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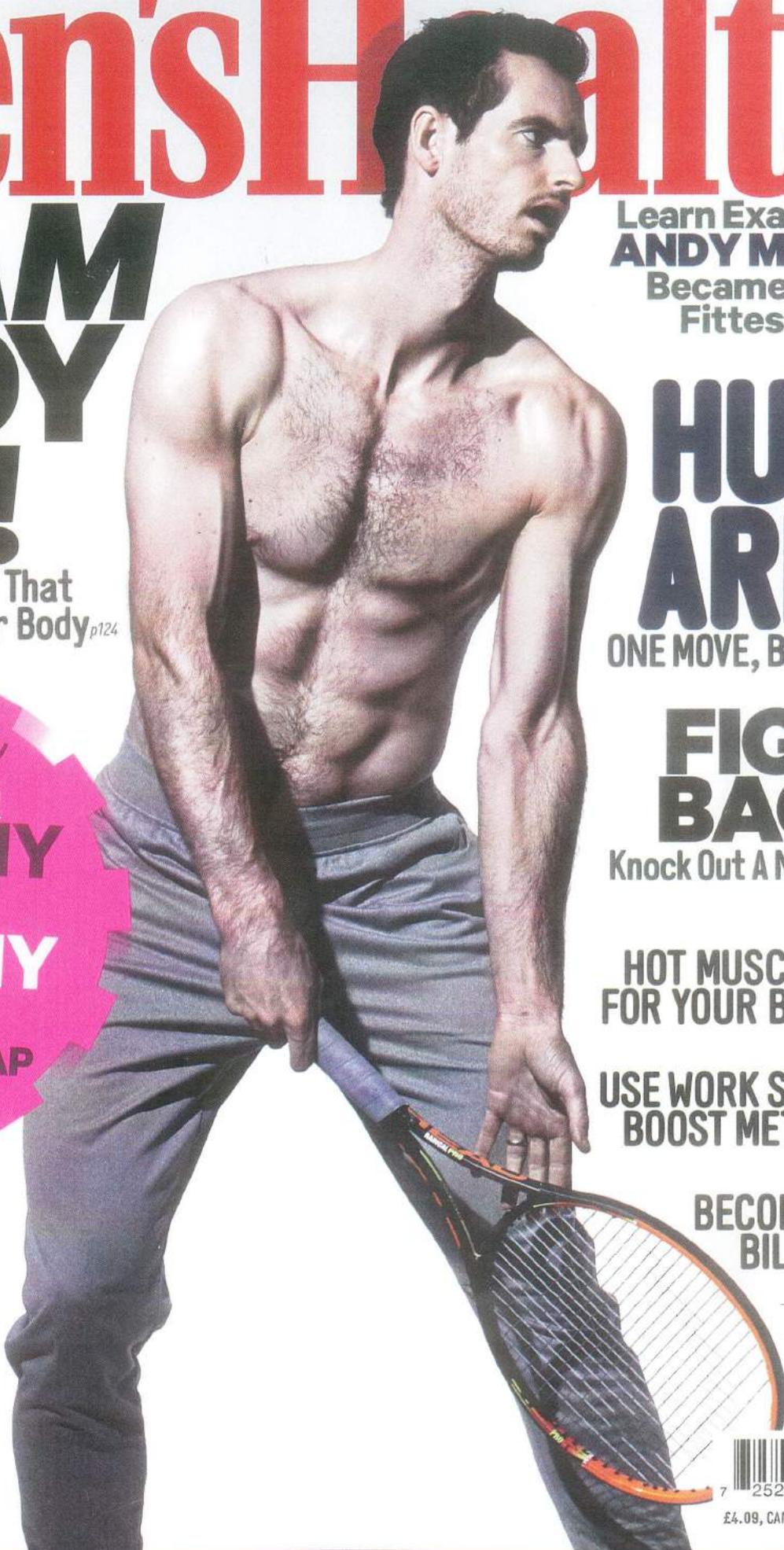
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— ANDY MURRAY, 29,
THE BEST OF BRITISH

