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BIG WOMEN ON CAMPUS

Delts, Quads, Pecs, Mascara, Lipstick

Photograph and interview by LAUREN GREENFIELD

Misty Hyman, Olympic gold medalist, Stanford University, Class of '01:



Lauren Greenfield

Some of Stanford's star swimmers: (from left) Jessie Carr, 20, a junior who swims distance freestyle; Jessica Foschi, 21, a senior and champion distance freestyler; Misty Hyman, 22, who won an Olympic gold medal for the 200-meter butterfly.

I've been a swimmer all of my life. It's a big part of who I am, and the physical attributes that go along with the swimming are definitely something I'm proud of. I've gone through periods when I've felt like, gosh, I'm so big and bulky. There are occasions where I just forget that I am so strong. I definitely get a lot of stares. But you can make it negative attention or you can make it positive attention. You can say, look, this is who I am. This is beautiful.

"I like to get my nails done and I like to dress up and I like to be taken out on dates. There are times when I've been on first dates where the guy isn't sure if he should open the door for me or not. Just because I am such a strong, powerful woman, he thought: Wow, you're so independent, you're so muscular. Do you want to pay for meals? Do you want to drive? The truth is I like to have the door opened for me, and I like to be driven to places and have dinner paid for, though I'd like to do that for him, too, on another occasion. But when I put my goggles on, I mean business, and I know that when I get in that pool, I'm powerful.

"I've struggled with that balance. There have definitely been periods in my life where I said, I really don't have time to do my hair and worry about makeup and that kind of stuff. And what I realize is that in order to be a whole person I need that too. It's great to be powerful and be strong, and I love to sweat and I love to work hard, but I also like to be pretty. And so a lot of us girls, when we have a morning off from swim practice, we actually dress up a little bit more just because it feels good to be feminine.

"Swimmers grow out their leg hair when they're training, because you want as much drag as you can have -- it's like weights on a baseball bat. When we get to our peak meet, we'll get together in groups to shave because we're really excited. We fill up buckets of water, get out our shaving cream, turn on the music, just have fun with it. As I've gotten older though, shaving's become kind of a quiet time to gather my thoughts about the next day.

"I also like to keep my toes pedicured, but from the training with flippers I've gotten a lot of blisters and calluses. The calluses, though, are actually something that I take pride in. They're a symbol of the pain I've gone through and the struggle and the hard work that I've put in. Sometimes I've been on the starting blocks and I look down at my callused feet or my blister scars and I go: Yeah, I put in the work, I know I'm ready to do this.

"I can see differences between our men's team and our women's team. I think with women there's a lot more heart and soul. But women don't have the same kind of power and strength as men. I read some statistic about the superhigh percentage of women who tear their knees because the structure of our legs is not as efficient as men's. For myself, it's hard to come to terms with that fact. So much of being an athlete is pushing yourself to the edge. But I think that that's one of the great things about being a woman: we are more fragile, and we are more delicate, and that makes what we're doing so much more amazing."



Strong-arm tactics: Misty Hyman on the chin-up bar. Her weekly regimen includes two to four hours of swimming a day, plus weight lifting, Pilates and spinning.



After practice, the swimmers usually head to the freshman dorm for a nutritionally significant brunch.



During a western dinner at their dormitory, Jessie Carr flexes for her teammate Jessica Foschi.