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Photography Piczo
Fashion Andrew Davis

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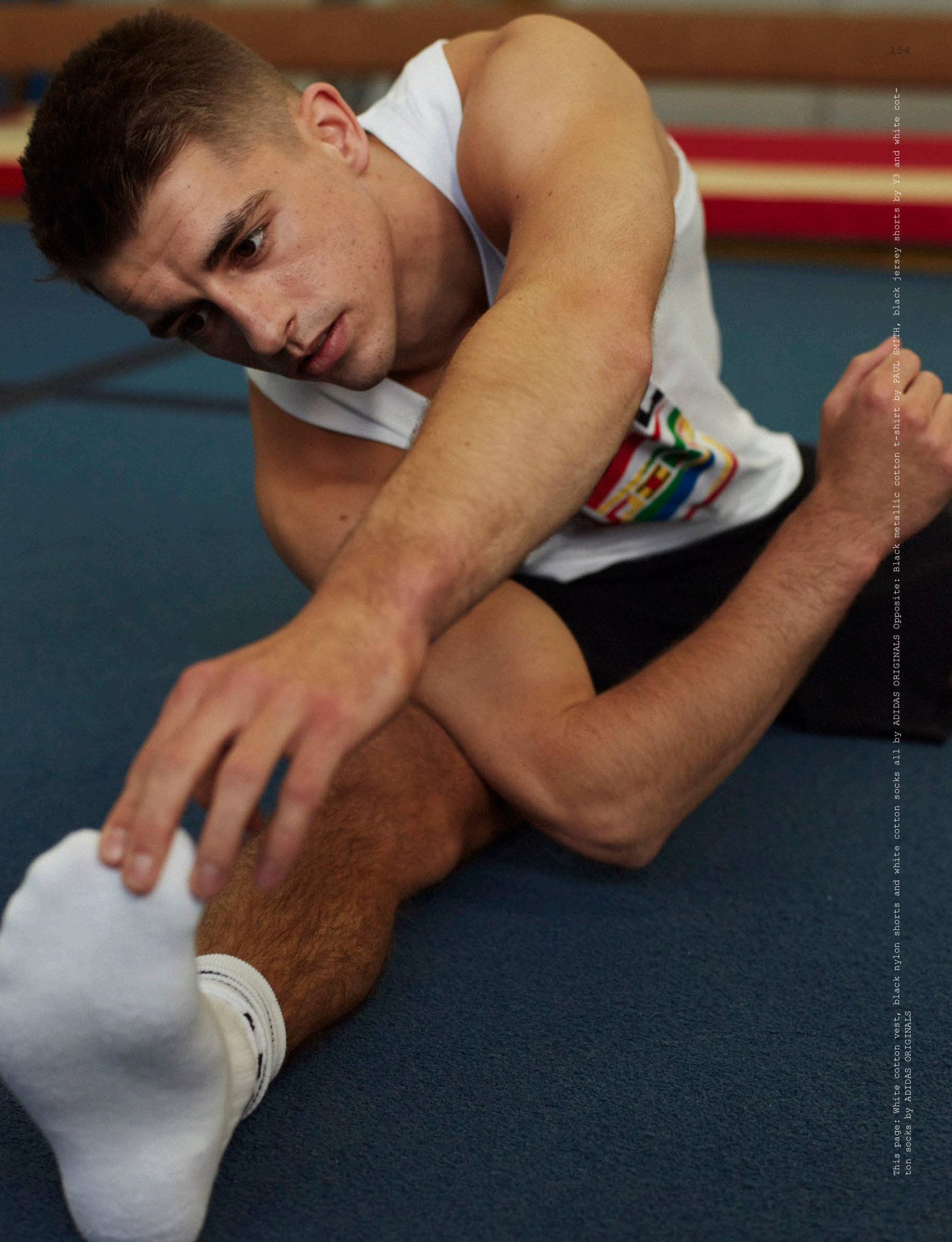
Red white and blue polyester jacket, blue nylon shorts and white cotton socks all by ADIDAS ORIGINALS



Black cotton vest by ADIDAS and white cotton trousers by DIOR HOMME

White denim jacket and white denim jeans both by CALVIN KLEIN JEANS





This page: White cotton vest, black nylon shorts and white cotton socks all by ADIDAS ORIGINALS Opposite: Black metallic cotton t-shirt by PAUL SMITH, black jersey shorts by Y3 and white cotton socks by ADIDAS ORIGINALS







White cotton vest and black nylon shorts by ADIDAS ORIGINALS



Black leggings and white cotton socks both by ADIDAS



Max Whitlock - the high-flying
face of British gym.