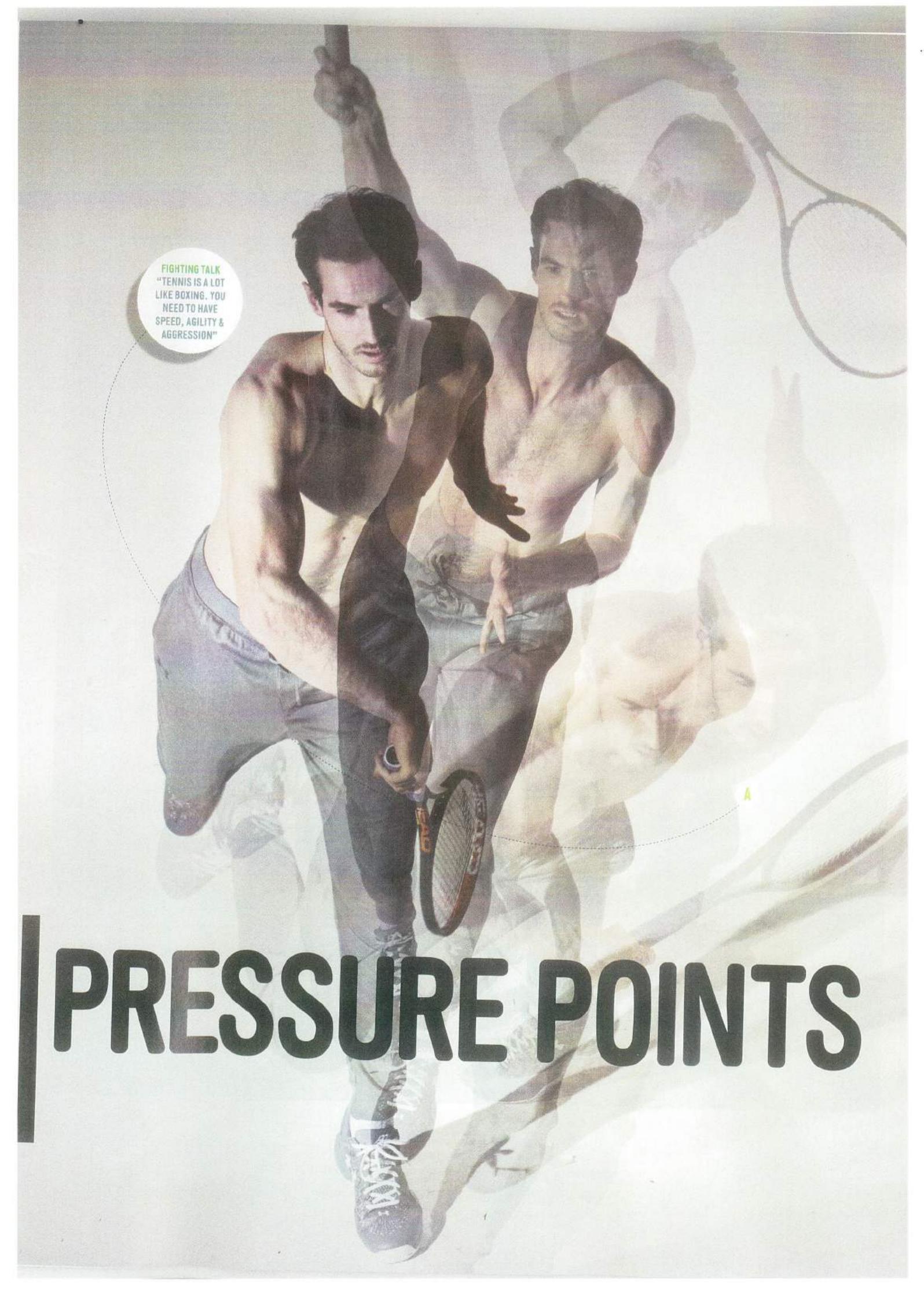
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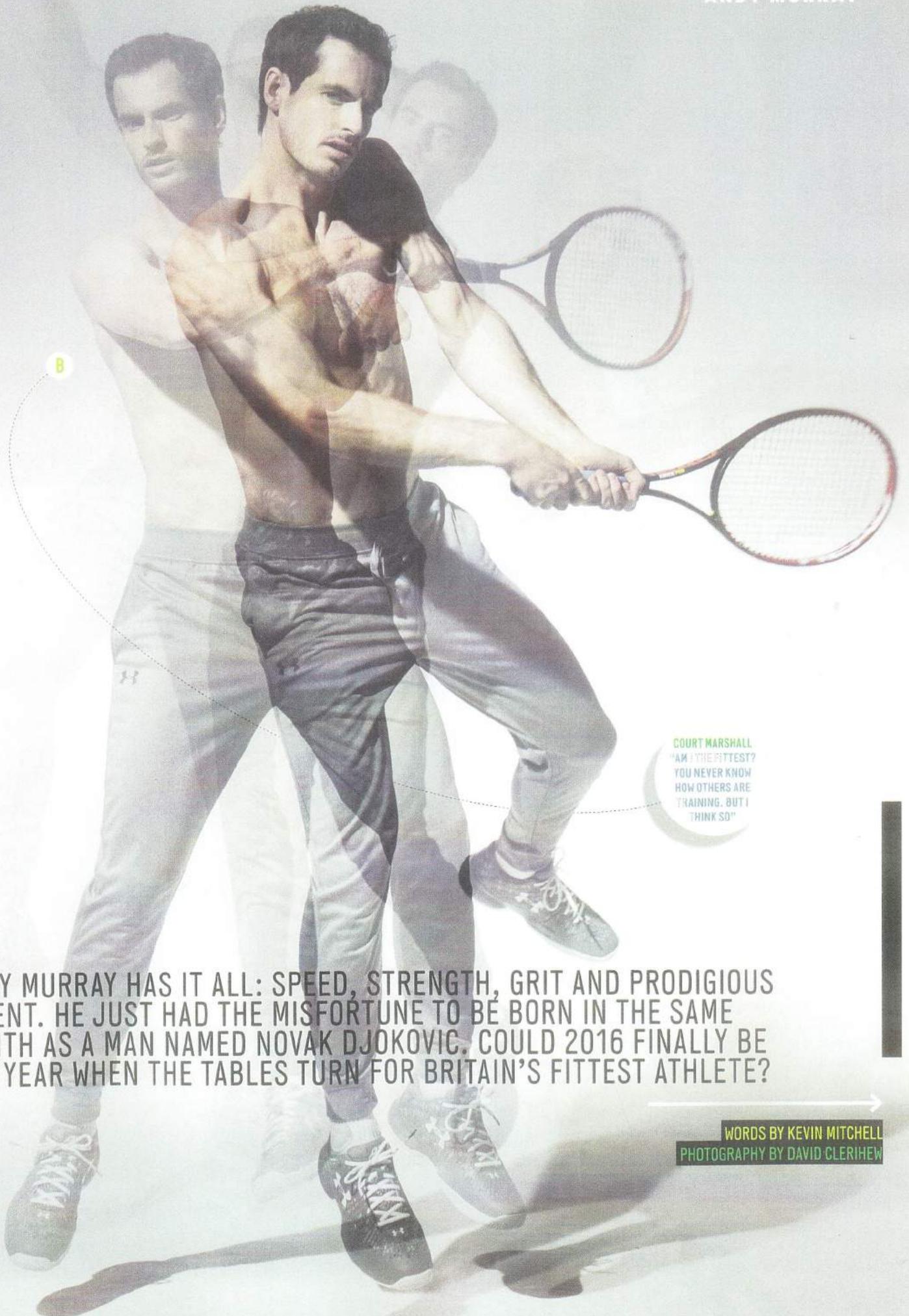
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FIGHTING TALK
"TENNIS IS A LOT
LIKE BOXING. YOU
NEED TO HAVE
SPEED, AGILITY &
AGGRESSION"

