

WHO WILL BE THE NEXT FITNESS STAR?

Women's Health Middle East conducted a UAE-wide search for the ultimate personal trainer. We reviewed plenty of submissions before narrowing the field to the talented top five, who all possess the recipe for success: the fit body, the inspiring moves, the dynamic personality and a great philosophy when it comes to living a healthy and active lifestyle. Join our judging panel and help us decide who deserves to be crowned the winner and take home the title!

MEET OUR JUDGING PANEL



Yi-Hwa Hanna

WOMEN'S HEALTH MIDDLE EAST EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

A Taiwanese-Lebanese-American, Yi-Hwa has also worked on leading titles such as Good Housekeeping and VIVA. She loves to keep fit via dancing, swimming, barre workouts, SUP, boxing and weight training.



Andreia Brazier

WBFF PRO WORLD CHAMPION AND PHYSIQUE TV PRESENTER

Born in Brazil, two-time WBFF Pro World Champion Andreia started her personal training career in the UK in 2005. She has her own fitness company in Dubai and hosts her show, "Ask Andreia," on Physique TV.



Andrew Phillips

DIRECTOR, MARKETING AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE, NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY - DAMAN

Andrew has over 20 years of experience in marketing and communications, and has played rugby in his spare time for 13 years.



Steve Johnson

CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER, FITNESS 360

New Zealander Steve's industry experience spans 20 years across the UK, Australasia, Asia and the Middle East. He holds a Post-Grad Degree in Sports Science and has been a professional sportsman.

INGER HOUGHTON

AGE: 29

FROM: NORWAY

A personal trainer and nutritionist, Inger has been living in Dubai since September 2011, and runs her own private gym—Scandinavian Health & Performance—with her husband.

Aha Moment: "I've never really had one specific 'Aha!' moment when it comes to fitness," Inger says, explaining that her life's passion was more of a slow build-up for her. Growing up in Norway, Inger was brought up with the philosophy that a healthy and fit lifestyle was practically a rule—"Everyone trains there!"—and despite the fact that her own family was very active, playing tennis and going skiing on family holidays for instance, she was never really that enthusiastic about a sporty lifestyle as a child. Yet as she began to realise what strength training was doing for her body and mindset, her feelings on training changed so much that she started wanting to help other people realise the same. Her husband—also a fitness enthusiast and trainer—has been, and continues to be an influence on her commitment to a fit and healthy lifestyle today.

Training Style: Inger loves to focus on strength training. "I don't follow a specific plan," she says, although there are certain moves she does every week, including squat lunges and deadlifts. "With these movements and their variations, you can do anything—they're the basis for everything," she says. She also runs intervals on treadmills. When she isn't training she loves going to the beach, and recently tried out climbing, and trampolining at BOUNCE.



Workout Wisdom: Strength training plays a very important role in Inger's workout philosophy: "I believe in building strength in your body rather than breaking it down," she says, stressing the importance of working out to build a strong body that's capable of anything, as opposed to one that's put through the mill with fad diets or trends that might not be suited for you. Similarly, when it comes to food, she also says it's very important to focus on giving your body the nutrients

it needs—and that includes making sure you're actually eating enough to give you the right results. "Give your body the nutrients it's telling you that it needs, but do that with quality, healthy foods! Listen to your body—nutrition and training should come hand in hand," she says, explaining that it's always best when it's tailored to the individual.

SIGNATURE MOVE

BULGARIAN SPLIT SQUAT

Start by standing in a lunge position with the front half of your left foot placed on a chair or bench behind you. Lower yourself down until your opposing knee touches the ground, maintaining a neutral spine with your hips kept fully open. If it's too easy for you, slowly add some free hand weights in until it feels like a challenge. Complete 10 reps on each side.



PAULA NUNES

AGE: 38
FROM: PORTUGAL

A mother of two, Paula has studied sociology and was professionally certified as a PT in 2002, followed by more training in fitness classes and nutrition. She's lived in Dubai for three years.

Aha Moment: From the age of four to 14 years old, Paula was a big fan of rhythmic gymnastics. She's always enjoyed activities related to movement, and while she studied law at university, she was unhappy. Fitness classes had always been a part of her lifestyle, and one day, an exceptionally inspiring teacher helped her realise that *that* was what actually made her happy. Normally a shy person, in big fitness groups she came out of her shell, and teaching came easily to this natural host. These days, Paula teaches group fitness classes to mums in Dubai and really identifies with them as she's a mum herself, with a two-year-old of her own. She hopes to develop her work in the industry more down the line and as her child grows older.

Training Style: Paula is huge advocate of body weight training, believing firmly that it's the base for all of the other work you can do. "I personally love doing weights rather than cardio," she says, continuing, "If you build a strong base then you can do anything else. It affects everything, from your posture to your overall body balance and other activities such as Pilates," she explains. Paula loves teaching body pump classes and other workouts that make you feel more conscious of how your body moves and how strong you are and can be, as you build a stronger base.

