

## TV STAR MEL SYKES

The presenter and *I'm A Celeb* runner-up admits she wasn't interested in fitness until her late 30s - and explains why discovering weight training changed her life

To men of a certain generation, Melanie Sykes will forever be linked to that Bodington's ad: so artistically shot, so clever, so... well, exciting. But approaching 45 the motor-mouthed Mancunian has a body you'd expect from someone half her age, and does numbers in the gym that put a lot of men to shame. Here, fresh from the *I'm A Celeb* jungle, Sykes calls out girls who don't lift weights and explains how she got so ripped while still being partial to the odd porky pub snack.

As we saw in *I'm A Celeb*, you're in amazing shape. Have you always been into exercise?

I'm naturally slim so I never used to exercise at all. Then I hit 37 and thought it would be a good idea for my health, if nothing else. I started running because it seemed like the easiest thing, but I soon picked up a knee injury and my calves were getting chunky so I joined a gym. Initially, I didn't have a clue what to do, but I watched and copied other people for a bit, before eventually getting myself a trainer. It wasn't long before I was lifting weights, knew my way around a gym and was looking forward to sessions. I was already making good progress, but it wasn't until I changed my diet that I really saw a difference.

What was that change? And please don't say detoxing.

No, a sports nutrition company called Active Woman approached me. They do pre- and post-workout shakes, rehydration drinks, fat burners and fish oils. At first I wasn't interested because I assumed those kinds of supplements were just for body-builders. Then I agreed to try some of the products and was genuinely amazed. I could train for longer, my recovery was better and I got more ripped. Once I'd experienced the benefits of the supplements I was more than

happy to attach my name to them. Eventually they became my own products.

How consistent are you with the rest of your diet?

I don't overindulge - well, rarely - but I don't rule out anything either. I eat well for the most part so if I want to go out and have a drink I'll do it. Fuck it, I'll even have a packet of pork scratchings if I fancy one. That being said, if I know I've got a shoot coming up I won't drink for the week beforehand to ensure I'm feeling and looking as fresh as possible.

That's probably sensible. What about your gym routine - what's that like?

I typically do four to five hours a week of high-intensity training, usually circuits. Most sessions I'll blitz it on the bike, come off and do three sets of three arms exercises, get back on the bike, and then do the same with legs. I've got a naturally flat bottom so I work really hard on my glutes. Nicki Minaj

probably doesn't have anything to worry about, though.

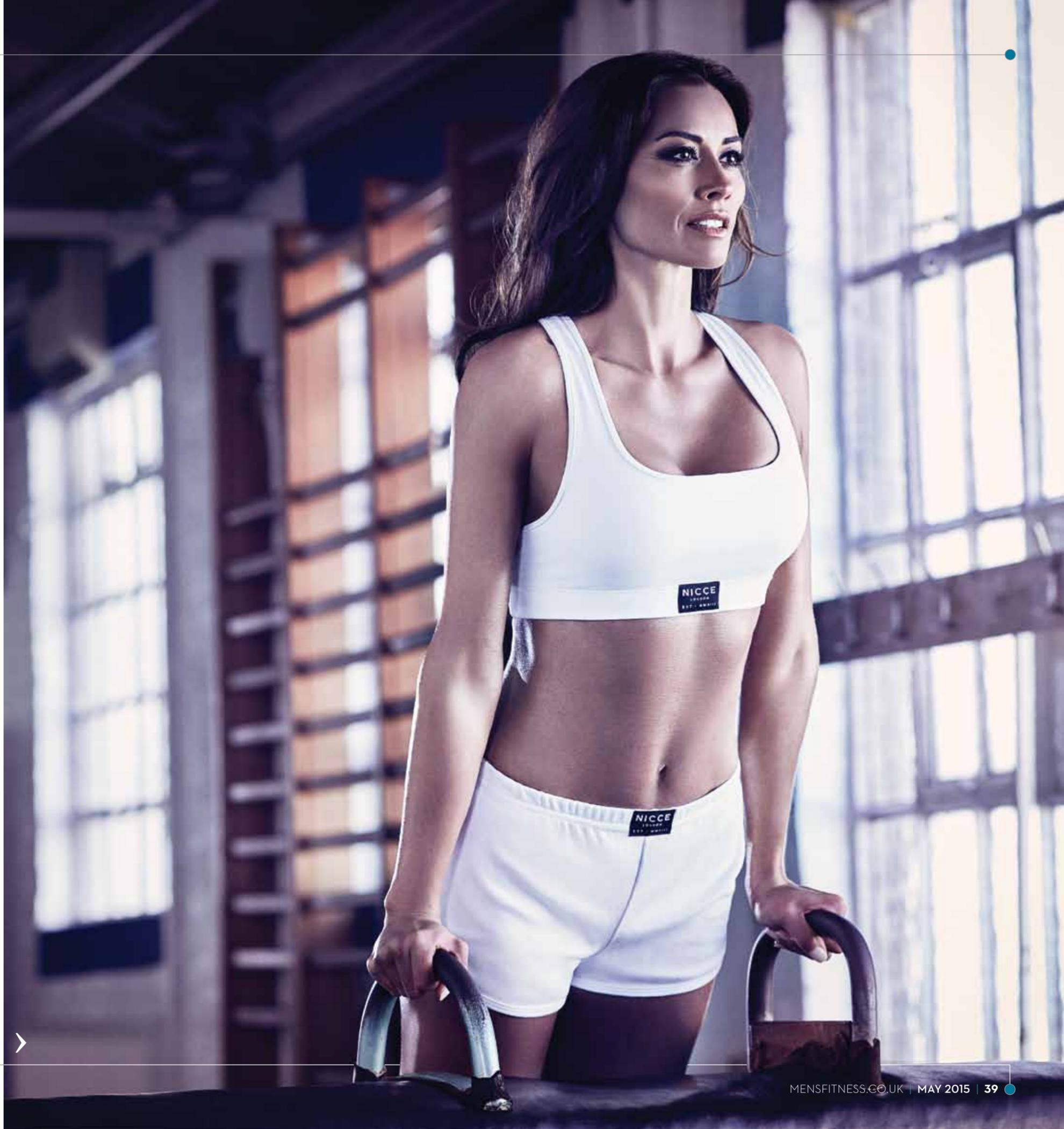
You're too modest - but let's change tack. How did being on *I'm A Celeb* affect your training?