PRESSURE POINTS

COVER MODEL MUSCLE
ANDY MURRAY



COURT MARSHALL
"AM I THE FITTEST?
YOU NEVER KNOW
HOW OTHERS ARE
TRAINING. BUT I
THINK SO"

ANDY MURRAY HAS IT ALL: SPEED, STRENGTH, GRIT AND PRODIGIOUS TALENT. HE JUST HAD THE MISFORTUNE TO BE BORN IN THE SAME MONTH AS A MAN NAMED NOVAK DJOKOVIC. COULD 2016 FINALLY BE THE YEAR WHEN THE TABLES TURN FOR BRITAIN'S FITTEST ATHLETE?

WORDS BY KEVIN MITCHELL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID CLERHEW

COVER MODEL MUSCLE ANDY MURRAY

At the photoshoot, Andy Murray leaps in the air, swishing his racquet in imitation of a running forehand, then lands on his appointed spot, marked on the floor by a piece of tape. Unfortunately, foot, tape and floor are misaligned and the best tennis player this country has seen since Fred Perry has to negotiate a muscle-jarring tumble that might have not just put a hole in his season, but significantly altered the tone of this interview.

Only Murray's sense of balance saves him from potentially calamitous results – not to mention embarrassment. “Well, that was nearly a story,” his business partner, Matt Gentry, says, raising his eyebrows. There is a hush in the studio as Murray pauses, then returns to his mark to complete the balletic task.

