

Robot wars

CAN YOU TRANSFORM AN AVERAGE WOMAN INTO A BADASS RUNNING MACHINE IN UNDER SIX MONTHS? WE PUT **ONLINE EDITOR RHALOU** TO THE TEST

I often find myself first on the list for the more extreme challenges that arrive at the *Women's Running* offices, which is probably how I found myself at The Centre For Health & Human Performance (CHHP) at 76 Harley Street, London, one afternoon.

I was asked to go in for a seemingly straightforward running assessment. But after being greeted by a crack team of experts, eager to measure every follicle of my being, the true intentions of the CHHP team were revealed. Headed up by the inimitable Professor Greg Whyte, they're best known for enabling Eddie Izzard to undergo his mammoth marathon challenge and James Cracknell to become the highest-placed Brit in the Marathon des Sables. So when it comes to sporting achievement, they mean business.

THE SCIENCE BIT

CHHP has the same facilities as those used by elite athletes to determine the best way

of achieving sporting goals, and use CPEX (Cardio-Pulmonary Exercise testing) to collect individualised data. Effectively, this means they record the essential elements of how your whole body responds to exercise and then devise a bespoke training schedule, enabling you to train at your optimum level. They also analyse your biomechanics with precise gait analysis, using a 4,000 frames per second camera. And it's not just aimed at athletes – they also offer training programmes for civilians like myself, to improve overall performance.

GOAL IN SIGHT

In my case, we decided to see if we could transform me into Sarah Connor from *The Terminator*, had she chosen to run marathons instead of fight futuristic robot warriors. As a regular runner with one marathon and several halves under my belt, I'm in pretty good shape, but I have a long way to go before I can bare knuckle fight liquid metal robots. With the ING New York City Marathon in November in my sights and determined to achieve a new PB, this seemed like an obvious goal to work towards. So before I could protest, I'd committed six months of my life to an intensive training programme.

I was then rigged up to a treadmill. As the guys filmed me and took my stats, the intensity of the treadmill increased, until I reached my maximum effort and narrowly avoided falling on my arse. After 20 minutes of terror (I hate treadmills at the best of times, let alone with a mask strapped to my face and a room full of men watching my every move), they were able to estimate my current marathon time.

SYSTEM UPGRADE

The team informed me that interval sessions will boost my system and speed up my running. The rest of the results indicated that the most obvious issue was my posture. The average human head weighs eight pounds. By filming my running style, they ascertained that I was running at an angle with my head bent forwards, and this was slowing down the process considerably. So, by learning to stand tall, I can effectively even out the weight distribution and make better use of my energy.

All that's left to do is train like a ninja for the next few months, with the aim of transforming myself into a robot warrior in time for the marathon. Will I succeed? With an elite team behind me, I have no excuses... 

A running performance consultation at CHHP starts from £250. For more information, visit www.76harleystreet.com

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