



BETH M. HOWARD

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Fall 1997

Women's Sport

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CONTRIBUTORS



Carla Fried

last played basketball in ninth grade, but then when you top out at 5' 4", your career on the hardwood is usually short-lived. A senior writer for *MONEY*, she brings her financial expertise to bear in a comparison of how the two professional women's basketball leagues fared in their inaugural seasons (page 70).

Beth M. Howard

is an adventure-sports buff who much prefers a bike trail winding up a mountain to a three-hour session in the weight room of a gym. But she made an exception to her usual workout routine to pump up with pro beach volleyball star Holly McPeak (page 168). In between biceps curls and trips to Starbucks, Howard has written for *Elle*, *Living Fit* and *Shape*. Her motto—"Beauty through strength"—fits McPeak as well.



Alyssa Lustigman Shaffer

can't imagine winning a national bobsled title or playing for the U.S. soccer team while pregnant, but in this issue she talks to women who have been there and done that (page 163). Shaffer and her husband, Scott, have no children, but she trains for marathons and triathlons with their two babies, greyhounds Paris and Holly. She's also managing editor of *Healthy Living* and has written for *Shape* and *Living Fit*.

Lynn Darling

was once intimidated by chess, but since she began playing a year ago, she has found the game to be "elegant and deceptively simple." Darling, a senior writer at *Esquire* and a contributing editor at *Harper's Bazaar*, has a seven-year-old daughter, so she welcomed the chance to watch the U.S. women's chess champion, Anjelina Belakovskaia, teach the game to a class of second-graders (page 112).