Life around Murray is rarely dull, on court or off. The 2011 French Open, for instance, was a sequence of comic mishaps: he got lost on the Metro; he broke his tooth on a baguette and later tore a tendon in his ankle; he won a match virtually on one leg; and he reached the semi-finals, giving Rafael Nadal, the best clay-courtier of all time, a decent three-set argument. Five years later, after winning two Grand Slam titles, an Olympic gold and a Davis Cup, there is still a sense of chaos, be it exploding during a match, or nearly splintering a leg at a photoshoot.

BREAK POINT

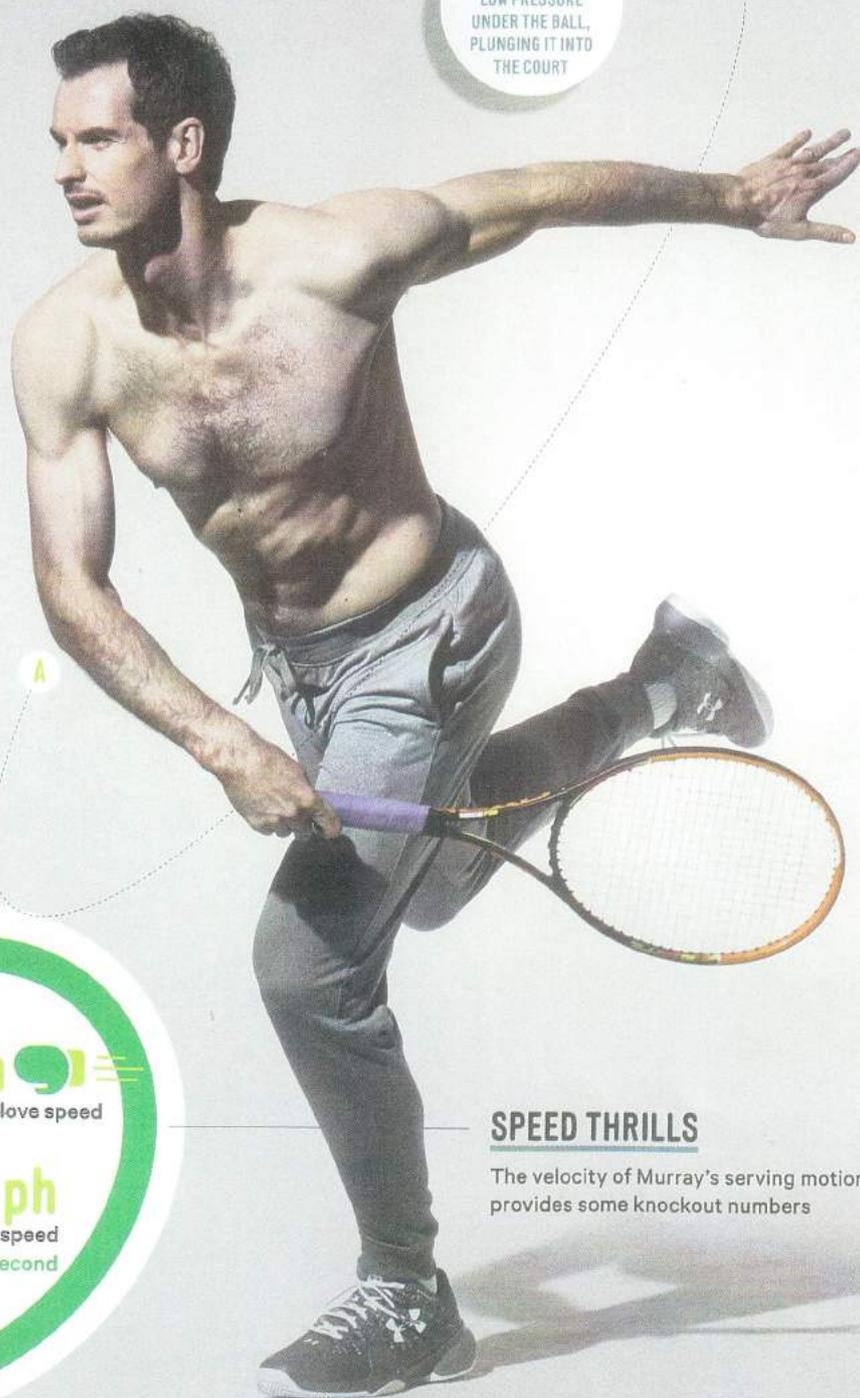
Clearly, Murray has come a long way since he first walked into Wimbledon as a nervous teenage professional 11 years ago. Now an acclaimed athlete near the peak of his powers, the chronic back problems that could have ended his career in 2014 are a distant memory. He is currently ranked the joint second-best singles player in the world (albeit several thousand points behind Novak Djokovic) and is a new and doting father.

