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Mr. Greco

English III

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### A Hundred Kilos

Heavy metal is the first thing you hear when entering Michael Hoffer's garage— both the music and the sound of solid steel barbells hitting the floor. Posted up on the walls are signs reading '*Do Not Give Up*' and exercise equipment is laid out on every inch of the room. This is Michael's personal office and gym. Currently, he's working on strengthening his upper body: back, core, and arms. He'd made a bet with his friends back in Sweden when they were younger, that they could only take their shirts off in the summer if they were able to bench press a hundred kilos every year. Their truce still stands, over thirty years later. It may seem like a peculiar promise, but it's a symbol of pride between them—to be able to attain the same feats of strength you did in your prime, and challenging yourself enough to do so. Some turn away from the threat of pain working out gives them, but people like Michael find thrill in the promise of what that pain can give them, and where it can take them. "I think the normal person would have stopped... [It's about] being uncomfortable. Being able to be uncomfortable" (Hoffer).

Michael is a professional trainer and track coach who strives to demystify the world of athletics to his clients, and to convince them that working out isn't as scary as dealing your soul away to protein powder, steroids, and Planet Fitness. He's worked as a pro athlete, having been ranked third in the NCAA, winning the Swedish Championships four times in Decathlon, and winning the Masters World Championships, among other things. He's also had experience

overcoming serious injuries, and wants to inspire others to change their lifestyles to have a longer health span—to remain healthy and prevent injury instead of working to rectify past injuries. He wants to show that being healthy is the result of a certain lifestyle, and that health is something you maintain, not something you can get back once lost.

Growing up in Sweden, Michael had spent a lot of his time playing sports with his friends. He was introduced to track and field at fifteen, which was late in the game according to him. However, it was track that got him a scholarship at many schools in the U.S, Stanford being among them. Michael knew since high school that he'd wanted to move to America, because "it's warmer. You can train year-round, and don't need to worry about snow or storms" (Hoffer). After graduating, he moved on to compete professionally and worked a more 'normal' job as an employee at a local gym. During his time there, Michael noticed that while the stereotype of Americans being obese and unhealthy was mostly untrue, there were certain aspects of their culture that warranted such titles. He realised that the job pool most sought after in his area, Silicon Valley, was desk jobs. And with the unhealthy work ethic pushed upon those employees, spending the whole day sitting at a computer, and then going home and only having time to eat fast food, was not uncommon. The National Library of Medicine shows that the average American adult spends up to eight hours sedentary, which puts them at a higher risk of physical and mental ailments, like decreased blood circulation, and depression. Michael wanted to teach the people he helped at the gym that it was possible to get their activity in through more fun ways, like team sports or hikes. But he focused on himself at the time, centering his attention on his sport for a large majority of his life. He coached track and field at Stanford, and later went on to start his own business as a personal trainer.

At the time, it seemed like his career would continue to grow forever. But amidst his athletic journey, Michael suffered a debilitating break to his left leg in 2021, which required multiple surgeries. With intensive physical therapy, he managed to recover most of his mobility, and had hopes of competing in decathlon once more. But a year later from the first break, he shattered his right leg, this time much worse than the last. He spent a couple months in and out of the hospital, needing to have it operated on several times. Throughout this series of setbacks, Michael had high hopes for his recovery, but “when you don't know what to expect and [the doctors] say that you might be able to walk but most likely not run or jog again... It's hard to comprehend when you've been doing that for your whole life. So accepting it is very, very hard” (Hoffer).

Once he was out of the hospital, he began physical therapy once again. Walking was incredibly challenging at first, and took almost four weeks just to walk up and down the street. One of his biggest challenges was that he had minimal sensation in his foot, and little control over its muscles. Running seemed like an impossible dream at that point, much less returning to his normal training routine. But he supposed that just being able to walk again with little issue was a miracle enough.

Although he's recovered most of his mobility, Michael wonders what would have been different if he were a “normal person”, like his clients. Many lead sedentary lifestyles punctuated by sporadic and infrequent physical activity by using their one or two hours with him as their only form of exercise. He mentions that even doing the little things, like walking instead of driving or standing at your desk, can greatly affect someone's quality of life so long as it is kept up consistently. A study conducted by the Australian government showed that people over the age of 44 who sat for 11 hours a day had a 40% higher risk of death over the next three years,

even if they worked out. The data shows that even those who work out can still be in poor health if they work out for one hour a day and don't move for the other twenty three. Michael also recognises that if he led a "normal" life, his recovery would have been much different. He says that as an athlete, his body was accustomed to breaking down and building back up again, and that working out or pushing oneself physically is a skill that must be learned, just like anything else. If he had a desk job, like most individuals in the Bay Area, he believes that the process of recovering would have been much more challenging. He wouldn't have had experience in recovering from injuries, nor the pain of rehabilitating muscles through physical therapy. In fact, if he were not an athlete, Michael never would have challenged himself to start training after the injuries. He never would have continued physical therapy at home, or worked on strengthening his legs again. And it was only because of his goals of challenging oneself physically that Michael was able to run again despite the doctors not having confidence he ever would. Almost a year after the last injury, he started jogging on the treadmill, and later around the neighbourhood.

