



BIG HEARTY STU!

Rugby star, model, personal trainer and now author and photographer. Matt Myers touches base with Stuart Reardon, a DNA favourite who is anything but *Defeated* (the title of his new book).

Photography by Stuart Reardon.

DNA: You've been the handsome fantasy man on the cover of many romance novels. Now you've written your own, *Undeclared*. How did that come about?

Stuart Reardon: I first met my co-author, Jane Harvey-Berrick a few years back and then again more recently in Dublin, where we got chatting. I had just had my shoulder reconstruction and we talked about injuries and how I was looking to retire from rugby. She asked if I wanted to write a book with her; half fictional and half real-life. I thought that could only be a good thing. I was already in that world and had been on book covers, so a natural progression would be to become an author.

How much of the story's main character, Nick Renshaw is really for you?

Well, Nick's a rugby union player and I was league but, with his injuries, a lot of the aspects of his life are like mine.

It's a great read, but how would you describe the genre?

Thank you. It's a fictional, contemporary romance with a lot of spice. It definitely caught my own emotions once I read it right through. It's very personal. Anyone who reads it and knows me will recognise that the character is based on me.

There's a quote in the book: "I've gone through the pain. Through the trial by fire." What parts of your life does this refer to?

Many parts. I've had some serious and long-term injuries back-to-back, including an Achilles reconstruction twice where I was out of action for 16 months. I've lost contracts. I've had many highs and lows, like everyone. In sport, just like in life, the lows help you appreciate the highs. It builds strength, and I'm where I am today because of all those incidents, trials and injuries. I don't look back with regret, rather I embrace what's happened.

The book has full-on sex, too. There's a line where the love interest says to Nick, "That beast needs a leash!" Of course, that's true to your life, too, isn't it?

[Laughing.] Absolutely, one hundred percent! You've appeared as the cover model on

many books and gained a cult following, particularly with American women. How do you feel about that?

It's very flattering to have support from anyone, and the appreciation is wonderful. I've travelled quite a lot to America for some really cool book events, and it's been nothing but positive. The book world is really big over there, which is probably why I have that cult following.

Over the years you've also become connected to the LGBTIQ community and become an advocate for us. Do you feel you understand the community more now than you would have, say, ten years ago?

No, I think it'd be about the same because I've always had an open-minded approach to all people, including the gay community. I thought the same-sex marriage success in Australia was fantastic, especially the way everybody pitched in for the Yes vote. A lot of other countries were already at that stage, so it was a major achievement for Australia, and a great step in the right direction.

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I still like Gerald Butler, but now I'll say Jon Snow from *Game Of Thrones*... I could play Jon Snow's boyfriend!

Thank you for being part of DNA's #Yes campaign supporting same-sex marriage.

You're welcome. Any time!

You've come a long way since our first interview in 2011. What are your plans now that you've retired from rugby?

It's the gym life for me now. I'm a personal trainer with an online program called Fear Nothing Fitness; it's a mix of body weight and resistance training. The book world has also kept me busy, with events in different countries.

I thought I'd miss the rugby aspect because it was my career but a lot of things have fallen into place and taken over.

Including photography... You actually took the images in this story yourself. They are self-portraits!

Yes, I've become a student of photography and videography, which takes a lot of study time. A lot of the shots I post on my social media are my own work, including these ones.

And modelling?

I'm still modelling and was last in Barcelona and Germany with my agencies. The modelling world can be a bit difficult, but I'm certainly not done with it, and I still do my yearly calendar.

I've found a good outlet for my modelling is through social media. I get a lot of personal jobs for companies to market their brands. Social media allows for direct contact into campaigns, whether it is for coffee, oil or selling T-shirts. Loads of people now represent themselves on social media and it's a massive network, so I actually get a lot of work off my own back - so to speak! I've also just signed with a new modelling agency, H1 Management.

