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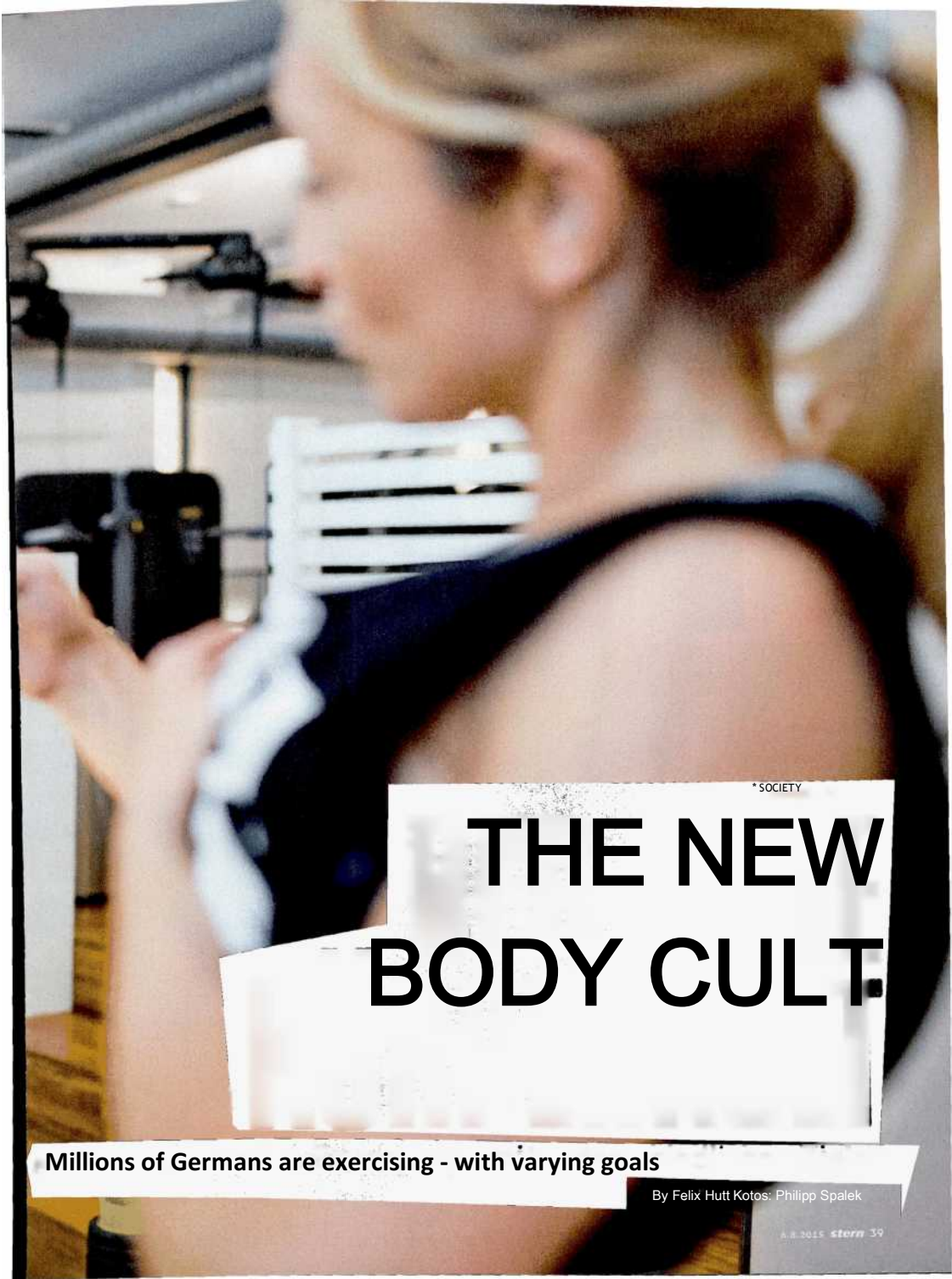
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### Derya Dik, 37, Hamburg, trained retail saleswoman

When Derya goes shopping with a girlfriend and she tries something on in the changing room, then the girlfriend will often tell her: "Derya, you have an amazing body!"

