

LIFE • BODY • LOOK

20s, 30s, 40s, 50s...

Your Best

# Women's health & fitness

Australia

your best  
**AGE**  
Issue

The **NEW**  
pre-midlife  
crises

Are you in one?  
(20s, 30s, any  
time...)

...It's just  
a number

Are  
you too  
young  
for Botox?

+Shoo away lines:  
Skincare that  
WORKS

BETTER  
**SEX**  
BY  
DECADE

KEEP YOUR  
younger  
body

...spread's dead,  
baby

"This is my  
**Favourite Age**"

Newsreader, 43

Entrepreneur, 47

Model, 52

CEO, 60

JUNE 2013





# THE TOUGH GET GOING

*"WE ARE BOTH 'OLD', AND DIDN'T KNOW  
WHAT WE WERE GETTING INTO."*



In case you missed the memo, fitness just got hardcore. As in, *what a relief that this knee-deep mud's as cold as Siberia, because these bruises are caning*. You can blame The Commando for the frenzy surrounding tough-as-gel-nails obstacle challenges, but the real appeal comes down to the buzz of beating the odds. Reckon you're tough enough?

Words: Michael Jarosky with Rebecca Long

**L**et's not gloss over it – the obstacle fitness phenomenon has all the hallmarks of a fad. Promises to get you fit while you're having fun (oh puh-leeese). Screen-printed trucker cap? Check. Plenty of Facey opps? Just watch the comments go crazy in a way they never did when you posted that you'd been to the gym.

But is there more to outdoor adventure-style challenges than meets the ego? Like, can they actually get your body lean, efficient and strong?

Goal-setting 101 says they may at least be a way to trick you into working out. Committing to a time-based event is a classic planning tool – there's nothing like a date with potential pain and/or humiliation to get you out of bed for training at 5am. Then there's the competitive aspect, which is enough to rouse anyone from their comfy couch. (What, you're going to blame your slow time on *Weekend Sunrise*?)

Triathlon coach and former Australian Ironman Champion Christina Thomas, from Energy Link, agrees with the competitive theory.

"Women are tough and competitive in

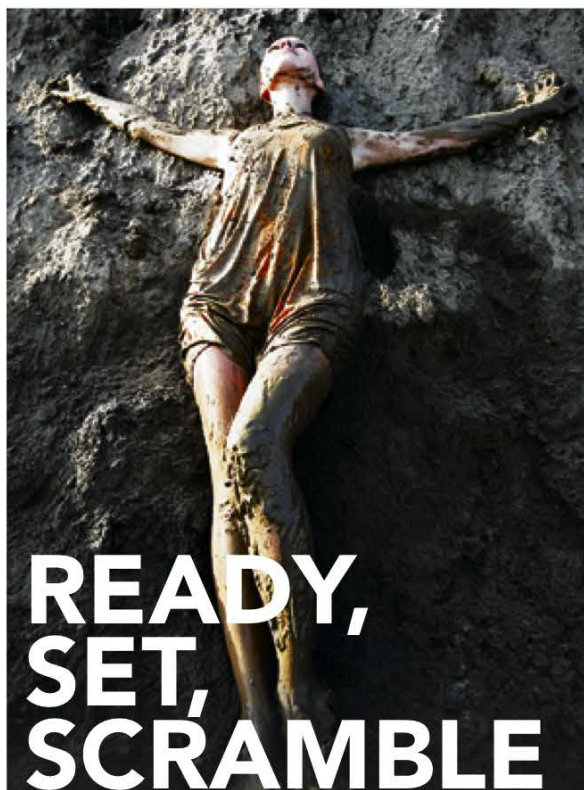
the office, so in their personal and physical lives they are seeking that same rush, and traditional gym workouts with little competition just aren't cutting it," she says.