Words Laura Isabella

I expect 22-year-old, world record-breaking gymnast Max Whitlock to grimace when I ask whether people ever told him gymnastics was just for girls. Instead, he offers a knowing smirk. “When I was at school, my mates were so supportive of me,” Hertfordshire-born Whitlock explains. “And you know, everyone wanted to be able to back-flip! So it’s never really been the case for me.” Despite my preconceptions, I can’t blame his mates after watching Whitlock somersault his way through his *Rollacoaster* shoot. In fact, I’m starting to wish I’d taken the sport up myself (instead of spending my youth collecting a rainbow’s worth of My Little Pony dolls).

Starting his sporting career as a pro-swimmer at just seven years old, Whitlock ditched the swimming pool in favour of the local gymnasium, joining the prestigious South Essex Gymnastics Club - a decision he calls “obvious”. The rest, as they say, is World Championship history. Whitlock won the coveted gold medal at the most recent tournament, becoming the first ever GB World Gymnastic Champion in its history. “Unbelievable” is all Whitlock has to say on the matter as he shakes his head. “It felt unbelievable!”

The medallion must sit pretty next to his two Olympic bronzes, I suggest. “It’s definitely given me a lot of confidence going into next year,” he replies, purposefully. Whitlock doesn’t have much time for frivolities - he’s a straightforward kind of guy. He needs to be, I guess - rest is a pretty foreign concept in his game. Whitlock trains six days a week, seven hours a day, pumping to rap and hip-hop favourites like Drake, Odd Future and Wiz Khalifa. He’s all about focus, choosing a dozen or so tracks at a time and playing them on repeat to stay in the zone. “Music can increase your stamina by around 17%” he tells me, earnestly. “I find it really motivational.”

Blasting Tyler at the gym? I’m not surprised he wants to dom his competitors. “It’s not about beating anyone for me,” Whitlock rebuts. “It’s about being the best that

I can be.” I stand corrected, though not taken aback, as his manner is both uncomplicated and endearing.

Beating personal bests means spare time is pretty scarce for the Olympic star. When he has a second to draw breath, though, he enjoys the simple pleasures. “I love going for roasts, spending time with my girlfriend and drawing,” Whitlock muses. What does a sports star love to draw? Why, trainers, of course. Whitlock even has ambitions to start his own sportswear line. “It would be, like, vintage Adidas-style, really retro-looking,” he says. “I’ve always loved that about Adidas.”

What are his plans for the New Year, I ask? “So many things!” He replies; eyes lit up. “After chill time at Christmas, it’s straight back into the gym as it’s all kicking off in March... We’ve got three competitions then – they’re used as sort of trials for the European Championships – which in turn is obviously one of the big trials for the Olympic Games.”

Whitlock aims to zen-out before competing - to be “as chilled as possible.” Gymnastics is, after all, “a sport where you have to control your adrenaline. It’s important not to over-do it, that just doesn’t help sometimes.” Instead, he believes if the build-up has gone well, that’s all he can ask for. “If that’s gone good, I just think I couldn’t have done anymore. Let’s just go out there, enjoy it, and do my best.”

Updating personal bests is more a casual pastime of Whitlock’s than a professional goal. Not only has he won almost as many major championship medals as he’s had birthdays, he was also one of the youngest sports stars to be shortlisted for Sports Personality of the Year 2015, alongside big names like Tyson Fury, Mo Farah and Andy Murray. “It wasn’t until I was maybe 16 or 17, when I sort of thought *maybe* I could do something big with gymnastics.” Whitlock muses on his successes with typical modesty - his selling point. “So, it’s been quite a short, small space of time coming from there to now, but it’s been amazing.” *I’ll* say.