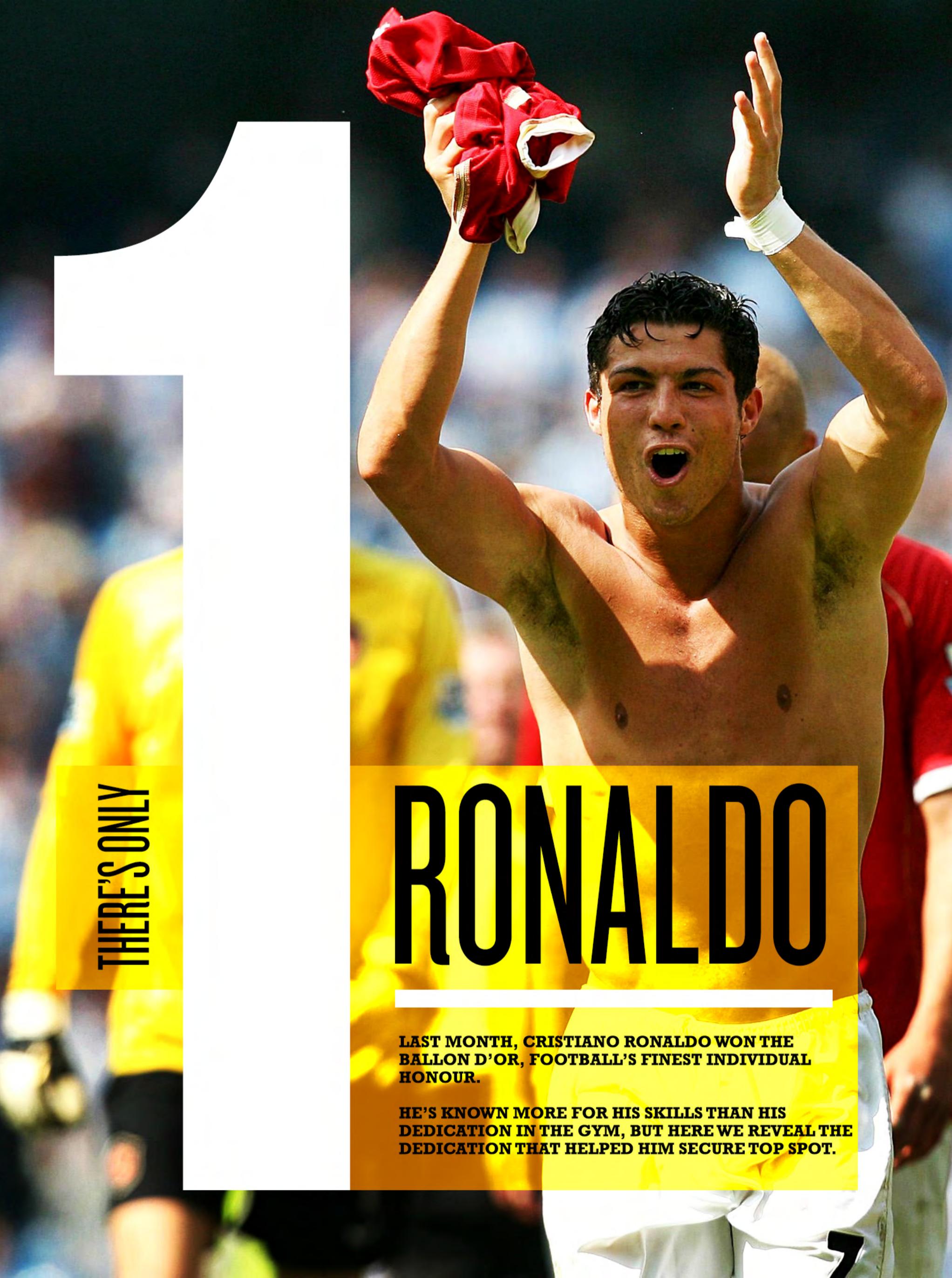


THERE'S ONLY



RONALDO

LAST MONTH, CRISTIANO RONALDO WON THE BALLON D'OR, FOOTBALL'S FINEST INDIVIDUAL HONOUR.

HE'S KNOWN MORE FOR HIS SKILLS THAN HIS DEDICATION IN THE GYM, BUT HERE WE REVEAL THE DEDICATION THAT HELPED HIM SECURE TOP SPOT.

WHAT HAVE CRISTIANO RONALDO & UK POP PUNKSTERS CHUMBAWUMBA GOT IN COMMON?

Not much, you might think, except when you consider the lyrics of the Burnley band's top hit, 'Tubthumping'.

'I get knocked down, but I get up again', goes the most famous line, words that seem tailor-made for the footballer recently named the world's greatest by his peers.

When Cristiano Ronaldo vowed to become "the best player around" in 2004, many scoffed at his declaration.

At the time, they saw him as a fancy Dan with more tricks than substance. As a result, opposing players would give him the customary welcome.

FEATHER WEIGHT TO HEAVY HITTER



THINK BACK TO THE BALLON D'OR WINNER'S MANCHESTER UNITED DEBUT IN 2003. IT TOOK LESS THAN 60 SECONDS FOR A BOLTON WANDERERS DEFENDER TO INTRODUCE THE TRICKY WINGER TO ENGLISH FOOTBALL WITH AN AGRICULTURAL CHALLENGE. IT WAS THE FIRST OF MANY.