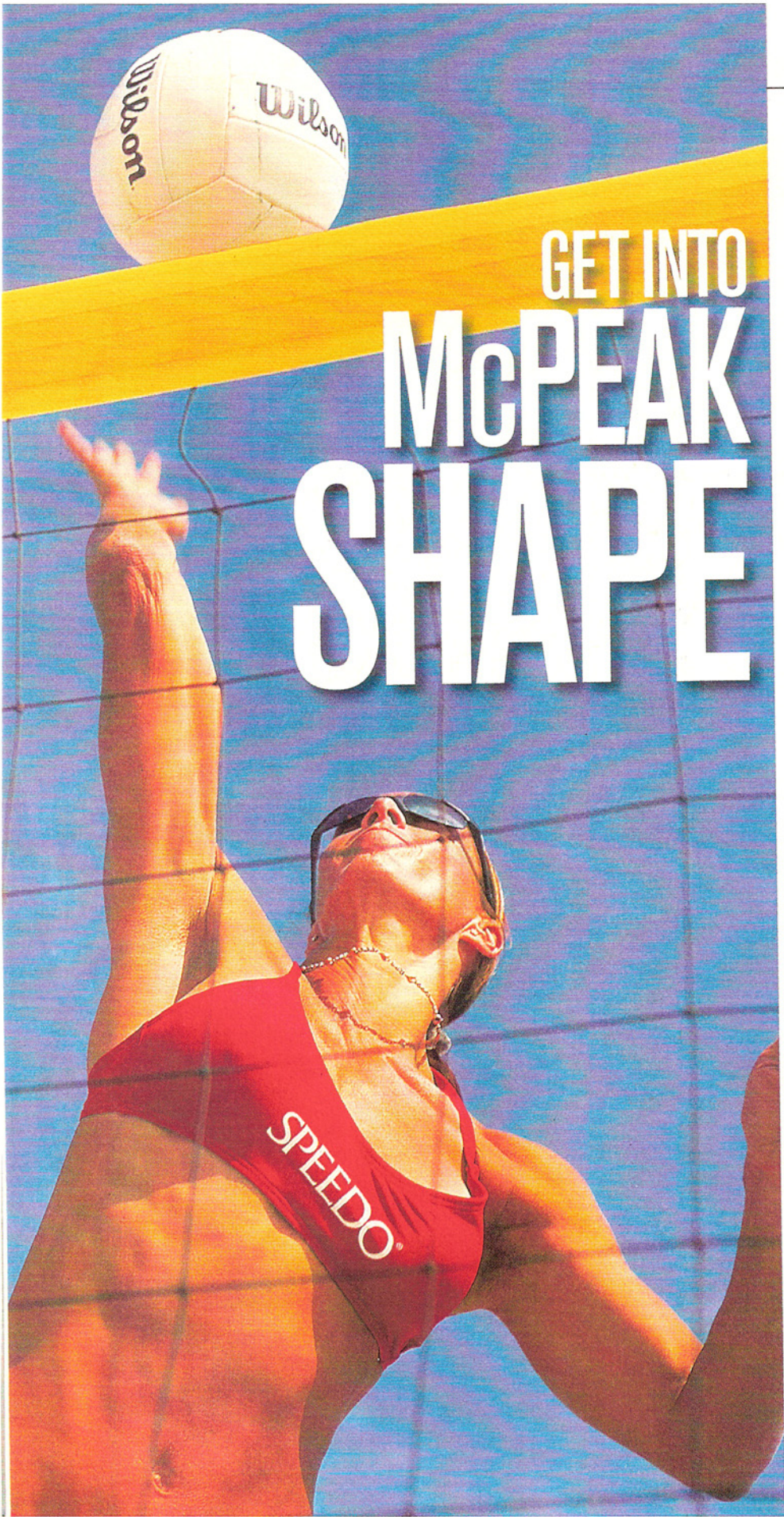
Kenny Moore

is a distance runner, as is Ann Trason (page 128). But while Trason competes in 100-mile races, Moore confines himself to the marathon, which he ran in the 1968 and '72 Olympics. Moore also writes frequently for *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED* and recently, in collaboration with Robert Towne, completed the screenplay for *Without Limits*, a film about distance runner Steve Prefontaine.

Edie Thys

retired from competition in 1993 after nine years as a member of the U.S. Ski Team, including two Olympic appearances, in 1988 and '92. With her experience she has a unique perspective on telling other people what they should do with their lives. Says Edie, now a senior editor at *Ski* magazine, "Check out the advice column [page 174]."





GET INTO McPEAK SHAPE

IN THE GYM

Beach volleyball star
Holly McPeak's three-stage
workout—in the weight room,
on the track and on
the sand—is smashing

by Beth Howard

IT'S 7:30 A.M. ON A MONDAY. WHILE Holly McPeak, 28, beach volleyball's No. 1-ranked player in the U.S., is on her second set of lat pulls, I am working on a latte. McPeak already has had breakfast (toast, yogurt and an apricot) and kissed her boyfriend, sports agent Leonard Armato, goodbye. Now she's ready to begin a week—make that a season—of nonstop training and competition.

The Spectrum Club—Manhattan Beach in El Segundo, Calif., is about two miles from the oceanfront house McPeak shares with Armato. It's a large, corporate-style health club that attracts the likes of Shaq, Jennifer Flavin and, of course, McPeak.

I recognize her instantly across the sea of barbells and stationary bikes. No one else in the club is as tanned, toned or self-possessed. Besides, her face is familiar from the Speedo posters on buses and phone booths in cities all across the country. Wearing a thick, leather weightlifter's belt over her sports bra and Lycra shorts, she adjusts a bench press. Her stomach is so flat it could send even the most secure onlooker straight to an abs-of-steel class. But McPeak is not about vanity. She's about strength and conditioning.

"I thought you got lost," she says. I begin to apologize, but she has moved on, toward the free weights. "I've already done the warmup on my arms. I start with them because they're superimportant to me." Volleyball requires strong arms, so the routine of biceps curls and triceps extensions makes sense, as does her warmup of rotator-cuff-strengthening moves.

McPeak's confident stride makes her appear taller than her 5' 7"—below average for a beach volleyball player. She knows she has to outjump much taller opponents. "I have to have something they don't have," she explains. "I'm smaller, thus quicker. I'm strong and I'm smart." Yeah, and she works out a lot.

"Holly's got an inner drive that's huge," says her new scrimmage partner and helper, Jon Wallace, an

