

TREVOR HOFFMAN

There is No Off-Season

By Roy Robertson



Photography By Martin Mann



Three million Padres fans came to play downtown and fill Petco Park during the 2004 season. They were anxious to once again see Trevor Hoffman come in late in the game, shut down opposing hitters and lock up a win, as he had done hundreds of times before. The team, and Trevor, didn't disappoint. The Padres had their best season in six years, and Hoffman returned to form after missing most of the previous season to shoulder surgery, earning more than 40 saves for a major league record sixth season.

But the bells that pealed from Petco Park all summer long heralding Hoffman's appearance have now fallen silent for the off-season. For Trevor Hoffman, the familiar sound of tolling bells has been replaced by the all too familiar sound of an alarm clock buzzing before dawn. Instead of "Trevor Time", it's time for another sunrise session with his personal trainer.

On the pitcher's mound, Trevor Hoffman is the picture of determination and intensity. But he is as focused on his off-season training program as he is at retiring baseball's best hitters, saying: "The harder you work, the more you're gaining on somebody else out there that's not working that hard." His competitive fire has served him well in his battle back from two recent operations, and it fuels him in the off-season. He says, "From the time the season ends until it begins again, it's my time to get ready to go again." That's his interpretation of "Trevor Time."

When Trevor Hoffman enters the ninth inning of a game, the public address speakers boom out his signature song: he jogs in from the bullpen to the somber bells that open AC/DC's "Hell's Bells." Towering red flames frame the words "Trevor Time" as they flash across giant video boards. Every Padres fan knows the routine. But few fans know the routine that will occupy Trevor's free time between now and the start of spring training.

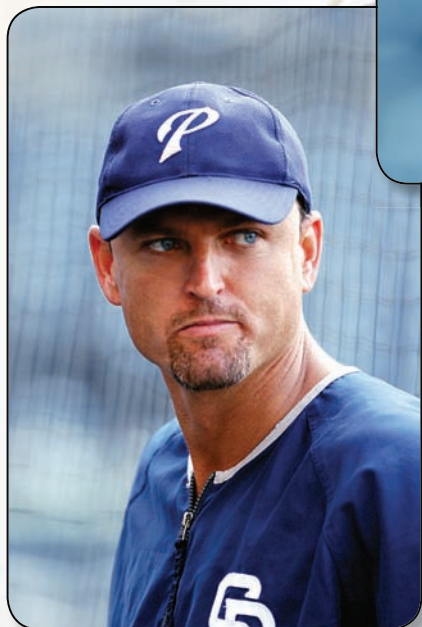




After operations to repair a rotator cuff, then a clavicle, Trevor says his doctors “handed the baton” to him. “The ball is now in your court. We’ve done what we had to do. We fixed the problem. Now it’s a matter of how hard you’re going to work,” the physicians told him. “They don’t really give you any long range guarantees,” says Trevor. Hoffman took the baton and started rehabilitation and training with exercise specialist Bill Henry of Athletes’ Edge in Vista.

Long before most people in San Diego start their day, Bill Henry is on the road to Trevor Hoffman’s home for a workout just after dawn. It’s a demanding schedule that began at the end of the Trevor’s injury-shortened 2003 season. That’s when they started down the long road of preparing Hoffman for 2004. “The reason we got up in the morning isn’t because we’re psychos and like to get up at 5:00,” Trevor explains, “but I wanted to be done and get my kids off to school when we’re done at 7:00 in the morning.” The early morning sessions permit him more time to be with his three sons, Brody, Quinn and Wyatt, and his wife Tracy.

As they started their off-season program last October, Bill Henry saw one small positive that came from Hoffman missing most of the previous season: it enabled them to start immediately concentrating on a general conditioning program. “You try to balance the body back out from imbalances that occurred during the course of the season. He wasn’t as out of whack as someone that’s played ball all summer long.”



In the first six weeks, they focused on isolating muscle groups on each side of Hoffman’s body to re-build balance. Once that was accomplished, they started to focus on developing strength and range of motion, carefully and gradually bringing back the surgically repaired shoulder. “There was some limitation that we had because of the surgery, but we worked within those ranges,” says Trevor’s trainer.

Now that the shoulder has been fully rehabilitated, the comeback complete and another successful season under his belt, Trevor will spend a full off-season with his personal trainer.