But recent months have seen a temporary derailment. Within weeks of the Birmingham Davis Cup celebrations in March, Murray fell to the 25-year-old Argentinian, Federico Delbonis, ranked 53 in the world, in the Indian Wells Masters. It was

01 SERVE

BEGINNING WITH A BIG BANG MEANS HARNESSING THE LAWS OF PHYSICS AND BENDING THEM TO YOUR WILL

THE DIVE
TOPSPIN CREATES
LOW PRESSURE
UNDER THE BALL,
PLUNGING IT INTO
THE COURT



23.7mph

Anthony Joshua's glove speed
8.8m/second

120mph

Murray's service racquet speed
53.6m/second

SPEED THRILLS

The velocity of Murray's serving motion provides some knockout numbers



THE TOSS
MURRAY BUILDS
KINETIC ENERGY
THROUGH HIS LEGS,
HIPS, TRUNK AND
SHOULDERS

THE STRIKE
THE LONG LEVER OF
ARM AND RACQUET
CREATES EXTREME
BIOMECHANICAL
FORCE

B

C

a significant blow. He had led 4-1 in the third set, but when it came to the tie-break, his game fell apart. "I have never really felt that I played my best tennis here," he said afterwards, philosophically.

Two weeks later, he was forced to make another losing speech when Grigor Dimitrov put him out of the Miami Masters. Again, he was a break up in the third before a string of unforced errors destroyed his rhythm. "Indian Wells may be understandable [because of the gusting wind]," he said. "Here, not so much."

It is no disgrace to lose in a sport where there are so many matches; the week-to-week grind can bring down the best of players. Nevertheless, Murray needed all his sangfroid when he found himself unable to carry his fighting spirit from the Davis Cup to the Tour. It was as if he missed the intensity and craved another big

challenge to motivate him. A few weeks later in Monte Carlo, he would tell a few of us that, yes, that was often the case.

Some of those who know him well, including the former British No 1 Annabel Croft, wondered if he was distracted by his new family obligations. "There was a lot of emotion," she observed on Sky after the Dimitrov match, "a lot of back-chat to the box. He admitted himself that wasn't great and he needs to find focus. I think generally he looked exhausted."

Davis Cup captain Leon Smith, who has known Murray since he and his brother Jamie came to prominence as prodigies in Scotland, was not so downbeat. "It's a brilliant chapter in his life but it's a lot to take in," Smith said. "There's not been many breaks. You certainly can't count having a child as a break!"

Murray also had to bat away questions about his relationship with former coach Amélie Mauresmo, who watched the Miami match from a different part of the stadium to the box where Murray's wife, Kim, and his support staff were located. Murray had done something similar at the ATP World Tour Finals in London, asking his family and team to watch a long way from the court as he strove for new ways to maintain his concentration. "It's something I've tested to see if that might help," he told reporters. Just prior to

printing, Murray announced an amicable split from Mauresmo after two years.

THE AWAY GAME

Speaking to *MH* some weeks earlier, life had seemed so sun-filled and straightforward.

Murray was delighted with his circumstances, and why wouldn't he be? He had already come through a tough time at January's Australian Open, where his father-in-law, Nigel Sears, collapsed on an adjacent court during one of his matches.

He admitted that his 31st match against Djokovic in the Open final was unlike the

others, although it wasn't the build-up of losses that affected him (his 22nd to the world No 1) but the external circumstances. He'd said beforehand he would have no hesitation leaving the tournament if Kim went into labour, even if he reached the final. And here he was. And there she was. Still waiting. Her father had just blacked out in the stands while she was at home with her mother in Oxshott. That's not a regular scenario for anyone. After he lost in the final against Djokovic, Murray was ferried overnight to Tullamarine airport for the first available ticket back to London – he'd reserved seats on three flights. But Sears recovered quickly and Murray's daughter Sophia arrived soon afterwards, bringing the edgy period to a halt.

