

Q & A with Phoenix Mercury's Penny Taylor, : How To Work Out Like an Olympian

Written by Madelyn Steckbeck

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Penny Taylor, being the star player on the Phoenix Mercury, has all the answers for how to work out like an Olympian. She has been with the Phoenix Mercury since 2004 and helped boost the team to three championships (2007, 2009, 2014). Taylor is a native of Australia and has been playing professionally since the age of 15. She represented Australia in the Olympics – winning silver in 2004 and 2008.

AFM: How much sleep do you get on a daily basis; do you recommend a certain number of hours for sleep for someone who is training?

PT: I have read a lot about this and the correct amount of sleep. I think it varies for everyone, but for me it's between seven to eight hours.

AFM: What do your daily workouts consist of?

PT: Because our schedule our daily routine is always different, it depends on where I am in the world and what I'm competing in. Usually it's a small amount of weights, between one to two hours of practice or if it's a game day it's pretty much all about the game.

AFM: What one or two things do you currently do in your training that are keys to your success?

PT: Limiting how much I do and making sure I don't do too much. I stick to a pretty strict weights program and that keeps me strong and in the best shape possible.

AFM: Many professional athletes practice yoga for relaxation and flexibility. Do you practice yoga?

PT: I have. I'm pretty bad at it, but I really enjoy it and I really look forward to doing more of it in the future.

AFM: What do you do to prepare for a workout?

PT: A lot of stretching. We do small exercises to get our muscles activated. But other than that I make sure I get enough sleep, I eat the right things and feel great energy coming in.

AFM: What is your diet like?

PT: About 10 months ago, I went on a vegan diet. I researched everything possible as far as staying in the best shape, having the most energy and longevity in my career and life. Facing cancer in my family, I wanted to research the best possible way to avoid it as much as you can and for me, that was a vegan diet.

AFM: You have been playing basketball professionally since you were 15. What keeps you focused on future goals within the sport?

PT: I'm pretty good at staying focused and competitive in the moment. I've always had the attitude and I've always been lucky enough to play on teams that have a chance to win, whether its WNBA, overseas or with my national team so that keeps you pretty focused when you're a competitive person like myself.

AFM: What is your biggest challenge, and what do you do to manage this challenge?

PT: I think the biggest challenge is always the constant cycle of playing year round. I think staying fresh and staying motivated is my biggest challenge. The motivation part hasn't been hard, but it's the switching over from Europe back to WNBA back to national team back to Europe back to WNBA...it's more the physical side of it. Traveling and the lifestyle has been difficult. Managing it, just enjoying the moments with my family when I had them and taking the time when I could and really shutting down for those moments.

AFM: Have you experienced a breakthrough, and if so, what led to it?

PT: I think the diet change for me was a breakthrough. I felt really empowered by it when I realized out how much your diet does affect your energy levels, your sleep, how your body feels. For me that was a huge breakthrough. I wish I would have realized it earlier on in my life.

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AFM: What advice would you give to someone who is trying to get in shape?

PT: Diet. Exercise only takes you so far. I think what you put in your body is the most important thing.

AFM: Do you have any recommended resources to share (books, seminars, websites)?

PT: Common sense is a good one – the less processed, the more natural things are always better. And there is one website called <http://www.NutritionFacts.org> which I love, and I get a lot of information from.

AFM: Do you have a saying or motto that you live your life by?

PT: No. I wish I did, 'cause I get that question a lot.