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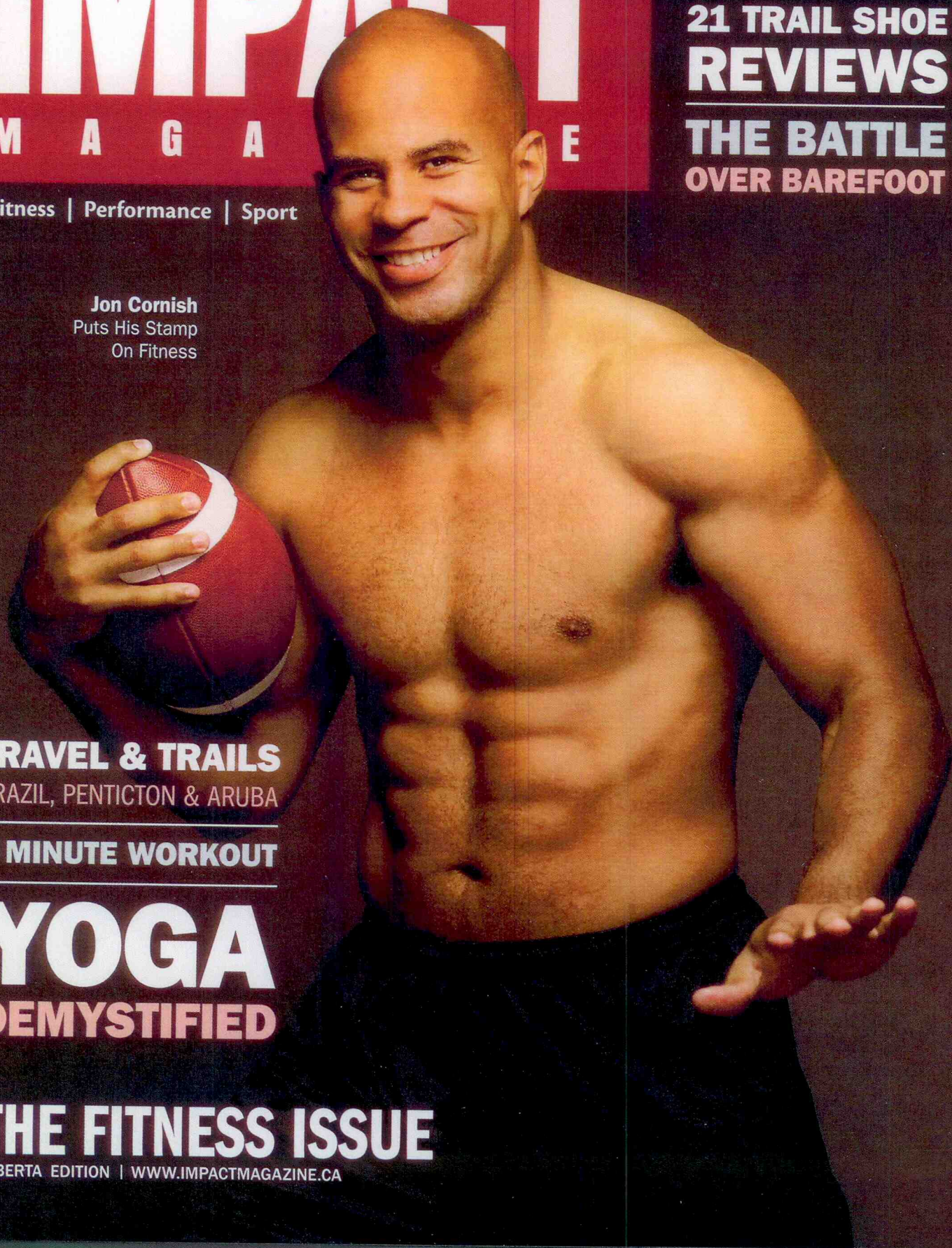
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Ditch The Travel Bug

HOW TO PREPARE AN ATHLETE FOR COMPETITION ABROAD

BY MELINA ROBERTS

WHEN TRAVELLING ABROAD for an athletic event or an adventure vacation, the last thing you want is to get sick when you reach your destination. There is no doubt that travelling itself can stress the body, whether it is being susceptible to infections on the plane or in a new environment, adapting to different time zones and new schedules, acclimatizing to different altitudes or trying to metabolize unusual foods.

Here are several tactics elite athletes use to stay healthy and strong through the stress of travel.

TAKE PROBIOTICS

Probiotics are healthy bacteria that lay a foundation for proper digestion and a strong immune system. Taking probiotics is the best way to boost your immune system by supporting your digestive tract, where

80 per cent of your immune system is housed. The best probiotics come from a human, vegetable or soil source — not a cow dairy source — in a capsule form that is room-temperature stable and does not need to be refrigerated.

TAKE DIGESTIVE ENZYMES WITH EVERY MEAL

Digestive enzymes promote effective breakdown of all foods consumed. They make sure the foods you are eating do not get stuck in your digestive tract and cause disturbances such as gas, bloating, indigestion, constipation or diarrhea.

Taking digestive enzymes with every meal can give your body the extra support to ensure that you properly metabolize even the most unusual, unfamiliar foods. The best digestive enzymes are from natural sources such as papain and bromelain in papaya and pineapples, respectively. For

most athletes, the easiest form to travel with are the chewable tablets.

KEEP GRAPEFRUIT SEED EXTRACT ON HAND

Grapefruit seed extract is a powerful, natural, broad-spectrum anti-microbial that acts against a number of pathogenic organisms including bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi. If you happen to show any signs of an infection from the common cold or traveller's diarrhea, start taking grapefruit seed extract to quickly, and effectively, get rid of that infection.

The supplements suggested above range in price from \$25-30 each.

INTRAVENOUS (IV) VITAMIN THERAPY BEFORE TRAVELLING

A strong recommendation for elite athletes is to get IV vitamin therapy before travelling. Most athletes have an

intense training schedule in preparation for a significant competition. Combined with the stress of travelling, this can wear down an athlete. Vitamin IVs help to give athletes the boost they need to enable them to more easily adapt to changes and allows them to function at their peak performance. IV vitamin therapy involves a small needle inserted into a vein in the arm and the vitamins and minerals drip right into the bloodstream for rapid absorption and optimal delivery of nutrients to the cells. The procedure takes less than an hour. The vitamins boost adrenal gland function, support the immune system and improve overall athletic performance. IV vitamin therapy is administered by a licensed naturopathic doctor and costs about \$115.

GET GROUNDED IN YOUR NEW ENVIRONMENT

Current research supports the importance of grounding. To adapt quickly to a new environment, and especially a change in time zones, walk barefoot on the ground of your new location. Grounding, or earthing, is an old practice. Your feet need to come in contact with the earth; so take a walk on grass, soil or sand to reap the benefits of grounding. The earth is naturally rich in electrons. When you are in contact with the ground, the earth's electrons are conducted into your body, bringing it to the same electrical potential as the earth. This is a great way to balance your circadian rhythms — your internal 24-hour biological clock — with your new destination and greatly reduce signs and symptoms of jetlag.

No one wants to be down and out when they are travelling, especially when you have put the time and energy into training, and used resources and expenses necessary for your travels. It is better to be prepared and take some preventative precautions to help you on your way. These simple tactics will help to keep you healthy and truly have that adventure of a lifetime experience. ■

Dr. Melina Roberts, naturopathic physician and clinic director of Advanced Naturopathic Medical Centre in Calgary, Alta., specializes in uncovering root causes of health problems, treating athletes, digestive issues, hormonal balancing and chronic disease.