Photographs by Robert Beck

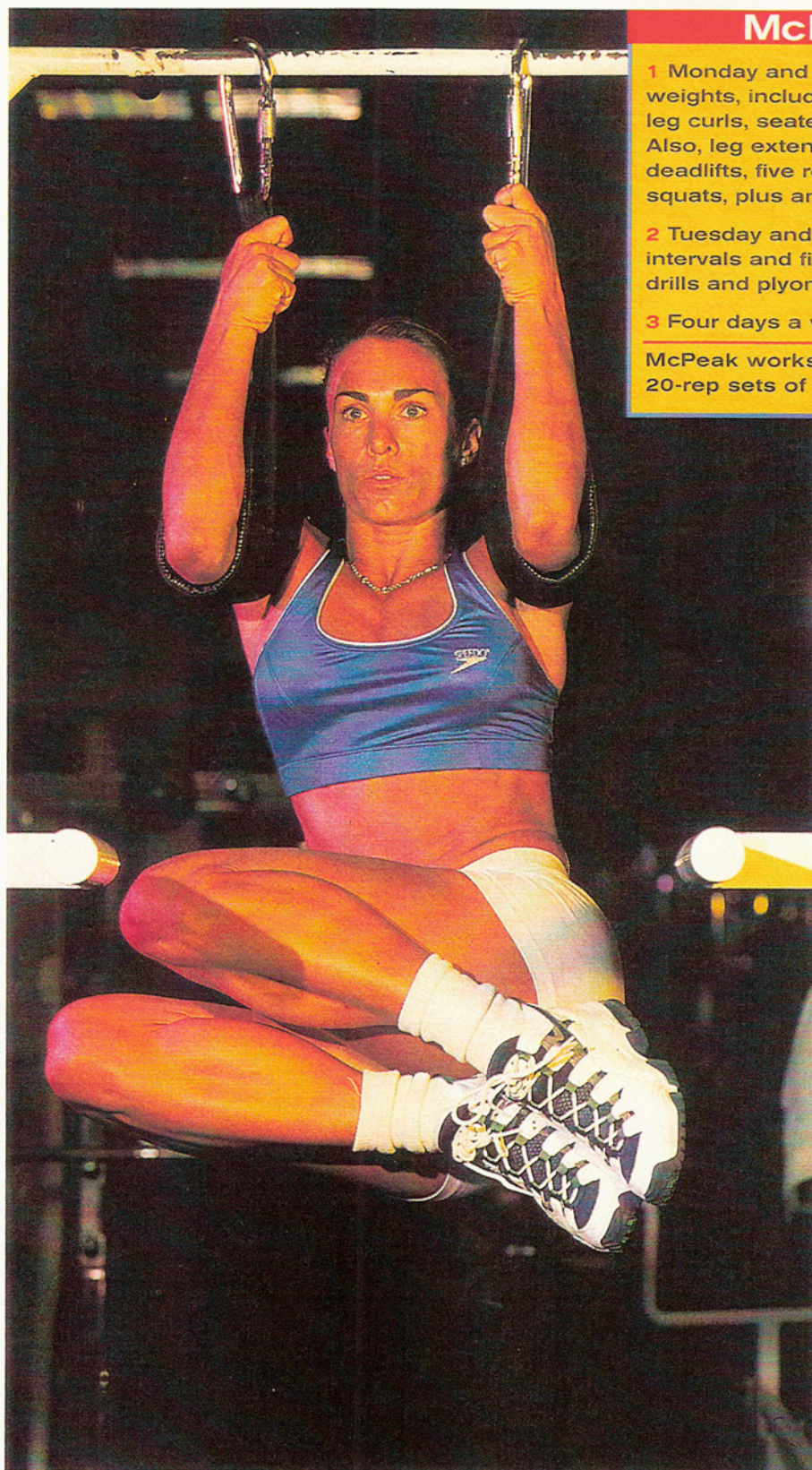
McPEAK'S WEEK

1 Monday and Wednesday: exercises with weights, including two to five sets of 12 lunges, leg curls, seated rows and triceps pushdowns. Also, leg extensions (three sets of 20), three deadlifts, five rep sets of hang cleans and back squats, plus an hour of step aerobics

2 Tuesday and Thursday: 25- to 80-meter stride intervals and five- to 15-meter sprints, plus agility drills and plyometrics

3 Four days a week: three hours of volleyball

McPeak works her fab abs with three to four 20-rep sets of hanging crunches in the ab straps.



assistant volleyball coach at Pepperdine. "She pushes herself beyond most women—and men. She works out five hours or more a day. She knows what it takes."

She knows enough to have been named MVP two years in a row by her fellow players in the Women's Professional Volleyball Association, the organization that oversees the U.S. Women's Pro Beach Volleyball Tour; to have been one of the six U.S. women beach volleyball players who competed in the 1996 Olympics; to be a top money earner on the WPVA tour; and to get an estimated \$300,000 a year in sponsorship money from companies such as Oakley, Pepsi and Speedo. "This is not a hobby for her," says her trainer, Bob Alejo, who trained McPeak at UCLA and is the strength and conditioning coach for the Oakland A's. "This is how she makes her living."