02 FOREHAND

TECHNIQUE, SPIN AND TIMING HAVE MADE MURRAY ONE OF THE GAME'S BEST RETURNERS OF SERVE



THE ANGLE SLANTING THE RACQUET FACE AT 55° PROVIDES THE MOST TOPSPIN

"GYROTONICS MADE A HUGE DIFFERENCE TO WHAT I CAN DO"

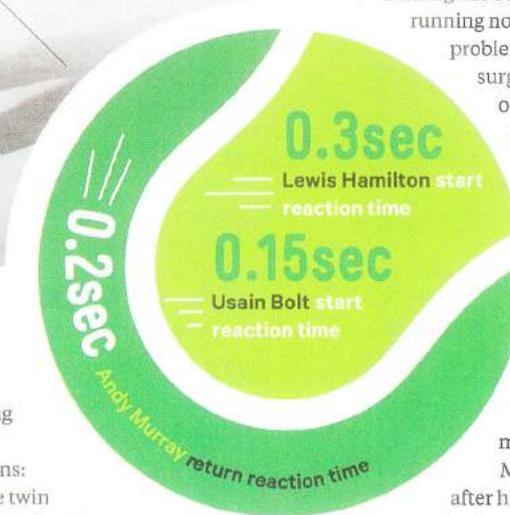
THE SNAP
FLEXION IN THE
CORE, SHOULDER
AND WRISTS PUTS
MAXIMUM VELOCITY
INTO THE BALL

C

THE EFFECT
MURRAY AVERAGES
2400RPM ON EACH
SHOT, FOR MORE
POWER AND
ACCURACY

REACTING CREDIT

Returning a fast serve puts Murray's reflexes ahead of most



OUTSIDE ADVANTAGE

Murray still trains as hard as ever, despite suggesting on a visit to his Miami winter camp a few years ago that he might level off as he got older. He remains ascetic about his diet. When he won that breakthrough title at Flushing Meadows, he joined the celebration party late, picking up a bill for \$6448 (£4000) at the Ling Ling bar in the upmarket Hakkasan restaurant. He had a \$6 soda.

Life for Murray is calibrated – he knows no other way. A few years ago he told this magazine: “Earlier in my career I used to spend a lot of time practising my tennis on court. Now I’ve learned that it’s better to do just a couple of hours on court and two gym sessions a day. That’s what’s made me fitter and stronger. For much of the year, you’re just trying to maintain your fitness. It’s not often you get time to really concentrate on improving it.”

Back at the photoshoot, Murray gives us an update. It shows how precise his training has become. “I don’t do much running now. I stopped after the problems with my back. After my surgery I did more cardio work on the court. Before I came here today, I was doing Gyrotonics, which has made a huge difference to my life, actually. Not just my tennis but to what I can and can’t do. I still do Pilates, but a lot of it is straight lines. With Gyrotonics there is more twisting and turning, the kind of movements I use in tennis.”

Murray is on a roll. Looking after his body is one of his key enthusiasms. When he played his third match at Wimbledon in 2005, losing a five-setter to David Nalbandian, he complained that he could not match the older, stronger Argentinian for stamina. Few listened. Get on with it, they said; it’s only tennis. Not now. What Murray has done since moving his winter base to Miami nearly eight years ago is not just admirable, but a template for others.

Returning to his latest obsession, Gyrotonics, he continues: “We got the

“[After the Australian Open] I took two weeks off without hitting a ball and that was the longest I hadn’t played since I had my surgery [in 2014],” he said. “Normally, after a week or so, I want to hit a few balls. When I got back to doing stuff, I felt much better for it. It was such a long end to last year, stressful. It’s been nice to be at home with Kim and the baby.”

“It wasn’t the final that was different, it was the whole event. It was tough, and then everything that happened in the middle of it... Obviously a lot of things go on away from the court. Normally in a Slam, the tennis is the priority. For a number of years I hadn’t played a Slam like that; normally I’m competing for them and trying to win them, but this time I had something else on my mind as well. I don’t think it affected my tennis so much, but it definitely gave

me perspective. I had to think a little bit more about what’s important, what my values are.”

It sounded like a turning point. The conundrum for Murray was and remains: how does he cope with the twin responsibilities of parenthood and tennis? Both Roger Federer, father to two sets of twins and a travelling ad for Swiss efficiency, and Novak Djokovic, also a beaming new father, have handled it. The question is what sacrifices will an individual make for his sport.

Murray thinks he has found a good balance and, for now, he will let the cards fall where they will. He loves tennis. But he loves Kim and Sophia more.

UNCORRECTED - GYROTONIC TRAINING (LEFT), LEE HIGGINS/THE HORN; ANDY MURRAY
 FOUNDER OF JOE AND CO USING KEVIN MURPHY

03 BACKHAND

AN EXPERT GRASP OF ANGLES AND BIOMECHANICS LETS MURRAY HIT WINNERS FROM ALL ANGLES

lady who teaches it to come to a few tournaments last year. She was in Washington the week before the US Open, she did a couple of weeks with me before the clay court season, as well as the Davis Cup final. She's been fantastic.

