

Time Lords

Can't squeeze everything into your mad-
hectic life? Five **Beijing-bound Olympians**
share their secrets of how to make the most
of every minute – while still having time for
regular jobs, study and family

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The clock is the rival for most Olympic athletes. Some want to beat it. Others want to hold it back so they can score more points or goals. All of them wish the bastard counted more than 24 hours in a day.

We punch well above our weight at the Olympics, despite the fact most of our athletes are time-poor dreamers studying for the next phase of their lives, or working when they can for salaries that get drained by their sport. Meanwhile, back on the home front, we blame work, study and families for letting go of exercise, healthy diets and a checklist of our own ambitions. With the help of our Beijing hopefuls, it's time to reignite the dream. >>





the student

Australian water polo captain Thomas Whalan is on his way to his third Olympic Games in eight years. In the same period, he's completed a Commerce/Law degree, worked in a law firm, competed for his home club (Sydney University) and spent five seasons on the European pro circuit.

"It's a lot easier in Italy (where he plays for Savona) because you're being paid," explains the 27-year-old Whalan, but I train no more than I do in Australia. So I train 11am-1pm, then rest and go back in the water from 6-8pm. At home I'm out at Homebush at about 5am to train a couple of hours, then go to work or study, then it's back to the pool for the evening sessions." Somewhere in between he has to fit in three weights sessions a week and a game day. And yes, he hits the wall just like the rest of us.

"In Seinfeld, George Costanza once made a bed under his desk, which I think is a brilliant idea. When I was working at a law firm I'd duck into the bathroom at about 3:30, set my alarm, sit down and sleep for five minutes. That really got me through the day. Naps are fantastic, but anything more than 30 minutes is too much because you start going into that deeper sleep and it's harder to get up."

On the flipside, Whalan sees jet lag as a plus. "I enjoy it, because if I wake at 4am, I'll go for a run or a swim ñ it's great, because I'm not usually a morning person."

Whalan can't do much about the volume of his training or his other commitments, all he can do is look after his energy levels to make sure he gets the most out of his time.

"I find that if you're down on energy levels, you probably need to get more vitamins into you, probably carbs as well. Eating in that half hour after training is really vital, too. If you're putting that off for an hour or two, you'll probably have trouble getting through the day. I always make sure I have food in my bag to see me through the day ñ bananas, muesli bars, Power Bars, Musashi protein drinks."

Even at rest, Whalan works on his sport. When he's sitting around at home he attaches physio bands to a pole at all different angles to do proprioception exercises ñ exercises designed to raise the body's awareness of how its different parts interact ñ to stabilise his shoulders and work on throwing technique.

"Lately I've also given up entertainment DVDs because I'm really trying to scout out our opposition for Beijing. Now I watch DVDs of individual players or the tactics of teams that we'll be playing, so I'm getting my physical rest, but my mind's still working." >>>

POOL SHARP

- ➔ When you hit the wall, look for a quiet spot to nap for five to 30 minutes
- ➔ Make use of jet lag - get up crazy early and knock things over
- ➔ Eat within 30 minutes of training so you get through the day
- ➔ Proprioception training for sport can be done almost anywhere





the water policeman

Matt Gray shot arrows at the 1996 and 2000 Olympics. Now, with a wife, a young daughter and a career in the NSW Water Police, the Senior Constable is on his way to Beijing.

In January 2007 Gray moved from Sydney to Nelson Bay on the NSW mid-north coast for work. Despite the long shifts, the move's been great for his archery, since he used to drive 45 minutes to training in Sydney. "At least I could use driving time to do my affirmations, getting into a relaxed state and picturing myself competing, concentrating on technique and other areas that I'm working on." Now he has his own private range set up on a friend's property 10 minutes from home. "It's great because I can be there at 6am and not disturb anyone. I've also made the fitness component much more convenient to me." The 35-year-old has cut the travel and prep time from the four or five gym sessions he used to do, and now he runs 45 minutes once or twice a week and paddles a surf-ski for an hour (including a swim and a stretch) three to four times per week.

He still does some weights n squats, lunges, a lot of abdominal work on the Swiss ball for core strength and stability. For the upper body he tends to do more work adding pressure to the bow with physio bands, so he pulls back 80lb of pressure instead of 50, and holds it back for 10 seconds at a time. The great thing is, he can do it almost anywhere.