Derya soaks up these compliments like a sponge, after all, she tortures herself almost every day at the gym for it. If it doesn't hurt, then she isn't satisfied. Selfies are just as much a part of the training to her as the powershake afterwards. She wears tightly fitting clothing because she has nothing to hide; she is proud of her body.





\*SOCIETY

# THE NEW BODY CULT.

Millions of Germans are exercising - with varying goals

By Felix Hutt Kotos: Philipp Spalek

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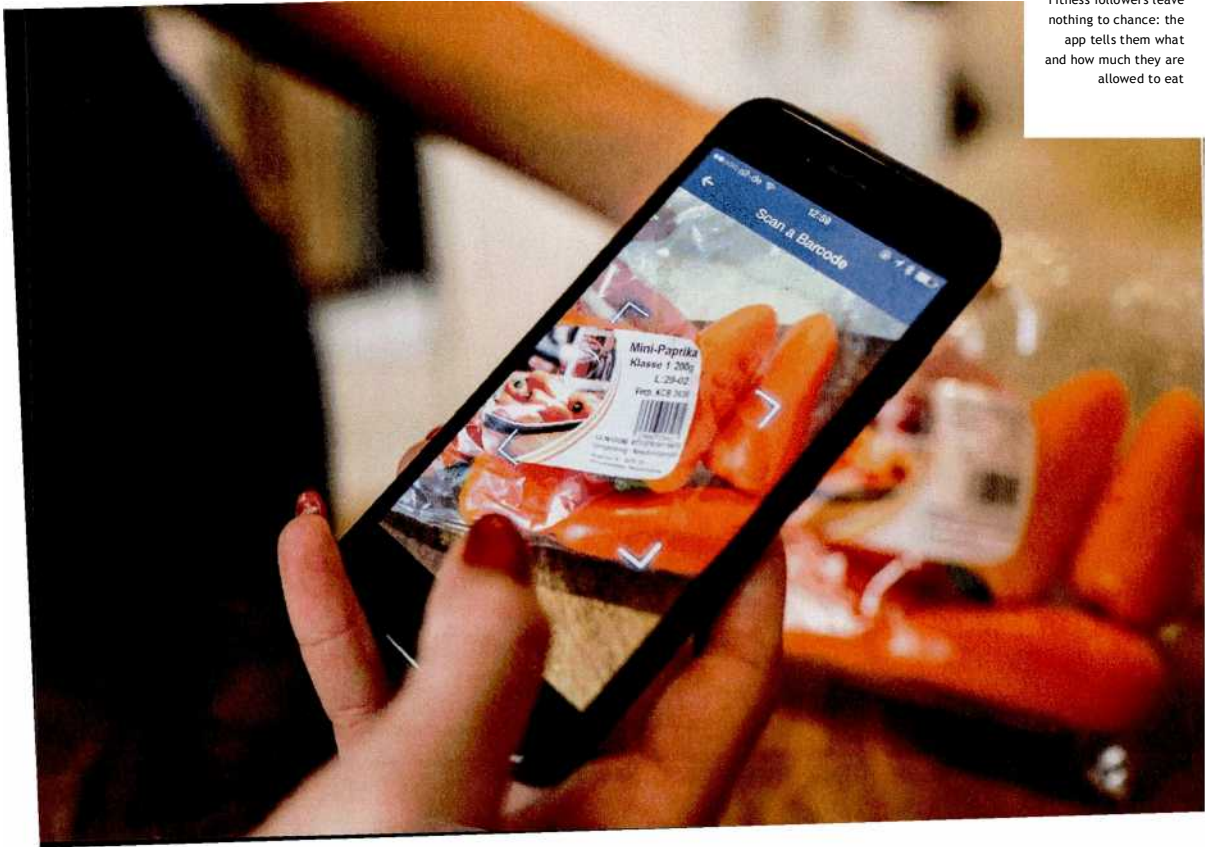
**Tim, 24, (above)  
and Nicholas, 23,  
Hamburg. Students**

Tim and Nicholas live for their bodies. Over the last three-and-a-half years they have been training four times a week at the Elb-Gym in Hamburg. Furthermore, they ensure a diet rich in protein, which they supplement with protein shakes. They represent a new generation of fitness followers who are constantly under pressure to show themselves. Many of their friends, even girls, have started to do heavy exercise. As they are used to exposing themselves in their social networks, they want to look good. The fitter and more beautiful the body, the more likes they can get. Those are their reward.



