

Net gains

How Gavin Rossdale stays in shape while staying out of the gym at all costs

At first glance, Gavin Rossdale may not seem to have much in common with you. The former lead singer of Bush, Rossdale has opened for U2, is recording a second album with his new band, Institute, and is set to appear in his third film, *How to Rob a Bank*. But under the glam, Rossdale's quest for fitness is challenged by the same issues we all face: He's traveling constantly on business; he's trying to prepare for a family (his wife, Gwen Stefani, is due this month); and he finds traditional exercise boring. "That whole mouse-on-a-wheel thing, day in and day out, gets monotonous," he says. Instead, Rossdale has found a way

to turn one of his passions, tennis, into a full-body workout. To compensate for all his traveling, Rossdale has a network of hitting partners around the country, and he's never shy about calling ahead to new clubs to find an opponent. Here's his program for staying fit.

WARM UP RIGHT

Before playing, Rossdale loosens up by jumping rope for 5 to 10 minutes. Then he stretches his shoulders, back, calves, and ankles (see "In the Stretch" below). Tennis is a short-distance explosive game, and being quick to the ball is everything. If you're not warm, it's these quick movements that can blow out a muscle. After stretching, Rossdale rallies from the baseline.

MIX IN EXTRA CARDIO

To boost the aerobic workout factor of tennis, between matches Rossdale mixes in hitting sessions, where rallies may go on for several minutes and breaks are much more sporadic. First, he hits stationary crosscourt forehands and backhands for 5 minutes each; then he repeats both down the line for 5 minutes. Next, he pounds out 10 minutes of ground strokes on the run, always returning to the center line before the next shot. Afterward, he moves to the net for volleys. He builds quickness by hitting a volley immediately followed by an overhead that forces him to wheel backward, followed by a short volley that brings him back to the net. In matches, this instinct to move toward the net while in no-man's land cuts down the angles his opponent can use for a passing shot.

CHALLENGE YOUR MUSCLES

Playing with a variety of opponents, in addition to local pros on the road, forces Rossdale to adapt constantly and improve his game—and his body—to handle different styles of play. One day, he'll be serving and sprinting to the net, working his fast-twitch muscles; another day, his workout will be more cardio-based as he endures brutal baseline rallies. Rossdale enjoys the challenge of change so much that he doesn't even have a favorite surface to play on. "All these destabilizing factors make me a better tennis player," says Rossdale. They also make him a fitter, less stressed-out expectant dad. AMY LEVIN-EPSTEIN

SECRET SOURCES

PROS DON'T USE STANDARD STICKS

Like Andre Agassi, Rossdale takes his rackets, Babolat Aeropro Drives, to Todd Hewish for a custom finish on the factory model. Below is how Hewish tunes Rossdale's rackets.



1 Weights To resolve production inconsistencies, Hewish places a total of 15 to 18 grams of lead tape on the handle and at 3 and 9 o'clock on the frame. It creates more stability and enlarges the sweet spot.

2 Strings The pros use Luxilon Big Banger ALU Power strings for their blend of control and power. Strung tight at 65 pounds for better control.

3 Dampener A rubber shock absorber lowers the risk of tennis elbow.

4 Grip The .44-millimeter-thick Babolat VS Overgrip (white) doesn't widen the handle.

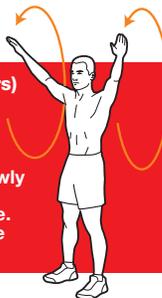
(A balancing starts at \$40; rpnnytennis.com.)

IN THE STRETCH

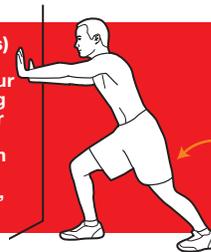
Prevent injury and elevate your game

These stretches are best at preventing tennis injury, says Paul Roetert, Ph.D., biomechanist and managing director of player development for the U.S. Tennis Association.

1 ARM CIRCLE (shoulders) To prevent tendinitis and rotator-cuff tears, rotate your arms in small forward circles. Over the course of 20 seconds, slowly increase the size of the circles until they are large. Stop and repeat, this time circling toward the back.



2 CALF STRETCH (calves) Stand 3 feet from a wall and step forward with your right leg. Without bending your left leg or lifting your left heel, lean forward against the wall to stretch your left calf. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds. Step back, switch legs, and repeat.



3 TORSO ROTATION (lower back) To help prevent lower-back injuries like muscle strains, stretch your lower back by putting your hands on your hips and slowly twisting your torso to the right while keeping your pelvis stationary. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat to the opposite side.



JASON LEE (ILLUSTRATIONS)