After work he usually heads out for a second training session. "I get more value for my time by splitting the training into two. I concentrate better in shorter sessions and three hours of shooting by yourself can get very mundane n it gets worthless towards the end."

Gray swears by his training diary, and feels he gains hours for every minute he spends on it. "If I have a purple patch, I can go back and see what my preparation was, what I was thinking, and work out how to get back to that zone."

Gray says he has some flexibility with his roster at work, but the catch is that he can get home then be called up to go to a rescue 300 kilometres off the coast.

"If I work a lot of overtime, I don't lose confidence with my archery training. I just think, that's happened, I just have to train harder or do a bit more on my day off." Gray prefers to focus on the more important things that can eat into his time and his performance.

"My wife and I have a great relationship, we're always communicating, so if there's anything niggling at me at home or work, it's best to get it out in the open so that I don't then take it to the training field or into a competition. When we're communicating at home and everyone is happy, then my results are good on the archery field." 

AIMING HIGH

-  The more convenient training is to you, the better
-  Short sessions are sharper and easier to fit in
-  A training diary gets you back in the 'èzone' quickly
-  Use travel time for affirmations



the electrician

Stephen Lambert is a real livewire in goal for Australia's men's hockey team the Kookaburras, but most weeks you'll find the electrician lighting up new homes around Brisbane.

On a normal week, he works 38-42 hours as a sub-contractor, trains 15 hours and plays a match. To ensure he makes training every afternoon, he's on the job at 6:30am, a half-hour or more earlier than the rest of the crew, to give himself a time buffer "in case things don't run smoothly during the day".

With only limited time for training, the 28-year-old Lambert has a nifty shortcut. "I've found I can mix in my speed work with my gym training through power and plyometrics exercises," he says. "Otherwise I need to find another location and two extra hours a week." For speed to get up off the ground after a save, he does explosive bench press and clap push-ups, and for sprint speed he jumps over hurdles or up onto boxes (to 1.15m high), and does 10m sprints pulling a weighted sled or pushing a shopping trolley full of weights.

Rest is gold to the non-professional athlete, so leading up to a tournament Lambert takes a couple days off and cuts back to 35 hours a week, so he can knock off in time to relax at home for an hour with the wife (Hockeyroo n and teacher n Angela Lambert) before training. "That breathing time between work and training makes a big difference," he says. "When there's a lot on in your life, so much is about learning to switch on and off at the right times." He uses psychological triggers for this, so the beach and time alone with Angela at home are triggers to switch off, while pulling out a reaction ball (a dimpled rubber ball that can bounce in any direction) 30 minutes before a match is his trigger to "turn on" for the game.

When possible, Lambert uses downtime on the road to bone up on SportsCode, a digital video analysis system. This is a database of hockey footage and information for players to analyse their own or competitors' performance. It's full of cool tools to do things such as frame-by-frame replays, overlaying images to compare performance, splicing two images side-by-side to evaluate technique changes and replaying individual video frames to see exactly where people are in pressure situations. The Kookaburras use the system so coaches and players around the country have the same information, saving untold hours on travel and briefings with national coaches.

"But on overseas flights, I'm usually thankful there's not much to do, because I'm usually stuffed. The best thing is to use the flight to freshen up."

As a team policy, the Kookaburras try to beat jet lag by getting into the sleeping times of their destination from the moment they step on the plane, and when they land



SAVING TIME

- Start work 30 minutes ahead of the crowd to create a buffer in your schedule
- Use any software in your field that saves on travel and meetings
- Power exercises and plyometrics can save on separate strength and speed sessions
- Beat jet lag n get out into the sun and do light





the accountant...

For the last five years, Lachie Milne and Mark Bellofiore have been muscling their way through slalom whitewater courses in a canoe together, leaving most of the world in their wash. At the same time the doctor and the accountant respectively have studied for their degrees, completed all their on-the-job training and travelled to World Cups and the Athens Olympics. The tricky part is, there's only one place in Australia they can do proper whitewater training (Penrith, west of Sydney) and strictly limited times that they can get into the frothy stuff. They aim to do eight 90-minute sessions on the water a week (add an extra hour for prep time and checking the course), plus three to four sessions in the gym. "Any more than an hour in the gym is a waste of time," says the 29-year-old Milne. "We have an old Eastern Bloc

coach who sets out our exercises in a circuit with almost no rest between exercises. We can do in 45 minutes what a lot of people would take two hours to do, and it adds a fitness component that you wouldn't otherwise get." Depending on the training phase they're in, they do 15 reps for power, down to three to four reps with heavy weights. The sequence begins with big muscles such as back and chest with abs done in between, working down to the smaller muscle groups. Milne finds upping the intensity in other areas of his life works well, too. "They often say, 'If you want something done, ask a busy person'. Initially I studied part-time, but I found it really hard to maintain contact with uni. Then in 2000 went to study full-time and suddenly my results at uni improved and then my results at canoeing got much better too. When I had more time for training I was probably less