In fact, the proof of the more-than-a-fad pudding is that adventure-style challenges were around long before current 'it' events such as Australia's Greatest Athlete (with its Channel 9 TV spinoff and \$50,000 cash prize) and Tough Mudder; and they put extreme on the map. The UK's Toughguy challenge was founded in 1986, and between 1995 and 2002, Mark Burnett's (*Survivor*, *The Apprentice*) *Eco-Challenge* was a mainstay on the Discovery Channel. Adventure junkies have been calling rope beating and tyre slinging 'CrossFit' since early last decade.

The difference now is that hardcore challenges have been well and truly democratised. Beside the GI Jane lookalikes lining up to conquer 20-foot barriers and mud pools, are groups of friends substituting commando-style scrambling for a weekend coffee catch-up. The mainstreaming of mud has also ushered in more modest challenges, with divisions tailored to different levels of fitness and, well,







## READY, SET, SCRAMBLE

P.S. These challenges are staged in most states. Visit their websites for one near you. For more races, and training tips, visit Australia's only dedicated obstacle race e-zine at [obstacleracers.com.au](http://obstacleracers.com.au)

### 5 or 10KM

Don't be deterred by the TV series – that's the culmination of the take-no-prisoners TV series challenge, with its \$50,000 bounty (enter if you dare). But there is also an 'adventure challenge' scaled to suit all fitness levels – there are five levels of difficulty. The 5km and 10km are our picks for beginner adventure athletes.

Visit [greatestathlete.com](http://greatestathlete.com)

← SLIDE TO READ MORE →

masochism. Australia's Greatest Athlete has two course lengths and five grades, from easy (hey, it's all relative) to extreme.

But despite the availability of ease-in options, the temptation to go hard or go home can result in more than bruises.

"It is a big challenge and the chase for that adrenaline rush can breed injury," Thomas warns.

Sydney Swans physiotherapist Jennifer Dodge, herself an avid adventure racer, says the first test of a racer's mettle is resisting peer pressure.

**“WOMEN ARE TOUGH AND COMPETITIVE IN THE OFFICE, SO IN THEIR PERSONAL AND PHYSICAL LIVES THEY ARE SEEKING THAT SAME RUSH.”**

"Folks that sign up for these events under water-cooler peer pressure are in for a shock. A bit of gym fitness isn't enough," Dodge warns.

Sprains (injuring ligaments joining bone to bone) and strains (injuring tendons, which join muscle to bone) can quickly cut short your mud campaign, rendering months of hard work a waste.

But building fitness incrementally before an event can spare you from a world of pain, Dodge says.

"If you are cardio fit, alter your training program to build upper body strength, and vice versa. Being the weak (or injured) team member might hold up the entire team!"



# CHOOSE YOUR CHALLENGE WISELY

Make obstacles work for you with these tips from AFL footy physio and obstacle racer Jennifer Dodge.

## READ THE FINE PRINT

The websites for most adventure challenges outline the length and nature of the event course. Being clued up on your event will save you from finding yourself at the start line for a challenge that would make a cadet cry.

## GET IN EARLY

Leaving things to the last minute might get you cheap hotel rooms, but here it's a path to injury. Plan your challenge eight weeks out and use the time to incrementally build all-over fitness. Unless you want to find yourself sitting on an inflatable ring with a pair of crutches beside you, you'll need to hone flexibility and agility as well as aerobic capacity. A personal trainer can write a training plan tailored to your event – it may be the best \$75 you ever spent.

## LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

You may well be able to outwit your line manager, but don't go thinking you know better than your body. If it's hurting – particularly from a niggling injury – flag the race with your physio. Knowing your limits is the key to a fun, safe race day (not to mention a better finish time). Even if you're not carrying an injury, Dodge recommends a \$10 wrist and ankle strapping job from the chemist to minimise the risk of sprains and strains on race day.

## UPDATE YOUR STATUS

It can be hard to get geed up to train for something that seems like forever away. As soon as you've signed up, tell your Facebook and Twitter friends you're doing the challenge. Join your challenge's Facebook page and bounce successes (e.g. can now touch toes) and ideas off other racers.

