

//////////////// COVER INTERVIEW



# ‘I’M TAKING MY TRAINING SERIOUSLY!’

We talk to influencer **Zoe Hague** about her fitness journey – from serving in the British Army Medical Corps to becoming an ambassador for fitness race HYROX – and find out about her exciting goals for the future

**I would say that as soon as I was walking,** I was running. I was that girl at school who always had an activity on every day after lessons – from running and athletics to ballet – but swimming was my main sport. I was swimming at a high level, so I was swimming twice a day, every day.

That was my childhood, and people say I missed out on a lot, especially between the ages of 16 to 18 because I never went out drinking with my friends at the weekend. I was just swimming all the time, but I loved it.

**Both my parents were in the police force and really into fitness.** They’ve done marathons their whole lives and they’re always up in the mountains, so I guess I’ve followed in their footsteps,

although we do joke that my sister [Molly-Mae Hague of *Love Island* fame] was swapped at birth! I always knew I wanted a fitness-related career, so I did think about joining the police, but it was my parents who suggested that I should consider something else.

**I joined the army in 2017 at the age of 22 with the intent of being on the frontline.**

I wanted to be front and centre, doing what the guys did, because it’s the most active role. Sadly, the infantry wasn’t open to women at the time, so I did the next best thing, which was being on the frontline as a medic. I didn’t have any kind of medical background, so studying for the Medical Corps was tough. I didn’t love it if I’m honest, but

being able to exercise every day was a good fit for me.

**Being in the Medical Corps strengthened my love for fitness.** Once I’d been a medic for a year, I requested to train as a personal trainer as soon as I could and, after that, I was pretty much based in the gym. I’d have 100 people coming to me three times a day for their PT, but in a weird way, leading those sessions became frustrating because I wanted to be able to train alongside everyone else! I spent so much time making programmes for other people, I fell out of love with my own training. It’s much easier to stay motivated when you’re exercising in a big group, so I definitely felt like I was missing out. ➔





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Hague is used to functional fitness moves from her army days

Thankfully, the army gave me many opportunities to try new activities. I had a go at so many things, such as CrossFit and horse riding and Nordic skiing. Every weekend, there would be a sporty competition to enter, which was great for me as army life could get a bit boring. You meet lots of lovely people in the army, but there's also lots of waiting around (which they don't tell you about), and lots of cleaning and counting rifles. It's not like the TV show *Our Girl*, but I wish it was!

*'HYROX is like a big sports rave held in an arena. The atmosphere is incredible – everyone's there to compete'*

I've always liked to enter competitive sporting events and races. I was really into triathlon, and I've also done an Ironman, so I would have tried HYROX sooner if I'd known it existed. I first discovered it in May 2023 – shortly after I'd left the army after serving for five-and-a-half years – when I watched my old army colleague Aaron Woodman competing in the World Championships in Manchester. When my fiancé Danny (who's also in the army) and I walked in, we were like, 'What is this? Why have I not seen this before? It's fitness heaven!' Hyrox is like a big sports rave held in an arena and the atmosphere is so incredible. Everyone's just there to compete and have a good time.

HYROX is a hybrid of running and functional fitness, so it involves a bit of everything. It's also an endurance race, so it might take some people an hour but it can take others three hours. You've got 8K of running in there and, between each kilometre, there's a functional fitness workout station (with things such as rowing, sandbag lunges, sled pushing and the farmer's carry) to complete. A lot of the functional moves are similar to things I had to do in the army, such as carrying two Jerry cans while walking for as long as possible, so I had a feeling I'd be quite good at it.

Danny and I booked in for our first HYROX race the day after we watched the World Champs. The format is always the same wherever you race, and you can either enter by yourself in the Open

or Pro category, as a pair in the Doubles category, or grab some friends and be part of a relay team. My first event was in Warsaw with Danny. We entered the Mixed Doubles category, and I was incredibly nervous beforehand. I hoped we'd do well together as I knew Danny was very, very fit, but it did add to the pressure. In the end, we came first in our age group and qualified for the next World Champs which are being held in Nice this June. I think that helps to explain why we got the HYROX bug so quickly!

HYROX is very addictive, and it helps that the training is so varied. When you're training for a marathon, I think you can get a bit bored with just running, but there are so many different elements and aspects you need to train for with HYROX. I also love the







Hague and her partner have qualified for the Hyrox World Champs in June

fact that it's so inclusive. I've seen a girl in a wheelchair finish it, and recently, I watched a guy with cerebral palsy finish an event. HYROX has a 98 per cent finish rate, which is one of the highest numbers for a competitive fitness event. I think that shows that anyone can do it.

**The travel aspect of HYROX also feeds into the attraction.** I've travelled to so many cities since I started competing. Since doing Warsaw with Danny, I've done four solo races and two women's doubles with different female friends at places including Copenhagen, Birmingham, Dublin, London, Manchester and Vienna. I'm sure there's a HYROX event happening every other weekend somewhere in the world. The UK events sell out within 24-to-48 hours, so we go to the ones abroad because they're not so busy.

**My training has a lot more structure now, and I'm taking it very seriously.** Before HYROX, I would go on the occasional run and lift weights at the gym, but I wouldn't really see any improvements. Now, my old boss Aaron Woodman is my coach, and I train progressively seven days a week. If I wasn't following



a programme, I don't think I'd be doing half the amount of training I'm doing now. But when you're paying for training, you want to get the most out of it, don't you?

