

HEROES WORLD

DUTY | WORK | ADVENTURE | TRENDS

LOYALTY.

THE WILD 50's

Five firefighters working together for one another.

TRUST.

TRUST MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

May Tømmervold between bullet casings and a sea of flames.

RESPECT.

TORMENTED HEROES

Firefighter Meghann on disrespect on the job.



Legal notice

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The Magazine for Rescuers, Creators and Adventurers

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LOYALTY
IN THE TEAM.

TRUST
IN YOUR OWN ABILITIES.

RESPECT
TOWARDS EMERGENCY PERSONNEL.

We talk to veteran May about her time in Afghanistan, chase records with the HAIX Wild 50s and visit Berlin's roughest areas with fire chief Meghann. Loyalty, trust and respect – three traits that are essential on duty. Our first issue of HEROES WORLD focuses on several burning issues: the toughest two minutes in FireFit, a Viennese emergency paramedic on duty in the townships of Cape Town, and a fire engine on tour in Scandinavia. We also have other stories in store for you, like that of Aladdin and Klaus. The unlikely pair met through their shared profession as landscape gardeners. In another story, we're taking a deep dive to explore marine biologist and nature photographer Robert Marc Lehmann's most memorable moments. Star butcher Lucki Maurer is grilling the perfect steak for us, while fitness author Christine Theiss hypercharges your next run with her useful tips. A world of heroes awaits. We hope you enjoy the read!

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A D V E N T U R E

DIVE IN AND BE AMAZED

Robert Marc Lehmann's camera captures incredible animals as they sneak by. He dives with sharks, snuggles with seals and meets endangered species eye to eye. Encounters like these still make him catch his breath and give him goosebumps. In our interview, the marine biologist and nature photographer tells us about the most memorable moments he has experienced in the company of wildlife.





Text

Paula Kormos

Photos

Paula Kormos

Robert Marc Lehmann

THE FASCINATING LIFE OF A RESEARCH DIVER

Everyone recognizes that distinctive melody, those two notes just before the Great White Shark appears: dum dum dum dum dum... it simply screams "danger!" A giant fin breaks the surface of the water, swimmers yell in horror, and a panic breaks out. You might be surprised to learn that there were 'only' nine lethal incidents involving sharks in 2021. Considering the billions of swimmers, surfers, divers and



Robert Marc Lehmann: Marine biologist, photographer and cameraman, environmental activist and author

other watersport enthusiasts who spend time in the sea every year, that is a very low rate. It is safe to say that sharks do not pose a major threat to humans. Humans, on the other hand, are quite lethal to sharks.

Every year, at least 150 million sharks are killed by the fishing industry. Yes, that's correct: 150 million. They are deliberately targeted and sold for food or medicine (although the medical properties of the resulting products are questionable). Even the cosmetics industry takes a share. On top of that, sharks often end up in fishing nets and on surface longline fishing hooks as bycatch. The body of a shark is barely worth a hundred US dollars. A single kilogram of their sought-after fins, on the other hand, sells for three times as much. They are sold as a luxury delicacy, particularly in Asian countries. Shark fin soup is served as a high-status dish at weddings and other festivities, with a single plate costing more than 100 US dollars. But the meat of the fins is tasteless – as is the method used to extract it. "Shark finning" refers to the practice of cutting the fins off live sharks before discarding their bodies back into the ocean. The animals sink to the bottom of the sea and suffocate slowly over the course of several hours. Not only is this method horrifying and cruel, it also harms the ocean's ecosystem. Sharks and other cartilaginous fish, of which there are around 1,160 known species, have an important function: they keep the sea healthy and intact.

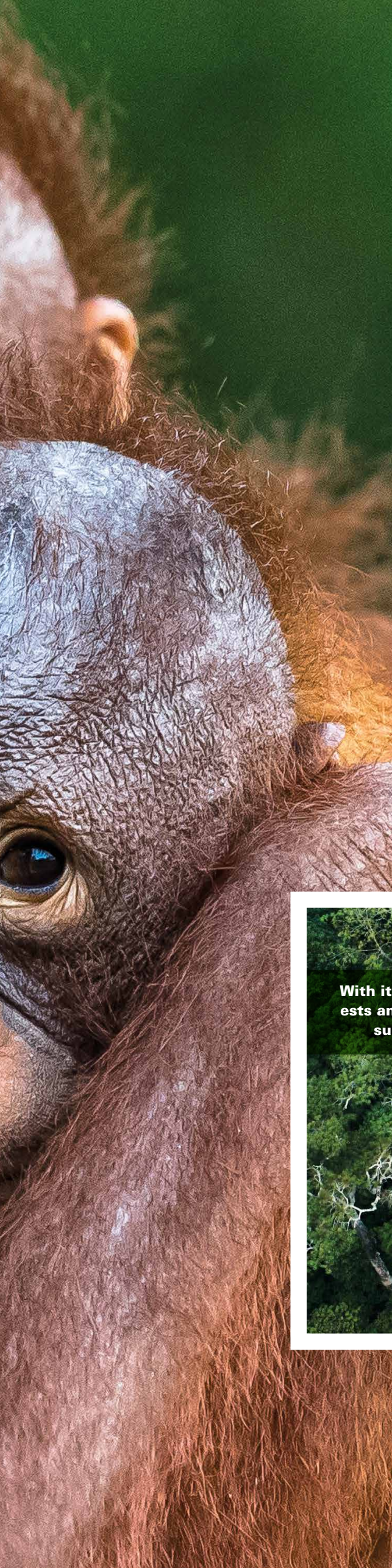
The impact of sharks is especially clearly visible in places where they are being hunted. Coral reefs often show per-

manent damage, and biodiversity is much poorer. Countries that protect sharks as an endangered species reap great benefits, as reefs and fish populations can recover, which helps tourism. There are countries which have recognized the positive influence and economic value of sharks. The Bahamas, for instance, is one of the world's top ten destinations for diving with sharks. The Bahamian islands are home to nearly everything that makes my marine biologist's heart skip a beat: tiger sharks, lemon sharks, nurse sharks, bull sharks and, of course, hammerhead sharks. "When I was a little boy, I dreamed of free-diving with a big hammerhead shark. Their heads, their agility and their beauty have always captivated me. In 2019, I finally got my wish! That feeling of entering the sharks' habitat without diving gear and simply taking in their beauty is totally indescribable. A huge creature, physically superior to me in every way, accepts me into its habitat and simply lets me be. It was a perfect moment for me," Robert recounts.

While most people would experience nothing but horror in that situation, it was a long-awaited dream come true for Robert: free-diving with a hammerhead shark just once in his life. This stunning female is five meters long and perfectly peaceful. Robert's presence does not seem to disturb her at all.

"I have been to many places all over the world. I've seen sad, horrifying things. Very rarely do I see a region where animals and nature are thriving. Those are very special moments to me that remind me why I do what I do."





AT JUNGLE SCHOOL WITH THE ORANGUTANS

"Sometimes, my trip take me to places that change my life. Borneo is one of those destinations. I visited it as a photographer and cameraman to document a rescue center for injured and orphaned orangutans. It houses young orangutans between one and ten years of age alongside some teenagers and young adults. In total, the carers look after about 70 animals around the clock. The Indonesian islands of Borneo and Sumatra are home to a population of approximately 64,000 orangutans of all species. Since the 1950s, their number has declined by 90 per cent.

There are many reasons for this decline in the great-ape population, with habitat loss being the most pressing problem. Large parts of the primary and secondary rainforest are being cleared for business interests, for example, to make way for oil palm plantations. Around 100 years ago, nearly 90% of the area making up Sumatra and Borneo was covered in forests. Only a third of these forests remain today. The orangutans are not only losing their home, the deforestation measures often injure the animals gravely, with many burning to death in the trees.

It takes nearly a decade before the little orangutans can leave the rescue station and return to freedom. Their human carers must teach them everything they would normally have learned from their mothers, which takes an enormous amount of time and dedication. That is why the orangutans go to jungle school and train their ape skills every day. As I was watching the young apes play, I realized: consumerism and the habits of every single one of us are affecting the lives of these incredible creatures.

**THESE ARE
ALL
ORPHANS**

With its tropical jungles, mountain forests and mangroves, Borneo is the last surviving habitat of many species.



And it was only after I took this picture that I comprehended: these are all orphans. Just like humans who have experienced terrible things, they are severely traumatized. It is extremely important that we understand the consequences of our actions. I hope my photographs and my stories can raise awareness."



As the sun kisses the horizon off Heligoland, a photogenic gray seal waves at the camera, with kelp tickling her stomach under water. The perfect moment, the perfect photograph! National Geographic's photo jury agreed, making Robert its Photographer of the Year in 2015.



PROCEED WITH CAUTION: A DOE-EYED PREDATOR

"I'm hiding in the long kelp, inching ever closer – it's already taken me an hour and a half! My body lies flat on the ground, submerged in water; only my head is just about poking out. With slow kicks of the fin, I approach the female gray seal snoozing on a rock. The 50°F water chills me to the bones. I can barely feel my hands gripping the camera. Finally, the perfect moment has arrived: the sun is setting behind the horizon, the seal lifts her fin – click. Done. My best picture ever! It was one of the most emotional moments in my wildlife photography career.

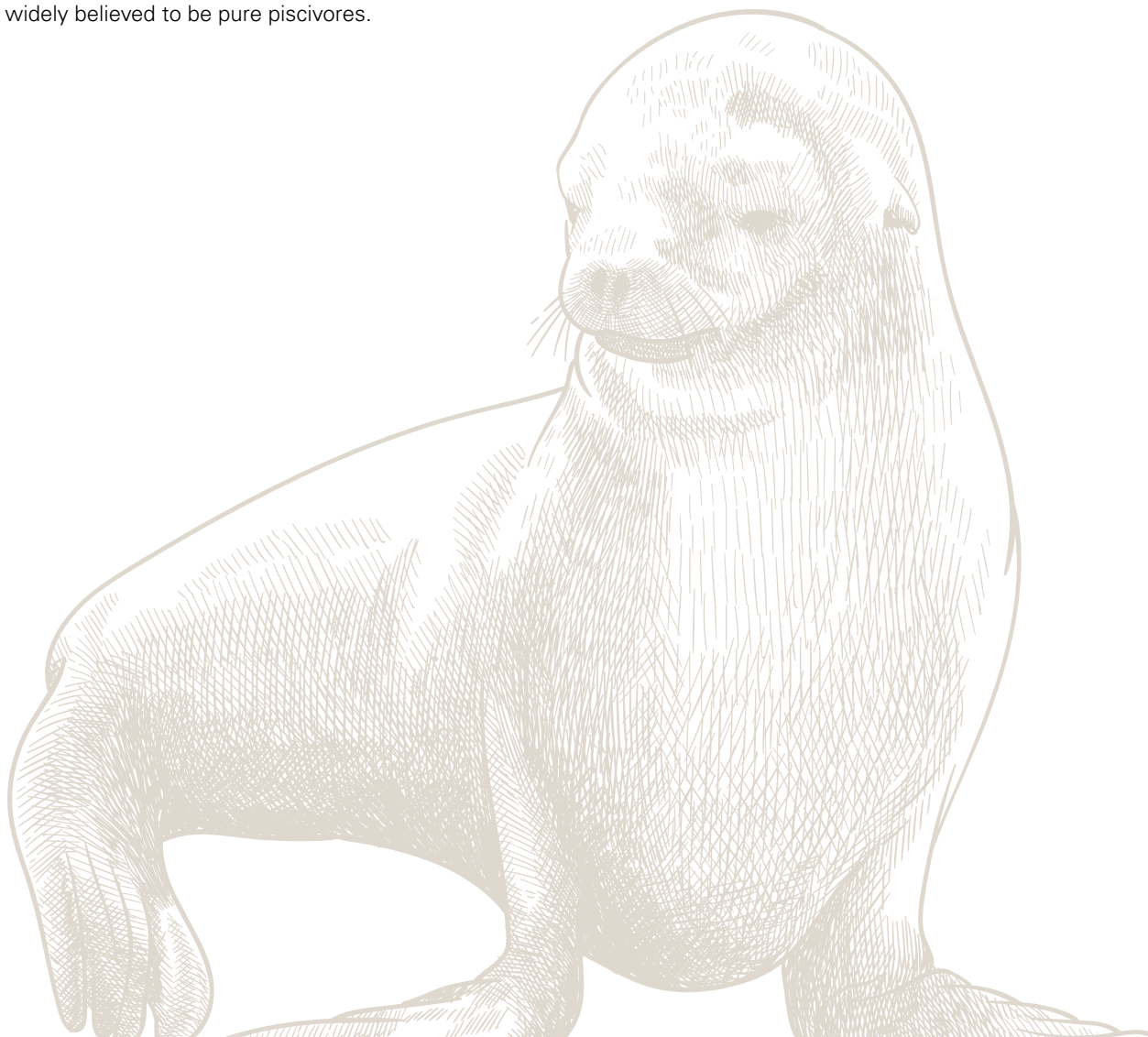
Only through many years of experience with these animals and my intimate familiarity with their habitat was I able to capture this scene for eternity. My ultimate goal is to document natural behaviors and show the world the unembellished truth. Besides equipment and patience, animal photographers need one thing: an intuitive understanding of what's in front of their camera. It's extremely important to assess the situation correctly. What is the animal doing? Am I disturbing its natural behavior? No matter what wild animals you are watching, it is crucial to keep a distance, not to underestimate the animals and to show them the respect they deserve. Not just with tigers in India but also with gray seals in Heligoland.

