

BRIDES, *on your marks!*

In our exclusive interview, newly engaged world champion heptathlete Jessica Ennis shares her tips for staying focused – and she should know!



She's the golden girl of British athletics and one of the country's hottest hopes for the London 2012 Olympics. Now, Jessica Ennis has added another superlative to her already stellar CV: fittest bride-to-be on the planet. After her long-term boyfriend Andy Hill popped the question in a surprise Christmas Eve proposal, we had to get in touch to find out what body-beautiful secrets the famously disciplined star had to share. Here, she reveals how she stays motivated (even when it hurts!) and drops a few hints about what kind of bride she'll be.

We know you've put your wedding planning on hold until after the Olympics, but what kind of big-day style do you have in mind?

Well, I'm not the wacky type. But to be honest, I haven't had much time to think about it due to my competition schedule. When the time comes, I'll be doing a lot of magazine buying and internet browsing for ideas though. And I can't wait to share the whole experience with my family and girlfriends – they'll all have to be involved!

What's your schedule like at the moment?

Pretty full on. I'm training six days a week, usually twice a day.

Most of us would hide under the duvet from that many workouts – do you ever find it tough to get started?

I do sometimes want to turn over in bed and stay there, but I'd never forgive myself if I missed a session. My major motivation is to be the best that I can, and every session counts.

Aside from the physical benefits, people are always talking about the mood-boosting powers of a good workout (key for dealing with, say, wedding-planning stress!). Is that true in your experience, too?

Definitely. When you're training, you're 100% focused on the task in hand. Sometimes I go into a session with something bothering me and afterwards it's all in perspective – often because I'm too tired to think anymore!

How do you stay energised while you're training?

My iPod gets me pumped up and ready to

compete – I'm really enjoying Rihanna's new album, and I love R & B and hip-hop. Music is a great way to zone out and get in your own world. As for food, I need to keep my energy up but can't train on a full stomach, so it's little and often – snacks like cereal bars and Haribo gums, and a light lunch like a toasted sandwich, soup or a nice noodle salad. My main meal is in the evening, and I make sure I'm getting the protein and carbs I need to recover. But I always sneak in a pudding after!

One big challenge brides-to-be face with their pre-wedding fitness regimes is burnout – but with the heptathalon, you've got a built-in system against boredom. How important is it to constantly shake up your routine?

Anyone who takes up fitness should try lots of things, and enjoy a bit of variety – that way, you'll find the activities you really enjoy. The worst thing anyone can



do is set an impossible goal, fail, and not enjoy it. Exercise should be fun! That's why dance, circuits, yoga and spinning are popular: by the time you think about what you're doing, 30 minutes has passed and you're getting a buzz out of the exercise.

Are there any crazy workouts you love to do?

As I train so much, every session is really hard and has a purpose. But we definitely do some quirky workouts, like funky hurdles and lots of sand-pit drills, which are hard but good fun. When I've got time to myself away from the track, though, the most exercise I do is swimming in the sea.

Are there any sessions you dread?

Yes, the 800m sessions, but I know I have to do them. They never get easier, but there is a kind of satisfaction afterwards in knowing I've got it under my belt. And

sometimes when you dread something enough, the reality is better.

How do you deal with post-training muscle soreness or fatigue?

The best thing is to do a little something the next day – stretching or a gentle jog. It sounds mad, but it will take away the soreness. And make sure you always stretch well after exercise, which can help reduce it in the first place.

Do you do anything to spoil yourself after an amazing workout?

Retail therapy is one of my other skills! I love shopping and get a real buzz out of new clothes and shoes, and it's all the more satisfying if you're treating yourself after a successful competition. I always have a shop after a major championship.

You've joked in the past that your fiancé Andy wouldn't be able to keep up on one of your training sessions. Have you two ever worked out casually together?

He's yet to join in on a session but has promised he will one day. He has come along to our hill sessions in the park with our dog Myla, but just to watch. It's business for me, so unless we are in a pool on holiday, I don't work out casually.

What about your friends – do they ask you for a lot of workout advice?

Often! Especially for little tips on toning certain areas. A lot of the time I suggest exercises on a fit ball, which are great.

You're constantly tracking your progress. How satisfying is it to watch yourself improve?

I love achieving new goals – every session I do is aimed at improvement so it's immensely satisfying to progress. It's a real buzz to come away from a session or competition and know I'm getting better. Seeing yourself improve – in appearance and fitness level – spurs you on.

As a champion athlete, you've got to be a bit of a perfectionist. Will this apply to your wedding planning?

I will be one of the most organised brides you have ever met! And I'll want to be in total control – but I don't think I'll be a bridezilla. Despite being focused, I'm a pretty relaxed person.