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## Tampa Bay Lightning's Marty St. Louis credits strenuous workout regimen for not missing games

by Damian Cristodero



GLENDALE, Ariz.

Marty St. Louis, Ben Prentiss said, can perform a feat of strength so difficult, no one else in Prentiss' gym can do it. It is a glute ham raise, so called because it engages the gluteus and hamstring muscles. St. Louis, in such control of his movement, almost appears to float. "It's superhero stuff," said Prentiss, who trains about 25 NHL and minor-league players at his Darien, Conn., facility. Lying on his stomach with ankles anchored, St. Louis raises his torso straight up. He lowers to a 45-degree angle and holds it for three, four seconds. With grunts and groans, the wing does this three times before collapsing in lactic-acid exhaustion. "By far, unquestioned, he is the alpha male in here," Prentiss said. "He is the top dog, and everybody knows it." St. Louis plays his 400th consecutive game tonight when the Lightning faces the Coyotes. It is far from Doug Jarvis' NHL record of 964, but it is the league's fourth-longest active streak, and of those, the most impressive.

St. Louis is 35, after all, the old man on the team, with black hair that is starting to gray. But with five goals and 12 points in nine games, he is as quick and elusive as ever and seems headed for his second straight 90-point season.

He also has played every game since Nov. 17, 2005, after missing two because of a finger injury.

It is partly luck, of course, and that at 5 feet 7, 180 pounds, St. Louis simply is tough to hit. But the 2003-04 league MVP said it has more to do with Prentiss' gut-wrenching (literally), almost vomit-inducing summer workout program that has armored his body and maximized his natural athletic gifts.

"If I didn't train the way I do," St. Louis said, "I could not do what I do on the ice."

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St. Louis' physique has eight-pack abs and thighs that seem more appropriate on a soccer player. Body fat: 7 percent.

More notable, though, is that at an age when even the most elite athletes slow, St. Louis is speeding up. At fitness testing before training camp, St. Louis, strength and conditioning coach Chuck Lobe said, graded higher than last season.

"He was a little stronger, a little quicker," Lobe said, adding, "He is a freak."

"I've definitely gotten stronger over the last six years," St. Louis said of his time with Prentiss, whose gym is near St. Louis' Greenwich, Conn., home.

"You'll slow down eventually, but you'll slow down quicker if you give in. That's why I went to Ben. I wanted to make sure I wasn't going to slow down."

St. Louis' summer workout changes every three to four weeks so his body gets a shock. He trains two days on, one day off, alternating between upper and lower body.

He does 400-pound squats and snatch pulls (six sets of three reps) in which he squats and grabs a weighted barbell, jumps into a snatch position and brings the bar to his chest.

There are rhythm squats (five sets of 50) in which, with a barbell behind his head on his shoulders, he 10 times bends his knees into a quarter squat position and then does 10 heel raises to blast his calves.

There are plenty of plyometrics to enhance explosive movements. And there is this, which Prentiss said mimics the effort of a shift on the ice: push a sled with 405 pounds of weight 50 yards, pull it 50 yards and then push it sideways 50 yards. Rest for 90 seconds and repeat several times.

"I'm on the ground for 15 minutes after I'm done," St. Louis said. "I can't even drive. I push myself to the point there are times I feel like throwing up."

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St. Louis said before the NHL's 2005-06 crackdown on obstruction, he played at 186 pounds.

"It was a more physical game. You had to fight through a lot more," he said. "But once they changed the rules, I wanted to be as strong and light as I could be. If you can be stronger and lighter, you can be faster."

That is why St. Louis' workouts are intense but relatively short, about an hour. That, and St. Louis is 35.

"We've taken into account his advanced age, so the workouts are actually shorter than they have ever been," Prentiss said. "We really get after it to keep his strength up, but we keep him fresher with the thought in mind of an 82-game schedule."

The workouts have done their job. Just ask defenseman Ben Lovejoy, 26, whom St. Louis blew by Wednesday to score the go-ahead goal in a 5-3 victory over the Penguins.

And Prentiss said they will continue to do the job as St. Louis plays out a contract that expires in 2015, when he will be 40 and, if all goes as planned, will have played another 400 consecutive games.

"There is no reason, in my eyes, that at 40 he won't be the same as he is right now," Prentiss said. "Yeah, your testosterone and your hormone production slow down in your 40s. But when you train the right way and eat the right way and control a lot of the elements in your world, the sky's the limit."

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