Hoffman and Henry team up several times a week for workouts that Henry describes as “nothing too fancy... pretty standard, but varied.” The sessions focus on bolstering Trevor’s strength and stamina, and enhancing his flexibility and range of motion.



To keep the workouts fresh and his client motivated, Bill Henry stresses variety, often combining different lifting and stretching exercises. “We didn’t get caught up doing a standard bench press or a squat. We can kind of mix things up, like just holding a medicine ball doing squats, changing the intensity, the angles and the movement that we go through.” Sometimes just adding a step or a movement pattern will mean greater benefits from just one exercise. “He has an awful lot of equipment, so we can mix things up.”

Dumbbells are used to increase Trevor’s range of motion and build strength in his pitching shoulder, but as he lifts, he cautiously avoids certain angles that might risk injury. Bill Henry encourages Trevor to check his position in the mirror as he works with the dumbbells. The workouts are broken up into what Henry calls “two day splits,” with different exercises and progressions varying from Mondays and Tuesdays to Thursdays and Fridays to add versatility to the program.

Trevor is quick to credit his trainer for the role he’s played in his rehabilitation. “Bill sucked it up. It isn’t easy to get up at 4:30 in the morning and I appreciate it. I think our hard work together has paid off. It’s kind of been a group effort.”



Hoffman is humble when he speaks about his need to persevere between seasons. “Some people are naturally talented and don’t need to put in as much work. I don’t consider myself to be one of those types of people. I don’t possess a mid-90 mile an hour fastball. I don’t have the kind of stuff that would kind of warrant not working that hard.”

To anyone who tries to squeeze in an early morning trip to the gym before work, Trevor’s occasional



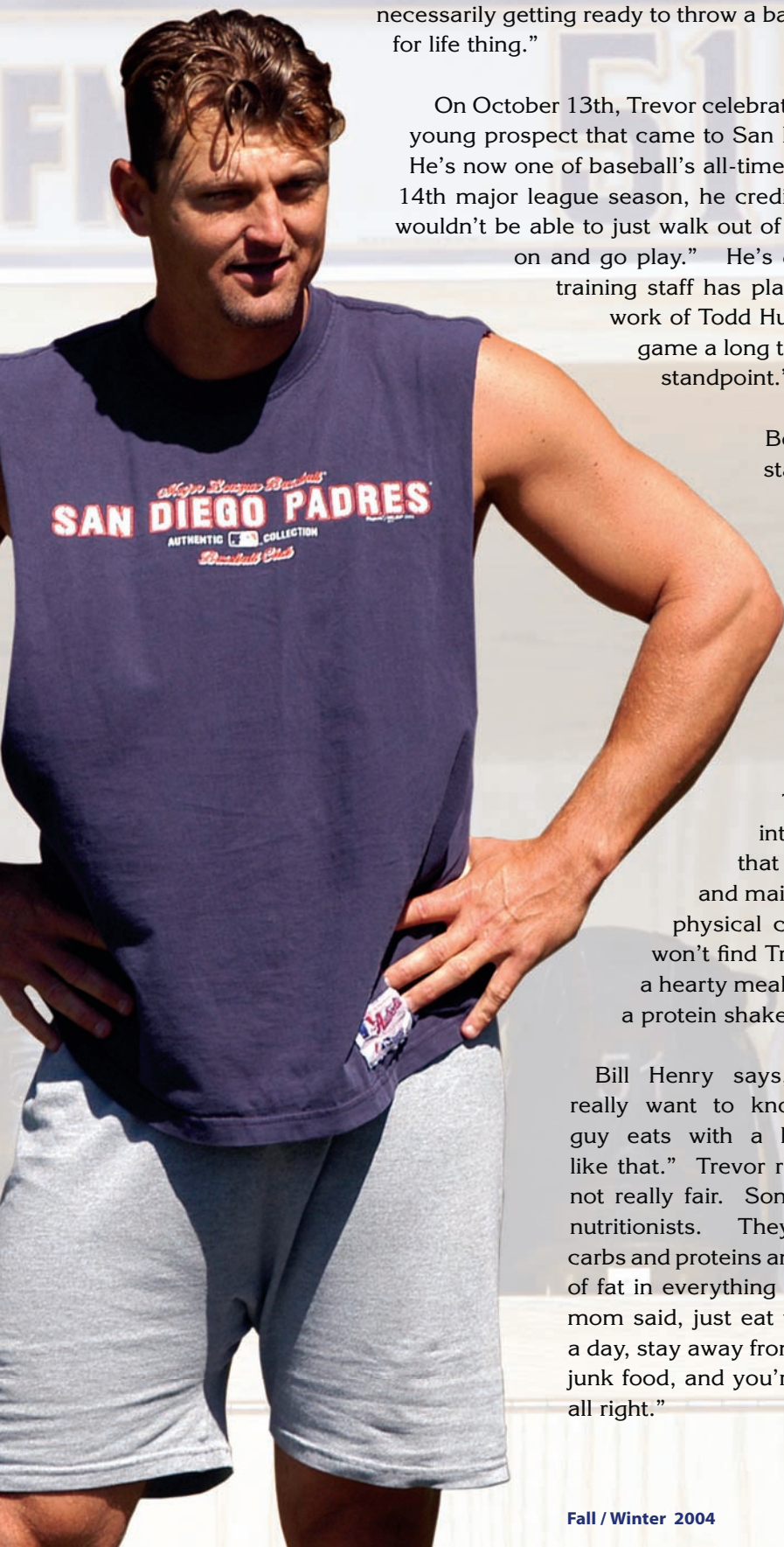
reluctance to answer that alarm clock might ring a bell. “You might hit a couple of days where you don’t feel like doing it, but I kind of enjoy it. I feel better about myself for the rest of the day when I’m done. It’s not just necessarily getting ready to throw a baseball. It’s more of a fitness for life thing.”