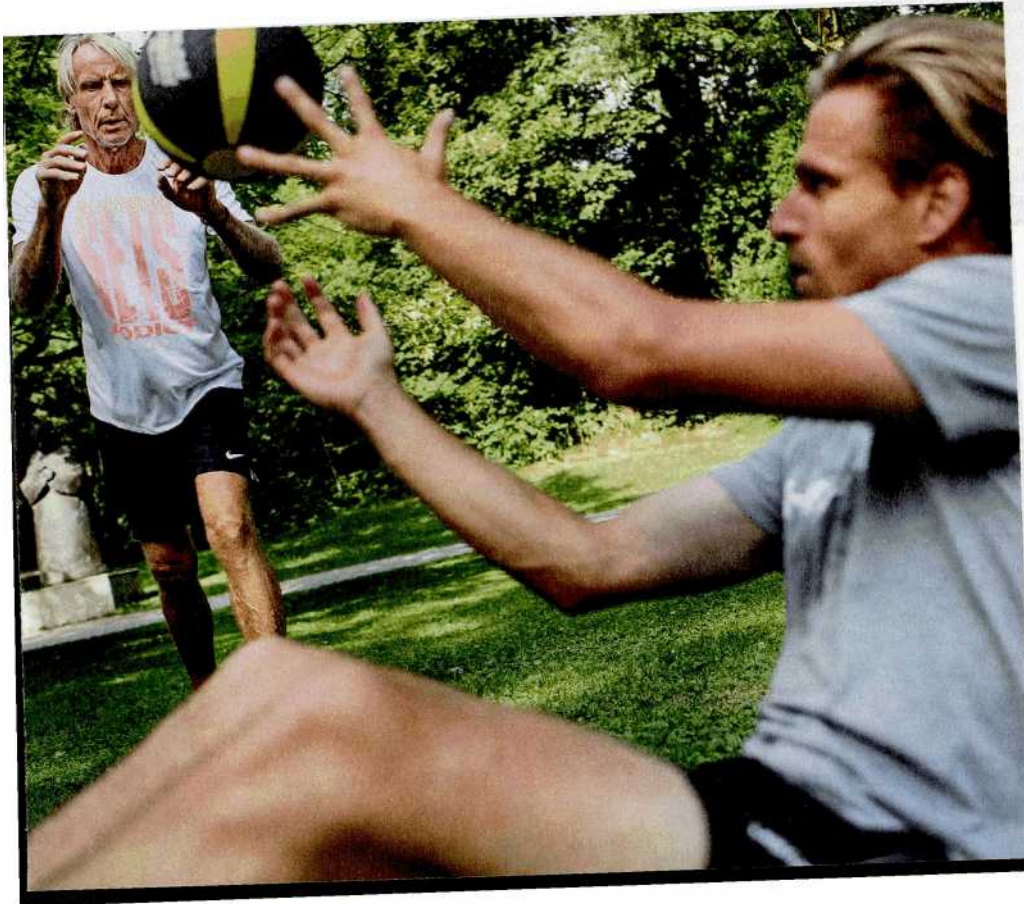


Fitness followers leave nothing to chance: the app tells them what and how much they are allowed to eat





Just going for a run is a thing of the past. Today many wear pulse monitors - be it outside or on the treadmill