...and the doctor

efficient and definitely less successful." Bellofiore and Milne both say the secret of getting work and Uni to allow them time for their sport was to be upfront about their commitments right from the get-go. Bellofiore started a Bachelor of Business at UTS in 2001 and began a cadetship with Price Waterhouse Coopers at the same time. "The key has been to communicate well with everyone, from my managers to my colleagues, so everyone can see that I have a well thought-out plan for my work and my sport," says the 25-year-old. "And we do it every two weeks Lachie and I meet and make sure all our sessions a planned out with our other commitments, then I'll print that and have it on my wall so I know what I'm doing from 6am to 10pm." Milne agrees. "So long as I was doing the work and keeping up with all the study, people had no trouble giving me time

off to compete overseas. But when I set a time to leave work, I leave it unless I'm up to my elbows in someone's belly. I keep more of the time during the day and try to wind things up a bit earlier. I think it's good to have something that sets limits, because people get sucked into work and end up working too many extra hours. Even if it's just a soccer team you train with on Tuesday night, then at least that sets a limit for one night if we're lucky we have that every day." For both Bellofiore and Milne, some of their most productive work and study time has been when they were overseas for international competitions. "I think it can be the same for anyone travelling for business or for conferences if you



CAN-DO-CANOE

- Circuit training cuts down gym time and adds a fitness component
- Set limits at work – make sure people know about your other commitments
- Make use of downtime on work trips
- Set out a timetable of work and training in regular blocks



the logistics expert

Malcolm Page has won four world titles with his skipper Nathan Wilmot and will for the second time go into an Olympics as red-hot medal contenders in the 470 class sailing.

Even as a world champion, the sport doesn't pay the bills, and Page says that in Australia sailing is still very much "sailor-driven".

"We have to do everything from organising the shipment of boats, be there for unloading of containers, then drive ourselves around Europe from one regatta to the next," explains the 36-year-old.

Page's time commitments were bigger leading up to Athens, when he was working as communications consultant for Telstra, a 50-hour week management position.

"It was quite flexible, so I'd usually get up at 5am to beat the traffic and shoot off to a gym in the city then be at my desk by 7am so I could get things done without distractions. I'd push off at about 2pm to train for four-to-five hours on the boat Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday."

After Athens he changed his work and is now self-employed doing logistics for sailing teams. "It gives me more flexibility, but I was also a bit scared after my father had a heart attack in 2003 - we're from the same mould, hard-working, don't sleep much, always busy."

His schedule is still full-up, so he's big on time management. "I have a book that I carry with me at all times, it's full of action lists. I also keep a very strict diary of my time, making sure I allocate a realistic time to the task. My bigger time blocks are all organised electronically through my computer."

All his training and competition involves his partner, Nathan Wilmot, a coach and the women's 470 pair. "We all get together and plan our training dates and what we want to achieve in those training sessions. We do it in segments - for example, the last one was six-week schedule."

Page needs a lot of endurance for his sport because a regatta often lasts seven days (the Olympics is 11) with two or three races a day, making up six to 10 hours in total out on the water. He also needs to keep his weight down.

"More attention to diet means less weight loss training, so I cut out as much fat as possible. Sugars don't worry me so much in competition, but cutting out fat allows me to eat more bulk." Page also uses his travel time for conditioning training, getting in 55 minutes of cycling going back and forth from Sydney's Northern beaches to his boat at Middle Harbour Yacht Club.

Page says he's learned to gain time by "cutting out the unnecessary social life". He still meets friends and family, but it might be a short, sharp coffee meeting, or he makes socialising happen at his place or close by. When he's out,

MAKER USE OF WORK FLEXIBILITY

- Make use of work flexibility
- A better diet takes less time than exercise
- Quality time socialising beat quantity
- A strict diary of your time keeps things in check