While these playful, doe-eyed animals may look like pets, they must be treated with extreme caution. The gray seal is Germany's largest, heaviest predator. A bull can weigh up to 300 kilograms and measure up to three meters. With sharp claws and jaws like a bear's, these agile animals even hunt harbor seals and porpoises. In 2014, I became the first person ever to film a grown gray-seal bull devour a harbor seal under water – something that had never been documented before. For a long time, the seals were widely believed to be pure piscivores.

**GERMANY IS UP THERE
WITH THE BEST WHEN
IT COMES TO WILDLIFE**


Holidaymakers needn't worry, however: gray seals are quite friendly around humans. Small injuries, such as scratches, occasionally happen when swimmers meet curious seals, but they tend to be harmless.

Germany's seal population has been on the rise since the nineties. The island of Heligoland even saw a record this winter, with more baby seals being born than in any year since records began in the winter of 1996/97. This is great news and shows that Germany is up there with the best when it comes to wildlife. So, if you are looking for an outdoor adventure with real predators, there's no need to travel far. Just bear in mind: keep a distance of at least 30 meters. Unless the seals approach you of their own accord.





"Free-diving with gray seals is not for people who are quick to panic under water. While one seal has a nibble of my headgear, the other is trying to steal my flippers."



Five men whose ages added up to a quarter of a millennium when they became a team. A quintet that has gained a legendary reputation in FireFit. Not just for their athletic prowess, their cumulative experience or their striking logo.

Text
Hanno Meier

Photos
Hanno Meier

D U T Y

ONE FOR ALL ALL FOR THE TEAM

One for all, all for one. Gerd Müller laughs and corrects himself: “one for all, all for the team!” He has been involved in FireFit since the very beginning and is an integral part of the HAIX WILD 50s. The men by his side are Ralf Sikorra, Dietmar Kirsch, Heiko Gehrke and Magnus Hirschfeld, who has replaced founding member Andreas Schröder. Together, they are the team with which HAIX entered the world of FireFit sponsoring eight years ago.



They always say that 46 is too old for sport. But Ralf Sikorra has other ideas when it comes to the athletic prowess of the HAIX Wild 50s: "Suddenly, this bunch of fifty-year-olds showed up and outran competitors twenty years younger." They are virtually undefeated in their own age range, regularly take the top spot in competitions and collect titles and medals like others collect stamps or air miles. European champion, world champion, world record holder. Every single one of them holds a title, gained either in individual or team competitions.

STRONGER TOGETHER

If you think the Wild 50s adhere to the Olympic motto, you're wrong. We're sitting in Magnus Hirschfeld's clinic in Seesen, Germany. In the background, Gerd Müller is running on the treadmill, fully decked out in his firefighting gear. His first target is the twelve-hour distance world record, then he cracks the 24-hour one. "FireFit meets records" is the motto of this event, which the team initiated themselves. As many as 13 world records are cracked this weekend. All donations and proceeds from cake sales go to charity.

Physiotherapist, chiropractor and naturopath Magnus looks after his teammates' physical and mental well-being. To keep Gerd motivated, Ralf regularly joins him on a parallel treadmill for an hour at a time. Later, Gerd will say the following about his Wild 50s: "As long as one or two make it through the competition, the whole team wins."

Their teamwork and fighting spirit in the "toughest two minutes in sports," as the FireFit competitions are known, is what makes the Wild 50s so unique, along with their uncompromising loyalty to one another. With their exemplary attitude, they are excellent role models for all generations of their community. All for the team – this is just as important in the fire department as it is in the police and the rescue services. And competitive sport is a perfect way of reinforcing and practicing it.

LOYALTY, TRUST, RESPECT

"Those are the values we aim to live by," says Ralf Sikorra. Once, during a competition in Poland, the referees made a mistake. Although he had been the faster competitor, they gave the top time to Dietmar. "If it had been someone else, I would've been quite annoyed," the Leverkusen native admits. "But this way, it stayed within the team."

The Wild 50s are all firefighters. All five of them are completely dedicated to the job, volunteers as well as full-timers. Ralf, who has been working for Bayer for eons, started out as a metalworker. He applied to the fire service of the company, then still called Bayer Industry Services, and worked his way up the ladder. His new job is at the safety center of Currenta GmbH, where he is responsible for keeping the three factories in Uerdingen, Leverkusen and Dormagen safe. Ralf's teammates sometimes call him "the politician," as he always makes an effort to understand everyone. He explains that living by these values is not always easy, but they are essential for him and his team.

COMPLETELY RELIABLE

Before his age forced him to retire, Gerd Müller, a professional chef, spent 35 years as a firefighter at the US air base in Spangdahlem, Germany. The former district chief still works on the base. Today, he holds the position of supply technician for the 52nd Logistics Readiness Squadron, and he is a volunteer firefighter to boot. "Gerd is our action man," Ralf explains. It was Gerd who came up with the idea of the Wild 50s in 2013.

Dietmar Kirsch is a high-ranking member of his local fire department. The supervisor at the fire department of the German Armed Forces in Warnemünde was the first team member to become an individual world champion. Heiko Gehrke is a professional firefighter and paramedic working with the Neubrandenburg fire department.

Magnus Hirschfeld is the only team member whose career is unrelated to firefighting. Whenever the volunteer brigade of his home town of Seesen is called out to a fire, he joins them. The platoon leader and head of the fire prevention committee is responsible for eleven fire departments in the town association.

Even though the five team members are scattered across the country, they frequently get together for competitions. The team works well because every member knows that they can completely rely on the others. Many others appreciate this integrity in the men: their friends and close acquaintances all over the world, their supporting fans, and their sponsors, who identify with their values. These old boys are certainly on the same wavelength. "Three from the west, two from the east," as they say, all bound together by unwavering loyalty.



D U T Y

FIREFIGHTING EXTREME

You're ready. A shrill beep – the signal that you're up in the FireFit Championships. With a 20-kilogram hose pack over your shoulder and a breathing apparatus on your back, you storm up a flight of 60 stairs. The toughest two minutes in sports are ahead of you. To us mere mortals, they beggar belief. To FireFit fans, they are pure adrenaline.





**Full focus,
turn on the water
and extinguish
the target fire**

Text
Julia Simon
Photos
Hanno Meier

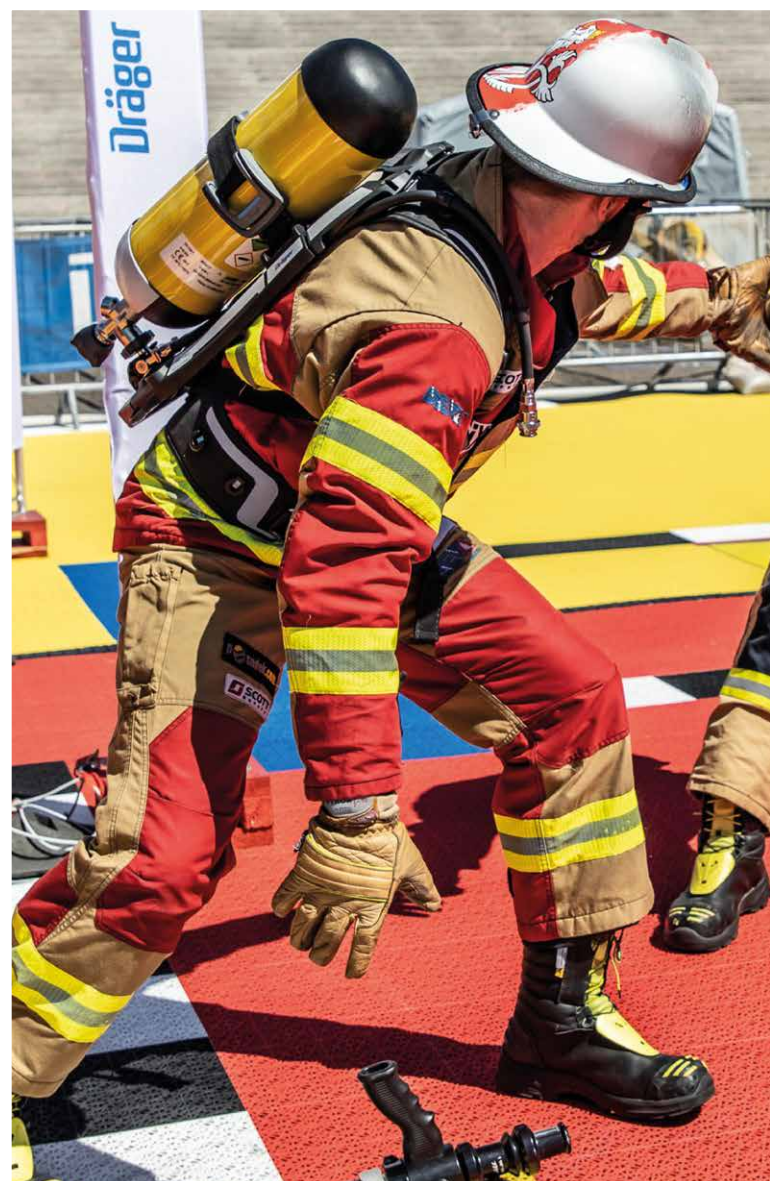
THE ULTIMATE SPORT SPECTACLE:

You can join as an individual, in tandem or in a relay with three to five teammates. The relay is ideal for athletic individuals with a new interest in FireFit. It requires a solid team spirit. You can hear your comrades cheer you on as you run. The breathing apparatus is loosely draped over your shoulder – the mask and hose connector stay behind. For experienced competitors, the individual run is the ultimate challenge – with the breathing apparatus fully engaged, it takes an incredible effort. As well as speed, the tandem comes down to dexterity, as you need to be adept at passing the breathing apparatus to your partner at the half-way mark.

When you reach the top of the twelve-meter tower, you don't get a chance to take in the view. Instead, you drag another fire hose up the stairs before you rush back down towards the next station. "Faster! Faster!" The chants of the audience ring in your ears as your hammer tirelessly moves the cylinder of the Force Machine forwards, inch by inch. The referee claps his hands. Time to keep sprinting. The slalom is almost relaxing in comparison, but at its finish, a filled fire hose awaits – you'll be dragging it along for another 23 meters. Finally, you reach the door frame. Water on! You direct the jet pipe at the target.

FITNESS, A FORM OF LIFE INSURANCE

The competition mirrors the real work of a firefighter on the job: climbing stairs, carrying hoses, opening locked doors, saving lives and extinguishing flames. For 27 years, the FireFit Championships have been taking place in Canada, with the first German edition following in 2016. During firefighting missions that require self-contained breathing apparatuses, your own health can become your life insurance. That is why FireFit was developed not just for extreme athletes but for regular firefighters, too. The stations take competitors to their physical limit, just like real firefighting operations. FireFit is a challenge at every

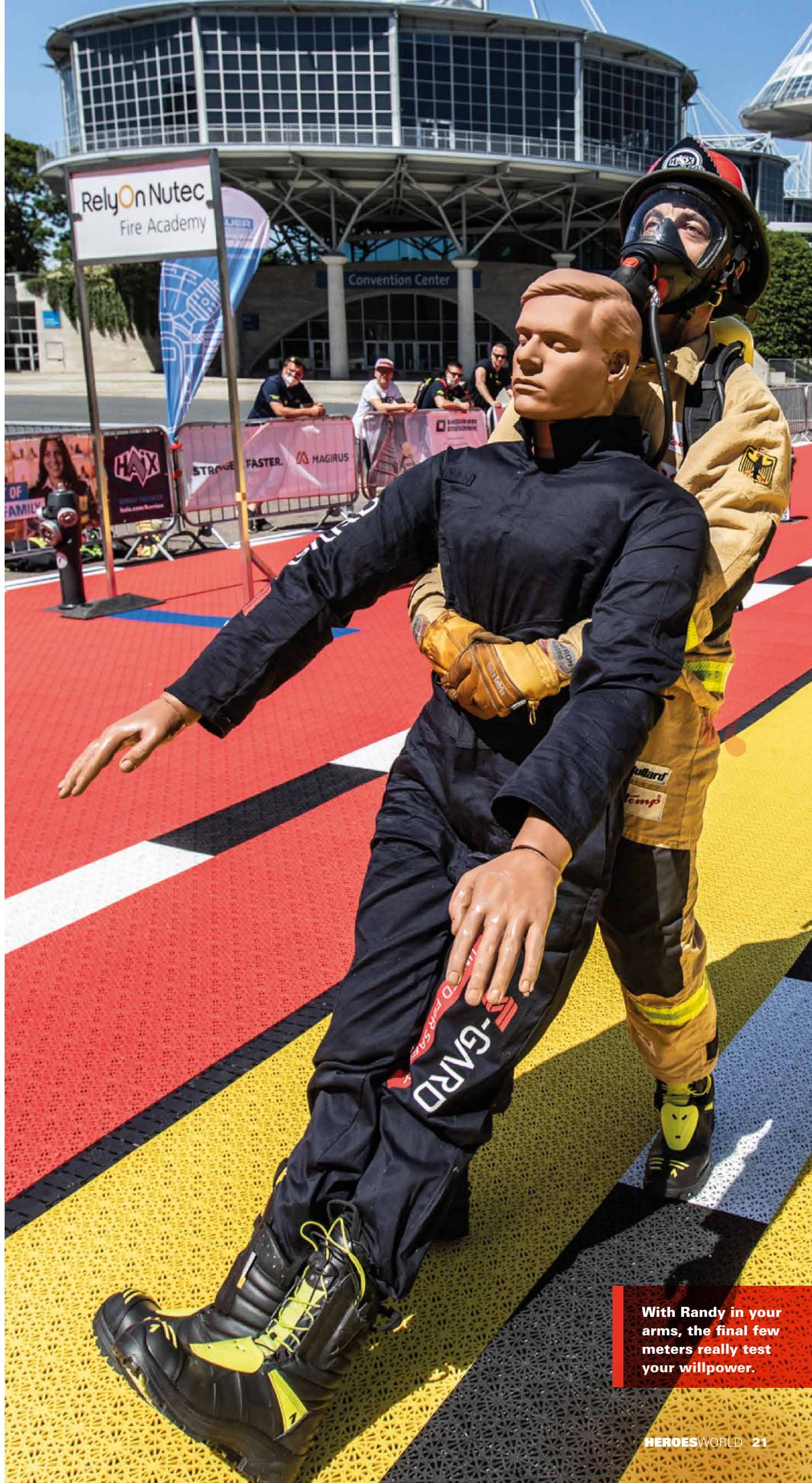


level, mental as well as physical, and it is important to know your limits, especially when using a breathing apparatus. A firefighter can always take a break in open-air training, but in a smoke-filled hall, that's not an option.