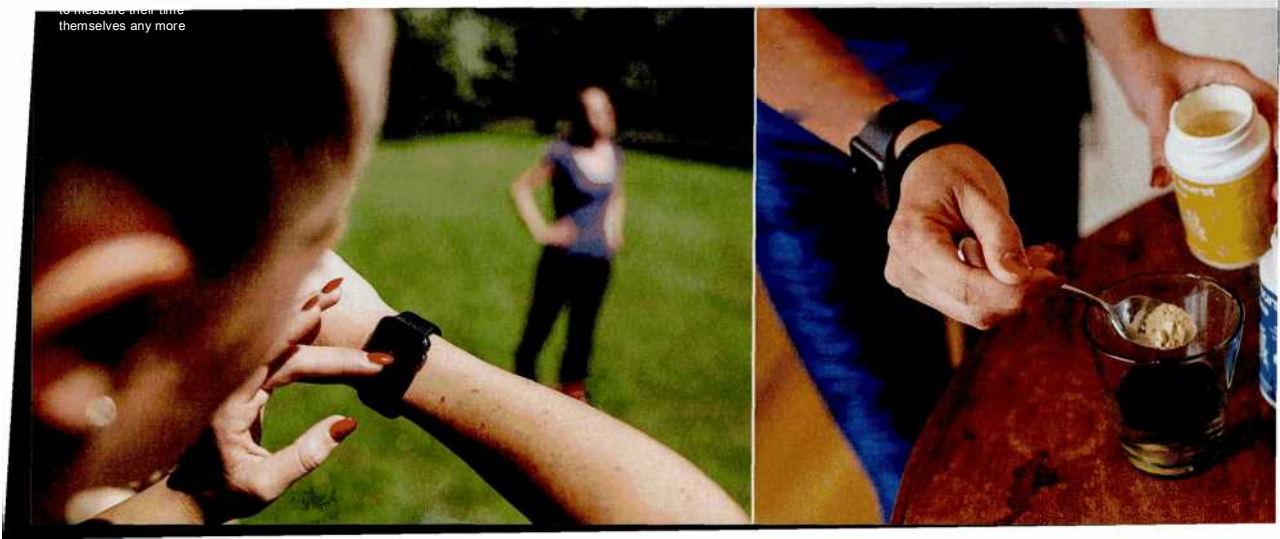


**Carlo Thränhardt, 58,  
and Peter Gojowczyk,  
28, Munich**

Thränhardt was a high jump world record holder, Gojowczyk is a professional tennis player and has realised he can learn a lot from the track and field athlete. They often train in the park, anaerobic strength and endurance; here they are working on their side abdominal muscles. In the cardio units Gojowczyk also has to complete ten 300 metre sprints. "Amateur athletes would get more from their training if they would model themselves on competitive athletes, as they have a great variety of incentives," says Thränhardt

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Show up. Run. Sweat. Always to the limit, but never give up. Is for losers. At the start of the evening in the Luitpoldpark in Munich, the madness begins. The runners gasp across the paths, wearing brightly-coloured functional clothing, heart rate monitors and aerodynamic rucksacks, from which they suck electrolyte drinks. Mountain bikers race across the terrain, as they were right up in the Rockies. Natural movers swing from bar to bar on the playground like monkeys, whilst the Freeletics followers follow the instructions of their apps, groan during burpees (jumping press up sounds too old-fashioned), before finally taking a selfie of themselves, which will hopefully be liked by the community. Just a few old-schoolers kick a ball on the field with a crate of beer under a tree for afterwards. Alcohol! What a sin, what an evil temptation! The fitness freaks have an algae extract smoothie waiting for them at home. That's tasty, too. And so very healthy.

This cornucopia of a sporty self-improvement community can be observed in the Luitpoldpark after working hours as if under a microscope. The location of this trend parade can also be changed at will. In Hamburg's Stadtpark, on the Alster, on the Rhine, at the Maschsee in Hanover, in Berlin's Tiergarten it all looks the same. And in the gyms the masses sweat as they body build, cross fit, do Zumba aerobics or work out with a personal trainer. For those whom this isn't enough, they torture themselves at bootcamps or swim across the lake in preparation for a triathlon. They get nutritional advice for all they're worth, take pills and shakes, even occasionally eat like a Neanderthal. After all, they must have known what's good for us. It's natural. There are competitive races and fights every weekend. Places in marathons are so sought after that they often have to be raffled off. In 1999 there were just 78 marathon competitions in Germany; by 2013 there were 200.