So just as if she were reporting to the office, McPeak shows up every Monday and Wednesday at the gym. For three hours she lifts, stretches and aerobicizes. Then she spends three more hours on the sand practicing volleyball moves with her partner, Lisa Arce, Wallace and coach Rick Arce (Lisa's older brother). On Tuesdays and Thursdays she runs as many as 10 five- to 15-meter sprints, up to 10 25- to 80-meter stride intervals and then follows with three hours of volleyball. Fridays are generally travel days for weekend tournaments. Suddenly, it's Monday again, and McPeak is back in the gym.

Having a trainer doesn't mean always having someone hovering over you barking orders. Alejo faxes an individualized program to McPeak. I look at the printout and gently tell her that it appears the leg extensions were supposed to

come first. "Yes, but I know what I like," she says.

With that, McPeak begins her hang cleans, warming up with 65 pounds and maxing out at 100. "Tooh!... Tooh!... Tooh!" she puffs with each upward jerk of the barbell, eyes fixed on the fluorescent lights overhead. She does three sets of five, resting briefly between sets.

This is week 24 (of 52) of her program to maintain strength, speed, power and endurance throughout the year, and McPeak has been instructed not to put forth her maximum effort. "It's not all about lifting as hard as you can," Alejo says. "Sometimes lifting at 50 percent is a necessity. So is taking time off. Our long-term plan is to be as healthy as we can, month by month, looking toward the end of the year and staying injury-free."

Having finished the hang cleans, McPeak starts on modified lunges: with a 135-pound barbell on her shoulders, she steps back, bringing her knee to the ground for two sets of 12. "This is working my butt," she says. I have yet to see her break a sweat.

Next: squats. According to the sheet, which I'm now in charge of, she's to warm up with 135 pounds and then increase to 205 pounds for five reps. "Squats are absolutely the best thing for a woman's butt and legs," she says.

Deadlifts (three at 95% of her max) are next, I tell her, pretending I'm her trainer. "I'm not going to do them today," she says. Reality check: I'm not her trainer.

Later, I ask Alejo about deviations from his program. "We've been together long enough,

she knows what works and what doesn't," he says. "Her problem is usually the opposite. Sometimes I have to demand that she doesn't go near the gym. She's a workaholic."

McPeak has learned what works for her by listening to her body. "I didn't used to," she says, "but now I'm good at it. I'm skipping these lifts because my back is really stiff." But McPeak is no whiner. She explains matter-of-factly, "I played in Austin two weeks ago on a hard surface covered by only a little sand. It was really jarring, and it took its toll on my body."

On days that McPeak doesn't lift weights, she does plyometrics training (enabling muscles to reach maximal strength as quickly as possible) with explosive jumps. She'll also do agility drills and cardiovascular exercises such as the Stairmaster, biking, rowing or running.

The reason for all this effort is clear when

you watch McPeak compete. Volleyball requires nose-in-the-sand dives and high-arching leaps. "Since I put myself in some weird positions, being strong—particularly in the back and stomach—prevents injuries," she says. "This is my seventh year, and I haven't missed a tournament because of an injury."

She hurries to finish the last of 60 sit-ups (while holding two 10-pound plates) so we can make it to step class, something that is not on the sheet. She explains that step class is part of her cross-training. "I like the music," she says. "And besides, it's fun."

Fun? McPeak also defines fun as lying in her hammock at the end of a strenuous day, walling on the beach at sunset with her boyfriend and dining on sushi. And before you know it, it'll be 7 a.m. again, with no time for a late break on the way to the lat pulls.

McPEAK'S TIPS

- 1 Listen to your body. If something hurts, stop doing it.
- 2 Check a mirror to be sure your technique and posture are good. Keeping abs and lower back tight will support the rest of your body during any exercise.
- 3 Keep the core—abdomen, back and gluteus maximus—strong. That's your center of strength and balance, and it's where you'll find explosiveness.
- 4 Remember cardiovascular training. Lifting creates muscle, but you get better results from weights and a cardio workout.

McPeak can think of no better place than the dunes for running her sprint drills.

