

AB-SOLUTELY EFFICIENT

Ted Lawler found getting ripped was as much about the time away from the gym



Ted Lawler began pumping iron as a teenager in high school in the late 1980s — long before it was cool or universally accepted as part of a healthy lifestyle.

“People would kinda snicker at us and think, ‘You guys are doing something that’s unhealthy. Why don’t you go run with the cross-country team?’ It was actually honestly viewed as an unhealthy thing to do,” recalls the 36-year-old Lawler, now a chiselled 200 pounds at five-foot-11.

There were no BOSU balls or Gliding discs back then. Zumba fitness was a mere gleam in a Colombian dancer’s eye.

Terms such as “functional training” and “core training” hadn’t been coined yet.

Leg warmers and headbands were popular fashion accessories among the women who dared to set foot in a health club. Lululemon and Under Armour — staples in today’s en vogue workout wardrobe — wouldn’t be created for another 10 or so years.

And then, circa 1997, Lawler became a full-time personal trainer. That was back when it seemed that only stars famous enough to go by one name — like Oprah and Madonna — had personal trainers.

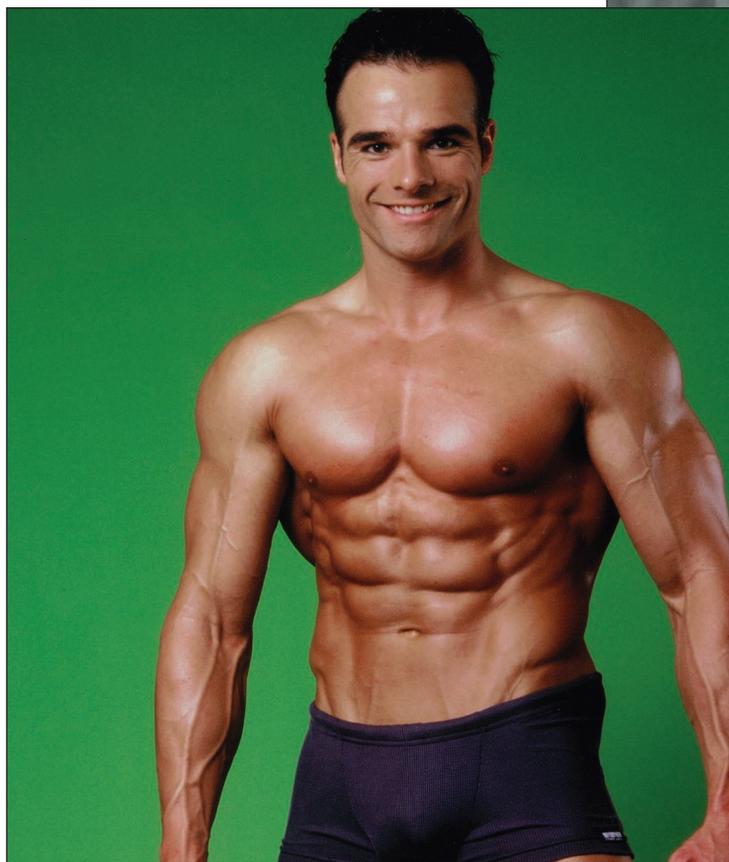
Fast-forward to today. Personal training is now considered a legitimate career choice and the many merits of exercise have been accepted by the masses.

Lawler, who used to make Winnipeg Mayor Sam Katz work up a sweat in the gym, is arguably among the top trainers in western Canada and perhaps the nation.

And with more than 20 years of workout experience, the model and former national-level natural bodybuilder has never felt better himself.

“I’m actually in better shape now at 36 than I was at 26 when I was bodybuilding,” says the Winnipegger.

But much like the fitness industry — now a gazillion-dollar economic juggernaut — Lawler’s own beliefs and techniques have evolved over time.



For instance, he no longer spends hours upon hours in the gym.

He has trimmed his workout duration and bolstered the intensity.

“I used to take an hour and 15 minutes to do my workouts. And then when I cut it down to a lot shorter, I found the results are phenomenally better,” he explains.

Lawler, who studied sports science at the University of Manitoba, weight-trains anywhere from two to five times a week, targeting his whole body in circuit fashion.

“That means I’m doing five or six exercises going from one to the next to the next,” he says. “Or I’ll do two back-to-back. So I’ll do one exercise, then another exercise, back to the first, back to the second ... three or four times through.”

Lawler’s rest time between sets of exercises is next to nil.

“So, I can get a workout done in 20-30 minutes,” he notes, adding he has trained that way for the past eight years.

Lawler also condenses his frequent cardio workouts, varying his

sweaty sessions from 10 to 20 minutes in length.

His cardio is done mostly in intervals. That is, he’ll go hard for a certain amount of time, then back off and then repeat.

