

The Real **IRONMAN**

HE'S AN ELITE SPORTSMAN WHO CALLS THE BEACH HIS OFFICE, DATES A MISS UNIVERSE AND OCCASIONALLY DYES HIS HAIR PINK. MEET 23-YEAR-OLD MATT POOLE, IRONMAN. INTERVIEW BY MATTHEW MYERS.

DNA: Just how tough is it to be an Ironman?

Matt Poole: It's very tough and requires a lot of discipline and training. We're on the beach five afternoons a week and usually have one big marathon on the Saturday. It's a big workload and challenging, but it's also very rewarding. We call the beach our office! We also get the chance to travel and make new friends. I personally love being a part of the professional Ironman series on television. That's such an honour and privilege.

You've had a few wins, too.

Yes, in my Ironman career so far I have had three professional series race wins, and twice finished on the podium. I've also won two junior Australian Ironman titles.

You're an ambassador for the National Breast Cancer Foundation. How did that happen?

Four years ago, one of the PR guys from the Ironman series asked if I wanted to be involved in a charity. I thought it was super cool to be involved with breast cancer research.

And you've even dyed your hair pink!

[Laughing] Yeah, over 2010 and 2011 I dyed my hair pink, which I guess is very strange for an Ironman! It certainly raised a few eyebrows. But it was for the National Breast Cancer

Foundation and I'm super-supportive of that. I think it's one of the bravest things I ever did!

This is our swimwear issue. What's your favourite swimwear?

I like Speedos and the European swimming trunk. I was brought up with them so it's all pretty traditional for me. In Australia, younger guys love to be seen in board shorts, but I love racing in Speedos or budgie smugglers. Everyone's got a million different names for them.

Have you ever been in the surf naked?

[Laughing] Not on purpose, but once when I was younger at Queenscliff I was training in big surf and I had my Speedos ripped down around my ankles. But I was pretty lucky, as I held on to them by my toenails!

You obviously eat healthy, but if you had to pick an indulgence, what would it be?

Chocolate! I've always had a super sweet tooth.

Your girlfriend, Lauren Barley, recently competed in the Miss Universe Australia pageant and you make a super hot couple.

Have you thought of modelling together?

Not really, but when we do stand together for photos my mates tell me how well I'm doing for myself.

A lot of people find you hot, including gay

men. How do you feel about that?

It's very flattering. The funny thing about sport is that the racing is one aspect, but image and looks come into it as well. I'm very fortunate to do promotions and modelling for Kellogg's and other sponsors like Red Bull. It's something that I'm comfortable with and part and parcel of a professional sporting lifestyle. We have fit and healthy bodies and we try to promote ourselves and our sponsors whenever we can.

Have you been on the Nutri-Grain cereal box?

Yeah, a couple of times, which is pretty funny. I grew up idolising all those guys on the back of the cereal boxes, and wanted to be like them. Now that I'm older and on the box, I can't help but wonder if young kids look up to me. I know how passionate kids can be about the Ironman. For me it's such a great opportunity to be on the cereal box.

Has anyone ever come out to you?

I once had a mate who came out to me, and I was super-stoked that he was comfortable enough to talk to me about it. I think it's something that a lot of people would find difficult to do, and it's unfortunate that it's not more accepting in Australia. Some people tend to still frown upon it, which is a shame.

If you were gay, who would you go for?

I'd turn for James Franco. He comes across in interviews as a pretty cool, fun kind of guy, and he's good looking, too.

If you weren't an Ironman, what do you think you'd be doing?

I love sport and being fit and healthy, so I guess it would be in that lifestyle, like a personal trainer or maybe a professional surfer.

What will you be doing over Christmas and New Year's?

We do a lot of racing through summer, so I usually lay pretty low and enjoy time with my family and girlfriend. This year I really want to get back home to Sydney for New Year's Eve. I want to see the city light up at midnight!

Who has been the biggest influence on your career?

Michael King, who I've been training under for five years. He's the head coach at the Mooloolaba Surf Club. When I was young, I showed a lot of natural ability for this sport and I had to go through a lot of hard work. Michael took me through it from a young age and gave me all the opportunities. He made me what I am today.