And with 9.1 million members in more than 8,000 gyms, Germany is the largest fitness market in Europe.

Germany is moving, that's quite clear, but where to? And what is it actually all about? Physical well-being, satisfaction, health? Or is a national neurosis being satisfied here, because without a sixpack or a respect-worthy marathon time we're no longer accepted? Is a sport and health craze even filling the religious vacuum, as is the opinion of renowned psychiatrist Manfred Lütz?

#### The app of movement

For the three men who recognised the hype and packaged it into an app, the situation is clear: life revolves only around recognition. It drives the individual actions in a society. Those who help people on their search for recognition, motivate them on the way there and create an experience of success in the end, they win. And deservedly Mehmet Yilmaz, 26, Andrej Matijczak, 27 and Joshua Cornelius, 27, founders and owners of Freeletics, are sat in an office not far from the centre of Munich on this hot July day and are telling their story. They look like they're their own best customers; their muscles straining at their t-shirts. Yilmaz, Matijczak and Cornelius have turned a student start-up into a company worth millions: nothing represents the new, superficial addiction to a perfect body and healthy psyche like Freeletics.

The three do not consider their success comes just from providing their customers with the right exercises and nutritional tips via a smart app; customers who also intelligently network with one another, but above all from psychology. They have been able to indulge their followers with experiences of success so often, that they actually work on themselves in the long-term, because they keep reaping recognition again and again. When they look in the mirror. From friends. From the other sex. From their own sex.

Their app, which they came up with on a football field, as they didn't have an office at the start, has turned into a movement. Two years after Freeletics went live, they now employ around 80 people.



### Matthias Marquardt, 38, Hanover, running guru

Marquardt had a dream: he wanted to take part in the famous Ironman on Hawaii as a professional triathlete. But many injuries kept causing him further setbacks, he became an internist, sport medicine specialist and wrote the 'Laufbibel (Running Bible)', the reference text for everyone who wants to approach running properly. Marquardt advises hobby and professional athletes in his practice. He says: "Training and diet are only useful if they can be applied in the long term"

According to their own information they record a seven-figure monthly turnover and have almost six million registered customers worldwide. The Freeletics Munich Facebook group alone, in which people arrange to meet for workouts, exchange nutritional tips or explain exercises to one another, has almost 11,500 members.

Freeletics combines the trend for functional training - power - and endurance exercises with your own body weight - and the magnetism of social networks. You can follow other users in the community, see which exercises they have completed, encourage them with a like and are encouraged in turn by your own followers to carry on. The electronically conveyed feeling here is: you're never training alone.

Giving up is not an option. After all, everyone is watching. Freeletics also rewards workouts with a points system.

It is hard not to improve yourself and those who improve carry on. The question of meaning, however, is not asked; exercises are not critically viewed: what good do quickly carried out press ups do for someone who is overweight? Do they even cause damage? A digital Freeletics coach costs around 80 euros per year. The training units, made up of exercises from the time of Turnvater Jahn - press ups, star jumps and squats - were given the names of Greek gods by the founders. An ingenious marketing move that blows the dust from the workout and as a result means that when many followers think about Aphrodite, they are not thinking about the goddess of love, but of pain. The pain that, according to Freeletics logic, turns them into fitter, more successful and therefore better people.



### The new kids on the block

Nicholas, 23, and Tim, 24, students from Hamburg, are not interested in Freeletics. They pump iron. And they do it properly. They want muscles. No just a bit of definition, but really big muscles. They do not train with their own bodyweight on mats, but with iron on the weight bench. They train their upper bodies at least four times per week. Heavy weights, minimal reps. Not legs; who looks at a man's legs? On the other hand, their chests are shaved – the muscles should be seen, after all. Tim eats ten eggs for breakfast and a 1.2 kilogram cooked chicken with rice, without fat, salt or pepper. With a protein shake thrown in along the way. Beer and disco? Not a chance. Protein is his drug.