After the fire extinction station, you reach the end of the red-and-yellow obstacle course, where the final boss awaits: Dummy Randy. You use the rescue maneuver and, moving backwards, drag the 80-kilogram dummy towards the goal. On the final 30 meters, you have to grit your teeth and keep going: don't drop the dummy, as picking it back up will drain your strength. You cross the finish line. The dummy drops on the mat. You've made it. No matter if you are on your own or in tandem, in a relay or a team, a man or a woman, a spring chicken or an oldie – once you cross the finishing line, you're a hero.



THE RELAY RACE REQUIRES TEAMWORK



With Randy in your arms, the final few meters really test your willpower.

Team HAIX Wild 50s:
Heiko Gehrke, Magnus
Hirschfeld, Dietmar
Kirsch, Gerd Müller
and Ralf Sikorra



D U T Y

TEAM HAIX FIREFIGHTERS

These are the top athletes in FireFit. They strive for the top times in FireFit championships, tower running and other competitions and are fiercely passionate about their sport.



TEAM HAIX WILD 50's

Oldies but goodies: the Wild 50s are the world's best in their class. The cupboards of Heiko Gehrke's, Magnus Hirschfeld's, Dietmar Kirsch's, Gerd Müller's and Ralf Sikorra's homes are full to the brim with trophies and medals won at many national and international tournaments. Even world championships are no match for the five. This has made these five firefighters over fifty idols for many young athletes.

PASCAL DÜLGE

The fire chief from Neubrandenburg trains every day. He is a passionate bodybuilder and works as a personal trainer in addition to his career in professional firefighting. For more than ten years, he has been competing in FireFit championships, and he joined the HAIX team in 2017. His preparations mainly consist of interval training. When he enters the competition grounds, there's only one thing that matters to him: being the fastest. The "Dülge pose" he strikes for photos after crossing the finishing line has long since gained cult status.

Text

Julia Simon

Photos

Simon Grundmann

Hanno Meier

Inge Fuchs



Pascal Dülge,
a fire chief from
Neubrandenburg



**Professional
Norwegian firefighter
May Tømmervold**

TOUR DATES [PROVISIONAL]

June 20 – June 25, 2022 Hannover INTERSCHUTZ

August 5 – August 7, 2022 Dortmund

August 26 – August 27, 2022 Pfalzen, South Tyrol

September 17 – September 18, 2022 Bavaria

October 8 – October 9, 2022 Valenciennes, France

October 15 – October 16, 2022 Seixal, Portugal

WWW.FIREFIT-EUROPE.EU



**Meghann Krüger,
a professional
firefighter from Berlin**

MAY TØMMERVOLD

The professional firefighter from Norway is among the world’s fastest female FireFit athletes. Her impressive performance at the Firefighter Combat Challenge Championships in Florida in 2021 made her a quadruple world champion.

MEGHANN KRÜGER

Berlin native Meghann loves living life on high alert, both in her day job as a professional firefighter and in FireFit. No setback keeps her down for long, and thanks to this fighting spirit, she has become Germany’s fastest female firefighter and a top athlete at the European level. Her next goal: the world championships.



Sören Warzok,
a voluntary firefighter
from Lower Saxony

SÖREN WARZOK

The latest addition to the HAIX TEAM, Sören is a voluntary firefighter from Lower Saxony. The project manager for high-voltage systems and part-time firefighter at the University of Göttingen takes the obstacle course at a dizzying speed. In 2021, he proved his prowess at the Fire-Fit premiere held during the INTERSCHUTZ Community Days in Hanover. HAIX looks forward to having Sören, the runner-up to the European title in his own class, on the team in the new season.

PHILIPP KAISER

The Breisgau butcher is a voluntary firefighter. Along with excellent finish times, Philipp brings a ton of fun to any competition. Any race he starts usually ends with him on the podium. In his daily life, he balances his day job as a master butcher with his commitment to the voluntary fire department of Rheinhausen. His entire family, including his daughter, tends to tag along when he trains or competes.



Philipp Kaiser,
a voluntary firefighter
from the Breisgau



T R E N D S

RUN YOUR WAY TO STRENGTH

Love running but tend to get bored of doing the same route over and over? Former kickboxing world champion Christina Theiss has a few tips to keep you motivated. So: on your marks, set, go!



“

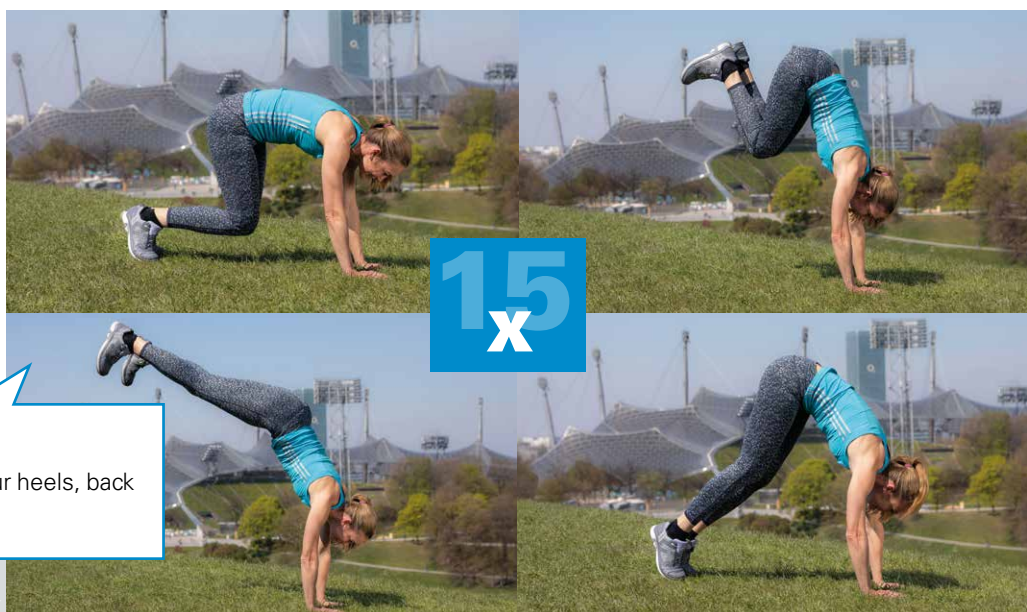
I recommend that you start these exercises around the halfway mark. Or, if you've still got plenty of energy, after your run. Alternatively, you can divide your route into ten-minute stages and fit in the exercises whenever works best.

MY EXERCISES

DONKEY KICK

Muscles exercised: abs, legs, arms

1. Get on all fours. Place your hands directly under your shoulders and tuck your chin so that you are looking between your hands.
 2. Kick both feet up into the air. Use your arms to stabilize your body in the air. Return to your original position.
- › 10 to 15 reps, three to five sets with 60 seconds of rest between sets.



TIP

At the highest point of the jump, your heels, back and head should be in line.

Text

Inge Fuchs

Photos

Hanno Meier

TIPTOE SQUAT

Muscles exercised: legs

1. Stand up straight with your feet at shoulder width apart and your arms extended forward.
 2. Keeping your back straight, lower your hips by bending your knees no further than 90 degrees. Now, slowly raise your heels off the ground and stand on your toes. Briefly hold the position, then return to your original stance.
- › 10 to 15 reps, three to five sets with 60 seconds of rest between sets



TIP

Extending your arms helps you keep your balance while you are on your toes.

LARGE V

Muscles exercised: abs, legs

1. Sit on the floor with your back straight and your legs extended and slightly apart. Point your toes upwards and extend your arms in parallel with your legs.
 2. Lift your left leg towards your left arm. Keep your toes pointed upwards. Hold this position for 10 to 15 seconds. Drop your leg back to the floor in a controlled motion, then repeat the exercise with the right leg.
- › Hold for 10 to 15 seconds, three sets with 30 to 60 seconds of rest between sets.

TIP

Keep your upper body straight throughout the exercise to avoid a hunchback.



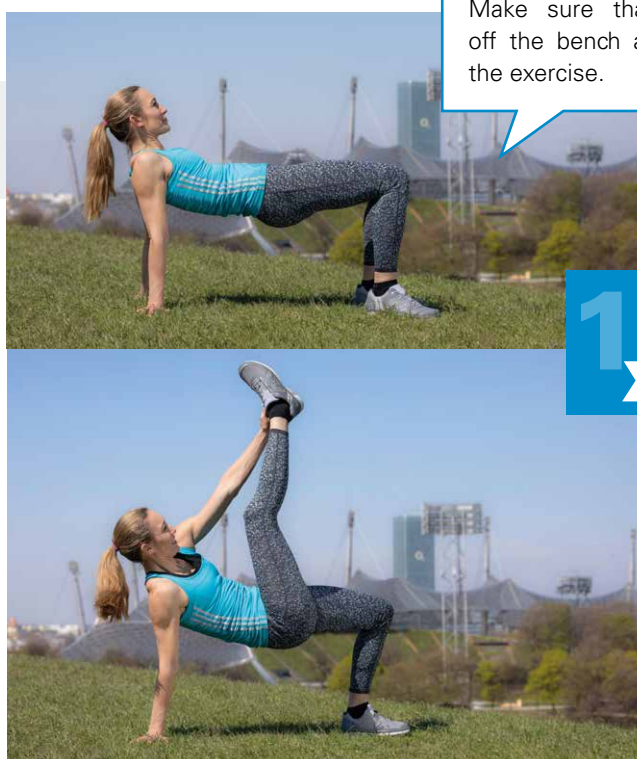
DANCING CRAB

Muscles exercised: abs, legs, glutes

1. Sit on the floor with your legs angled and your feet resting on the ground. Move your arms behind your back with your hands on the ground and your finger tips pointing outwards and backwards. Stretch your arms and position your hands underneath your shoulders. Raise your buttocks off the ground so that your lower legs are now perpendicular to the floor.
 2. Engage your abs and glutes. Simultaneously lift your right arm and left leg so that your hands and feet touch. Return to your original stance and repeat the movement with your left arm and right leg. Continue repeating the exercise, alternating between sides.
- › 15 reps, three to five sets with 60 seconds of rest between sets

TIP

Make sure that your hips are lifted off the bench and engaged throughout the exercise.



SEATED PLANK WITH LEG LIFTS

Muscles exercised: abs, legs, arms

1. Sit on the edge of a bench with your torso straight and your head facing forward. Place your feet on the ground. Position your hands on the edge of the bench next to your hips.
 2. Now, push your body up with your arms without changing your seated position. Your hips and feet are lifted off the ground. Hold the position for 10 to 15 seconds, then return to your original stance.
- › Hold for 10 to 15 seconds, three sets with 30 to 60 seconds of rest between sets

15
sec

TIP

To achieve the right amount of tension, point your toes towards your shins and keep your head in line with your spine.



Watch the exercises:





D U T Y

TRUST MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Trust is a must during firefighting operations, but it manifests itself in a very different way than it would in a war zone, May Tømmervold explains. No shots are fired when you're fighting fire. Getting people and animals to safety is the top priority. That is what motivated May to become a professional firefighter in 2014, having spent the previous 15 years as a soldier.

Text
Julia Simon

Photos
May Tømmervold



The engine roars. Aerial gunner May Tømmervold is kneeling next to the door of the helicopter, surveying the area. A distress call comes in over the radio; gunshots sound below. Several soldiers are encircled on the ground, all severely injured. May knows each of them personally. There is no questioning the urgency of this rescue mission, but the risk of being discovered and targeted is high. The door gunner has no choice but to trust her pilots. They, in turn, rely on her for protection.

On this mission in Afghanistan, May's job was to secure a rescue helicopter of the Norwegian Medical Detachment. She spent 15 years as a non-commissioned officer in the Norwegian Armed Forces. Norway, a founding member of NATO, deployed troops to support the ISAF mission. May has to be on high alert at all times, watching her surroundings closely. In a crisis, door gunners protect their helicopter and everyone inside it.

FLAMES EVERYWHERE

Just a few years later, May finds herself near Tønsberg in southern Norway. A residential building is engulfed by flames, with two adults and two children trapped inside. When the call comes in, her adrenaline spikes and her heart races. Firefighter May spends the drive mentally preparing herself for the operation. She checks her equipment, makes a plan. This is her first fire in a residential building. Entering someone's house is not the same as training in a flashover container. There are flames and smoke everywhere; May can barely see the person in front of her. In an environment like this, trusting your team partners blindly is your only option.

