

Jockeys share winning secrets to stay in shape

2023 is in full swing, and many have started to implement their new year's resolutions. Not surprisingly, exercising and eating healthily are among the most popular ones.



Image supplied: Aldo Domeyer

However, according to [research](#), 77% of people only manage to keep a resolution for one week. To help with this challenge and provide inspiration when it comes to health and fitness, three Cape Town-based jockeys have provided some insight into how to lose weight and remain fit under the pressure of meeting goals.

Jockeys not only have to be as physically fit and athletic as possible, but they also need to have exceptional balance and strength to stay on a horse that runs up to 70km/h. In order for the horse to be able to perform its best, jockeys also need to ensure that their weight remains around 52 kgs and that they have reached this goal in time for race days.

Taking health and fitness to the finish line

Richard Fourie, Aldo Domeyer, and Grant van Niekerk are among the top riders in the country and the top three in the Western Cape. Each has recently raced in the prestigious L'Ormarins King's Plate and is now preparing for the World Sports Betting Cape Town Met taking place on 28 January 2023 at the new and improved Hollywoodbets Kenilworth racecourse.

Domeyer had to ensure he weighed 58kgs to ride more successfully in the L'Ormarins King's Plate this year. Usually, at 60kgs, Domeyer is one of the heavier riders on the racing scene but works hard to trim down ahead of races.



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"To lose weight, you need to combine healthy eating and exercise, and it is essential to be disciplined with both. You need to focus on what your body needs and not what you want. For example, I don't like fish but when it comes to crunch time, I eat a lot of fish and only drink water. Sometimes I will add other types of protein such as red meat when I need more energy," he says.

As for exercise, Domeyer turns to running. "I run about 10km to 21km, and sometimes the shorter length will feel harder. It's mind over matter and you need to remind yourself that this is something you need to and can do, and then ensure that you exercise no matter what."

As a lightweight jockey, Fourie has had to keep his weight down which can be tricky since he travels so much. "While I'm often tempted by the fast-food outlets at the airport, I typically eat light snacks and small meals throughout the day."

He says that horse racing allows him to maintain his fitness.



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For those that want to incorporate horse riding into their fitness regime, studies have shown that it can improve one's strength, balance, coordination, flexibility, mental toughness, endurance and cardiovascular fitness.

Van Niekerk, another lightweight, has tried to keep his weight at 52kg but, due to taking a short sabbatical from the sport, he picked up a couple of kilos which he is trying to lose. "I do a lot of cardio because I need to lose weight and not gain muscle. I prefer cycling as it puts less pressure on my joints. To slim down quickly, I eat mainly chicken and salad as well as smoothies."

Anything is possible

For those considering becoming jockeys, van Niekerk advises, "Always work hard and do everything with confidence. You can only do your best and, if that's not good enough for anyone else, then it shouldn't matter. And when you make it one day, stay humble!"

"There are going to be lots of highs and lots of lows - just focus on the long-term. In 20 years from now, you're going to look back and realise what you've achieved," adds Fourie.

Domeyer, who is the former Western Cape Champion jockey, says that being a jockey is not a job, it's a lifestyle. "It's something you live for, and you have to be willing to make the sacrifices that come with it."

When it comes to the 'new year new you' mentality, not only are these pointers relevant to the jockey lifestyle, but also to anyone who is wanting to successfully reach a goal.

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