

CROSSFIT
ATHLETE

'HOW I BUILD
MY BODY'

Emma McQuaid

WORDS: Joanna Ebsworth

MEET THE ELITE

Emma McQuaid is dubbed 'Ireland's fittest woman' and a serious contender for the podium at this year's CrossFit Games. The former quad bike racer took up CrossFit eight years ago to build strength to help her husband in and out of his chair after he had a serious car accident.



CARDIO

'I train five days a week doing four or five sessions a day to cover all the different elements of CrossFit, including cardio fitness (think running, cycling, rowing and exercise on a SkiErg machine); bodyweight exercises such as burpees; gymnastics moves like handstand walks, handstand push-ups and rope climbs; and Olympic lifting, plus Strongman elements like yoke carrying and sledge pushing. I need to be ready for anything, so I do some form of speed or endurance conditioning every day, sharpening things up with quick bursts of interval training when competition time approaches. A recent quarter-final cardio workout was just two-minutes long, but I could be competing for up to 60 minutes.'

STRENGTH

'I lift four times a week, and my workouts vary from specific strength training [those that are specific to CrossFit] to absolute strength sessions [one rep max training] and Olympic lifting. Depending on the time of year, I could be working on single reps to get stronger or doing "touch and go" reps to develop my speed nearer to competition time. With gyms closed over lockdown, I've now

got all the gymnastics equipment I need at home, from rings to bars.'

NUTRITION

'I eat two to three meals a day and plenty of snacks in between, using a meal delivery service for all my food. I counted my calorie intake for the first time recently and I was kind of embarrassed to realise that I consume well over 4,000 calories a day! After having

some blood tests done to understand what my body uses for fuel, I now rely on carbs as my main source of energy, eating upwards of 400g a day.'

SUPPORT

'I like to wake up, look at my training schedule and get on with it, so I find a lot of value in having a coach to work everything out for me. My coach, James Jowsey, assesses my movement patterns via Skype and advises me on how to correct imbalances and prevent injuries, which is crucial as I have a fairly dodgy left hip following surgery on my right shoulder. I also see a physio once a week to make sure I'm moving well.'

VITAL KIT

'The first thing I have before I start training in the morning (after drinking water) is caffeine. I drink the Reign Total Body Fuel (£12.99 for 12 x 500ml cans; reignbodyfuel.com), which also has BCAAs [branched-chain amino acids] to help improve my endurance. Post-training, I'll have a protein shake using protein powder from Wheyd (wheyd.com), and I take greens and creatine supplements every day from Blu Nutrition (blunutrition.co.uk). There's so much evidence behind all of these things to show that they support recovery and performance, so they're a total must for me.'



WHY TRY CROSSFIT?

'I thought I was fit and strong before CrossFit, but then I tried it and I was extremely humbled by how much better everyone else was than me. There's something really empowering about being able to lift weights and look very feminine while doing it.'

'You get to tick a lot of boxes and goals with CrossFit. Most women say they'd like to be able to do a strict pull-up – CrossFit has the progressions to help you to achieve it, rather than just talk about it. My next goal in life is to lift double my bodyweight overhead.'

'CrossFit is like every sport rolled into one and anything can come up. I've swum in the ocean in Dubai, tried mountain biking, and climbed ropes in the rain, which was really scary. It's challenging but also a total thrill, which probably explains why I keep coming back for more.'



EMMA MCQUAID IS AN AMBASSADOR FOR REIGN TOTAL BODY FUEL, A NEW ENERGY DRINK FOR FITNESS. FIND OUT MORE AT REIGNBODYFUEL.COM