Workout Wisdom: "Everything is connected," Paula says, explaining that to her, being fit is not just about achieving a certain level of strength or fitness, but more about committing yourself to a lifestyle and mindset of living healthily. "It's more than just exercise," she says, adding that it's important for people to realise that if you don't follow that philosophy you'll never see real results. "It's a commitment and a choice for a specific lifestyle, to have your body work at its best."

These days, Paula has really been enjoying healthy smoothies and juices, particularly when she gets to add in superfoods such as wheatgrass, spirulina or chia seeds, making it an easy all-in-one for nutrition. She also likes making healthy meals such as oat pancakes with bananas for herself and her family. When she isn't working out, she loves spending time with her family, taking long walks or dancing with her kids—"They have tons of energy!" she says. Their energy always helps to motivate her further: "The birth of my children has made me super happy," she says.

SIGNATURE MOVE SUMO SQUAT + LUNGES

Take a wider stance than your regular squat position, with your toes turned out at an angle and your knees kept wide open. Keep your upper body and core tight and strong, like you're being "zipped up," then bend into a deep squat. Do a side lunge, another sumo squat, and a side lunge on the other side. If you need a challenge, add in some dumbbells. Do 12 or more reps.



HEBA ABDEL GAWAD

AGE: 32
FROM: EGYPT AND SPAIN

Heba is an ex two-time Olympic athlete, NeuroPilates Instructor and Fitness educator. She specialises in targeting the brain and nervous system to get the most out of your body.

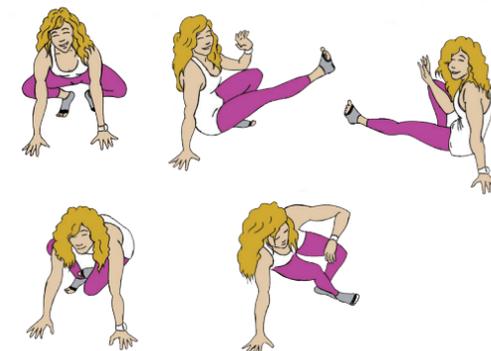
Aha Moment: An active life has always been a huge part of Heba's world. As a child, her swimming coach saw something special in her and her twin sister, and not one to ask many questions when it came to working hard, they both went with the flow. This dedication, commitment and drive for excellence drove her to such expertise that as a half-Spanish, half-Egyptian, she had the honour of representing Egypt in the Olympics—the first time the country was able to qualify—in synchronised swimming, and she took part in the world-renowned event in Sydney in 2000 and Greece in 2004. Yet she hadn't yet found her calling: "As an athlete, I was frustrated that sometimes we'd perform incredibly and other times it was awful—I wanted to know why." This led her to delve into studies of neuroscience, and she discovered how activating certain parts of the brain and stimulating your nervous system in the the right way affects everything from your posture to your movements. Thus, her passion for her speciality—a neurology-fitness combination—was born.

Training Style: Incorporating aspects of everything from gymnastics and parkour to cardio and flow, Heba likes to mix up her training styles constantly in ways that stimulate both body and mind. She strives to find ways to take the "brakes" off the body, and her current passion—an animal workout inspired by the natural movements of creatures in the wild—allows us to work autonomously. She combines eye movements with Pilates techniques and other body-challenging free movements to create a unique workout that works your mind and physique as one.

Workout Wisdom: Heba believes you should never force yourself to train. "Do something that you enjoy, not what you think you have to do to get in shape," she says, insisting that that's the key to long lasting fitness. "At the end of the day, you know your brain and what your body needs more than anyone else—and if you enjoy your training, your body will give you back more in return."

SIGNATURE MOVE APE CROSS-THROUGH

Squat down into a deep squat with your heels lifted and your hands on the ground, with your palms laid flat in front of you. Thread one leg through in front of you with your toes pointing to the other side. Put your weight on your supporting hand, hop to the centre without landing, and then thread the other leg through. Do 20 reps for 5 sets.



Salmon is one of Heba's go-to nutritious foods, but she still feeds her body what it needs, including its cravings: "I love good quality ice cream!" When she isn't working on her unique techniques, she loves staying active by lifting weights at a gym, doing everything from pull-ups and push-ups to squats and deadlifts, and really enjoys working on her body flow and ground flow. These days, Heba's been especially happy since she started teaching her own classes: "You can't beat working for yourself!"

FITNESS BONUS

TATIANA MOSKALENKO

AGE: 34
FROM: RUSSIA

Tatiana is a former sports aerobic competitor, and now a mum of two who still finds time to pursue an active fitness lifestyle. She's lived in Dubai on and off for the past five years.