"I still make adjustments during the year and I tried a lot of things to help my back. It's so much better now but I'm always trying new stuff. Sometimes you find something that makes a huge, huge difference. I used to do a lot of running on the track and then came across the VersaClimber. I felt I was getting huge benefits from that without my hips and knees and back taking a pounding. That made a big difference as well, a big aerobic benefit. Also, the work you get on your quads on the VersaClimber is massive."

COURTING CONFLICT

Elite athletes spend a lot of time on the hunt for new techniques. And of course, some take the easier route: performance-enhancing drugs. Murray, more than just about any other player, abhors their use. He was among the most unforgiving of critics when Maria Sharapova failed a drugs test at the Australian Open for the previously unheard-of meldonium. He exchanged frank words with Djokovic over the suspension of the Serb's compatriot, Viktor Troicki, in 2013. Other players tread warily. Not Murray. If he feels strongly about something, he will say so.

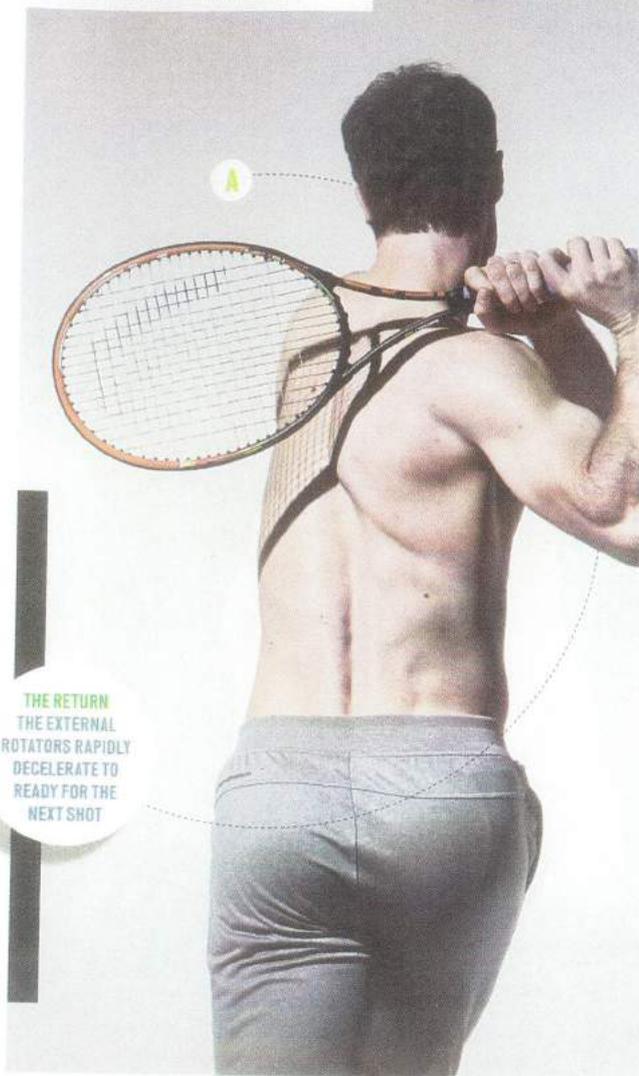
Murray and Djokovic, born just a week after him 29 years ago, fell out more dramatically this year, when the Scot said he sometimes wondered about

past opponents who had been able to go strongly to the wire in long matches. First, Djokovic's coach, Boris Becker, came out firing. He said Murray was "totally out of order" to make such inferences. Djokovic, a born diplomat, tried to soothe the row, though tension between them remains.

Djokovic asserts that he is good friends with Murray, whom he has known since losing to him in a junior tournament when they were 11 years old. But Murray is equivocal. He describes their relationship as that of "professional friends". They are cordial – and have even played five-a-side football together – but they have had their moments on court. Murray has suspected Djokovic of gamesmanship more than once, most pointedly in the 2015 Australian Open final. But they take such contretemps in their stride. They might be closer when they retire. They might not. Neither went to each other's wedding. Neither was upset about it.

They are different temperamentally: Murray rides his emotions more loudly; Djokovic is quietly brutal in mastering his inner beast. For now, Murray is happy to talk sushi, another seeming obsession; over the course of our conversation he hoovers up maybe 20 pieces.