You must be completely confident in your training and your abilities, your comrades, your own body and your equipment – confidence can make or break an operation. All members of the company have each other's back, they will do anything to get their comrades back to safety. Knowing that everyone relies on everyone else calms her nerves and reassures her, May explains.

Outsiders find it difficult to grasp the level of solidarity that exists within a firefighting company. But 41-year-old May is unusual: according to CTIF, the International Association of Fire and Rescue Services, only 2 per cent of Norwegian firefighters were women in 2019. That amounts to 200 women out of 12,000 emergency personnel. Their number has been growing, however: today, women make up around four per cent of the force. In Germany, they account for nine percent of firefighters – around 90,000 out of a million.

MOMENTS THAT STICK WITH YOU

May tours schools and talks to the media to advertise her profession. She loves the teamwork, the adrenaline, the challenge and the diversity of her work. In her view, a wide range of personalities combined with trust and honesty are what make a good team. Everyone reacts differently to dangerous situations, and talking about your experiences and emotions after a mission is extremely important. May has no doubt: "If you feel safe to talk about your feelings with your team mates, you know you've got a good team."

She admits that this openness is something she misses in everyday life. "Of course, it's hard to hear that you've made a wrong decision or done something unwise, that you were being an idiot." Many people are afraid to express direct criticism. But trust also means leaving things in the past and learning from difficult situations. This feedback culture is well established in the military, and it has been on the rise in firefighting, too. Speaking openly about a mission is just as important as ignoring your own emotions while inside a burning building, keeping calm and exuding confidence.

May's experiences have shaped her as a person: rather than relying on luck, she makes sure that she is well prepared. She knows what she can do and what her comrades contribute. Ultimately, it was this trust that saved lives in the helicopter over Afghanistan. And it was what got all the residents of the house near Tønsberg out of the flames and to safety.





W O R K

PLANT WHISPERERS

One is from Baden-Württemberg, the other from the Gambia. Landscape gardeners Klaus Mödinger and Alige Konateh met through their work. They have been close friends ever since. We spent a day looking over their shoulders.



**“BOSS, IT’S
NOTHING
BUT A
MUGGA-
SEGGELE!”**

These two have plenty of fun at work, especially when Aladdin learns the local dialect: the term “muggaseggele” (used to describe something very small – literally, a housefly’s scrotum) is one of his favorites.



One slab, then another. Alige Konateh, also known as Aladdin, is carefully putting together a stone carpet. The challenge: creating a two-centimeter slope while his examiner watches him closely. Two centimeters exactly, no more, no less. Aladdin puts down the final slab, and the examiner scrutinizes the ground with a raised eyebrow. "That's not two centimeters." "Boss", Aladdin argues, "it's nothing but a muggaseggele!" A West African speaking in the local dialect of Baden-Württemberg! The examiner's heart melts, making him forget about the minor deviation. Aladdin passes his exam and receives the certificate making him a professional landscape gardener. He's finally arrived – in his dream job and his new home.

THE PLANT WHISPERERS

That was one year ago. Aladdin has been working with Rigon & Lenk in Fellbach for four years now. This is where he met Klaus Mödinger, who offered him an apprenticeship in his company. The 58-year-old grins as he recounts the story of Aladdin's final examination. In a broad accent, he tells us of the examiner's delight over the trainee's mastery of the local dialect, which Klaus appears to have taught his protégé.

But the sense of humor, he assures us, is entirely Aladdin's own. "As is this," he says, tapping on his heart. He believes that plants have a soul. You may not be able to talk to them, but they're just like all other living beings. Whenever a shoot needs trimming, he first inspects the plant carefully. "We always check in with the plant first," Aladdin explains. This involves asking the tree why it's growing the way it's growing. Every shoot has its place,

It's an overcast day, and drizzle dampens our faces. Aladdin gently clips the buds off a wilted hibiscus plant. In the background, Klaus is clambering up a ladder. He analyses the treetop, pulls a saw from his belt and fells the branches of this ginkgo tree. The pair will need an entire working day to drag this sloped garden in the Stuttgart suburb of Fellbach out of hibernation. Klaus has been looking after the splendid grounds for more than 20 years. During a quick chat on the owner's doorstep, we learn that she appreciates his landscaping work greatly. And she adores Aladdin. "These two together can brighten up the grayest day," she praises her hard-working gardeners.

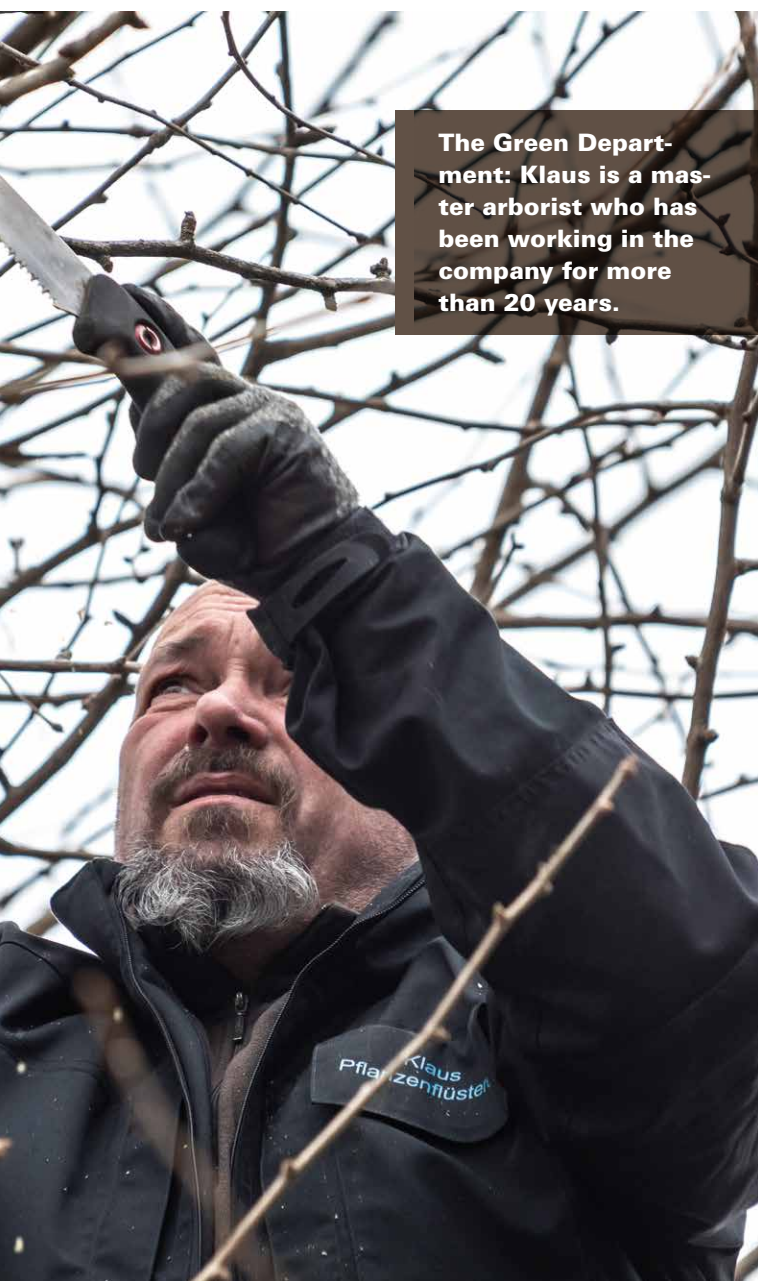
TRANSPLANTING SEEDLINGS, ACQUIRING CITIZENSHIP

Besides "Aladdin", Alige has another nickname: "Mister Sunshine". But where did "Aladdin" come from? "I've always been called that. It's easier to pronounce, for Africans as well as Germans," he jokes. Having come to Germany as a refugee seven years ago, he initially trained as an ornamental horticulturist, spending day after day transplanting seedlings. The 26-year-old soon became frustrated with the repetitive work, but his situation kept him coming back to the greenhouse. "If I hadn't completed the training, I would have been deported right away," he explains. He finished his two-year course and applied for an apprenticeship with Rigon & Lenk. "I was lucky, and now I'm very happy," he says.

Klaus's nickname is "the Plant Whisperer". He is like a search engine when it comes to gardening: ask him about any plant and he will tell you its correct Latin name. Even though he used to be quite a lazy trainee in his younger years – before he developed a strategy and began to memorize the Latin terms using mnemonic stories and similes. That is exactly how he teaches his trainees today. "At some point, they all started calling me the Plant Whisperer," he recalls. To show everyone that he and Aladdin belong together, both have a label saying "Plant Whisperer" on the breast pockets of their work jackets.

Aladdin hopes to continue working with Klaus for a long time. After all, they've become very close friends. He repeatedly emphasizes how grateful he is for everything he's learned from Klaus. When we ask him about Klaus's favorite plant, he takes a minute to think. "It's definitely not taxus," he exclaims and casts an expectant glance at Klaus. But his boss gives nothing away. Aladdin keeps guessing. Palm trees? Roses? It's got to be something that blooms. I can't be yew. "Of course it's taxus," Klaus shouts. Both laugh. "I've got a good boss," Aladdin says. Sounds like a fairytale. And we all need a few of those nowadays.

Text
Inge Fuchs
Photos
Hanno Meier



The Green Department: Klaus is a master arborist who has been working in the company for more than 20 years.

Meet the Plant Whisperers in our video:



A D V E N T U R E

AN OLD FIRE ENGINE FORGING NEW PATHS

One dream, two letters, two numbers: LF16. The fire engine with its in-built pump spent much of the 70s and 80s on the front line of firefighting missions. Natascha Müller and Flo Kandsperger decided to give the old Iveco a new life – and you won't believe what they've turned it into. Eight square meters of mobile living space perched atop the old truck chassis. An elegant design equipped with incredible functions – all self-made, of course. After a long break caused by the Covid pandemic, Natascha and Flo finally set off on their big trip last fall. Their stories are incredible enough to make anyone dream – not just firefighters.





Their fire engine is as old as they are. In the middle of the Covid pandemic, Natascha Müller and Flo Kandsperger started converting the old LF16 into a mobile home. They gutted the dated Iveco truck down to its leaf springs, turned the original driver's cab from a nine-seater into a four-seater and renovated the vehicle completely. The empty container that became the camper shell was supplied by a Polish manufacturer, everything else is home-made, from the kitchen unit with its air-sprung closing mechanism, oven and induction cooker to the three-m² photovoltaic plant on the roof. A swivel-mounted 42-inch LED TV overlooks the comfortable double bed. The shower cabin is equipped with a urine-diverting dry toilet. In the modern dining area, large windows offer panoramic views of the outside world. Futuristic light switches dim the indirect lighting at night. The entire interior looks as though it was made by an expensive design studio. Everything is of the highest quality, and the vehicle has been raring to go on its first trip for months, but the couple's departure was delayed by the pandemic.

A ONE-HOUR DRIVE

Finally: September 12, 2021, Natascha's thirtieth birthday. "We drove our truck to my birthday party and headed out immediately after the celebrations," she laughs. After an hour's drive, a lie-in started to look like the more attractive option. After all, the ferry from Rostock to Trelleborg was booked. "The adventure started at the port," Flo recalls. "We joined the queue of caravans with our LF16,

towering above all the other vehicles." But staff soon called the live-in fire engine out of the queue, ordering its passengers to wait until everyone else had entered. As time goes by, all free space around the truck gradually disappears. Natascha and Flo fold their mirrors in. Only a couple of centimeters separate them from the walls. "They basically lifted the ramp and carried us up into the ferry on it," the two caravan adventurers remember as they proudly show us their photos of Scandinavia.

Life on the road, plain and simple. "You can put the Iveco on any natural parking space and spend the night." Sweden's freedom to roam ("allmannsrätt") is unique in the world. There is only one golden rule when it comes to nature in Scandinavia: don't disturb anything, don't destroy anything. Apart from that, anyone – be they a local or a tourist – can spend time in nature to their heart's content, and this includes private lands. This "everyman's right" dates back to the Middle Ages, and it is sacrosanct to the Swedes. But beware! Do not dare to break the one golden rule. When it comes to protecting their beautiful nature and keeping it pristine, the Scandis are unforgiving.

Heading inland to the north, far beyond the Arctic Circle, and then back down along the Gulf of Finland, the LF16 successfully racked up its first miles. Its owners spent nights by crystal-clear lakes, river and coasts, hiked across moorlands and mountains, crossed birch forests, discovered waterfalls and explored the Swedish wilderness. "We soon found out how important good boots are," Natasha smiles.

Text

Hanno Meier

Photos

Hanno Meier
Natascha Müller



THE TRUCK SETS THE PACE

When Natascha and Flo bought the LF16, it only had 25,000 kilometers on the clock. It had spent more time being serviced than being driven, as the vehicle was originally designed for short routes. "That was no issue at all," Flo fondly recalls the 6,000-kilometer trip. "The truck was as reliable and robust as a tractor."


The caravanning newbies made sure to plan the interior of their camper shell with simplicity in mind: everything is easily accessible for maintenance purposes. Flo installed sensors in sensitive areas. He is a true tinkerer in the best sense of the word. When a short damaged the solar-powered induction cooker before their trip and the manufacturers dragged their heels providing feedback, he impatiently opened the stovetop himself. "The issue was completely obvious," the trained goldsmith says with a disarming nonchalance. There's no problem this thirty-year-old cannot solve.