Aha Moment: With a very sporty family, it's no wonder Tatiana has had a love for sports since her childhood. Despite doing years of ballet as a little girl, she didn't see herself as a ballerina. By the time she was pursuing higher education, she had become such a successful member of her university's aerobics team that she ended up competing on behalf of Russia for six years. "Aside from taking a break to have my children—I have two boys: one is four and a half and the other is two and a half—sports has always been a big part of my life and I've never stopped!"

Training Style: "I love smart and efficient workouts, which at the moment for me is mainly High Intensity Interval Training (HITT). In general, I love to mix it up," Tatiana says. She enjoys everything from dancing to body combat to CXWORX™—a LesMills programme—and really loves to combine her strength and cardio training, rather than focusing on one specific area or one specific type of workout. Above all, she likes to make sure she doesn't take her fitness regime too seriously since she believes it's important to always have fun.

SIGNATURE MOVE CROSS LUNGE + SIDE LUNGE + MOUNTAIN CLIMBER

Crossing your left leg over your right, lunge deep and far to your right side, with both heels touching the ground and your right leg stationary. Return to starting position then repeat on the other side. After several reps, assume push-up position. Keep your body straight, and raise each knee up to your chest and back alternately for several reps.



Workout Wisdom: If Tatiana has a list of rules for achieving serious results, this is it: Exercise at least three times a week, drink a lot of water, eat small portions four or five times a day, try to combine your workouts to feature both strength and cardiovascular benefits, and above all, always remember to enjoy yourself!

When she needs a healthy snack, Tatiana loves having yoghurt and no-sugar-added cereals—both organic and high in quality. When she isn't working out, she's busy being a mum and hanging out with her kids is one of her favourite ways to stay active: They do all sorts of sports together, and lately they've been passionate about kitesurfing every weekend. "Getting the email saying I'd be a finalist made me so incredibly happy—I was with my kids at the time, and we all just started jumping around together!" she says.

SALMA ISMAIL

AGE: 27
FROM: EGYPT

Salma is co-founder of The Body Challenge and a Nike-sponsored athlete, as well as a Nike Training Club trainer. She's been back and forth between Dubai and Canada for four years.

Aha Moment: Salma didn't grow up athletically. She worked in the media industry for years, where she was sat at a desk from 9am-7pm. One day she took a bootcamp led by a cute instructor named Jordan. They fell in love, and after they got married, Salma wound up helping him teach—and even eventually ended up participating in fitness competitions. She became a certified personal trainer because she loves being able to help others discover the joy of a fit and healthy lifestyle like she did: "Once I got a taste of what it was like to feel fit and strong, I knew I wanted to feel like that for the rest of my life," she says.

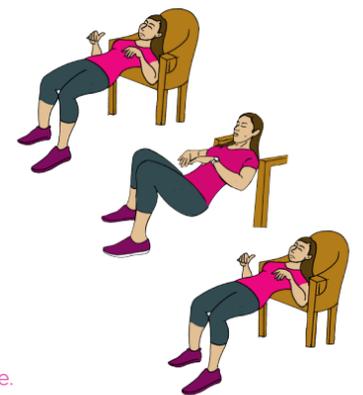
Training Style: Salma trains three times a week, usually doing CrossFit Metalize, with the focus on putting her in competition mode. When it comes to training others, Salma's specialities are body definition and resistance training with a focus on specific areas at a time. "Every person has different goals, so we have to find what's right for them," Salma says. She believes that educating people to figure out what they want to achieve with their body, then developing an understanding about how they can achieve their goals, is the best way to approach each individual: "And then we can take it from there!"

Workout Wisdom: Salma's motto? "Live and dream with no limitations while dreaming big, then dream even bigger!" She believes it's important to always go with how you feel, and listen to what your body, mind and heart are telling you when it comes to your goals and what you want to—and can—achieve.

"I love chocolate!" Salma says, although when she wants a healthy snack, she likes to eat oatmeal with berries. When she's not training, she loves going to the beach and relaxing at home watching movies with her husband—though she's so busy working most of the time she doesn't tend to get a lot of free time! Aside from being super happy when she got the call saying she'd be a finalist, Salma was also thrilled to be named a Nike Training Club trainer—not just for the sponsorship but also for the chance to run her own class.

SIGNATURE MOVE HIP LIFT + BULGARIAN SPLIT SQUAT WITH JUMP

With your shoulders resting on a chair and your knees in a 90° angle, lower your hips down and up. Repeat for several reps. Next, with your left foot placed on the chair behind you, lower yourself into a lunge with your right knee to the ground. Raise up with a jump back to starting position. After 10 reps, repeat on other side.



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Join our judging panel in voting for who YOU think should be The Next Fitness Star by logging on to www.thenextfitnessstar.ae and placing your vote before August 31st, 2014!