"The first time I went to a Japanese restaurant I would have been, like, 19? I thought, there's no chance I'm having that: raw fish, no way. The first time I tried sushi was after a Davis Cup tie. I think it was the

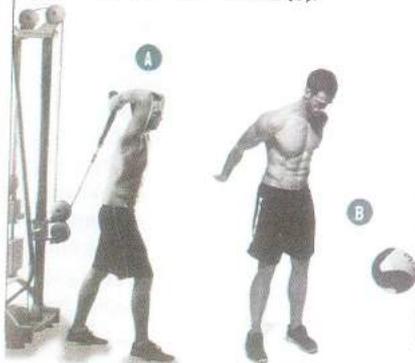


THE FULL SERVICE

TRULY ELITE ATHLETES WORK EVERY ANGLE. MURRAY'S PLAN ADDS STRENGTH TO DYNAMIC MOVES FOR A LEAN PHYSIQUE

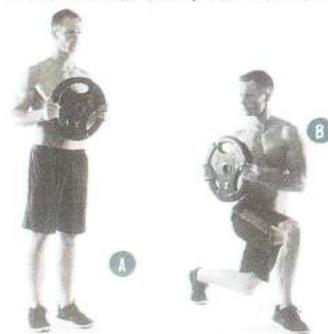
1/ EXTENSION / MED BALL SLAM

3 SETS OF 5 REPS ON EACH
Stand in front of a cable stack and pull the rope handle straight up over your head (A). Do 5 reps, rest 30sec, then smash out 5 med ball slams (B).



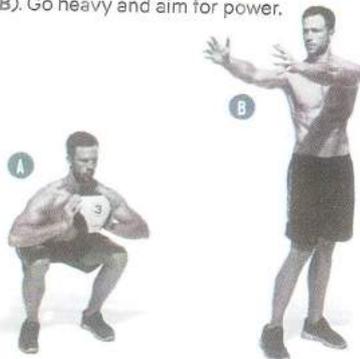
2/ TWISTING PLATE LUNGE

3 SETS OF 8-10 REPS
Holding a weight plate in front of you (A), lunge forward and twist 90 degrees in the direction of your lead leg (B). Do 8-10, then swap legs. And yes, this will burn.



3/ MED BALL RETURN

4 SETS OF 3-5 REPS
Face a wall with a med ball in both hands. Squat (A), jump slightly and rotate your shoulders as you land to throw the ball (B). Go heavy and aim for power.



THE GRIP
A MIXED GRIP
TRANSFORMS THE
BACKHAND INTO
AN 'OFFHAND
FOREHAND'

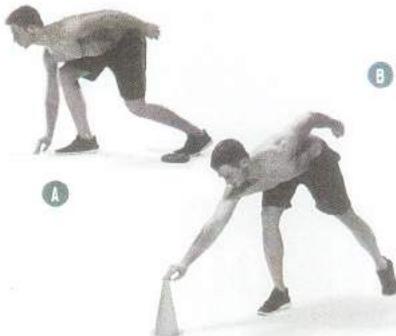
THE ROTATION
TWISTING HIS
SHOULDERS PAST
HIS HIPS PUTS
STRETCH ENERGY
INTO THE MUSCLES

B

C

4/ REACTION SPRINT 4 SETS OF 10 SPRINTS

Set two cones 10m apart and get into a 'sprint start' position between them (A). Have a partner call out a cone, then react to touch it (B). Reset and repeat.



one where Tim [Henman] retired, when we played at Wimbledon, against Croatia in '07. We went to Nobu. And that was it. Sold. In Miami, it's everywhere."

Does he still stack up the calories and match the intake with a massive workout, like boxers such as Amir Khan?

"No. There was a period, when I was younger and trying to put weight on, when I was looking at my calories. These days I just try to maintain my weight. I feel most comfortable at 84kg." He does not look as if weight would ever be a problem.

"The problem for me was when I had my back surgery. When I don't do anything, I drop weight, because I don't have as much of an appetite. When I started training again, I put on quite a lot. Anyway, now it's fine. My body fat is around 9-10%. It's what I want. When I tried the gluten-free diet, I dropped like 5kg in the space of a few weeks, and had

no energy. The only thing that it helped was sleep but I think that was simply because I was so tired. I slept really well, but I couldn't play tennis like that. I just didn't have enough energy, I struggled."

It was Djokovic, of course, who led the way with gluten-free.

"I DID TRY THE GLUTEN-FREE DIET BUT I HAD NO ENERGY"

He is the method's champion. He is also Murray's bête noire. Gluten-free was never going to cut it. They will surely clash this summer, perhaps here at Wimbledon, then in the Davis Cup. It

is a rivalry that encapsulates the nature of modern tennis: intense, physical, psychologically demanding – and, for the rest of us, utterly engaging. **10**