

ARE YOU MH FIT?

Adrian is On's  
Singapore  
Distributor

**ADRIAN MOK**  
*The Endurance King*  
Elite Ironman  
triathlete

**MUHAMMED  
HAZLEE**  
*The Speed Machine*  
Top competitive  
climber

# ARE YOU MEN'S

These four athletes are the best in their respective sport – and represent the *MH* standard of fitness. Use our tests to assess how you measure up to them. And if you want to crank up the training, our expert tips will help you reach your full potential.

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**DIFFERENT EXPERTS WILL HAVE DIFFERENT** definitions of fitness. That's because the way you define the word depends on the type of performance you expect. Some athletes need to develop a particular type of fitness over all others – bodybuilders on one extreme, marathoners on another – but most of us are at our best when we achieve a balanced fitness.

When it comes to the basic muscle groups one would need to perform well in any sport, the experts are in agreement. You need core stability. You need lower-body strength and power to run, jump and lift heavy objects off the ground. You need torso strength to lift your own body weight in repeated challenges. And you need enough endurance to run a marathon without stopping for defibrillation.

However, of course, there are always men who need to go beyond the standards of guys like us. These four athletes represent the *Men's Health* standard of fitness. Take our tests to assess how you match up to them – and see if you're *Men's Health* fit!

# YARDSTICKS OF ULTRA-ENDURANCE

## TEST #1

**THE 2.4KM RUN** According to Adrian Mok, one of Singapore's top Ironman triathletes and general manager of Polar Electro, if you want to be an elite endurance runner, you've got to keep pushing your cardiovascular ability to the limit. "To me, a personal best effort has to be at 92 per cent heart rate or higher. However, it won't be easy for someone who hasn't trained for such a high, sustained pace."

The best test of a person's cardiovascular fitness is on a run. That's why Mok suggests doing the 2.4km run as a cardio benchmark test. It is a combo of both aerobic and anaerobic capacity, as it's not short enough to sprint through, and not quite a marathon in terms of length. So, even if you can run 100m in 12 seconds, a 2.4km run might not be a shoo-in. From a 2.4km timing, you can almost gauge one's 10km performance and, to some extent, how well they can perform in a marathon.

**TEST YOURSELF** Do the test on a running track, so there is no undulating terrain to slow you down. Track running allows you to break your running down into easily quantifiable distances, so you are able to determine when you're slowing down, or at what point your legs start to give way. Run 6 rounds on the inside ring of a standard 400m track for an accurate 2.4km test.

### THE SCORECARD

**Below average:** You take more than 12 minutes to run 2.4km

**Average:** 10:30 to 12min

**Above average:** 9 to 10:30min

**MH FIT:** 9min or less

**REACH THE NEXT LEVEL** Mok recommends doing this interval exercise once a week to build up your cardiovascular endurance. For the first week, start with 6 intervals of 400m rounds, going at a



moderate 80 to 85 per cent heart rate for the first round. Take a 2-minute break after each lap. Record your time for the first round, then aim to drop a few seconds for every subsequent lap, pushing yourself a bit more each time. This will force you to run faster and at a higher intensity as the intervals stack up.

Increase your number of intervals by 1 each week, so that you're doing 10 intervals after 5 weeks of the workout. Don't forget to push yourself a bit harder for each lap. "If you can run 10 repeats and shave a few seconds off each time, you'll end up running at above 92 per cent of your maximum heart rate by the end of the programme," says Mok.

After you've built up to 10 intervals, cut back to 6 but run with decreasing rest time. After the first round, give yourself 2 minutes' rest, and cut that rest by 15



seconds after every round, so that by the fifth round, you're resting only 1 minute. To make this doubly difficult, these 6 intervals must be run at 92 per cent heart rate or more. If you are able to handle this killer workout, you'll have no trouble with the 2.4km test.

## TEST #2

**THE PLANK** For long endurance events, form is extremely important – from how you keep upright in a leg race to how you power your arm forward while swimming. That form relies a lot on the core of your body – the group of muscles that holds the body stable and prevents injury.

The best way to test your core strength is to do a simple plank, which is the most

basic gauge of core stability. "Someone with a weak core will start to tremble very quickly," says Mok. As an added bonus, the plank also tests your back muscles. Someone with weak rhomboids (the muscle in the upper-middle of your back) will find his shoulder blades collapsing inwards, which means poor form.

**TEST YOURSELF** Get into a basic plank position, with your weight distributed across your forearms and toes. Your arms should form right angles at the elbows, and your feet should be placed hip-width apart. Your elbows should be directly under your shoulders, and not bent inwards. Ensure that your shoulder blades are level with your back and not folded inwards. From the side, your entire body should form a straight line from the neck all the way to the ankles.

### THE SCORECARD

**Below average:** You hold a plank for less than 1 minute

**Average:** 1min

**Above average:** 1 to 3min

**MH FIT:** More than 3min

**REACH THE NEXT LEVEL** There are a whole bunch of exercises that target the core, such as the V-shaped jackknife, leg raise (lying down) and plank leg raise. If these core trainers bore you, try Mok's personal favourite, the inverted V stability ball push-up.

Assume the push-up position and balance your toes on a stability ball. Do a standard push-up, lowering your body until your chest is 2cm above the ground. Return to the starting position, then curl your legs in while rolling the stability ball towards your body, forming an inverted V shape. Hold this position for a second, then straighten your legs back out to the starting position (roll the ball back as well). That's 1 rep. "If you can do 10 inverted V stability ball push-ups, you're in pretty good shape," Mok says.

**Pro tip:** Do your core workouts at the end of the day, after your other exercises. "A tired core will affect all of your other activities, and you might end up injuring yourself," Mok says. Also, do core exercises in slow, controlled motions to emphasise stability.

## THE ENDURANCE KING

**Adrian Mok, 36, 175cm, 67kg**

With a personal best time of 10h 23min for the world-famous Ironman endurance race, Adrian Mok ranks as one of Singapore's top Ironman triathletes. His longest-ever run was a 168km lap around Singapore – that's four consecutive marathons. "I'm more of a long-distance athlete," Mok says. "Over short distances, I'm really not that fast." Well, he has managed to pull off a 3:09 marathon, and scaled the 73 floors of the 1999 Westin Vertical marathon in 6min 56sec (the world record is 6:45). In our book, that's pretty fast.

Mok attributes his massive cardio capacity to his triathlon-style training plan. He has a tough six-days-a-week schedule, which sees him swimming 1½ hours' worth of interval laps on Mondays, biking 72km in a little over two hours on Tuesdays, and running 10-minute max-intensity tempos, gruelling circuits and half-marathons throughout the rest of the week. "Biking and swimming helps to build cardiovascular ability without the impact of running," Mok says. "It's helped to keep me relatively injury-free through these years."