The standard gasket on the boiler looked a bit dubious to him, so he had bespoke cutting ring fittings made – they are normally used for hydraulic pipes.

During the fire truck's maiden voyage, perfectionist Flo repeatedly took issue with the flexible rubber tubes of the water supply, as his water detectors noisily roused the couple out of their sleep. "They seemed like the best solution at the time," he says in retrospect, but the temperature differences kept expanding and shrinking the tubes. This allowed a few drops of water to leak out, which triggered the alarm in turn. Since returning from Scandinavia, he has converted the whole system: "stainless-steel pipes, press fittings, it's a done thing," Flo rattles off. The couple are ready for their next adventure and, perhaps, the next caravan conversion of an old fire engine. After all, there are many who would like a bespoke LF16 like theirs. They attracted many admiring glances on their trip, and their first order is pretty much in the bag.

More pictures
from LF16:



A woman in black athletic wear stands next to a fire truck. The background features a cobblestone roof and the side of the truck. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

D U T Y

PROVE YOUR WORTH TO YOURSELF AND THE WORLD

A woman among men? Can't work. At least that's what the team of the Prenzlauer Berg fire department believed for a whole decade. Until Meghann entered the scene a year and a half ago. They even actively recruited her for being such a perfect fit. "We're a pack, a family," she tells me today as we go on a tour of Berlin together.





The fire station at Prenzlauer Berg was built on Oderberger Straße in 1883

Text & Photos
Inge Fuchs

NO WOMEN ALLOWED

We start in Meghann's "safe space," the historical fire station at Prenzlauer Berg. There are a few twin bedrooms next to the common area and the dining hall on the second floor. Meghann walks to her locker and opens the door. She proudly presents the inside of the shelf unit: a motivational wall of photographs showing Meghann's friends and family. On the opposite side of the room, a single bed with a bare mattress. This is where the firefighter rests between operations. But there's usually little time for rest until the next alarm sounds. She shares her room with a colleague. Today, four women work in this former men's domain. Her early concerns have evaporated into thin air since she started the job.

The fire station is a listed building and cannot be modified, so you won't find a fire pole here. Its red doors have long since become too narrow for modern fire engines. Whenever the company comes back from a mission, Meghann and her colleagues get out and fold the wing mirrors in. The driver painstakingly reverses into the red-brick building with just a few inches separating the vehicle from the wall. Meghann and her teammates guide him to the end of the hall. "Everyone helps you out, so you're never alone," she explains.

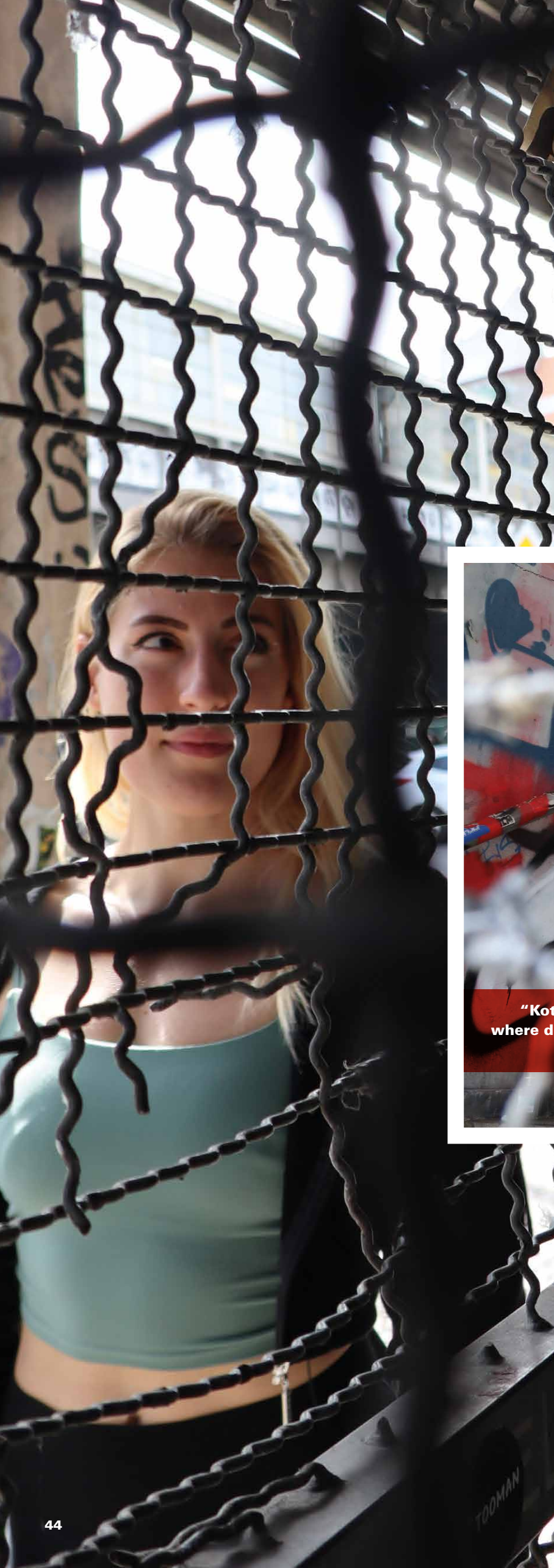


Blond hair, black eyeliner, leggings and a crop top. A duffel bag draped over her shoulder with mate bottles clanking inside. Meghann unzips her hoodie and peels herself out of it. Her body is toned; tattoos of mandalas, peacock feathers and a sun adorn her right upper arm. On her lower arm, she's had her motto inked: *They expect you to have your best day on their worst day*. "People call us because they hope to be saved. That is my motivation to give more than a hundred per cent every time," the 26-year-old explains.

She knows very well that her appearance is a divisive issue, but she has learned to own her looks and her values. Things were different when she was in her teens. Meghann has always been physically stronger than others in her class, and her schoolmates reacted by bullying and teasing her. "Some of the children were really mean to me," she says. Fascinated with the big red trucks, she joined the fire cadets – a strange bunch to some but an accepting retreat to Meghann, who was finally able to make use of her strength.

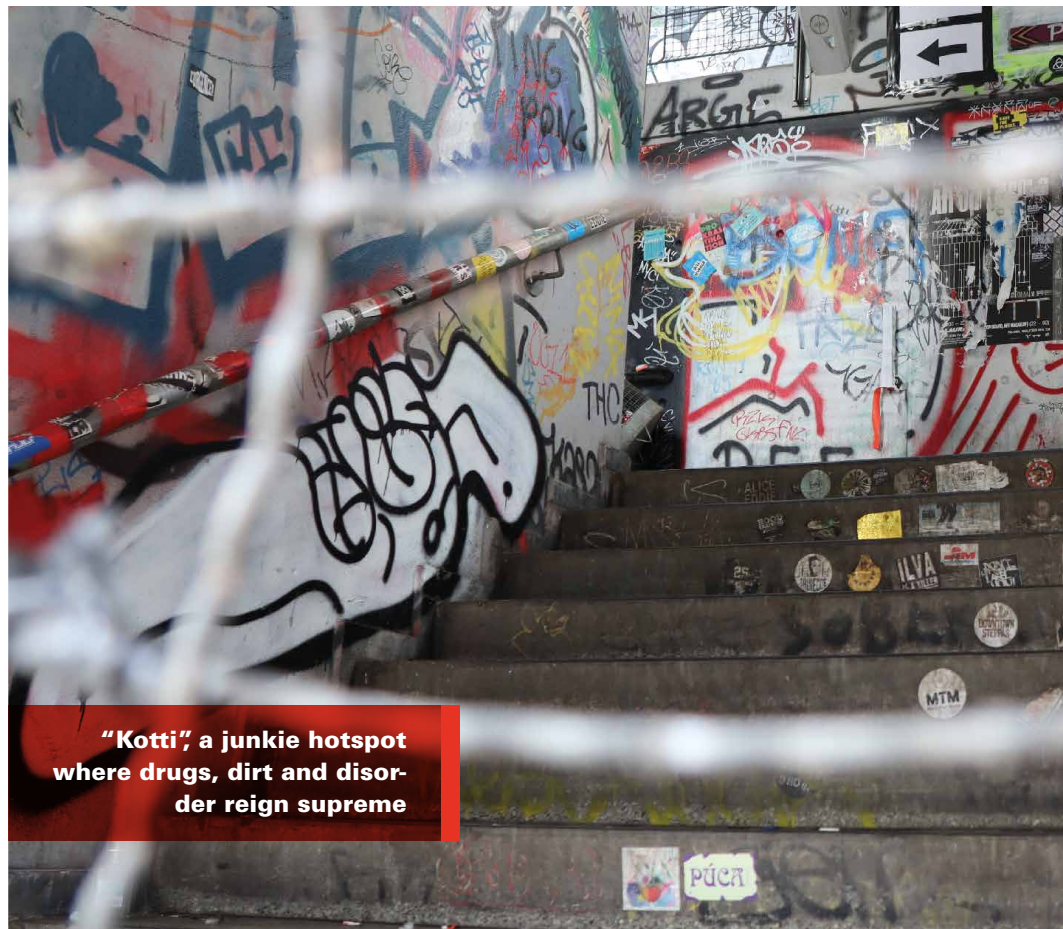
A lot has changed over the years, but the fire department will always be her safe space. We leave the station and head towards the subway. Next stop: Kottbusser Tor.





A BAD TRIP

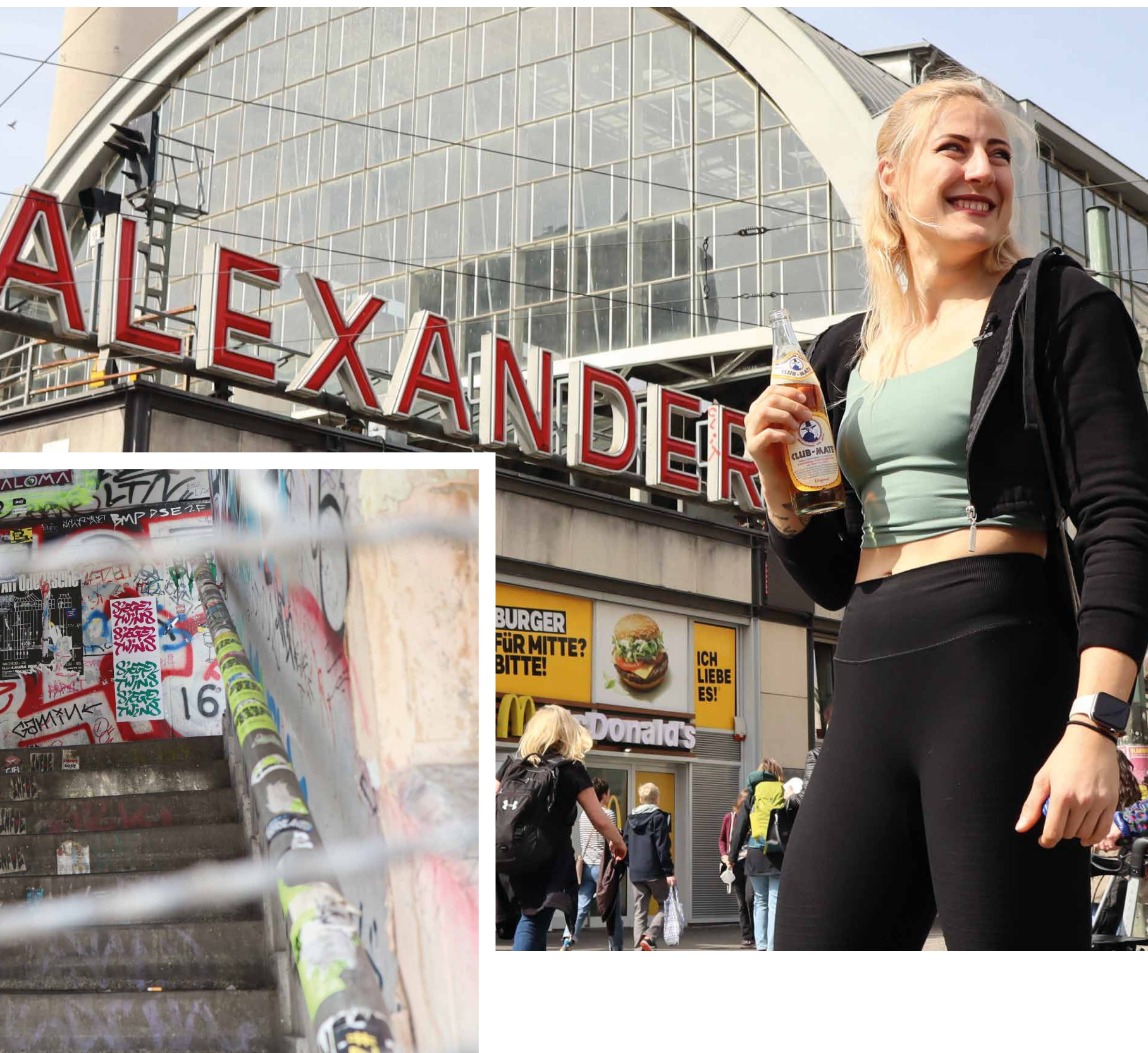
The stairs to the subway station are littered with needles. A stench of urine and human feces hangs in the air. There's a man on the ground: a short while ago, he was shooting up heroin. Now, he seems close to death. Some passers-by have dialed the emergency services but quickly left the scene. Meghann arrives in an ambulance, accompanied by a paramedic. It's her first experience with an addict. The paramedic injects the man with an antidote, but when the patient realizes that his savior just ruined his trip, he freaks out and attacks the two with his fists. More junkies are gathering at the bottom of the stairs and blocking the exit. It is only with help from the police that Meghann and her colleagues manage to escape.



