me through quite the same hoops in the gym as my younger colleagues. But it was still no stroll on the treadmill.

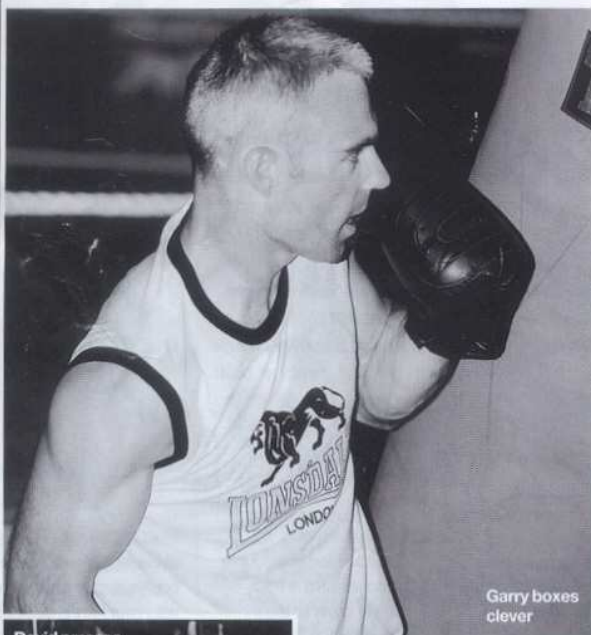
"Each session commenced with a series of basic moves – press-ups, pull-ups, lunges with weights and squat-jumps. These were more demanding than I expected, but with a bit of grit it



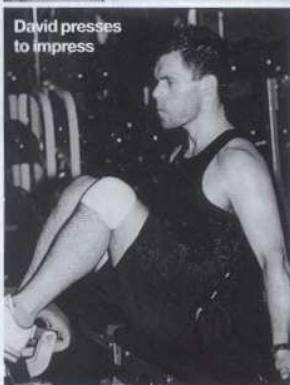
It's mill time for John...



...and crunch time for Mike



Garry boxes clever



David presses to impress

completed them. Next came isolation exercises, and I also squeezed in at least 20 minutes of cardio work twice a week.

"Dietwise, I banned the two Bs: beer and bread. I can't say a weekly half-ottle of white wine was my substitute for a pint of foaming ale. And if I had any more muesli in the morning instead of my usual buttered toast I'll probably turn Swiss. But having seen the final pictures, the self-restraint has been worthwhile. My abs may not be rippling but they're no longer jiggling, and that's a weight loss for any 40-something's mind."



THE PLATEAU MAN
GARRY MEARS, ART DIRECTOR

"When the ab gauntlet was thrown down, I was the first to grab it. I've exercised constantly for the last 10 years – mountain-bike racing, kick-boxing and weight-training – and I'm known to my friends as the 'it bloke'. But even with what most people consider an active lifestyle, I'd never managed to develop the six-pack I was after.

"I needed to move up a gear, so I hit the weights harder than ever, and cycled to and from work. It seemed to make a difference in the first week, and I was feeling confident. Then, midway through my new-found routine, the misery started – my weight went up, my body wasn't hanging and I felt like quitting.

"Why? Well, they say Guinness is good for you, but not for a six-pack! After kidding myself that I had cut back, I decided the black stuff had to go completely. My overall diet was fairly good, but I had to get serious with my nutrition to make

a big difference. I cut carbs from my diet after lunchtime, and survived on a high-protein evening meal.

"I trained for five days a week in the gym and kept cycling. I know this may sound drastic, but if you want serious results you have to face the fact that it takes serious action. I needed to shock my body to make the difference, and it worked. I managed to swap my six pints for a six-pack, within the six weeks. Plus I feel fitter and healthier than ever before, and I have a strange urge to take off my shirt at the slightest hint of sunshine."



THE INJURED MAN
DAVID WATERS, STYLE EDITOR

"At my 40th birthday party last December I drunkenly lifted my shirt to display my 'mono-belly'. My younger boyfriend did the same, except he exposed a taut six-pack. Hitting 40 is a watershed in many ways, a farewell to youth, and at that moment it felt like a farewell to a body I'd ever want to expose in public again. To be honest, I didn't think these six weeks would change that, but they have.

"My energy levels have increased, I feel relaxed and, miraculously, I've been able to run for the first time since my cruciate ligament damage a year ago. Four weeks of cycling and Nordic trainer work built up the strength in my knee, and I've lost the weight I put on after the accident.

"The results aside, I've surprised myself with how much I've enjoyed actually *doing* the six-pack challenge. I'll be drinking more and allowing myself the odd dessert now it's over, but I'll be keeping up the work to keep the weight off. The extra energy and the regained confidence in my body are things I definitely want to hold on to." ▶

THE AB ROUTINES

Personal trainer Phoenix O'Neal designed these workouts for the *MH* six-pack guinea pigs. It all seemed so simple, but after six weeks of sheer agony, no one was offering to buy her a protein shake

- 1** **Crunches** 4 sets of 15
Plank Hold for 30 seconds
Sit-ups 4 sets of 15
Back extensions 3 sets of 20
- 2** **Twisting crunches** 3 sets of 15
Sit-ups 4 sets of 15
Back extensions 3 sets of 20
Reverse curls 4 sets of 20
- 3** **Swiss ball crunches** 4 sets of 20
Back extensions 3 sets of 20
Twisting crunches 4 sets of 20
Cycle (knee to opposite elbow) 4 sets of 30
- 4** **Twisting crunches** 4 sets of 20, alternate legs
Hanging knee raises 3 sets of 20
Back extensions 4 sets of 20
Plank Hold for 60 seconds
- 5** **Swiss ball crunches** 4 sets of 30
Hanging knee raises 3 sets of 20
Back extensions 3 sets of 20
Reverse curls 4 sets of 20
- 6** **Crunches** (with a 10kg weight held to chest) 4 sets of 20
Sit-ups (with a 10kg weight held to chest) 4 sets of 15
Back extensions 4 sets of 20
Twisting crunches 3 sets of 40 each side
Plank Hold for 60 seconds