

JUMP LEADS

GREG RUTHERFORD

MBE talks fame, fitness

and food BY JO USMAR

Greg Rutherford, 26, entered the Olympic Park last summer as a lesser-known sandpit botherer. After leaping 8.31m, he snatched gold on Team GB's Super Saturday. We find out what makes a champion.

I don't have any rituals before a race, because what if something went wrong? Your mindset would be totally off.

In the gym, I lift weights three or four times a week, focusing on power. We do power cleans [lifting weights using a technique that uses your hips, knees and ankles] and snatches [lifting a barbell over your head].

So, how did you discover you could jump?

I started off as a sprinter, but realised I would never be world class, so I turned to long jump. My dad was a builder and he used to leave loads of materials in the back garden and I'd always be jumping over them.

What does your training regime involve?

You can't constantly jump because it's so tough on your body. I only jump properly into sand about twice a week. I do a track session in the mornings, then two hours in the gym. I get Sundays off to totally chill out. Giving your body a rest is probably one of the most underestimated parts of training.

What about food?

I'm very strict and have a high-protein diet. A lot of people believe the myth that athletes have to eat lots of carbs, but I can't remember the last time I ate pasta or bread. Carbs aren't necessary for the energy resources I tap into as a sprinter and jumper – I mainly need protein.

How has your life changed since the Olympics?

Everything's changed. I think it was because I competed on the same night as Jess [Ennis] and Mo [Farah]. It's become one of those cultural "where were you?" moments.

On the track, I sprint. It's lucky I'm a fast runner [Greg's 100m time is 10.26 seconds, while Usain Bolt's is 9.63].

I won't have sex for at least three days before a race. It takes your mind off the competition.

When I'm just starting training and have to drop weight quickly, I go through a 'leaning' phase and do intermittent fasting for a couple of days. I'll stick to 1,200 calories a day and only eat between certain hours, say 12-4pm or 2-6pm. When that's over, I eat 2,000-3,000 calories a day. It's all about *what* you eat, though. You could eat 2,000 calories, but if all you'd had was burgers, it's not going to do you any good.

I need protein to feed my fast-twitch muscles, because what I do as a jumper is the same as a sprinter – except for the one step before the jump, which is really heavy.

I do plyometrics, which means jumping on or over things, to increase stamina and leg strength. These exercises focus on moving from muscle extension to contraction. Squats aren't good for jumpers. Instead, we do single-leg box step-ups under a very heavy load, to recreate the initial phases of the jump.