The 18-year-old winger had feet faster than Roadrunner and more tricks than Dynamo, but he was repeatedly dumped to the floor.

Far from grow disillusioned, Ronaldo grew more determined and he used opponents' physicality to his advantage. He spent more time on the training pitch in an effort to perfect his array of tricks but perhaps more importantly, he retreated to the gym to build his body strength.

Nine months later, on May 22 2004 (at around 1.44pm to be precise), Ronaldo revealed the fruits of his labour for the first time. Shortly after scoring to give Manchester United the lead in the FA Cup final against Millwall, a game they'd go on to win and Ronaldo secure his first winners' medal in England, Ronaldo took off his shirt to reveal an impressive upper body frame. In under a year, Ronaldo had already started cultivating the physique which is as synonymous as the magic in his boots and now, he's finally the finished article.

PERFECTION

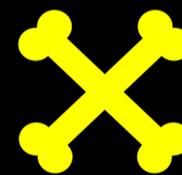


“HE’S THE PERFECT ATHLETE,” SAID ARSENE WENGER, WHO’S ARSENAL SIDE WERE OFTEN ON THE RECEIVING END OF THE PORTUGUESE WINGER’S PACE AND POWER.

When Castrol recently analysed Ronaldo’s body with a series of laboratory tests ([Click here to view](#)) results showed he had just 3 per cent body fat, which is less than your average supermodel. His thigh circumference was almost 62cm, which is only 6cm smaller than Chris Hoy’s Olympic-winning pistons. On a 25m sprint test, he was just .3 seconds behind Spanish 100m champion sprinter Angel David Rodriguez.

What’s more, when Ronaldo jumped (as if heading a football) he climbed 78cm, higher than the average NBA basketball player and with his takeoff force five times his normal body weight, the same an astronaut experiences at takeoff.

BONES & RESILIENCE



SO, JUST HOW DID RONALDO DEVELOP THIS HULK-LIKE APPEARANCE? NOT WITHOUT HARD WORK, OF COURSE. HIS PERFECT BODY WAS CLEARLY CULTIVATED BY HOURS OF GRAFT AT UNITED’S GYM IN CARRINGTON (MORE ON THAT LATER).

But as we all know, the dedication to become fitter and faster is as much mental and physical.

“At 18, Ronaldo already had the personality of an adult,” said Marques de Freitas, Sporting Lisbon’s then representative on Ronaldo’s birthplace of Madeira, talking to Manchester United’s official club magazine in 2004. It was arguably at Lisbon that Ronaldo’s body began to take shape. De Freitas explains how a study was taken of the density of Ronaldo’s bones to evaluate his growth rate. This growth rate was then used to manage how many games Ronaldo played to avoid stifling his growth potential.

De Freitas continued to explain how Ronaldo matured at an early age as a result of a difficulty fitting in when he first moved from Nacional. Ronaldo’s thickset Madeiran accent set him aside from his young peers and he was teased as a result, an experience de Freitas argues “helped form a player with a great deal of resilience.”

THE MANCHESTER UNITED EFFECT



THIS RESILIENCE WOULD COME IN HANDY IN HIS FORMATIVE YEARS IN ENGLAND, WHEN OPPOSING DEFENDERS OFTEN FOUND THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP PACE WAS TO BRING HIM DOWN.

Then United manager Sir Alex Ferguson demanded more protection from referees, but Ronaldo took the matter into his own hands. He focused on becoming fitter, faster and stronger. As well as spending hours with a ball at his feet developing the kind of skills that have left others in his wake, he spent longer developing his physical strength.

“If you are strong, the quality comes naturally,” Ronaldo revealed. “Ronaldo was the greatest trainer I ever worked with,” explains Mike Clegg, United’s former power development coach, on his website seedofspeed.com. Clegg worked at United between 2000 and 2011 and now runs his own gym

in Ashton-Under-Lyne. “He took on a new level of total dedication to his training because he wanted to be the best footballer in the world. “He’d be in the gym with me doing core work, then he’d do activation, then his actual football training. Afterwards, when most had gone home, Cristiano would come back into the gym and do power work for his legs. Then he would go home, eat the right food, swim, sleep, where I’m sure he dreamed about football, and come back in the next morning.” United’s no.7 would endure explosive total body exercises. He’d even strap weights to his ankles to help him perfect his skills. “He did that for five or six years,” says Clegg. “There’s a theory that you need to put ten thousand hours in before you can become great at something, be it football, painting, playing the guitar, anything. Ronaldo did that – and more.”

Not surprisingly, when quizzed more recently about Ronaldo’s training habits following his Ballon d’Or win, Clegg described Ron as the ‘perfect specimen’: “from his height to his natural body type, muscular structure, how much fat he’s got in his system, his endurance capacity, flexibility, power and strength - they are in perfect balance,” said Clegg.

THE BEST OF THE BEST



NOW, WHEN YOU WATCH RONALDO PLAY, YOU CAN SEE WHY HE SPENT SO LONG IN THE GYM.

His speed is matched with incredible strength. His quick feet continue to bamboozle opponents while his low centre of gravity allows him to power past defenders with ease. In short, he’s the complete player, the world best just ten years after he made the prediction himself.

Tubthumping was also no.1. See, not so different after all...