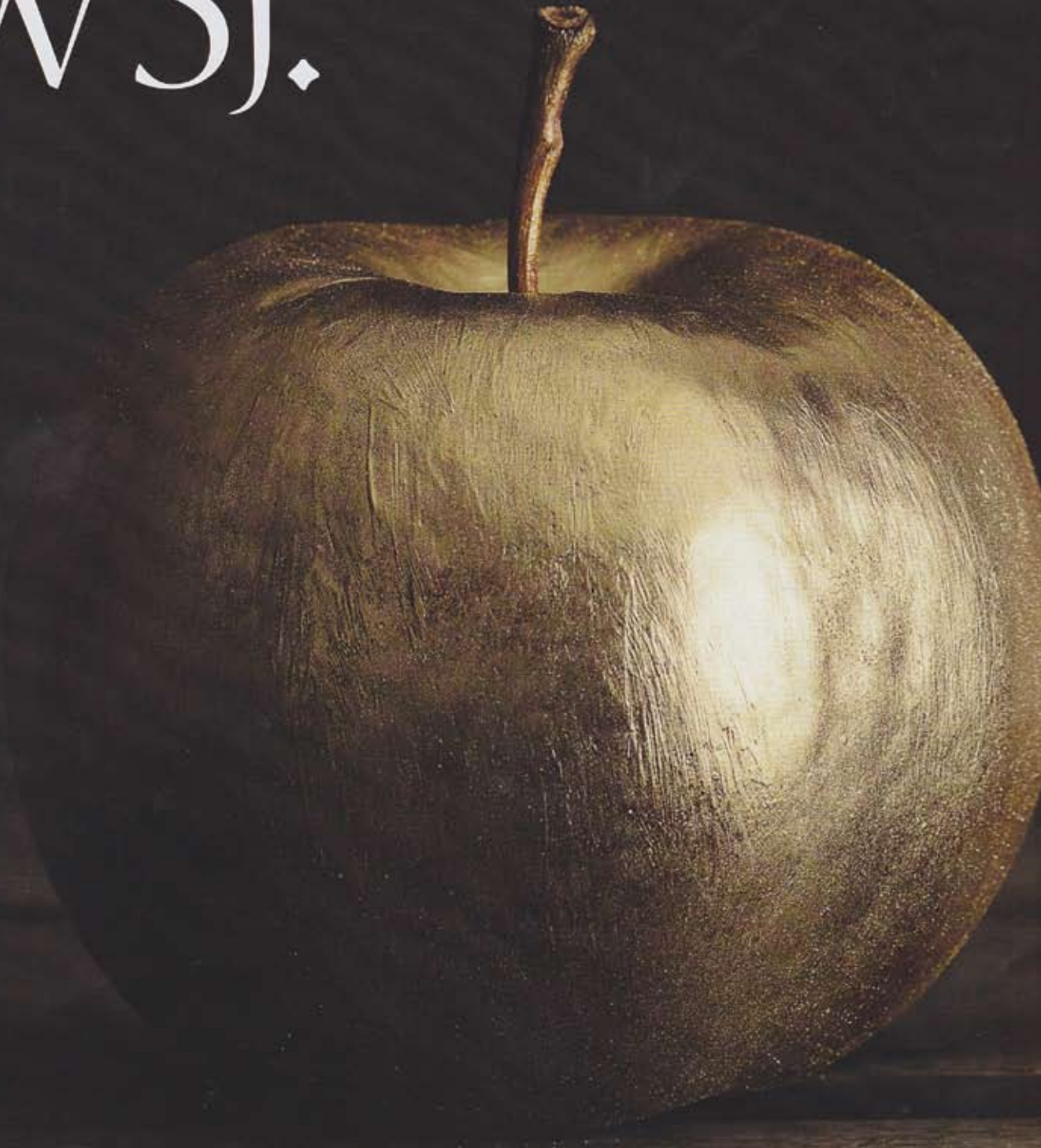


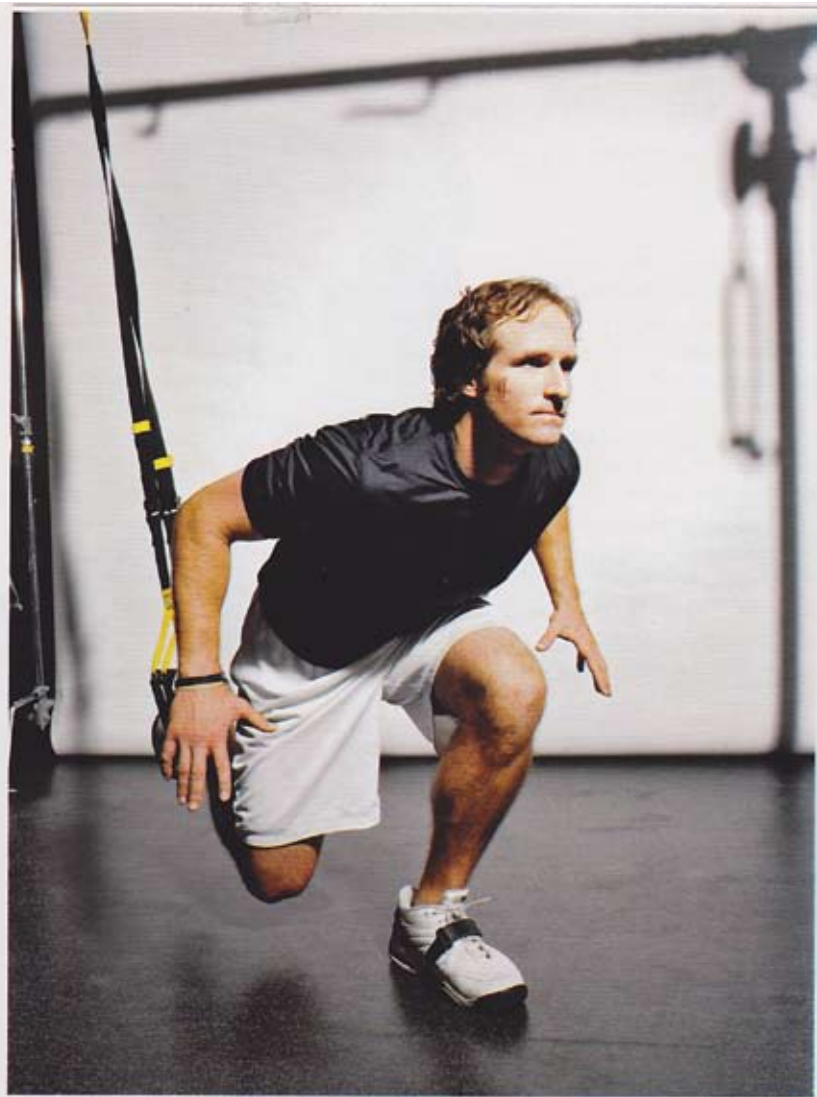
THE MAGAZINE FROM THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WSJ.



# Forbidden Fruit

SELLING LUXURY IN THE AGE OF ABSTINENCE



Drew Brees incorporates the TRX, a resistance system, into his regimen; it uses body weight to work muscles.

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## STRETCHING LIMITS

Star quarterback Drew Brees pushes his mind and body to get an edge in the gym and on the field

BY JEN MURPHY

**A**t 6 feet and 209 pounds, Drew Brees is 3 inches shorter and 11 pounds lighter than the average NFL quarterback. Yet Brees has an advantage that helped earn him the league's Offensive Player of the Year award in 2008. The New Orleans Saints starting quarterback takes a mind-over-matter approach to his workouts and to his game. At the gym, you're more likely to find him playing a tricky game of catch with a deck of playing cards or working with resistance bands than lifting 200-pound dumbbells. "The body will only go as far as the mind will take it," Brees says.

Growing up in football-obsessed Texas, Brees was a natural athlete but still far from typical: "I never thought I could be a starting quarterback in high school compared to the guys ahead of me," he says. The 30-year-old knows he needs to put in more than just time in the weight room to perform well. After being checked for food allergies a few years ago, he cut gluten, dairy and nuts from his diet. "Every edge counts," he says. ♦

### THE WORKOUT

► Brees focuses on improving three areas: balance, core strength and joint integrity. To prepare for the season, he works out three hours a day, five days a week, with strength-and-conditioning coach Todd Durkin. The focus changes day-to-day from speed to strength and power. "One morning we might be