

PHOTOS: ANDREA MEAD CROSS AND BRYAN BEDDER/GETTY IMAGES NORTH AMERICA



# PARTING THE **WATER**

Two South Florida Olympic champs train to work their magic again – **Dara Torres** in the pool, **Anna Tunnicliffe** on the sea.

BY ELIZABETH RAHE

# DARA FIRMA

At 45 Olympic hopeful Dara Torres is training shorter, smarter – and sometimes colder

BY ELIZABETH RAHE

**Dara Torres hits the water** and shivers before propelling her long, lean, finely sculpted body down the length of the Coral Springs Aquatic Complex pool. Training for her sixth Olympics berth at age 44, she has braved that first jolt of temperature adjustment thousands upon thousands of times, yet it's still a shock.

"I don't like cold water," she says later at her home in a gated Parkland community.

Given her chill factor, it's surprising to hear that she recently subjected herself to a cryosauna – at 200 degrees below zero – in an effort to boost tissue repair and metabolism.

"Yeah, I was dying," she says.

"What did you have on?" asks her trainer, Anne Tierney.

"Socks," Torres responds, to a burst of laughter from Tierney and fellow trainer Steve Sierra, who are mashing – a type of deep massage – the 12-time Olympic medalist's body with their feet.

Torres was willing to brave the icy blast of liquid nitrogen in the cryosauna for the same reason her days are filled with carefully orchestrated training and recovery, consultation with a team of experts and close attention to how her body performs and feels. It's all for the chance to make the U.S. Olympic team in the 50-meter freestyle in Omaha, Neb., this July and to compete in London in August. She will be 45 – if she makes the team, the oldest Olympic swimmer ever.

Achieving this goal is also the reason she is getting poked, kneaded and stood upon while lying on her dining room floor, next to a playroom dominated by little-girl pink. That's the domain of her daughter, Tessa, in kindergarten class this day, whom Tierney describes as "5 going on 18."

"Oh my lower back," Torres laments, arching in discomfort. "Oh my gosh, from a lot of traveling, sitting on the airplane. Whoa." It's her lone complaint during the 40-minute mashing session, which she says she enjoys. "It's a little bit painful, but I know that they are getting the knots and lactic acid out."

Then Sierra and Tierney, creators of Innovative Body Solutions in Coral Springs, begin bending and rotating her limbs and torso while she resists the movement. Tierney says their resistance stretching, which they call Ki-Hara, develops strength and flexibility throughout the range of motion and aids in recovery after workouts.

Torres has just returned from a weeklong trip that could be a metaphor for her life. It included time with family and friends, a brush with celebrity and a lot of hard work. She traveled to Boston to be with her sister during minor surgery, then to Palm Springs, Calif., for its film festival gala – she tweeted photos of George Clooney and Brad Pitt on stage. Her last stop was Scottsdale, Ariz., for a workup at the American Center for Biological Medicine, an alternative clinic recommended by Canadian elite

fitness coach Andy O'Brien, the guy she credits for her lean strength and rippled abs.

The three-minute cryotherapy treatment was one of several alternative procedures and diagnostic tests Torres underwent at the center in an effort to coax the highest possible performance from her middle-aged body – within Olympic guidelines. To underscore her clean status, she volunteered for enhanced drug testing with the U.S. Doping Agency before the 2008 Olympics. "They just came Wednesday and tested my urine and blood. I welcome it," she says.

Jeff Drobot, a naturopathic doctor and founder of the Scottsdale clinic, says she is "one in a million" to be able to achieve such a high level of success for so long, given the effects of aging – changing hormonal levels, joint wear, increased recovery times. "She is the most motivated person. She doesn't waver from a plan once she has it."

Even on this trip, Torres squeezed in her workouts, including a swim at the Palm Springs Swim Center, reflected in a Twitter post. "Wish they had lent me a pull buoy & kick board instead of [making] me rent it!" she tweeted to more than 200,000 followers.

Back home at the Coral Springs Aquatic Complex pool, Bruno Darzi coaches Torres in her morning workout, consulting with her at lane's end to fine tune her stroke technique. He says she is by far the most dedicated and professional swimmer he has ever worked with. "Everything she does or works on has the same purpose: Swim fast," he says. Darzi tailors her training to her physical status, which she continually communicates to coaches and trainers. "We have to respect her body so we can help her achieve her goals," he says.

Earlier in her swimming career, she didn't concern herself with such matters. A gifted and intensely competitive athlete, she first broke the American record in the 50-freestyle at age 15. She went on to earn 28 NCAA All-American swimming awards while at the University of Florida and set three world records. She also has won a matched set of Olympic hardware – four gold, four silver, four bronze.

In Beijing at age 41 – the oldest female swimmer in Olympic history – Torres collected three silver medals, two for relays. In the individual 50-meter freestyle she set an American record at 24.07, missing gold by only 1/100<sup>th</sup> of a second.

