

MATT SHIRVINGTON FROM SPIKES TO SPORTS REPORTER

MATT SHIRVINGTON
MAY HAVE LEFT THE SPRINT TRACK BEHIND, BUT HIS LOVE FOR SPORT AND THE OUTDOORS IS STRONGER THAN EVER.



MATT SHIRVINGTON – a Spalding athlete – is dressed head to toe in sportswear, making him easy to spot among the suits at Foxtel studios, where he is a television presenter for Foxtel and Sky News. He's quite fidgety and he fesses up that he has just spoken to his wife, Jessica (an author), and tells me that her young adult novel series, has been

snapped up by Steven Spielberg and will be made into a TV series for the US network CW. To say he feels proud and excited is an understatement, but it's just another day in the Shirvington household that has seen a tremendous amount of success over the years.

The second fastest Australian of all time, Matt Shirvington held the Australian 100m national sprint title

from 1998 to 2002 but has slowed down somewhat and prefers to spend his time in the surf and discovering mountain bike trails wired in to his favourite tunes. After spending six years in the UK training with former Olympic Champion Linford Christie, he is happy to replace track work for a comfortable seat reading the sports news or broadcasting sports for Foxtel.

IF YOU CAN BE #1 IN AUSTRALIA THEN YOU CAN, POTENTIALLY, BE #1 IN THE WORLD. //

Training in the UK not only proved a good opportunity to be part of global athletics and to improve his skills but it also taught Matt the ability to interact with different training and coaching styles which not only has helped him as an athlete but in his own coaching endeavours. 'I learnt quickly that you've got to remain open minded; don't think you know it all, and don't think you can't improve on the knowledge you've got or the understanding of movement you've got. You can always improve on it and there's always something new and developing,' he says.

Launching his fitness business, Shirvington Fitness, in 2010, he dove into the corporate market, developing in-house programs for different corporations, incorporating personal and group training and subcontracting a number of trainers to help him out. It didn't take long for word to get around and soon Matt was receiving calls from elite level sports teams interested in his knowledge about speed and agility.

Shirvington Performance, his second fitness business, dedicated to elite training and football codes has Matt working with the St George Illawarra Dragons, the NSW Waratahs, and the Sydney Swans. 'It's been a really good introduction to elite level sport outside of track and field and also it's great to be able to apply the knowledge that I have gained at a competition and an athlete level to be able to apply it to teams.'

Is there anything Matt misses from his days on the track? 'Probably the by-products of the training – feeling really fit and strong all the time, lean as well, but I definitely don't miss the absolute hard vomit level work we had to do which was difficult,' he explains.

Coming off the back of his athletic career in 2008, he was offered a place

on Foxtel's Olympic broadcasting team in the lead up to the Vancouver Games, which included the Commonwealth Games in Delhi and finished off with the London Olympics. 'It was a great opportunity and a baptism of fire to learn pretty quickly about the TV industry and what it meant to sit on a news desk and read the sports news.'

He admits that athletes have it pretty good compared to the broadcasters, talking about his recent stint at London 2012, where he worked 17 days straight with barely four hours sleep a night. Taking up his position behind the microphone rather than on the field, he says the opportunity to interview Olympic Champions such as Usain Bolt, Sally Pearson and Mo Farah was 'unbelievable – an opportunity that just does not happen.'

Away from the cameras Matt is most content mountain biking or heading to the beach to swim and body surf, far away from reps and sets and intense workouts, although he admits he still does some technical training; speed interval and speed endurance training with some explosive power and acceleration work. You'll rarely see him running. 'A long run for me is 300m!' he laughs. 'No, occasionally I'll go for a 20 or 30 minute run. It just doesn't suit my energy system having trained it for speed for so long.'

As a parting gesture, we ask Matt to share with us one piece of training wisdom. Without hesitation he says 'consistency – in everything you do. Knowing that the small things add up to the greater things later down the track. Whether that's a fitness goal, losing weight, gaining strength, or in your own business, simply being able to do one small thing each day will accumulate to seven at the end of the week.'

60 SECONDS WITH MATT SHIRVINGTON

What's something you want to do before you die?

Master skiing, go heli-skiing and get down one of the biggest slopes in the world

What's your favourite place in the world and why?

Paris, France. For the romance with my wife, competing at the 2003 world championships and taking my kids and seeing Paris through the eyes of a child

What's something about you that not many people may know?

I am very good at making sounds – everything from a whipper snipper through to a didgeridoo!

What do you do to relax?

I do some sort of activity like surfing and go to the park with my girls (he has two daughters)

What are your three biggest passions?

Sport, surfing and mountain biking

What's your favourite healthy snack?

Rye bread, poached eggs and avocado

If you could, what other sport would you love to excel at?

Rally car driving

Describe your ultimate day off

Brunch, the beach, watch a movie at home

MATT'S TIPS TO INCREASE YOUR SPEED

- Access your starting technique, as acceleration is the key.
- Maximise your top speed by developing your maximum velocity.
- Try to combine stride frequency and stride length in the most efficient way possible.

TONI KRASICKI

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Photos: Foxtel – Tarsha Hosking