**"Kotti", a junkie hotspot
where drugs, dirt and disorder
reign supreme**

Today, two years after the incident, the former meeting spot for Berlin's junkies is barricaded with corrugated mesh, steel chains and padlocks. Meghann can still hear the screams resonate in the stairway. She looks at the concrete steps. "A wretched place," she blurts out. Her stature, her appearance, the fact that a woman is calling the shots – many people, especially men, still feel offended by it all. "I've had someone spit in my face before," she tells us. Insults and pushes are increasingly frequent occurrences.

Three minutes – that's how long Meghann gives every patient and herself. Three minutes to figure out whether someone really needs help. "It doesn't matter where you're from, what you look like." Three minutes of respect. Three minutes that can save a life.



TOURISTS EVERYWHERE

We're on the subway. A woman's voice calls out the next stop: Alexanderplatz. Meghann gestures at the door. We're getting off here. The sun beats down on us, people and trains zip past us. The 'Alex' is not one of Meghann's favorite places, and she tries to avoid it both in her personal and professional life. Too many tourists, not enough Berlin. "These people hate it when we drive past with our lights and sirens on," she comments. The Berlin spirit is sorely amiss here: live and let live.

"Anyway, it's time for a cold bottle of mate," she decides. We head to the nearest *späti* kiosk and pay more than five euros. Tourist central. Back to the fire station, then. Meghann's shift is about to start.

All her experiences, positive and negative, have brought Meghann here and made her exactly who she is today. She treasures the good memories and discards the bad ones after reflecting on them. Her conclusion: "Giving it your all every day is well worth it." What used to get her bullied at school has become a source of pure motivation.

When men approach her at the gym these days, it's usually to ask her: "How can I look like you? How do I get as strong as you?" It's the greatest form of appreciation for the young woman. At work, the muscles she trains at the gym are hidden inside a uniform. Once, a patient patronizingly asked: "Are you going to be able to carry me down the stairs?" Meghann smirked as she lifted him up.

Join us on a trip
through Berlin:





W O R K

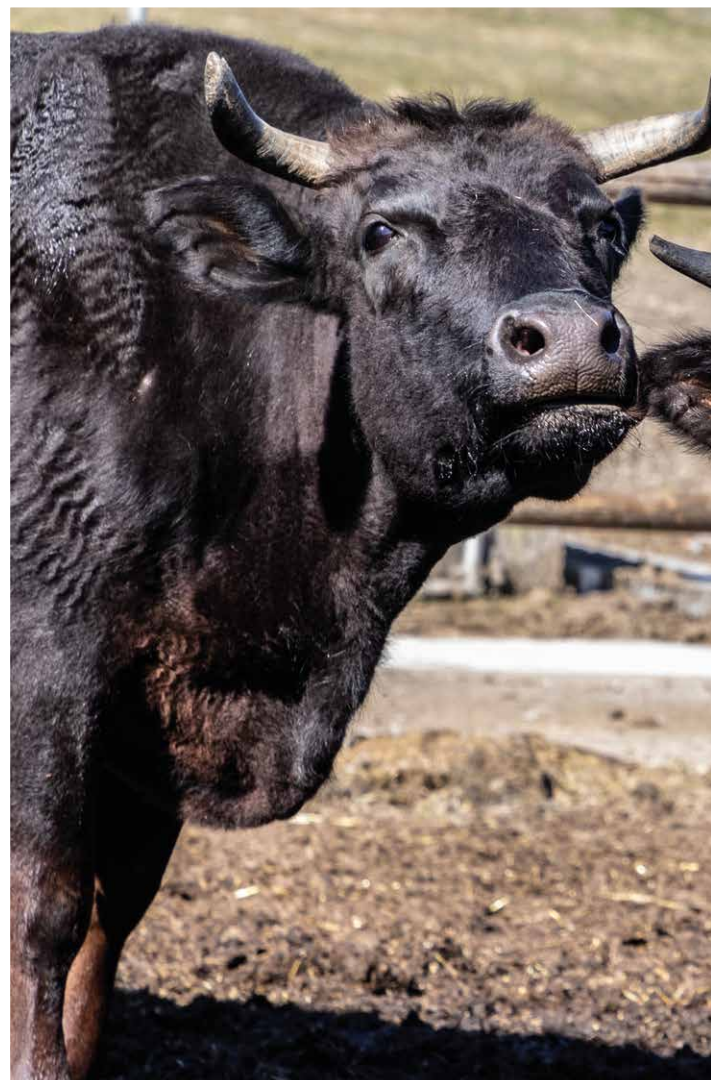
THE PERFECT STEAK

Searing a cut of meat for three minutes on each side does not a perfect steak make. "There's more to it than that," Luc-ki Maurer says. To him, there are three commandments that must be obeyed to create a quality steak: good breeding, good butchery, good preparation. It also takes genuine respect for life. Thankfully, he is not above offering a few tricks for improving your searing and grilling results.

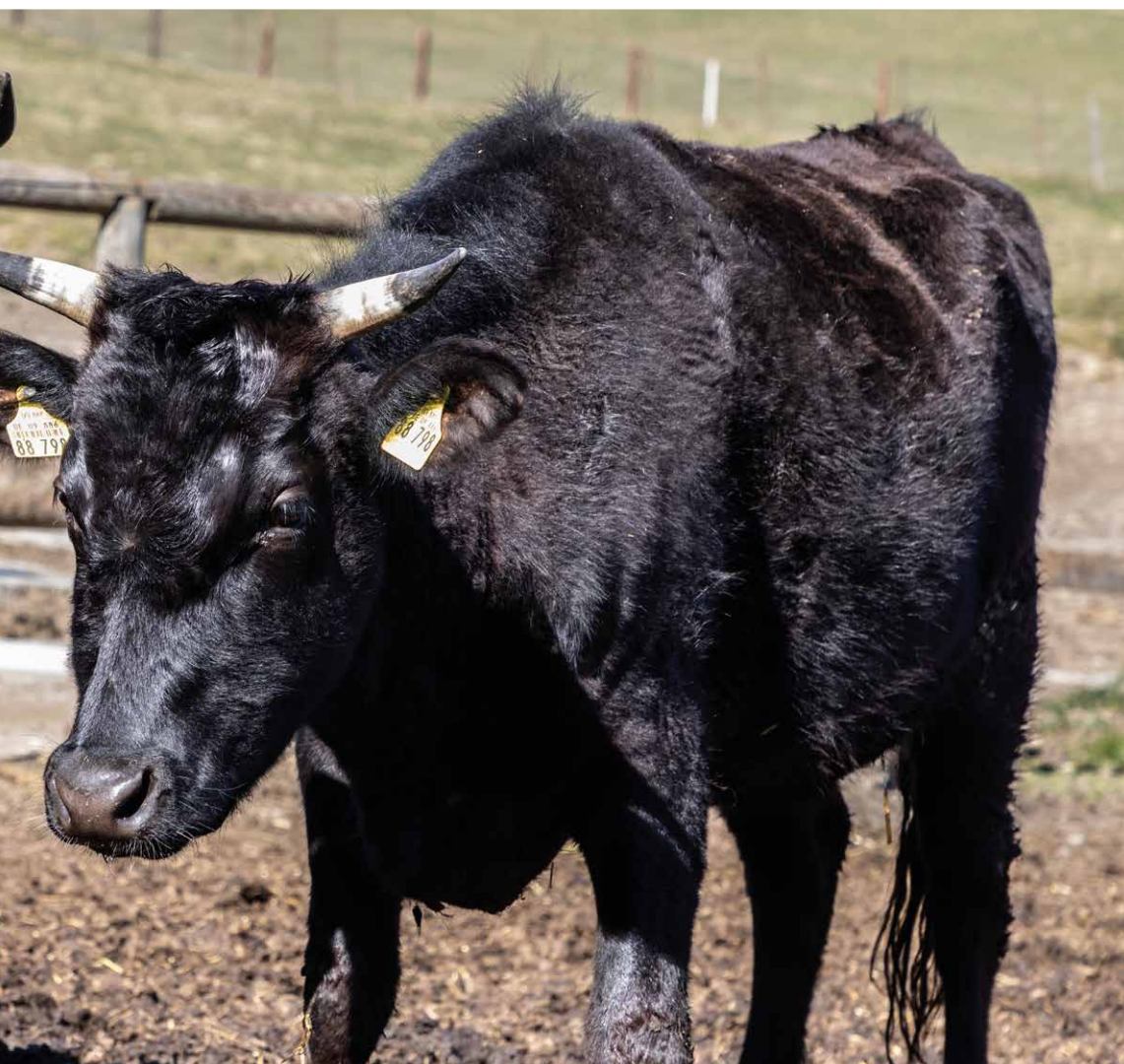
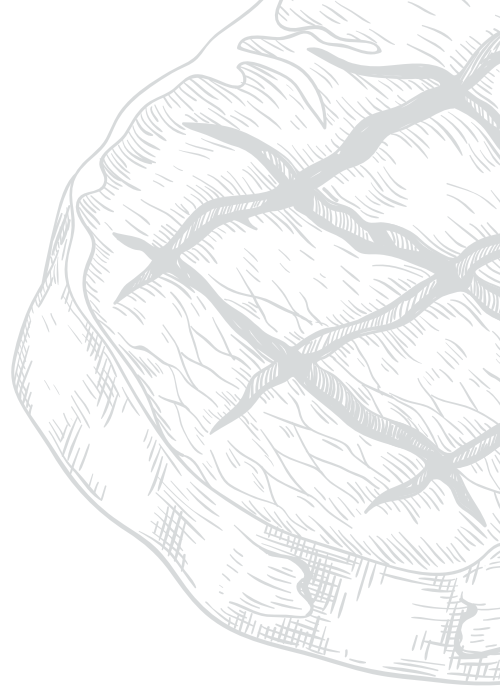




TV chef Lucki Maurer, reverentially called “The Pope of Meat” for his knowledgeable books on all things meat.



Lucki Maurer isn't just adept at cooking steaks, he breeds the animals they come from. What's more, he doesn't just use the fillet cuts. His guiding principle is: "from nose to tail." Many a guest and cooking student has marveled at the miracles he conjures up from allegedly inferior cuts.



**MEAT IS ABOUT
RESPECT AND A
GENUINE
APPRECIATION
FOR LIFE**

He doesn't like the term "Landwirt," which roughly translates to "agriculturist." "I'm a farmer. A farmer from the Bavarian Forest," he says. The word suits Lucki, who is as authentic as the lush meadows on the doorstep of his home in Schergengrub and the Wagyu cattle happily grazing there. To Lucki Maurer, the farmer, "cattle breeding is not about making a product. It is a symbiosis between animals, nature and humans." On his environmentally conscious estate, Wagyu cattle, Angus cattle and crossbreeds of the two spend all year on the pastures. It is a pure grassland farm with a suckler herd. The animals live the happiest life imaginable:

"We don't dehorn our animals, we don't do embryo transfers, we don't give them any preventive antibiotics, we don't feed them genetically modified feed," the son of an innkeeping family from the Bavarian Forest explains. His parents operate a four-star hotel in the region. At Schergengrub, every animal remains on the farm from its birth until its slaughter. Handling every single step himself is important to Lucki.

GENUINE RESPECT FOR LIFE

We're in the "Stoi," the former pigsty of the family-run farm, which Lucki inherited from his late grandfather. For

two decades, Lucki has been teaching eager students about meat, barbecues and the nose-to-tail principle in his cooking classes. There is one question he hears again and again: "Hey, Lucki, how do I make the perfect steak?" If he were able to say it all in a single sentence, "we wouldn't be spending the whole day doing a cooking class, we'd be seasoning a slab of meat, searing it on both sides and cooking it to the perfect core temperature," as he always responds. But the perfect steak can't be reduced to taking the temperature of the pan and picking the best T-bone.

How long to sear it? It's up to you! Some like it medium, others rare. That's what the core temperature is for: 130 degrees for medium rare, 136 to 140 degrees for medium, 147 to 150 degrees for medium well – you can look it all up. A popular trick is to add a sprinkle of sugar to your salt rub, the basic mixture used for seasoning the meat quite some time before cooking it. When the sugar caramelizes, it releases additional roasting flavors. The salt dehydrates the meat. Sounds a bit like a fast-tracked dry-aging process, doesn't it? In a way, it is: the result is, quite simply, better meat.

No matter whether you are cooking a tomahawk, porterhouse, T-bone, club steak, flat iron, flank, striploin, chuck roll or any of the other succulent cuts from different parts

of the animal. Lucki swears by the ribeye cap, the removed and rolled-up outer muscle of the ribeye steak, which he calls “the very best piece of meat on a cow.”

To find a complete answer to the question about the perfect steak, however, we have to go back a lot further. Lucki likes to use a metaphor that occurred to him a while ago: a cattle farm is like the gearbox in a vehicle, where many little cogwheels work together in unison. Every single aspect needs to be just right for that perfect cut of meat to land on your plate in the end: the rearing method, the breeds, their genetics, feed, castration, age and sex, the slaughtering and butchering process, the storage and maturing of the meat and, of course, its preparation.