Training for the 2012 Olympics, she has faced a few more hurdles. Her beloved swim coach, Michael Lohberg, who helped guide her to the 2008 Olympics, died last April of a rare blood disorder. In addition to being four years older, Torres has undergone two shoulder surgeries, a hernia operation and the reconstruction of her left knee. The knee still hurts a little, but she asks

PHOTO ANDREA MEAD CROSS



"EVERYTHING SHE DOES OR WORKS ON HAS THE SAME PURPOSE: SWIM FAST."

—Coach Bruno Darzi, Coral Springs Swim Club

## Spoils of speed

Swimming fast has led to a string of endorsements for Dara Torres – McDonald's, Sleep Innovations, HP and Bengay, among others. In addition, she has been a TV commentator, motivational speaker, print model and best-selling author. She told her inspirational story in her first book, *Age is Just a Number* (with Elizabeth Weil, Crown, 2009), and shared her training philosophy and fitness program in *Gold Medal Fitness* (with Billie Fitzpatrick, Crown, 2010).



Olympian Dara Torres trains at the Coral Springs Aquatic Complex

a lot of it. Pointing out her five-inch long scar she says, "I just look at it as a challenge – to overcome that and make the Olympic team after dealing with it."

Dealing with it requires four knee strength-training sessions each week, in addition to her five pool workouts, four weight-training workouts, three Ki-Hara sessions and a couple of massages.

With her busy life of training, business obligations and – above all, she says – taking care of Tessa, time is at a premium. She no longer dates Tessa's father, South Florida reproductive endocrinologist David Hoffman, but they remain close friends, she says. The precocious and strong-willed 5 year old has helped her gain perspective on life and taught her another important lesson: "Pick your battles," she says.

Torres speaks philosophically about the battle she has picked for herself, swimming in her sixth – and, she says, definitely her last – Olympics.

"I'm always trying to push the limits and see what I can do. I am doing less now than four years ago. I'm older and only swimming one event. But I'm still trying to push the line...to see where the line is drawn." ●



Anne Tierney and Steve Sierra perform Ki-Hara resistance stretching exercises with Dara Torres at training camp in Singapore before the 2008 Olympics.

PHOTOS: ANDREA MEAD CROSS AND SUSAN STOCKER



Anna Tunnicliffe, Molly Vandemoer and Debbie Capozzi at the Oct. 2011 Olympic Team Qualifying Regatta off Key Biscayne.



## CATCHING THE WIND

Anna Tunnicliffe sails for gold once more, but this time with a couple of friends

BY ELIZABETH RAHE

**Here's some Olympic trivia:** Name the South Florida woman who won an individual gold medal in the 2008 Games. Unless you're a sailor, you might not know that it's Anna Tunnicliffe of Plantation, for Laser Radial sailing.

Now her sights are set on 2012 gold but in a new Olympic sailing category, women's match racing – two sailboats, with three crew members, in a one-on-one duel. A growing sport, match racing requires precise boat handling, strategic moves and a lawyer's mind to interpret complex rules – and wield them against your opponent.

"I always say it's a chess game on the water," Tunnicliffe says.

Her switch from individual racing in a fleet to team match racing has been no small feat. "For the people who aren't sailors, what she is doing...is akin to a pro pitcher deciding to switch over and becoming a quarterback," said sailing champion JJ Fetter, presenting Tunnicliffe with her third Rolex Yachtswoman of the Year Award for 2010. So far, it's been a winning change. Her team's success recently

helped her earn the Yachtswoman award for 2011, making her the only woman to receive sailing's top honor four years in a row.

Capping the year was Team Tunncliffe's match-racing victory at the ISAF World Sailing Championships in Australia, which secured a berth for the United States in the event at the 2012 Olympics. Whether or not that spot will go to Tunncliffe's team will be determined at the U.S. trials in Weymouth, England, May 4-9.

Although she is at the helm, the 29-year-old sailor always shines the light on her crew, Debbie Capozzi, 31, from New York, and Molly Vandemoer, 32, from California. Indeed, the trio recently received the 2011 Best Team Performance award from the US Sailing Team AlphaGraphics.

"It's usually the skipper that gets all the credit, but honestly it's the crew that deserves it all," Tunncliffe has said. "I just drive the boat. They tell me where to go and pull the sails."

The three teammates, each a champion sailor in her own right, share a strong mutual respect. "The nicest thing is that it's definitely a level playing field. No one is a rock star," Vandemoer says. "Anna brings an incredible amount of drive...and she is driven in a way that pushes you rather than turns you off."

Capozzi shares a similar view, noting that Tunncliffe's push for excellence inspires those around her. "She is the first to offer encouragement when things are not going well or to offer congratulations when somebody has done a good job," she says.