And why do they torment themselves this way? They feel good with it. Their hardened bodies give them more self-confidence than they would have without them, they say. Nicholas speaks quietly, he is shy, not a flashy body-builder. They enjoy the looks of girls at the beach, but what's even cooler is when other guys ask them for tips. How do you train? How much? How can we look like you? There are six of them in their group, pushing one another to peak performances. Anabolic steroids are banned, even if there are several people in their gym who use them. They post pictures of their bodies on Instagram and Facebook. That's as normal as their full beards, which they have trimmed every few weeks at a barber's.

Even trained retail saleswoman Derya, 37, from Hamburg, photographs her sixpack from every angle and constantly shares selfies with her followers. She is particularly proud of her stomach muscles. Her body, which she trains almost every day in the 'Kaifu-Lodge', is like an expensive sports car, she says. You don't buy one to leave it in the garage. She sees the likes as a reward for work that she takes very serious. Without pain, training isn't training. Her muscles have to burn. Women contact her, she notices that her permanent profile is causing something to happen that allows her to take others with her. Derya lives in virtual reality limbo. In the studio she hardly speaks with others. She closes herself off with music. People used to give her compliments, real ones. Now there are likes, but not really ones any more. That's kind of sad. Derya, the woman with the dream body, is single.

### The naturalist

Bernd Reicheneder, 41, is training in the Luitpoldpark in Munich with his Natural Movers in a play park. No hectic pace, no iPhones, no shouts of encouragement. They are the antithesis of Freeletics and co.; quiet instead of loud, but no less ideological. They train barefoot, balance on wooden beams, climb up the slide, drag sandbags. "It annoyed me that conventional training isn't about sustainability. When you train a group of muscles, you train their condition. They would look like slaves from another age if it wasn't for all the tattoos. Reicheneder is a qualified sports scientist, was a karate and fitness coach for a long time in one of those studios, until three and a half years ago he decided to take a different

path. But I was interested in learning skills." A pull-up is only an accomplished skill if you can use it to get up somewhere.

The Mov-Nat movement works along the lines of the "Methode Naturelle". A fitness concept in which the body is trained in natural movements in a great many disciplines. It was founded by French naval officer Georges Hebert at the start of the 20th century. He was looking for a way in which people could quickly and efficiently help themselves and others with their own force in natural catastrophes.

Reicheneder works with people that have bad posture, who don't breathe properly. He describes sitting as a constrained posture; he sees it as unnatural. Mov-Nat is even subsidised by a health insurance fund. Similarly to the other new fitness trends, the Natural Movers are also not satisfied just to exercise. They want to convey a more deliberate lifestyle, go to bed with the sun and get up with it again, eat according to the Paleo diet, respect nature, in which they experiment with a never-ending stream of new training exercises. Reicheneder says he's never felt better. His group really give a relaxed impression.

### The running guru

If you tell Matthias Marquardt about the Freeletics lads and the muscle pumpers who arduously maintain their appearance, seemingly with which they can hide their insecurities, then he doesn't react with spite, even though he has the knowledge and the experience to spot. He finds it unfortunate that those who are suddenly interested in sports and exercise are chasing after fleeting trends. The intensity with Freeletics is much too fast, much too high, which can lead to injuries to shoulders and elbow joints.

Marquardt, big, blond, in good shape, is only 38 years old, but has been involved for long enough to be able to recognise illusions and body modifications. He once wanted to become a professional triathlete, had to give up due to injuries, studied medicine, became an internist, sport medicine specialist, diagnostician, expert. In his practice in Hanover he takes care of beginners as well as recreational and professional athletes. 15 years ago Marquardt wrote the 'Laufbibel' (Running Bible) because he felt too many self-proclaimed experts without practical experience were spreading too much nonsense. With great success it actually became the bible for runners and is now in its 15th edition.