tossing medicine balls and flipping tires outside," Brees says. He also works out nearly every day on the TRX, a Navy SEAL-designed nylon-strap suspension system. Rather than using weights, TRX pits body weight against gravity to work the muscles. And to train both the left and right sides of the brain, Durkin incorporates drills that are mentally and physically challenging. At the end of each workout, when Brees is

exhausted, Durkin takes out a deck of playing cards, faces Brees and starts throwing the cards in the air, one every few seconds. Brees can lunge or jump but he's only allowed to catch with one hand. "It takes great focus and concentration," Brees says.

### MIND OVER MUSCLE

► "The quarterback position is 90 percent mental and 10 percent physical," Brees says. "I try to simulate the game as much as I can in practice and visualize every play and every defense we could see. In essence I'm playing the game over and over so that no matter what situation happens, I've already played it and can anticipate what will happen."

### COMPETITIVE EDGE

► Brees does not like to lose. "He's a fiery competitor," Durkin says.

Durkin tries to foster that by turning group workouts with the team into competitions with the loser having to run extra sprints or do 50 push-ups. "When Drew wins, he revels in it. But when he loses, which doesn't happen that often, he goes back and works at it," he says.

### DIET RESET

► In 2004, after discovering he had nearly a half-dozen food allergies, Brees re-engineered his diet, and almost immediately got more energy (he has slowly reintroduced certain foods like eggs and peanuts in moderation). "Now when I cheat and eat things I'm not supposed to, I'll toss and turn and kick in bed and my wife knows I've been eating something I shouldn't. She has extra incentive to keep my diet in check."