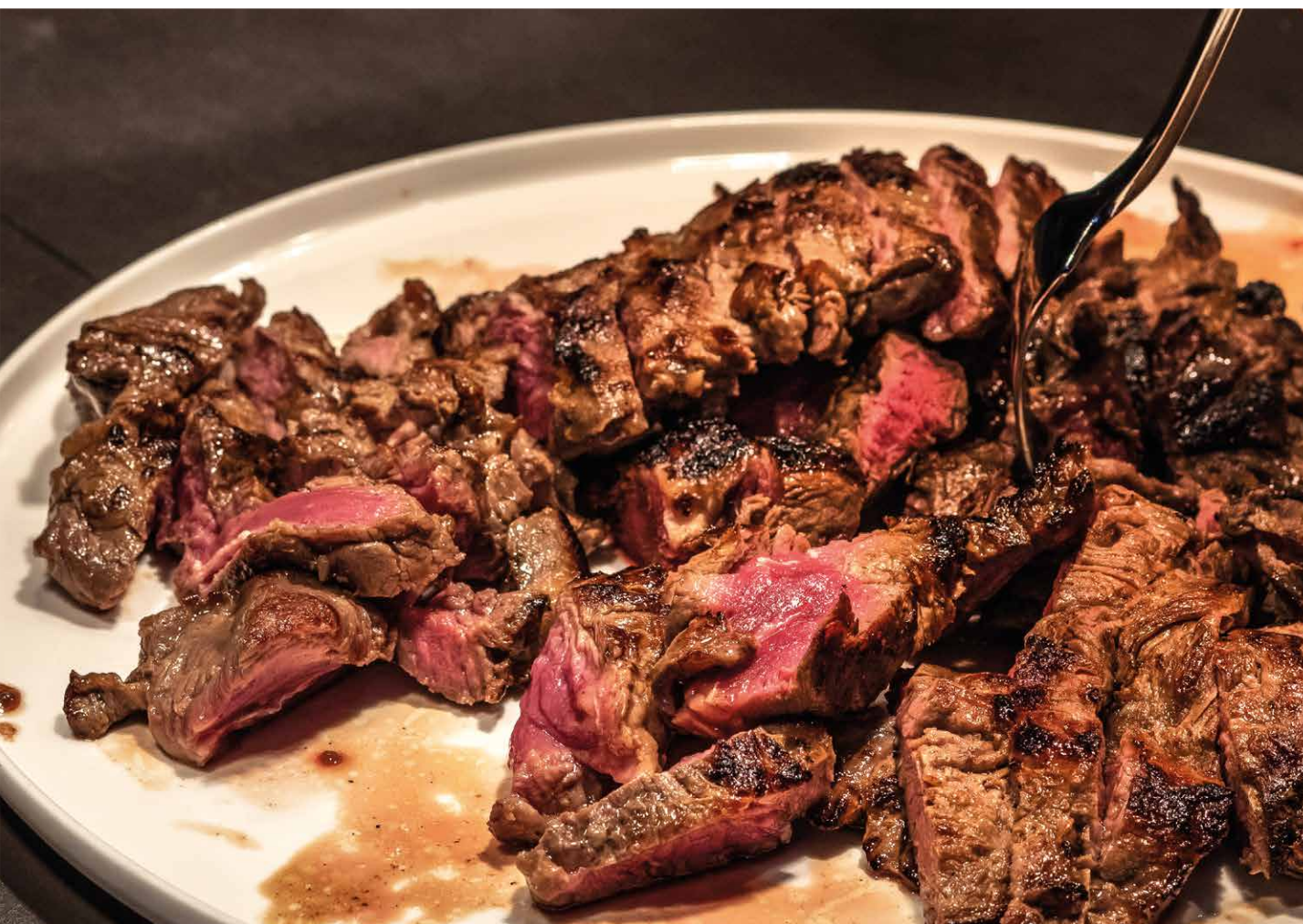
Lucki likes to think of his meat as a whole food rather than a product. And he doesn't care for clichés, either: he loves

filter coffee, Toast Hawaii and isn't above adding a splash of Maggi liquid seasoning to his beef stew.

With the legendary Jolly Roger Cooking Gang, founded by the award-winning celebrity chef Stefan Marquard, he got to know the wild side of cooking – together, they have cooked for 1,500 people at the SPD party conference and, on another occasion, for Metallica! But Lucki's respectful approach to food is entirely of his own making. The farmer, who has been named the “best newcomer ever” in the top-100 ranking of German gastronomy professionals, draws his beliefs from the life he experiences every day in his stables and on his pastures.

“I'd rather have a really good steak once a week than a daily dinner of sub-par meat that was created with profits, rather than life, in mind.”





RECIPE

RIBEYE ROAST

Basic recipe for Lucki's DP Rub

(rub = a basic seasoning for grilled meat, consisting of salt, sugar and various herbs and spices)

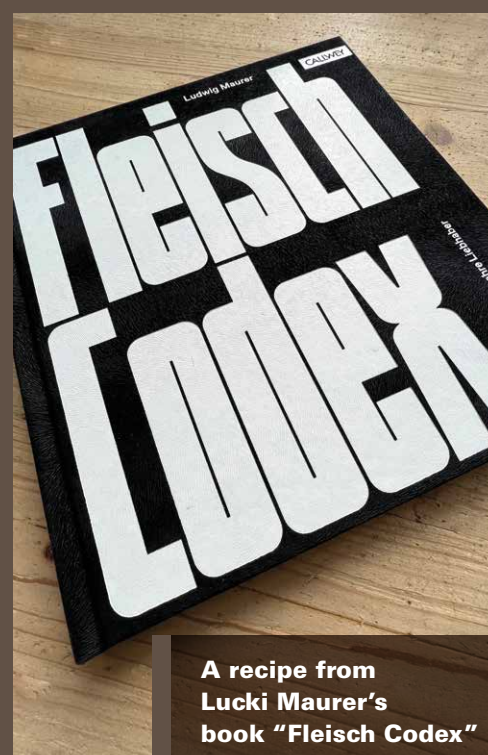
Ingredients for Lucki's rub:

1/4 cup of powdered garlic
1/4 cup of powdered onion
1 tbsp of dried thyme
1/2 cup of brown sugar
1/2 cup of coarse sea salt
1/4 cup of coarse black pepper

Ingredients for the ribeye roast:

1 bone-in prime rib (around 2.5 kg)
4 tbsp DP rub
4 sprigs of fresh thyme
4 sprigs of fresh rosemary
70 g butter
1 garlic clove

Coat the prime rib with the DP rub and leave it to sit for about 30 minutes. Grill the meat at 230°F, indirectly and with the lid closed, for two hours. When the meat reaches a core temperature of 133°F, remove it from the grill and place the thyme and rosemary on top of it. Tie the steak up with butcher's twine and pan-sear it in melted butter and the smashed garlic clove.



A recipe from Lucki Maurer's book "Fleisch Codex"



DUTY **MIXED** EMOTIONS

In early 2020, when the Covid pandemic seemed as far away as the Cape of Good Hope is from the imperial palace of the Habsburg dynasty, Daniel Knogler was interning as a paramedic in Cape Town. The excellently trained local emergency personnel left a lasting impression on the Viennese doctor. Now, in 2022, the thirty-year-old is back at the southern tip of the African continent for another year – this time, in pandemic conditions and with a brand-new team.





A FIRST RESPONDER ON TOUR

Has the coronavirus changed the situation? “Not in terms of the calls we get,” Daniel explains, “except when it comes to masks.” South Africans, he says, are extremely disciplined in wearing them, even though the virus is absolutely everywhere. Be it on duty or in daily life, even the smallest store has an attendant at the door splashing sanitizer on the hands of everyone who seeks entrance. “If you don’t open your hands, you won’t get in,” the Austrian continues. “No noses are poking out of masks anywhere.”

Cape Town’s emergency care practitioners (ECPs) face tough situations. Every day, they deal with gunshot wounds, stab wounds and severe traumas following fights or car crashes. “There was a thirteen-year-old with a gunshot wound to the head...,” Daniel recalls. “We were the first responders, so we were able to administer the general anesthesia. Three days later, the boy was dead. These things stay with you.”

MASS-CASUALTY INCIDENT

Of course, there are always bad apples, he says. This goes for his profession, too. Some emergency responders base their sense of importance on the number of intubations they perform. One of his colleagues on the streets of Cape Town genuinely impressed him with her exemplary empathy, however: the scene was a full frontal collision in Blouberg, around the corner from the world-class surfing beach. An almost full coach had hit a car, 29 people injured, three dead. “Sometimes, being there for a patient on the worst day of their life and giving them back some sense of inner peace by providing good care is more important than simply ramming a tube down their throat,” she later explained to him.

She also told him a story about Uber, the taxi app. In South Africa, the police virtually never stop cars to perform a breathalyzer test, and the locals are rather cavalier about driving drunk. This often leads to accidents with injuries that are barely imaginable from a European perspective. When Uber came to Cape Town, the number of accidents under the influence of alcohol notably fell. “That’s the good part,” Daniel says. The downside was competition with the established taxi drivers, some of whom are members of criminal organizations. “It’s not unusual for them to ambush and shoot Uber drivers.” Some townships have become completely off limits for Uber drivers. Incredible. “It’s usually already too late when we arrive to such a scene.”

One time, when the emergency responders were called to an apartment whose owner had had a heart attack, their intubation and reanimation efforts fell flat. “After trying for fifteen minutes, we had to abort – with all the family watching,” Daniel remembers. Once the death certificate had been issued and the paramedics were packing up their equipment, the relatives broke into rhythmic chanting, clapping their hands. “To me, it was an unfamiliar way of coping with grief, completely different to our culture,” Daniel describes the scene. “But there was something captivatingly beautiful about it.”

Text
Hanno Meier

Photos
Daniel Knogler



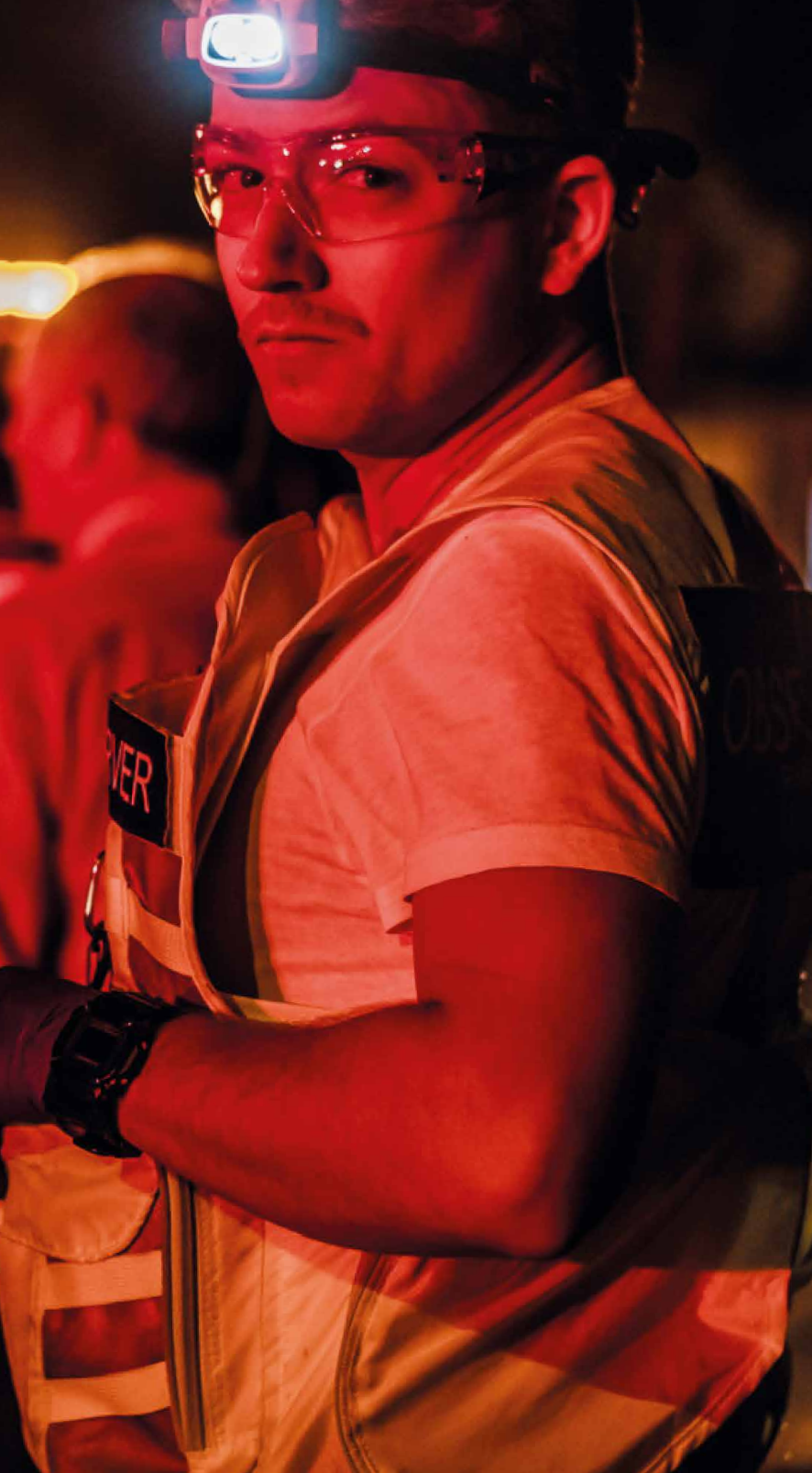
“There are districts of Cape Town that ambulances and single responders would never enter without a police escort,” Daniel Knogler tells us after his first stint in South Africa.