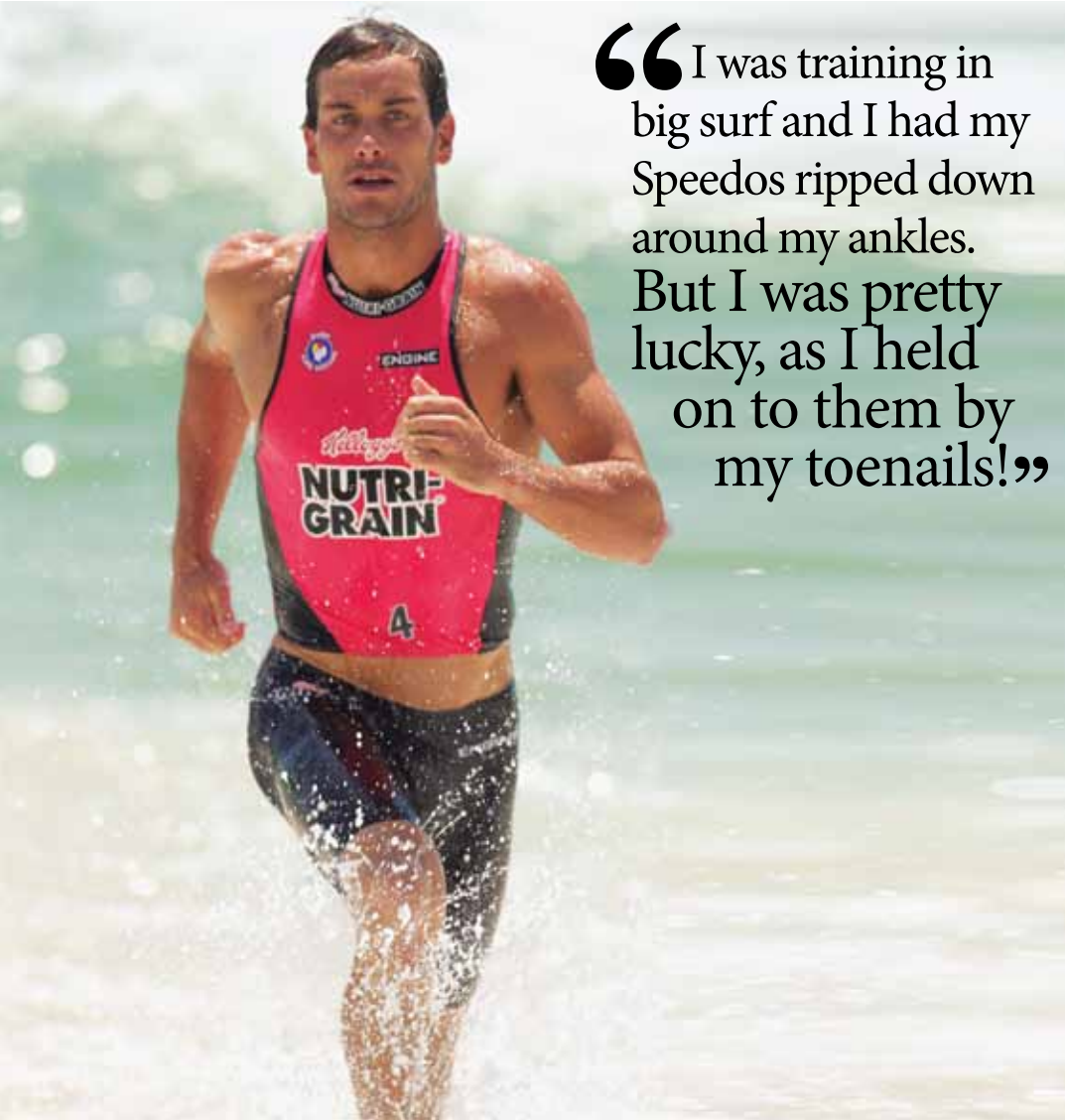
Are you a jocks, boxers or freeballing man?

I've always had fitted boxers and I literally can't wear anything else.

Have you ever worn your Speedos underneath your jeans?

No, I've never done that. I'd rather freeball than suffer getting a rash.

more: The Kellogg's Nutri-Grain Ironman and Ironwoman series begins January 18, 2014 on the Nine Network. For more on Matt Poole: mattpoole.com.au. Twitter and Instagram @ matt_poole1.



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