On October 13th, Trevor celebrated his 37th birthday. He’s no longer the hot young prospect that came to San Diego as part of a trade for Gary Sheffield. He’s now one of baseball’s all-time best relief pitchers. As he prepares for his 14th major league season, he credits conditioning as key to his longevity. “I wouldn’t be able to just walk out of the house, go to the field, put my uniform on and go play.” He’s quick to acknowledge the role the Padres’ training staff has played in extending his career. “Without the work of Todd Hutcheson, I would have stopped playing the game a long time ago just from the physical deterioration standpoint.”

Before the physical training with Bill Henry started, Trevor addressed the psychological challenge he tackled after having the surgical procedures performed. “You have to be ready to mentally attack all the things you have to attack,” he says. “The more positive food you feed your brain, and think ‘I’m going to get it done’, the better off you’re going to be.”

One aspect of the off-season program Trevor won’t dwell on, is the food he puts into his body. Blessed with a metabolism that allows him to eat almost anything he wants and maintain his solid physical condition, you won’t find Trevor forgoing a hearty meal for a salad or a protein shake.

Bill Henry says, “You don’t really want to know what this guy eats with a body looking like that.” Trevor responds, “It’s not really fair. Some guys have nutritionists. They’re counting carbs and proteins and the amount of fat in everything they eat. My mom said, just eat three squares a day, stay away from some of the junk food, and you’re going to be all right.”







While other players take a steady diet of nutritional supplements to be at the top of their game, Trevor takes only a basic multi-vitamin and glucosamine sulfate to help lubricate and strengthen his joints.

One other thing Trevor Hoffman won't be doing much in the next few months, in addition to monitoring his diet, is throwing a baseball. "I don't pick it up five days a week just to throw it. I think there are some benefits from playing catch once a week, just so you're keeping that range of motion and keeping that rotator cuff firing."



But for Trevor Hoffman, the next season is never really too far away. "Usually I start ramping up in January, even in December, we pick up the pace." In 2004, Trevor Hoffman moved into third place on the list of all-time career save leaders. Only two relief pitchers in baseball history will have locked up more wins for their teams in late inning appearances as the 2005 season begins. Between now and then, there's work to do.

Trevor sits down to take a breather after a recent workout with Bill Henry. Though he's at home now, resting after being put through his paces, he still very much has his game face on. He shows trademark Trevor intensity as he says, "The will to be your best at what you do is your greatest drive."

I want to be the guy who holds



all the chips at the end of the day." Perspiring through a T-shirt with cut off sleeves that reveals chiseled arms and a tightly contoured physique, he looks less like one of baseball's elite stars, and more like a scrappy boxer... a feisty fighter, biding his time in the corner, waiting for the sound of the opening bell to ring.

