

TOP FORM



For questions choose from the athletes A-C, the athletes may be used more than once.

Which athlete

1. started doing her sport as a way of using up energy?
2. thinks she sometimes demands too much of herself?
3. has worked as a model?
4. sometimes feels too tired to go on?
5. took a break from her sport to improve her motivation?
6. used to have to combine training for her sport with a job?
7. hasn't completely recovered from an old injury?
8. feels people's envy is misplaced?
9. doesn't avoid any particular type of food?
10. knows the time when she can continue in her sport will be soon up?
11. wouldn't consider having a day in the week free of training?
12. goes straight from the track to the pool when she is training?
13. says she has a different attitude to her body from non-athletes?
14. feels that she was born with certain advantages?
15. gave up something time-consuming to concentrate on her sport?

A Jessie, 31, is a 100m hurdler.

'People are always commenting on my arms. I think I'm lucky genetically because I had good muscle tone even before I started training. I've actually been earning some extra money recently by posing for some photographers who appreciate the beauty of the strong, fit bodies athletes possess. Obviously, I have to watch what I eat carefully, and as desserts and chocolate are a weakness of mine, it can be a problem! I tore the ligaments in my knee three years ago and since then I've been in constant pain, and have had it operated on four times. But I'm running well at the moment. I train about three to four hours a day, six days a week. I have friends who say they wish they looked like me, but it's hard work to maintain my body in peak condition.'

B Natasha, 16, is a gymnast.

'My mother got me into gymnastics because I was an over-active child - I was always getting into trouble for standing on my head and leaping around. At the moment, I train up to six hours a day and Sunday is my only day off. I don't worry about my weight or what I eat as my parents do that for me - they think I don't know when to stop. But I do have to keep off peanuts! Anyway, it's more about muscle tone than weight. I



don't envy models their bodies because they're a different shape. We're not skinny, we're toned and muscled. Most of us retire at 19 or 20 because you invariably get bigger then. Three years ago, I had a hip injury which put me out of the sport for 18 months and I had to be really committed to get through it. There are days when you're so worn out that you think "I can't do it today", but you must try to work through the exhaustion.'

C Sophie, 21, is a backstroke swimmer.

'Three years ago, I took three months out because I knew I had to if I was to carry on. I now know that every time I get in the water. It's because I really want to be there. In my time out, I occasionally treated myself to chocolate, which is normally forbidden. I didn't train either. So it was hard when I started swimming again. My body is a tool for me and I don't see it in the way other women view theirs. I was approached by a major chain store once about modelling swimwear, but I wasn't keen on the idea. I train seven days a week, which is tiring, but missing a session is never an option. I swim for two hours in the morning, and then spend two hours in the gym before going back to the pool. Now that I have the advantage of financial sponsorship, I can train full-time and no longer have to get up at 4.45 am to swim before going to the office.'

D Karen, 28, is a modern pentathlete.

'I'm very competitive and I can push myself too far in training. I'm never tempted to miss it, except when I feel ill. A typical day's training is: shooting from 8 am to 9.30 am; running from 10 am to 11 am; swimming from 11 am to midday; riding from 1 pm to 3 pm; and then 45 minutes fencing. I snack on bananas to keep up my energy levels, but it's impossible to fit in time to eat and digest anything substantial until the end of the day's work-out. I limit my coffee-drinking because it's bad for me, but I can eat anything really, as long as it's in moderation. I only eat around 2,500 calories a day, which isn't much more than the average woman needs. I was studying to be a vet when I started competing in pentathlons. I was training every day and fitting it in round my coursework, which was exhausting, so eventually one of them had to go. I'm more focused now.'