Your body shots pop up everywhere, even on sites such as Tumblr and Pinterest. How do you feel about that?

I don't worry about it. They're only pictures, and if they're supporting me it's okay. Once a picture is on the internet, it's there! Some people take themselves too seriously. I don't.

Many will agree you have the perfect *Game Of Thrones* look. Do you watch that show?

Yes, I'm a massive *Game Of Thrones* fan, and have been from the beginning. I think it has something for everybody, whether you're into knights and dragons or war and sex, it's just so well written. I can't believe we have to wait until 2019 for the final season! I'd love to get a role in *Game Of Thrones*. I'm just waiting for the call! They're casting at the moment for bearded men to play the White Walkers.

In a previous interview you told us you'd turn gay for Gerald Butler. Who would be your gay romance now?

I still like Gerald Butler, but now I'll say Jon >>



SEE
STUART'S NUDE
SELF-PORTRAITS IN
THE EXTRA PAGES
OF THE DIGITAL
EDITION.

>> Snow [from *Game Of Thrones*, played by Kit Harington]. I could be Jon Snow's boyfriend! [Laughing.]

Who is your diva these days? When you did the DNA Straight Mate interview a while ago it was Rihanna and Miley Cyrus.

Well, I'm a massive Ed Sheeran fan now, and I love Adele. But for a diva I'll say Lorde. She's current, she's down with the kids and she's a bit of a hipster.

What did you think of the cheating scandal with the Australian cricket team?

Cheating is wrong in any sport. It's hard to believe they tried it in such a televised sport, but I don't want to add wood to the fire. I'm sure the players regret it, and the cricket authorities will punish the players accordingly. I hope the players learn from their mistake and make a strong comeback. Nobody is perfect. I'm actually not a big fan of cricket. I could go along to a match, but I don't find it very exciting to watch. I love the rugby and I'm also a big fan of Aussie Rules (AFL). My Aussie Rules team is Essendon (The Bombers), because my Aussie mate once sent me their jersey!

As mirrored in *Undeclared*, you've overcome a lot of difficulties. What advice can you give to anyone having a personal struggle?

Embrace your personal struggles. I've been in some really bad situations. I've been bankrupt with no money but, fortunately, had

somewhere to live, so I've never been rock bottom. I talked to family and confided in people close to me and always looked at the brighter side of life. I've never been a deep worrier. When I found myself in a low place, I'd always compare myself to somebody who was worse off. Whenever I've been down I've still been grateful for whatever I had.

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My mother always said if you've got a roof over your head and something to eat, then you're doing better than half of the world. That's always stuck with me and helped me. If you're at a low point, you can always look for the positive sides to climb your way out. I'd also recommend working out. It's always been a rock to me. The release of endorphins

will leave you feeling great. There's no better wealth than good health!

What's up next?

There's actually a second book on the way, again co-written with Jane Harvey-Berrick. I know, crazy right? I must be the first professional rugby league player to write a contemporary sports romance. It's not a line of work I saw myself getting into but I'm enjoying the journey.

When you come to Australia next, will we see you on Bondi Beach in budgie smugglers? We know you can pull off that look?

I'd be fine to wear budgie smugglers on Bondi Beach but people here in the UK don't seem to like them. You get ripped for wearing them. The lads in Australia can wear them but in the UK they're seen as uncool. So, I'd wear boardshorts for surfing, but for sunbathing it's budgie smugglers. You don't want your tan line cutting off at the knee!

Coming over from the UK, you could literally smuggle some budgies!

[Laughing.] Yeah, but from here it would probably have to be robins!

MORE: *Undeclared* is available on Amazon in print and Kindle unlimited online. Follow Stuart on Twitter and Instagram @stureardon

**Sports briefs or jockstrap
– what should an athlete
wear under his kit?**

Stuart: "It depends on the brand. I wear a mix of briefs and boxers and sometimes I freeball. In fact, I'm free-balling right now!"