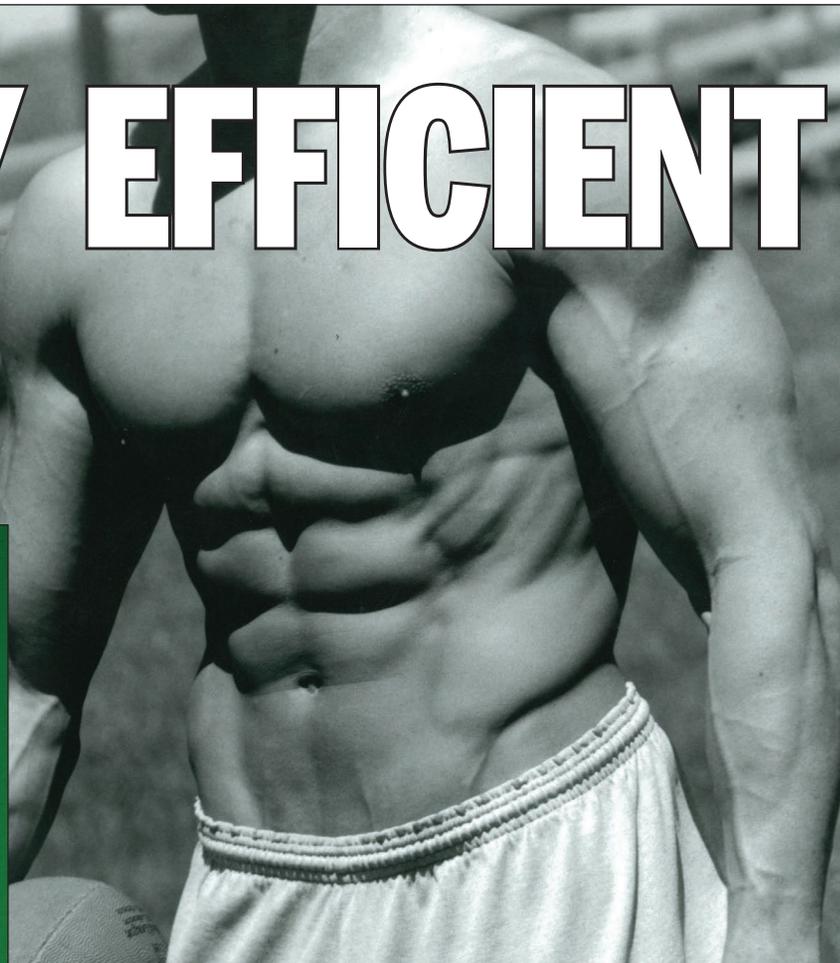
The theory behind interval training, Lawler explains, is backed by research, including a Canadian study done at Montreal’s McGill University.

“When you extend yourself close to a maximum, back off and recover ... the results, as far as increasing your cardiovascular capacity ... it’s not even close,” he adds.

“They (intervals) are many times more effective than doing steady state cardio for half an hour where you go at say the traditional 60% of your maximum heart rate for an extended period of time.

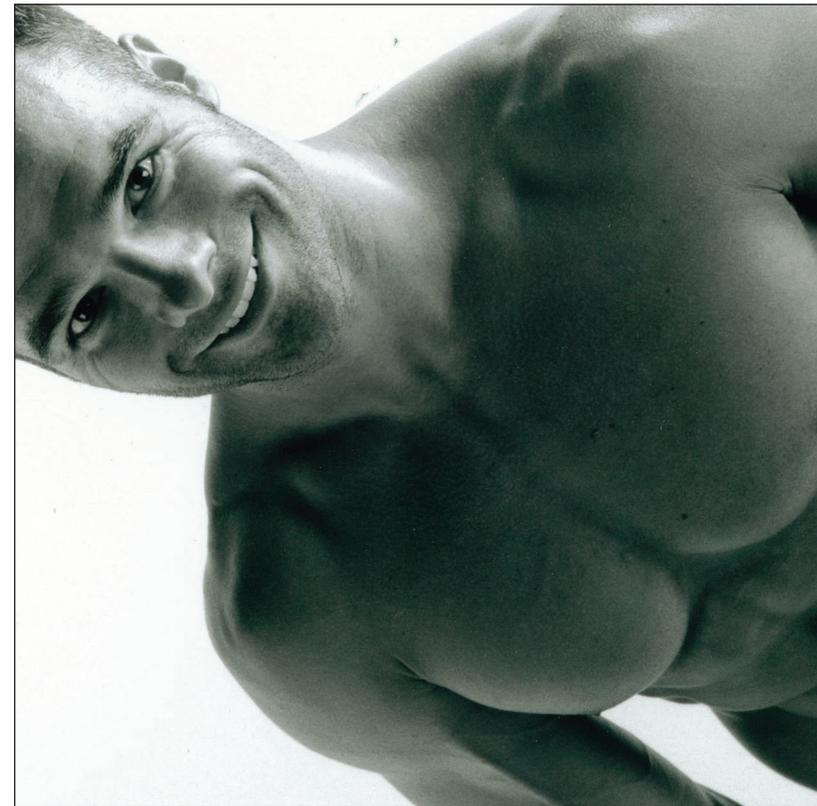
“Once you accustomize yourself to it, it’s very energizing, as opposed to traditional cardio, which can tend to be a bit draining.”

For Lawler, who also eats a clean



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

Winnipegger Ted Lawler has become a world-renowned trainer, but says he learned later in life that short workouts are better for his physique.



diet — with a minimum of processed foods, sugar and other nutritional no-nos, it’s a regimen he has developed through trial and error.

“There’s no one answer,” he says. “Exercise and nutrition are not clear-cut, black-and-white issues where one thing works for everyone or in every situation.”

And so, the evolution continues. But you can bet this pioneering pumper of iron will stay ahead of the curve.

Cary Castagna is a certified personal trainer through Can-Fit-Pro. Visit the Keeping Fit blog at <http://blogs.canoe.ca/keepingfit>