Marquardt does not care about appearances, but about the health of the athlete. He builds a bridge between what people wish and what's realistically achievable. His goal is not a radical conversion that leads to a relapse after a few months. He wants to integrate exercise, understanding of the body and improved nutrition into the everyday lives of his patients and customers.

When Marquardt talks about those who run through parks and forests in their compression shorts and functional shirts, constantly checking their heart rate on their heart rate monitors, then he knows

who he is dealing with. A majority of his customers are a part of this target group – around 45 years old, family men, successful careers, on the lookout for a new challenge. Ideally a marathon or even triathlon, and most of all to lose lots of weight. "First, I have to set them straight," says Marquardt. Excess strain at the start takes the fun away. Without fun there is no motivation. Without motivation the training is quickly over again.

Marquardt considers running to be the best method to get fit, because it is the most practicable. It can be done everywhere and at all times of year. Before beginning with running training, however, he advises people to have a medical examination. They are very important to rule out any health risks. After a marathon people have blood counts like after a heart attack, so this should be taken seriously. Even an orthopaedic analysis from the pelvis to the hamstring can be beneficial. Marquardt often meets hobby athletes who are prepared to spend 10,000 euros on a triathlon bike, but want to save money on sports medicine precautions.

It is very important to set realistic goals. It takes a full year of running training in order to tackle a marathon. At least. Stabilisation exercises are to be implemented alongside, otherwise injuries can be the result. Start slowly when losing weight. No radical low carb diet, but have low fat curd cheese with fruit and nuts for breakfast instead of a bread roll with pork or marmalade. Have salad and fish instead of casserole in the canteen. Snack on nuts and raisins instead of Snickers and Mars. Limit the availability of temptations. If there is no cake standing around, then no cake is eaten. But eat a plate of noodles or potatoes when training requires it. Act not according to dogma, but a hungry feeling.

Even though he is himself a brand ambassador for one of the companies that contribute towards many joggers looking like GPS-controlled Ironman participants, Marquardt calls for reason, urges people towards proportionality. Many products are developed by the industry for competitive sports and it is suggested that they are also necessary for a run after work.

But what's really important is good shoes. They should not cost less than 90 euros and should be matched to your feet. A shirt that doesn't soak up sweat, but transports it to the outside. Don't wear too many layers in winter. No insoles if they are not really medically required. Run one day, rest the next. And sleep for eight hours. Dietary supplements are only required by those who find themselves with a negative energy balance as a result of their training, i.e. consuming more calories than they eat. A banana, nuts, lots of water; that's enough for your average runner.

Much more important than the synthetically created conditions, says Marquardt, is to turn off the music whilst running every now and then, leaving the iPhone at home. Switch off. Run. Breathe. Nature. Breathe. Run. Then a shower. Then they can happily carry on with their chaotic, everyday lives.



Felix Hutt, the author of this story, would like to be better looking, thinner,

fitter.

But he'd like to be a winemaker in Chianti even more. Alexandra Kraft processed the tips. She herself likes to jog - but only for relaxation

### Read on the same topic:

On the next page – this is how you achieve a new start in an active life



Andrej Matijczak, 27, Joshua Cornelius, 27, and Mehmet Yilmaz, 26. (from left to right) Munich, Freeletics founders

With almost six million customers the 'Freeletics' app stands for the latest fitness hype. A student idea became a movement. Thousands of Freeletics followers find one another to train together. It's all about recognition, it drives the actions of a society, the young entrepreneurs realised. And they've done well out of it.



In the Berliner Poststadion on Lehrter Straße Freeletics enthusiasts meet up to work out together

# MEASUREMENT ARTISTS

Be it a fitness armband, smart watch or phone: they are all computers. As electronic aides they measure the number of steps, consumption of calories, differences in altitude, distance covered, heart rate, whatever takes your fancy. Apps analyse this data. But they can do even more – right up to organising entire coaching programmes. But beware: depending on their settings, apps like to share their knowledge. Apple, Google or the entire world: in 2011 activity tracker producer Fitbit got into hot water because it not only shared the daily activities on the web as a standard setting, but also published numerous sex categories, right up to "energetic sexual activity". This error was corrected.