The main problem was the lack of protein that wasn't in the form of some kind of animal genitalia! My abs started popping like crazy and my arms looked really toned when I was in there, but that's because I lost so much body fat. I even trained with [fellow contestant] Jake Quickenden using logs, doing press-ups and some abs work, but we got too weak to do it because of the lack of food. ITV never showed any clips of our jungle boot camp sessions, which was annoying.

We agree - seeing those might have steered some people in the right direction. Relatedly, do you

**'I EAT WELL SO  
IF I WANT TO  
HAVE A DRINK,  
I'LL DO IT'**

Words: Robert Cottingham, Max Anderson; Photography: Ian Derry; Grooming: Laura Tucker using Elemis, Tom Ford and Oribe; Location: Peacock Gym, Canning Town, London



## 'I'M HAPPY WITH MY BODY AND I'VE NEVER FELT STRONGER'

**think women are starting to train differently these days?**

The main difference is that athletic, muscular bodies are now fashionable for women. That fashion doesn't seem to be going anywhere - I hope it sticks around for good. Nowadays, you go to the gym and there are loads of older women with better bodies than the 20-year-olds who don't train. I'm 45 this year and I've never felt as good as I do now. The mainstream normalisation of exercise is partly to thank for that.

**What's most surprised you about yourself since you started training?**

Just how much I love it. I'm happy with my body at an age when some women are abandoning all hope, and as an added bonus I've never felt stronger. Don't get me wrong, there are some days when I go for a session with my personal trainer and I really don't want to do it. There are points where I even start to develop a healthy dislike for him, but once we're finished my endorphins are pumping and I'm as high as kite. I don't go to the gym to fuck about, and because I have that attitude I never leave it feeling bad or sorry for myself.

**Have you got any fitness goals?**

No. I've got what I want so it's all about maintenance now. Every time I go to the gym my goal is to finish the session. So far, I'm smashing it.

**Active Woman nutrition and equipment is available from [very.co.uk](http://very.co.uk) and [bio-synergy.co.uk](http://bio-synergy.co.uk)**



### **BODDY BEAUTIFUL** Do three rounds of Mel Sykes's total-body workout for ale-defying abs



#### **DOUBLE KETTLEBELL FRONT SQUAT**

'Make squats harder and more beneficial by holding kettlebells,' says Sykes. 'The extra weight also improves balance.'

REPS 10  
REST 1MIN



#### **ROMANIAN DEADLIFT**

'Romanian deadlifts are a great way to practise the deadlift motion without putting too much pressure on your lower back,' says Sykes.



REPS 10  
REST 1MIN



#### **SIDE PLANK**

'This is a core-strengthening, balance-testing move that's good to have in your repertoire because you can do it literally anywhere,' says Sykes.

TIME 1MIN  
EACH SIDE  
REST 1MIN