



Are you comfortable in your retirement?

If you have a \$500,000 portfolio, download the guide for retirees by *Forbes* columnist and money manager Ken Fisher's firm. It's called "**The 15-Minute Retirement Plan.**"

[Click Here to Download Your Guide!](#)

FISHER INVESTMENTS™

Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit www.djreprints.com

[See a sample reprint in PDF format.](#)

[Order a reprint of this article now](#)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WSJ.com

WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT | July 9, 2012, 11:18 p.m. ET

Mental, Physical Training for Olympic Volleyball

By JEN MURPHY



Associated Press

Misty May-Treanor, left, and Kerri Walsh-Jennings, right, at the Beach Volleyball World Tour Grand Slam in Moscow in June.

Beach-volleyball star Kerri Walsh-Jennings and her teammate Misty May-Treanor have dominated the sport for more than a decade, capturing gold medals at the 2004 and 2008 Summer Olympics. So it's unusual for the duo to be heading to London as the third-seeded team, rather than No. 1. "We're a bit of the underdog," says

Ms. Walsh-Jennings. "It's a whole other mind-set."

The teammates fell to third seed because they missed playing some tournaments together as a team in recent years. Ms. May-Treanor, 34 years old, missed most of the 2009 season due to a ruptured Achilles tendon. Ms. Walsh-Jennings, 33, married pro-beach-volleyball player Casey Jennings and gave birth to a son in 2009 and a second in 2010.

"After my pregnancies my body was completely different," says Ms. Walsh-Jennings, who lives in Hermosa Beach, Calif., and trains at nearby Manhattan Beach. "My joints felt loose. My muscles felt stretched out. My sleep was off and my energy changed. Taking care of two young boys is a workout in itself. But I figured it was a good time to mold myself and become stronger than ever."

Looking for an edge, she started a brain-training program from Los Angeles-based Neurotopia. "My training has always focused on physical agility but brain training helps sharpen my mental agility as well," she says.



Michal Czerwonka for The Wall Street Journal

Ms. Walsh-Jennings warms up at the OC.

Ms. Walsh-Jennings is among a growing number of athletes who have embraced neurofeedback training. She learned about it from sports psychologist Michael Gervais, who has worked with NBA players and Olympians and is a member of Neurotopia's science advisory board.

The company says it has had more than 1,500 athletes complete an evaluation, which identifies an athlete's strengths and weaknesses, and about 25% have completed a full training program. Over the past 18 months, "we have evaluated 61 Olympians and we anticipate 10 individuals and several teams to be competing in London," says Neurotopia Chief Science Officer Leslie Sherlin.

The Workout

Ms. Walsh-Jennings and her partner play volleyball on the beach four to five days a week for two to three hours a day. Passing, setting, and hitting drills are followed by scrimmages against each other or coaches.

Three days a week, they do beach workouts that include sprints, push-ups, squats, and exercises using the TRX Suspension Trainer, a set of nylon resistance straps. Ms. Walsh-Jennings takes hourlong Pilates sessions two to three days a week. She says Pilates has increased her flexibility, and strengthened her core.

"It's really given me an extra 20% in my performance on the sand," she says.

Ms. Walsh-Jennings started using Neurotopia earlier this year. She does a double session, which lasts 90 minutes, two times a week. While wearing a brain wave sensor headset, she controls a videogame with her brain. A technician monitors her brain activity and may provide coaching or adjust thresholds to continually challenge her. "It's a lot less physical than my other workouts, but in some ways equally challenging," she says.

More

[A Brain Flex to Help Athletes Train for Better Performance in Competition](#)

According to the company, the sensors interpret how her brain is functioning. Neurotopia's software converts this brain activity into data that help her learn how to suppress brain waves associated with low performance and increase those associated with optimal brain function.

Ms. Walsh-Jennings says Neurotopia has helped teach her how to stay calm.

"I like to use the analogy of always having my foot on the gas, even when the car is parked," she says. "I'm always going on a really high level, but you'll run out of gas that way. I needed to learn how to run really high, but then take a deep breath and come back down."

Twice a week, she goes to OC Fast Twitch studio in Fountain Valley, Calif., for a two-hour workout with trainer Tommy Knox. These sessions focus on plyometric exercises, weight training, stretching, and isokinetic work that engages her fast-twitch muscles. "I never know what I'm in for when I work out here," she says. "It's always something fresh and new to keep my muscles challenged."

The Diet

For breakfast, she usually has a multigrain waffle with agave syrup or almond butter and a banana or blueberries. Lunch is a salad with salmon and goat cheese. She eats a protein bar 30 minutes after each workout.

She and her husband often order in for dinner. "We had Thai food last night, but always get brown rice and stir-fried vegetables. We eat a lot of salads and ground turkey tacos," she says.

And she isn't afraid to splurge: "I love chocolate and lattes."

Sharing Workouts

"My favorite thing is to work out with my husband," says Ms. Walsh-Jennings. "When we were dating we'd work out together and it was a great way to get to know him. Now that we have kids we have to alternate our workouts more."

The Playlist

"Mellow music allows me to breathe and focus so I listen to musicians like Jack Johnson before a game. When I'm working out I love a great beat so I put on hip hop and always the Black Eyed Peas."

Write to Jen Murphy at workout@wsj.com

A version of this article appeared July 10, 2012, on page D3 in the U.S. edition of The Wall Street Journal, with the headline: Mental, Physical Training for Olympic Volleyball.

Copyright 2012 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit www.djreprints.com

You Might Like

Sitting for Hours a Day Cuts Life Span

29 States That Could Make Adult Children Pay for Mom's Care

Can You Spot the Prostitute In This Picture?

A Brain Flex for Better Performance

2012 Olympic Profile: Hong Kong's Fencing Team

From Around the Web

Content from Sponsors [What's this?](#)

Ten Signs You're Acting Old (Life Goes Strong)

The Affordable Care Act: Top Things to Know for Seniors (HealthCare.gov)

7 Exercises to Make You Feel Great (Lifescrpt.com)

5 Rules for Bipolar Relationships (HealthCentral.com)

One Weird Trick to Stay Asleep All Night (Health Headlines)