

MAN ALIVE!

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TRAIN LIKE A WALLABY...

Stirling Mortlock

Strength training from the captain who plays – like he leads – from the front

It's a cold fitness centre on a Wednesday afternoon. Standing in reception is Stirling Mortlock, still looking battered from the Wallabies' defeat by the South Africans three days earlier. It's also his day off; he should be on a golf course. Instead, I'm asking him to pretend to lift weights so *Alpha's* photographer can say, "That's good, just one more" a lot. I'm slightly embarrassed.

About two shots in, Mortlock's eyes light up. He starts doing the exercises for real, suggesting things, showing us the way, shifting big chunks of metal about. Suddenly there's sweat dripping off him and I realise I've got a real live Wallabies captain on my hands.

Mortlock is a big man, an explosive runner and one of the best players in the world at centre. What he's doing now is showing me why. Stirling Mortlock wants to take this work-out and crush it in his bare hands. By the time we've finished, it's a shame to stop him. Look at the exercises over the page and you'll see why stopping him would be tough for anyone.

WORDS: IVAN SMITH. PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES DEMITRI (PROFILE); THEMBA HADEBE/AAP IMAGE (ON THE RUN).



Andale! Andale! The fastest Mortlock in all rugby union.

MOTIVATION

"The fundamental thing that drives me is that I'm never happy with where I'm at. Never. So I'm always looking to get better and always looking at ways to improve. That's a common trait with most of the guys at this level. Most athletes towards the top end are constantly doing everything in their power to improve."

CAPTAINCY

"As leader I couldn't just continue being a hothead. I wouldn't say I was always a hothead, but sometimes in Test-match conditions I'd be a fiery customer. That's something that, as a captain, you need to always pull back on – see the bigger picture. You need to be able to communicate clearly to the team."

STAMINA

"Playing in my position you've got to have a decent motor – and the ability to make repeated efforts. You've also got to have the physique that can take a fair bit of contact. In defence, a lot of traffic comes through. In attack, you end up with a lot of collisions and a lot of running forward and backwards – it's unique."

SPEED

"I do speed training when I can, although I haven't the past few weeks. Leading into the Wallabies' (European) tour later this year, I'll do a good block of speed training. Speed is crucial to my position. And when you're doing speed-work and feeling fast, that's good for your confidence."

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