The team take a short break at a gas station. Most are open around the clock, offering small bars “serving genuinely good coffee,” as Daniel tells us with more than a little appreciation. Back in Vienna, he really misses the nightly pick-me-up. Recalling one particular coffee break, he continues: “We’d just got the first sip of cappuccino in when a call came in. Two “red patients” with multiple gunshot wounds to the chest. Daniel and his Austrian colleague, who had studied medicine in Graz and accompanied him to South Africa, were the first to arrive on the scene along with the ECP. Having provided first aid, assessed the situation, administered medication and inserted a chest tube, the ambulance arrives. A bench that normally seats the ECPs inside the vehicle is converted into a fully functional stretcher. Transporting two patients in a highly critical condition in an ambulance and showing up unannounced in a shock room with them is completely normal in Cape Town. “Unimaginable back home,” Daniel comments, visibly impressed. He points out another significant difference: instead of using the NACA score, a system for assessing the se-

verity of an injury or illness that is widely used in Europe, patients in the South African metropolis are color-coded. Red: acute threat to life Orange: possible threat to life Yellow: inpatient treatment. Green: mild injury or illness Blue: deceased.

MANHOLES AND THE SKILLS LAB

All these things are taught in the Department of Emergency Medicine of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, the main training institution for emergency doctors at the Cape. On campus, there are deep manholes for rope rescue training, large pools for practicing water rescue, and a special Skills Lab that can realistically simulate any kind of scenario. Not only are ECPs taught about pre-clinical medicine, i.e., first-response care on the site of an accident, they also learn to handle emergencies at hospitals. The Department’s graduates are highly qualified medical practitioners whose training has prepared them for virtually any scenario. It is a level of education “that many European countries would be well advised



to emulate," Daniel enthuses. "Quite a few of our own emergency doctors could take a leaf out of the South African ECPs' book."

AN INTERNSHIP IN CAPE TOWN

When Daniel submitted his request for leave, Cape Town still was on emergency level 6, the highest possible level of alert. Things had calmed down markedly by the time he arrived to start his internship. Despite the lowered alert level, Daniel cannot help but notice the Capetonians' "remarkable discipline" when it comes to pandemic safety. Again, the four weeks spent looking over his South African colleagues' shoulders left him with lasting impressions – and no infection. But only two weeks after his return to Vienna, during his first foray into the city's nightlife, the virus finally caught up with him. For nearly a whole week, he had a fever of almost 104°F. Covid can get you anywhere. In that respect, Daniel comments with a smirk, Vienna can be more dangerous than Cape Town if you aren't careful.



Sightseeing off duty:
Daniel takes in the
views of the ocean





T R E N D S

THE POWER IN YOUR VEINS

Text & Photos
Hanno Meier

"Blood is a juice of the rarest quality," Goethe once wrote. Magnus Hirschfeld could not agree more. "An analysis of my blood gives me crucial insights into where I'm at, what I can achieve physically," says the man with countless titles and countless certificates collected over the course of his education.

But Magnus is not talking about a complete blood count of the kind your doctor might perform. "That gives you the basic data but nothing more," he explains. The naturopath from Seesen wants more: information about his tissue hormones, his overall hormone status, everything down to the exact vitamins and micronutrients coursing through his veins. In the past few years, the state of analytics has evolved in quantum leaps.

Rhüden, a district of Seesen: the entire hallway and all seven treatment rooms of Magnus Hirschfeld's clinic are covered in certificates. The naturopath also works as a physiotherapist and teaches physical therapy; his specialization is pain relief through acupuncture. Also a qualified osteopath, he even offers traditional Chinese medicine.

"I'm not quite satisfied yet – there'll be more," he says. Through Shaolin Coaching seminars, he has gained deep insights and come to realize: you cannot healthily compete in high-performance sports without replenishing your minerals and vitamins. Denn: If you train too much and replenish too little, your body may develop a deficit that is hard to treat. His advice: "You need to see past your own nose."

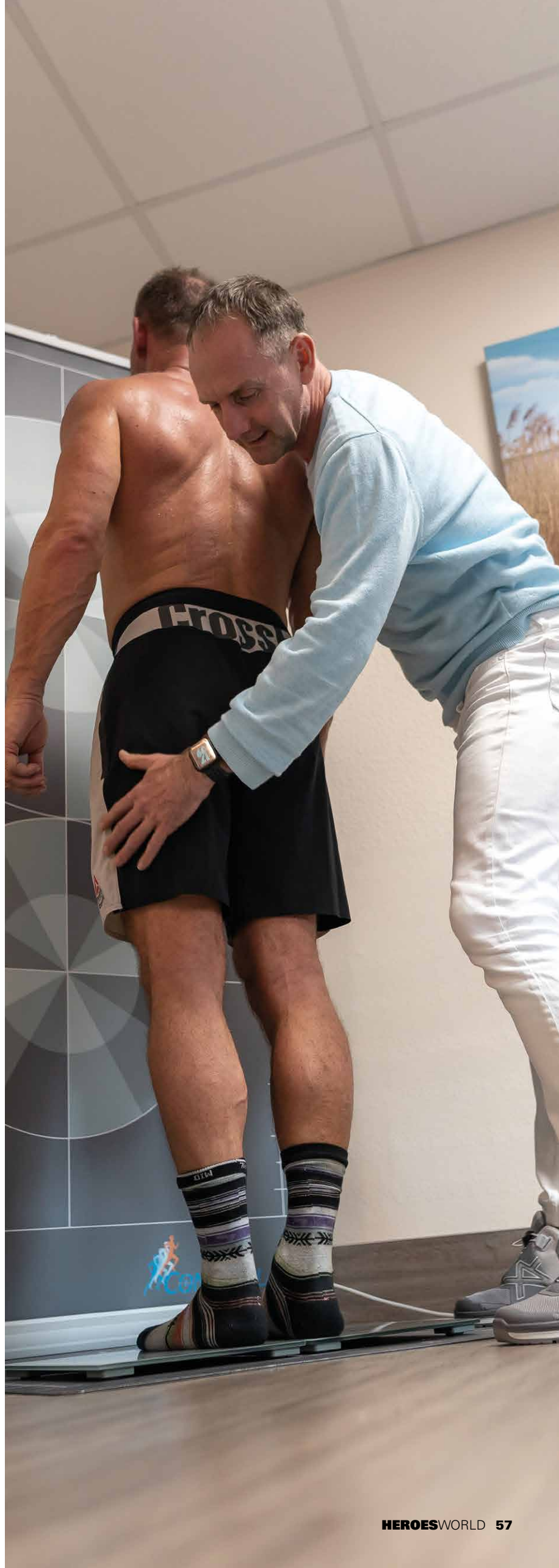
In his view, there are two conditions that absolutely must be met for anyone to achieve extreme athletic feats. "You must be physically well, meaning that your blood work must be good, and you need mental support."

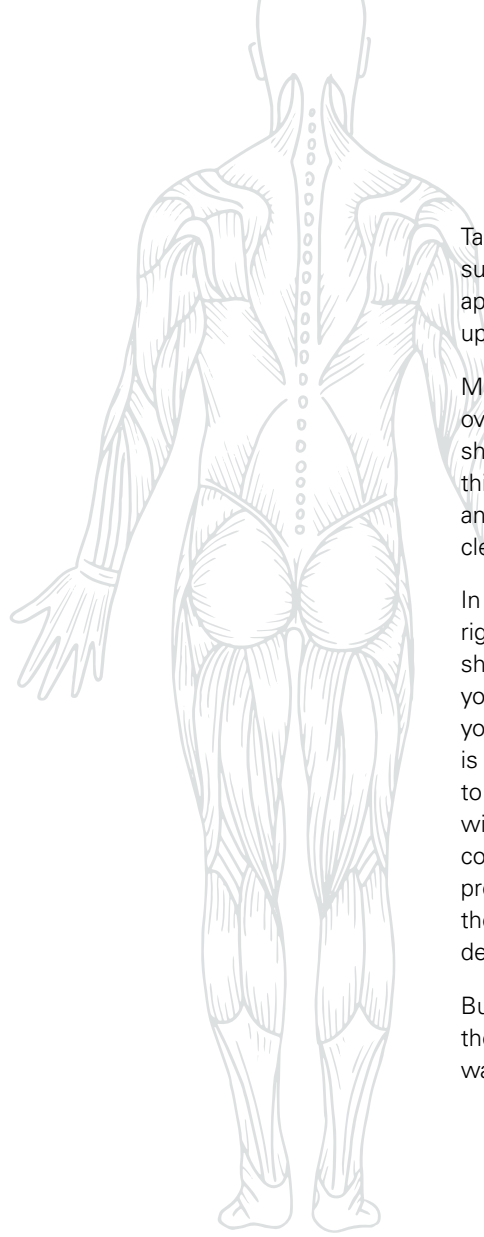
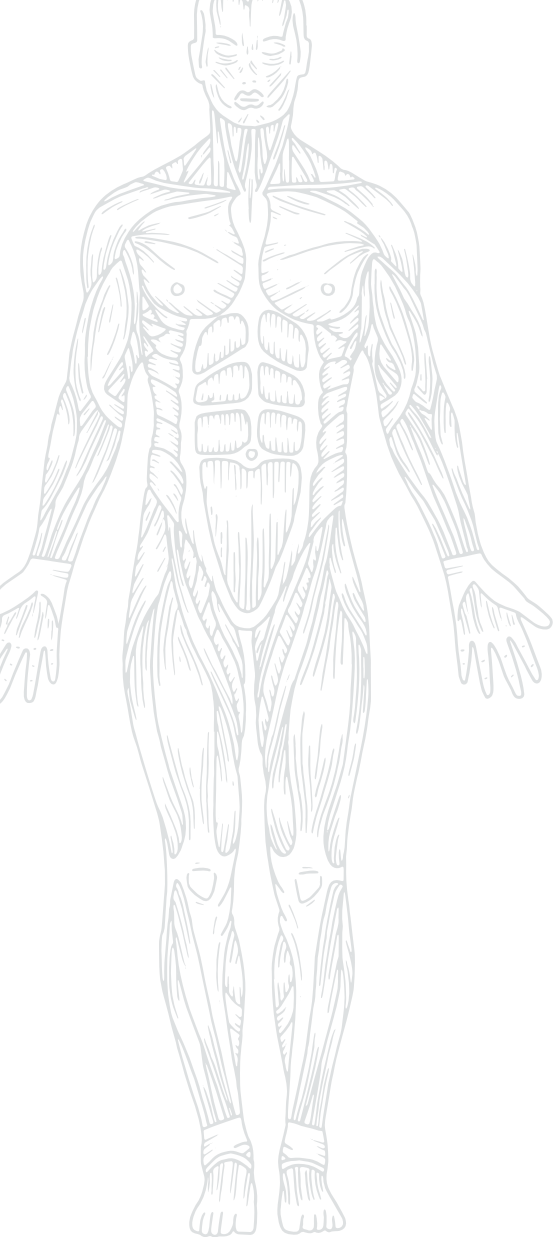
To Hirschfeld, getting several consecutive nights of good sleep is essential before any endurance event. So is avoiding stress: "Your serotonin levels need to be good in the daytime, too, because low stress levels lead to healthy levels of feel-good hormones.

And your brain needs the serotonin to produce melatonin, which helps you sleep well at night," he explains. Melatonin, the sleep hormone, is extremely important to our brain. It is one of the most important antioxidants available to us, as it lowers our blood pressure. "Once it enters a cell, it says: sleep!"

Magnus Hirschfeld further points out that a sensible approach to sport is key. "If I notice that it's getting too much for me, I'm out right away." He recalls the day his wife ordered him to take a time-out when he was attempting to spend 48 hours on the treadmill with Gerd Müller, carrying his full firefighting gear. "It wasn't going to work. My life is too stressful for that sort of thing, what with the clinic and all," Magnus admits. When he was younger, he was one of Germany's fastest FireFit athletes. Today, skipping two nights of sleep would leave him "completely out of whack for two weeks".

To perform, you need to drink enough, keep an eye on your metabolism, and supplement with a few correctly dosed vitamins and, if necessary, amino acids, That definitely helps, Magnus assures.





Taping can help, too. "You can do that, it's a good way of supporting your musculoskeletal system," the physiotherapist and chiropractor explains. But when the body builds up too much acid, taping won't do much good.

Magnus offers us another few tips: "Make sure you don't overheat. The pelvis must be in sync. The joints and spine should work without blockages. But," he continues – and this is where the circle closes: "If you have problems with any particular organ, they will be reflected in your muscles.

In that case, you have to make sure that you've got the right equipment." Another piece of advice he likes to share with "his" athletes: your clothes mustn't bother you. Lightweight, well-fitting shoes are optimal. Once you're done, never forget to regenerate. A balanced diet is as essential on the day after the race as a massage to relieve your muscles. "Breathe! Drink plenty of fluids with minerals." There are certain regenerative infusions containing vitamin B, vitamin C and amino acids. These preparations are used in high-performance sports to help the organs detoxify faster. Ultimately, this is a personal decision.

But never forget: "All parts of your body belong together, they are in a symbiotic relationship with each other. Always pay attention to your whole body!"





KEEP EXPLORING

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