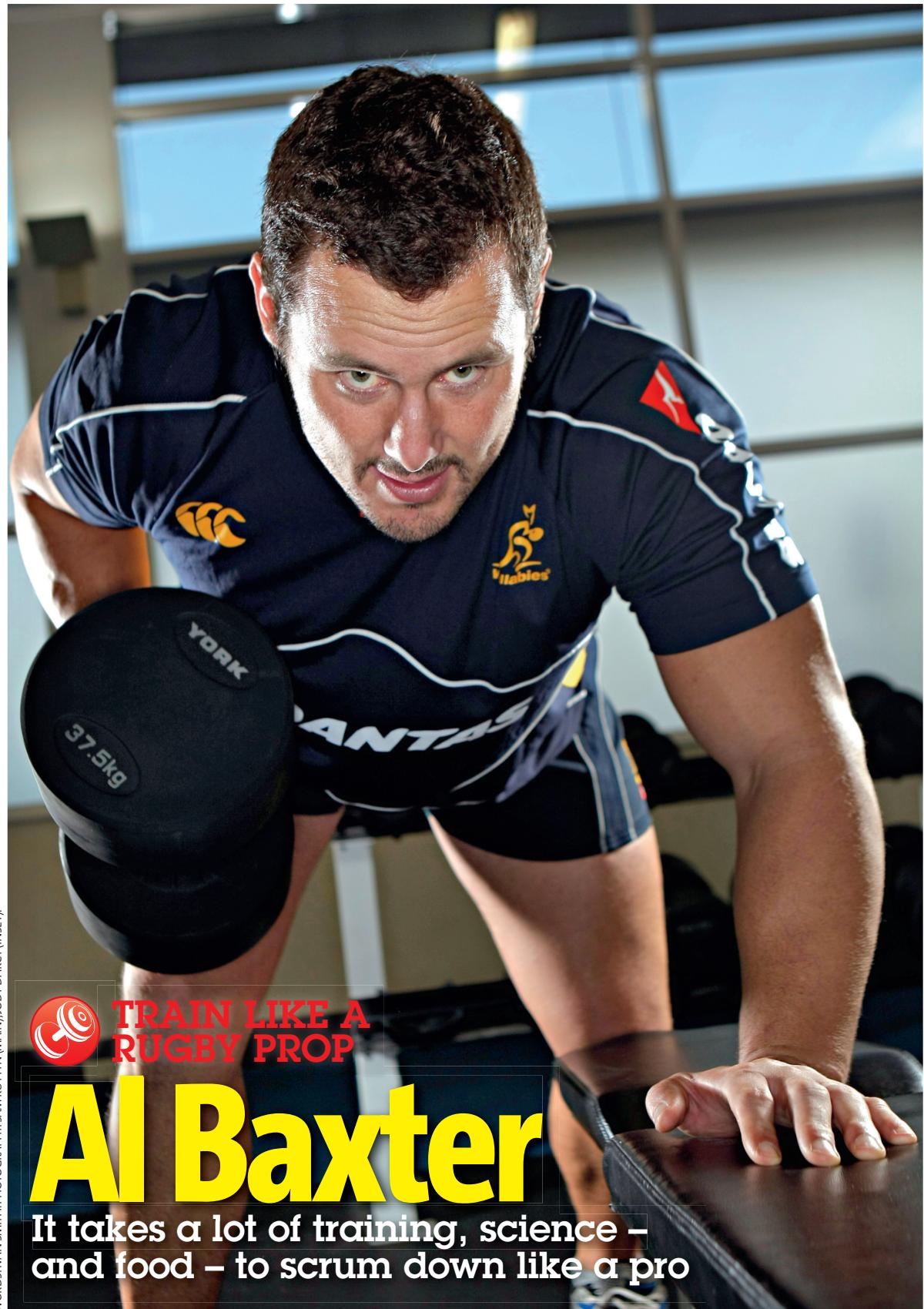


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**TRAIN LIKE A
RUGBY PROP**

AI Baxter

**It takes a lot of training, science –
and food – to scrum down like a pro**

WORDS: IVAN SMITH. PHOTOGRAPHY: SAM RUTTYN (MAIN); JODY DARCY (INSET).

A key member of the Wallabies scrum since 2003, NSW Waratahs prop Al Baxter, 32, like the pack itself, is getting better and better. Monitored regularly by the opposition, the Wallabies turned the tables on the fabled England unit late in 2008, using power and technique to grind them into the dirt. As Baxter explains on the following pages, there's a lot more to his position now than just being a big bloke.

PACKING IT ALL IN

WORK

"I've got a very understanding employer (Baxter is an architect). They say when you're free, come in and when you're not, concentrate on rugby, and they'll get me full-time at the end of it all. I'm in anywhere from weekly to monthly depending on my travel schedule. And this week I've got training all five days."

MOTIVATION

"I am naturally motivated. It's very easy to motivate yourself coming back from injury because you're sitting around a lot. But it's fairly easy to stay motivated, especially if you see other players in your position."

LOVE THE JOB

"It's just competitive spirit, it's what I've always done. I've stuck with it because I enjoy the physical challenge, the competitive action, and that's why I keep playing. If you don't like it, you stop playing and try something else."

CRITICISM

"I enjoyed it (Aussie scrums getting slated). In Australia, stuff up-front isn't considered an exciting part of the game, but in northern Europe and England especially, they love it. So even if it's negative, at least they're talking about it. But here, most of the guys commentating don't know anything about it. It's nice when you head up there and this is the big part of the game for them, so we (the pack) all enjoyed it."

