

Golden GIRL



Jessica Ennis-Hill on the long road to Rio, looking forward to retirement and how becoming a mum has changed her life

When the Olympic games came to London four years ago, Jessica Ennis-Hill became the face of the games. With literally the whole country assuming that she would bag a gold in the heptathlon, the pressure on Jessica, now 30, was truly immense. But, the Sheffield-born track star lived up to all of our expectations, bagged the medal and cemented herself as one of the country's best-loved athletes. Three years later – and just nine months after giving birth to her son, Reggie – she went on to win another gold in the Beijing World Championships. But bouncing back that quickly

after pregnancy was nowhere near as easy as Jessica made it look. 'Only my husband [childhood sweetheart Andy Hill] and my family really knew how tough it was,' she admits. This month Jessica will be defending her Olympic title in Rio, but she is first to admit that her priorities have changed since becoming a mum.

Having a baby definitely throws life into perspective. Things that were really important to you before don't really matter any more and you just appreciate a lot more things in different ways. I don't worry about myself as much any more, I just always worry about Reggie and how things may affect him.

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Training for the Rio Olympics this time round is completely different for me because time is so precious now. Before London, I was training twice a day, most days, but now things have changed and it's more about quality training sessions with fewer hours because I don't want to miss out on time with my son. That's my life now and he's what's important to me.

Even everyday moments become special when you have a child. Watching Reggie grow and develop is incredible. It's the really normal things, like seeing him taking his first steps, saying 'Mummy' or giving me a big cuddle, that completely melt my heart.

Reggie's growing up so fast – he's a proper little boy now. He'll sometimes just stand up and lean against the wall with a hand in his pocket like a little cool dude. He's such a character and just wants to make you laugh all the time. He loves running around, jumping and throwing things, so hopefully he will enjoy sport when he gets older, but I don't want to be putting too much pressure on him just yet!

I always knew that I wanted to go back to work after having Reggie, but I've battled with a lot of doubt, too. My mum warned me that as soon as you have a baby, you feel guilty all the time for everything and she's so right. I've definitely had moments where I think, 'Why am I doing this?'. I also didn't know if I was going to be the same athlete, and be able to cope with the training without having much sleep. But my mum and Andy were there to reassure me and put things into perspective.

Parenting is a team effort and you have to support each other. Andy is a hands-on dad and always gets stuck in – they both love having daddy and son days. Even though we are always really busy, we do try to have as much family time together as possible – we take our dog for lots of walks and Reggie loves

swimming, so we take him every week. However, I think it's important for us to have some time to ourselves, too. We'll try to squeeze in a meal out together or meet up with friends every now and then.

Andy is a great sounding board, but I always go to my mum for advice, too. It was my mum who taught me that the key to success is self-belief. In 2008, I had three stress fractures in my foot and missed my first Olympics. It was a tough time and I worried that it could be the end of my career. But all of these things just make you stronger. If you believe in your own talent and abilities, you can do anything.

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I'm excited for Rio, but I'm nervous, too. It's a tough challenge to retain a title and this will hopefully be my last Olympics, so it's one that I want to go out and enjoy. I'm looking forward to that feeling of stepping out on to the track knowing I've trained and prepared, and then there's the buzz of competing. You always get that, but the Olympics is just at such a greater magnitude – it's an amazing feeling!

Reggie will be watching me run and pointing at the TV saying 'Mama'. One day, I'll look back at it with him and say, 'Look what your mum has achieved' and hopefully, he'll be impressed (and not embarrassed!). I want him to grow up to be



Jess takes family life and training for the Olympics all in her stride

ambitious and work hard for things – I'd like him to look back and be proud of me.

*** Jessica Ennis-Hill and her mother Alison Powell are ambassadors for the P&G Thank You Mum campaign in the UK for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. P&G owns household brands such as Pampers, Olay and Venus. For more information about the campaign, just visit supersavvyme.co.uk/tag/rio-2016-olympic-games**

MY BIG LOVES

♥ **SHEFFIELD** is my hometown and close to my heart. I still live there and love that my family do, too, as I can easily get around to see them.

♥ **EYELINER** I like an understated look – fresh and natural. However, I never leave the house without my eyeliner!
♥ **MUM** I really wouldn't have achieved what I've achieved throughout my career without the love and amazing support from my mum.

♥ **SUNDAY ROASTS** I love roast beef with roast potatoes, veg and a glass of red wine. I train so much that it's important I get enough energy and fuel in, so I eat quite a lot.
♥ **MY SON** The best day of my life by far was the day I gave birth to my little boy, Reggie.

Feature Anna Matheson Photography Camera Press