Though it might seem impossible and unimaginable, the long journey of recovering his mobility had allowed him to discover the art of the body in everyday life. He also found that accepting one's shortcomings can be the toughest challenge an athlete must face. But he realised his personal limitations don't make him any less of an athlete, nor any less qualified a trainer. Track is in season for local high schools, and he's focused on being a good coach for his kids. At the same time, he's also working on many personal goals— in fact, celebrating April twenty-first, he'd finally gotten to bench a hundred kilos. "My friends and I, we tend to compete in a lot of things, and I still like to do those things. I might not be as good as I used to, but still, I can still do a lot. I can do a lot" (Hoffer).

## Works Cited

Hoffer, Michael. Personal Interview. 08 February 2024.

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Park, Jung Ha et al. "Sedentary Lifestyle: Overview of Updated Evidence of Potential Health Risks." *Korean journal of family medicine* vol. 41,6 (2020): 365-373.  
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Use of AI: I used Studyable to review my already written work, and did not use it to generate any content. I used prompts like "correct the grammar and punctuation of the following paragraph:..." and "give suggestions on how to improve the following profile article:..."

### PROFILE DOCUMENTARY ARTICLE RUBRIC:

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Angle	No angle present. Generic summary of interviewee's life. Information dominates the profile, boring the reader. Or, information is missing or inaccurate. No clear sense of character and present-day importance	Angle is present but reflects a fairly obvious perspective of the interviewee. Profile lacks balance between information and entertainment. One of the following is unclear: a sense of their character or their	Angle communicates the journalist's perspective of the interviewee, although it could be more distinct, allowing for a more interesting (informative and entertaining) picture of interviewee's character and present-day	Angle communicates the journalist's distinct perspective of the interviewee, sustaining an entertaining & informative profile that illustrates the interviewee's character and present-day importance in the context of a researchable issue.

	in the context of a researchable issue.	present-day importance in the context of a researchable issue.	importance in the context of a researchable issue.	
Profile Structure	No clear profile structure. Existing parts don't connect in a logical way, making the profile difficult to follow.	Profile structure is somewhat apparent, but some parts are missing. Feels too summarized. Needs more anecdote/story and quotation/dialogue to define the narrative arc.	Profile structure is complete and easy to follow, but could be better arranged to enhance reader's experience. Somewhat effective use of anecdote/story and quotation/dialogue. Narrative arc is present but has some weaknesses.	Profile structure is organized professionally, enhancing the reader's experience. Highly effective use of anecdote/story and quotation/dialogue to create a compelling narrative arc.
Style	No literary devices or significant details are used. Paper may read like an obituary or a Wikipedia page. Vocabulary is overly simplistic or vague, with no attention to purpose/audience. Title is missing or plainly inappropriate.	Language is fairly plain, with some specific details about the interviewee, but more/varied details and literary devices needed. Portrait of interviewee seems incomplete. No central metaphor present. Vocabulary may reflect a couple instances of specificity or sophistication, but it largely lacks attention to purpose/audience. Title doesn't creatively reflect the profile's angle / argument or is unengaging or inappropriate for the audience.	Obvious thought has been put into the use of diction, imagery and detail to portray star interviewee creatively, although the central metaphor needs to be more clearly developed to communicate writer's angle. Vocabulary occasionally reflects attention to specificity and sophistication, although it could be improved in consideration to purpose/audience. Title is appropriate for the audience but could more creatively reflect the profile's angle / argument.	Obvious thought has been put into the use of diction, imagery and detail. Central metaphor is well developed, communicating the writer's angle. Overall, stylistic choices give the profile a fresh and original creative texture. Vocabulary reaches a level of specificity and sophistication that is appropriate for the purpose and audience of this article. Title reflects the profile's angle / argument in a creative way that's both engaging and appropriate for the audience.
Research	Writer doesn't rely on an interview transcript and/or there is no indication of secondary research. No indication of research-backed	Writer makes limited use of interview transcript(s) and secondary sources. Interview testimony prompted by research-based	Writer makes satisfactory use of at least 2 interview transcripts and 4 secondary sources, although some interview testimony or secondary	Writer makes intelligent use of at least 2 interview transcripts and 4 secondary sources. Effective use of interview testimony prompted by research-based questions

	questioning. Or, three or more research sources do not pass the “ <a href="#">CRAP Test</a> .”	<a href="#">questions is vague. Not a clear sense of an informed angle, although a view of the subject’s character is certainly present.</a> Or, two research sources do not pass the “ <a href="#">CRAP Test</a> .”	source material may be either overused or too limited. Interview testimony prompted by research-based questions is apparent, but could create a clearer sense of an informed angle. Research sources generally pass the “ <a href="#">CRAP Test</a> ,” although one may be questionable.	gives the reader a clear sense of an informed angle. All research sources obviously pass the “ <a href="#">CRAP Test</a> .”
MLA Format and Citation	MLA format/style has not yet been applied.	<a href="#">MLA format. Works Cited page, and/or in-text citation</a> are not close to meeting MLA standards.	<a href="#">MLA format. Works Cited page, and/or in-text citation</a> are nearly perfect by <a href="#">MLA standards</a> .	<a href="#">MLA format. Works Cited page, and in-text citation</a> are all perfect by MLA standards.
Mechanics	Writing obscured by spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.	Writing contains some errors that affect the reader’s understanding.	Writing contains a few errors, but not at the expense of understanding.	<a href="#">Writing is polished, free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.</a>