Match racing requires extreme coordination among crew members, the result of many hours of practice and analysis. For this reason, the three sailors and their coach, David Dellenbaugh from Connecticut, moved into a Key Biscayne apartment in January. In addition to time spent sailing and debriefing, they also work to be in top physical condition.

"It's not a regular cruise around the bay. It's quite intense," says Dellenbaugh, a much-decorated sailor and publisher of the racing newsletter *Speed & Smarts*. And no one in the sport is in better shape than Tunncliffe, he says.

Her workouts five or six days a week lend credence to his assessment. In the warehouse-like Cross Fit in Coral Gables, she deadlifts a barbell bearing 180 pounds before tackling the day's drill with the class – repeating sets of 20 dumbbell thrusts, a 100-meter run and 20 single-arm kettlebell swings. The class is set up as a friendly competition, which suits Tunncliffe.

"Anna raises the bar for everyone, and she has an awesome spirit," says Nikki McGowan, a Cross Fit coach. "Everybody's always chasing her – even the male athletes."

After the workout she joins her teammates at the apartment. While cooking breakfast, Tunncliffe speaks about the challenge of match racing and all its complexities. In addition to harnessing the ever-changing elements of wind and waves, match racers use the rules to outsmart their opponents or cause them to earn a penalty. "It's such an in-depth game, I want to know every strategy," she says.

As Tunncliffe sits down to her paleo-diet breakfast of scrambled eggs and spinach, the team discusses sailing plans for the day, interspersed with light conversation, peppered with inside jokes.

"Anna, Molly and I are all very close friends, and that is and has always been the foundation of our team," Capozzi says. She sailed with Tunncliffe at Old Dominion University in Virginia, and they both competed against Vandemoer, who sailed for the University of Hawaii. Together they are known as Team Maclaren for their title sponsor, the British baby stroller company. They also have a half-dozen other sponsors, including 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Racing, which promotes environmentally conscious regattas.

Even with strong financial support, competing at this level requires sacrifice. The women are away from home for about eight months a year. Tunncliffe is fortunate that her husband, sailor Brad Funk, is nearby when they are training in Miami. (The two have coached sailing at the Lauderdale Yacht Club, which was home base for Tunncliffe while training for the 2008 Olympics.)

After breakfast the team members head off to Key Biscayne Yacht Club, where they rig one of the Elliott 6m sailboats stored there for competitors in US Sailing's Rolex Miami OCR Regatta (Jan. 22-28).

It's pushing 80 degrees, and the cerulean sky is littered with wafts of white as they sail out for an afternoon of practice – boat handling, starting, turning and speed drills. Later they meet up with the Dutch team for a few races. As Team Tunncliffe rounds the buoy, the Dutch women hold up a yellow-and-red striped flag, protesting that their opponent did not give them enough room.



Capozzi, Vandemoer and Tunncliffe beat Team Macgregor for the 2011 ISAF world title.



PHOTOS: RICHARD LANGDON/PERTH 2011

PHOTOS: ELIZABETH RAHE



Coach David Dellenbaugh checks the wind, Tunncliffe pumps iron and the team trains off Key Biscayne.



For videos on women's match race sailing and the ISAF World Championships, including an exciting replay of Team Tunncliffe's world title win, visit [www.cityandshore.com](http://www.cityandshore.com).



PHOTO: MICK ANDERSON



Team Tunncliffe races Team Macgregor in the 2012 Miami OCR Regatta.



Dellenbaugh holds up a green flag to deny the penalty.

Dellenbaugh is well qualified to serve as impromptu umpire. He was tactician on the winning yacht for the 1992 America's Cup – the ultimate match race – and he serves on the US Sailing Racing Rules Committee. Today he zips around in a Zodiac boat, offering the sailors feedback on their drills and tossing them food and water bottles (refilled from a larger container). They appear eager for his comments and deliberate in their practice, analyzing each exercise, but they also clearly enjoy one another, chatting and laughing during breaks.

"They are very focused on their goal and the steps to get there," Dellenbaugh says. "They have a good mix of seriousness and fun, which is important for the long run, for the bumps in the road that come along – like when things are said in the heat of the moment."

Later in January they had some tense moments in the quarterfinals of the Miami OCR Regatta. They faced Great Britain's Lucy Macgregor and crew, the team they had narrowly beat in the world finals. Tunncliffe says some critical errors cost them this race.

"It was great, intense and challenging sailing so we are not quite as upset as we thought we would be," she wrote in her blog. "It is never fun to lose, but we sailed well, and are looking forward to the sail-offs tomorrow."

The following day they sailed to a fifth-place finish in a field of 24 teams. It's not the result they had hoped for, but they see it as a learning opportunity. Tunncliffe says the trick is to stay disciplined through the low times and not get overconfident during the highs. There's always the next race, as well as the ultimate goal – Olympic gold in Weymouth. ●