## TRAINING COMPUTER

Those who would rather remain private should avoid the internet – using a classic training computer in the form of a watch. The leading manufacturers such as Polar, Sigma or Garmin offer them in various segments. A good mid-range device comes in at about 100 euros. It measures everything that's important. Requirements can be freely increased and there are training computers with hundreds of functions for hundreds of euros. A trial run in person is essential; a blind purchase is not recommended.



## ACTIVITY TRACKER

The 'fitness armbands' follow an entirely different philosophy: they keep track of activities around the clock and want to be lifestyle coaches. You become a kind of collector of virtuous deeds on your own body, but without concentrating on fixed training units. Whilst their precision and the point of functions such as sleep quality measurement are doubted by science, one thing is certain: the increase of physical activity is a success. Even in groups that are not really enthused by exercise it increased by up to ten per cent.



## SMARTWATCHES

The new trend watches only reach their full potential when a mobile is involved – they use its internet connection, navigation and recording capacity and processing power. Many have their own GPS, others, such as the Apple Watch, do not. How useful the combo that completely replaces individual devices such as the training computer, is decided only by the...



## APPS

Health and fitness are amongst the most successful app categories – the market is flooded with them. That's why it's important to precisely outline your own requirements: basic fitness and health trackers are already available both for Android and iOS. They allow simple analyses, such as daily time spent moving, and keep a diary of many sporting activities.



Those who 'only' run on a regular basis and want to create routes and analyse their endurance need a **running app**. Well-known sports brands (e.g. Adidas, Asics or Nike) offer free versions. The 'Runtastic Running & Fitness' is particularly popular, boasting a community with 30 million members. Alongside tracking there are training plans and analysis tools. The business models of such apps typically have pro versions you have to pay for (without adverts) and in-app purchases of additional functions.

The App Store also has a few less serious motivators available – 'Zombies! Run!', for example, inspires a daily workout by being chased by the undead, but can nevertheless lead to serious training success. Cyclists largely rely on the 'Strava' app, which, as a route planner and tracker, also centres around a community: here certain routes can be found and used, with time comparisons with other riders serving as motivation for performance.

On the other hand, those who prefer all-round training and workouts need apps with exercise programmes. The simple variant here is offered by the very widespread '7-minute apps' according to the guidelines of the American College of Sports Medicine, which principally instruct towards sleek and fast everyday circuit training. On the sixpack scene the 'Men's Health Personal Fitness Trainer' has a loyal and successful following. The spectrum continues to the most complex, individualised training programmes such as 'Freeletics', whose app is more like a portal to the community and represents a comprehensive, individualised training programme. And this means if you want to take it seriously: you have to take out a subscription. This is no different with the somewhat more affordable competitor 'Virtuagym' and here, too, there are hundreds of workout instructions, albeit only in exchange for money. Each of the popular apps named stands for a type – and has masses of competition. So there is a real embarrassment of riches. And one consolation: the basic versions are often free or cost just a few euros, meaning apps can be tested for a lot less than expensive training computers. If you don't like it, you can simply fire the



virtual coach of the population of Germany are members of a gym, which is 9.1 million people. When you calculate the proportion of 15 to 65-year-olds, it even rises to 17 per cent





Simon Müller  
from Crossfit  
Sankt Pauli has  
everything a  
fitness enthusiast  
needs:  
motivation,  
muscles and  
tattoos

26

The global turnover for fitness apps will run into billions of US dollars by 2017 predicts a study by Google. After all, the market segment was already worth four billion dollars in 2014



Fit like the  
Neanderthals: the  
Natural Movers  
orientate  
themselves  
around evolution  
in their training.  
They do the Paleo  
diet, too, of  
course

of the individually  
determined  
maximum heart  
rates are a good  
average to build  
upon with loose  
endurance runs. In  
competitions 90  
per cent is  
regularly exceeded