**My workouts incorporate a mix of interval training, strength work, HYROX movements and recovery.** On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, I focus on active recovery with easy 30-minute runs where I try to keep my heart rate as low as possible. I'll do strength and HYROX training on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and I'll finish the week with a big HYROX session on a Sunday morning. It's a lot, but I have the time, and my training goal is to qualify for the World Champs on my own, especially as Danny has already qualified for the

*'You've got to fuel yourself properly if you want to perform well – I'm always eating'*

Men's Singles. I don't know if it will happen this year, but I have faith that it will happen at some point in the future. [At the time of writing, Zoe achieved an 8th place at the HYROX European Championships, with a new personal best of 1.14.02]

**In terms of recovery, I'm early to bed and not that early to rise!** I also recover with the help of good nutrition. I've gone through phases of counting my calories, micros and

macros, but I didn't really notice a difference. Now, I just eat when I'm hungry. With all the training I'm doing, I'm always hungry and I'm always eating. You've just got to fuel yourself properly if you want to perform well.

**I noticed the biggest changes to my performance when I started following a high-protein diet.** I use a lot of Myprotein products because they're so easy to use on-the-go, especially the Clear Whey Protein Powder (£35.99 for 35 servings; myprotein.com). I put a scoop in practically every drink I have for an easy 20g of extra protein, and it's something my body is familiar with when I travel. Staying fuelled can be hard when you're in a new city, so I stick to things like eggs, porridge and toast to avoid things going horribly wrong.

**Becoming an ambassador for HYROX was a no-brainer for me.** I was already posting about competing at events and spreading the word, so I was doing the job anyway. I've had so many messages from people saying they've only signed up to do a HYROX race because they've seen me doing it, and that's really lovely to hear. Right now, my future is HYROX because I've got an event every month for the next six months. But I'm also getting married to Danny in July, so my hen-do will be happening at some point. We're made for each other. Once he gets back, I'm sure we'll either be really busy travelling doing HYROX on our honeymoon, or just taking it very easy for two weeks! 🍷

# ZOE'S FAVE MOVES!

## BURPEE

Squat down and put your hands on the floor in front of you. Kick your feet back and hold a plank position. Lower yourself until your chest and thighs are close to/on the floor (A). Jump your feet back in towards your hands and jump immediately up (B). That's one rep.

### Zoe's top tip:

If you struggle with jumping, try stepping up instead. This is easier on the legs.



Words: Joanna Ebsworth | Photography: Eddie Macdonald



## WEIGHTED LUNGE

Holding a moderately heavy dumbbell in each hand, step your left leg forward (A) and lunge by lowering your hips to the floor and bending both knees (B). The back knee should come close to the ground and the front knee is directly over the ankle. Push off with your back foot and lunge forward again. Continue for 10m and then turn around and lunge-walk back.

### **Zoe's top tip:**

If you feel a bit wobbly, place your feet wider apart to aid your balance and help with stability.



## THRUSTER

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Hold a medium-weight dumbbell in both hands at shoulder height. Squat down to a 90-degree position (A) and explode back up, driving the dumbbell overhead (B). Hold for a second then lower the weight as you squat down to repeat the sequence.

### **Zoe's top tip:**

For HYROX wall balls, you must squat past parallel to get a rep. Try this when doing thrusters!

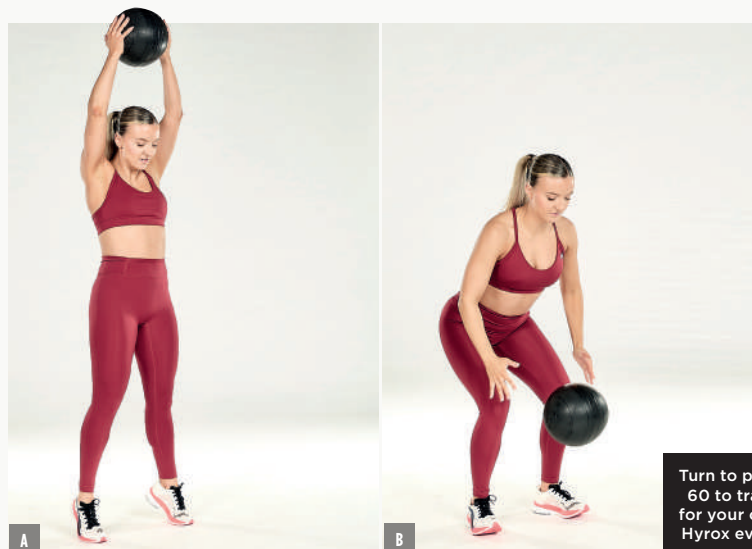


## BALL SLAMS

Stand with feet shoulder-width apart and hold a medicine ball in both hands. Explosively rise up onto your toes and raise the ball overhead (A). Reach up as far as you can, bend your legs and slam the ball onto the floor in front of you (B). Catch the ball when it bounces and repeat. 🏋️

### **Zoe's top tip:**

Try rising up onto your tip toes – a bit of height will help because you have further to throw down.



Turn to page 60 to train for your own Hyrox event ➔