

Golden Girls

They get facials, Brazilians, and spray tans—and they can spike a ball with laser-guided precision. The U.S. beach volleyball team is the hottest thing going at this year's Olympic Games.



By Danielle Pergament

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Kerri Walsh (left) and Misty May-Treanor practice in Manhattan Beach, California. These pages: Hair, Ian James; makeup, Cathy Highland; manicures, Alexis Jachno. Fashion editor: Kelly Atterton.

Scene

On a recent Tuesday morning, on the generous swath of sand running along Manhattan Beach, a group of men were trying—without much success—to play a pickup game of beach volleyball. Just as one of them was getting ready to serve, two women in bikinis walked by and caught his attention.

“Ass, ass, ass, ass, ass,” he mumbled to his teammates.

As if on cue, a small crowd of tourists, surfers, lifeguards—the whole bathing-suit-wearing populace lingering at the start of a southern California day—squinted into the blazing sun to watch the women walk by.

“Ass, ass, ass, ass,” the man repeated, a little louder this time. “That’s some *five-star ass*.”

Was his comment offensive? Sure. Objectifying? Of course. But accurate? I wouldn’t be doing my job as a reporter if I didn’t say: Absolutely. Though perhaps it would be more accurate to call them two-time-gold-medal asses, since the body parts in question belonged to Kerri Walsh and Misty May-Treanor of the U.S. beach volleyball team.

“Hey, I’ll take it!” says Walsh about the booty remark. “It’s my best asset!”

Even if they weren’t highly recognizable (which they are, especially here on their practice beach), Walsh, 33, and May-Treanor, 34, are highly noticeable: Walsh is “six foot two plus” with a thick mane of blonde hair that hangs down her back; May-Treanor has a powerful build, rich brown skin (she’s half Hawaiian), and a mess of brown curls.

As they jogged down the beach, the two were the picture of a Beach Boys song. Following a path forged by Bo Derek, Cameron Diaz, and the cast of *Baywatch*, Walsh and May-Treanor are archetypes of the California girl. But there is a big difference between young women who look cute in bikinis and these Olympians. That is to say: They’re Olympians.

If you know anything about the



Summer Games, you know about Misty May-Treanor and Kerri Walsh. Since 1996, when beach volleyball became an official event, these two have changed the face of the game. They brought it from a pastime to a serious sport—one that programming executives are happy to televise in prime time. They’re three-time world champions. They are considered the greatest beach volleyball team in history. This summer, the two will travel to London to compete for their third gold medal. They are definitely among the few members of the U.S. Olympic team who can speak intelligently about bikini-line laser treatments.

“It was a glorious day when I discovered lasers,” says Walsh, who

“Are you kidding? I don’t even notice wedgies anymore,” says Walsh.

readily shares the fact that she has a full Brazilian. “I hate getting waxed. Waxing makes me want to punch someone in the face. But I don’t want to be self-conscious and worry about my bikini line when I’m playing, so



“Of course my tops are padded! Absolutely!” says Walsh.

While it's a relief to know that these women have hang-ups about their bodies, they are still comfortable in their bikinis in a way few amateurs could be. You'll never see them adjusting and readjusting the padding in their bikini tops. Or sucking in their stomachs and trying to make it look like they're not sucking in their stomachs. (Washboard abs help.) They don't do any of that. They don't have room for self-consciousness. While most of us have moments of feeling confident about our bodies and moments of feeling less so, these two exist on an entirely different plane. They can stand in their bathing suits, in bright, unforgiving sunlight, with their arms hanging straight at their sides, hair pulled tightly back in a braid, and look you right in the eye.

Off the beach, the women are plenty girlish. They wear makeup (Walsh: “Laura Mercier Illuminating Tinted Moisturizer changed my life”), try new hairstyles (May-Treanor: “Me and curling irons don't mix”), and do cleanses. “Once a year, my husband and I do the Standard Process Cleanse,” says Walsh. “It's 21 days of hell. Day three is the grumpiest. I can have as many vegetables as I want, but I have to give up my coffee—and I love my coffee. And the cleanse makes me realize how often I just finish my kids' Pirate's Booty.” A mother of two young sons—Joey is 3, Sundance is 2—Walsh also tries to lead by example. “I want my kids to eat breakfast; that's important,” she says. “Would I rather skip it and sleep ten more minutes? Of course!

Although they're a team, the two actually wear different uniforms. Walsh is sponsored by Oakley; May-Treanor by Nike. The colors match, but there are differences. “If I wore Kerri's bottoms it would be a G-string on me,” says May-Treanor. “I like more coverage in the butt and smaller in front. I don't like things around my neck, and no S-hooks. I wore an S-hook once and it broke in the middle of a game. No, no, no. We can't have any ‘oops’ moments.”

Walsh has her own set of priorities. “Of course my tops are padded! Absolutely!” she says. “Misty doesn't have to! I always had something there, but then I had kids and”—she flattens her palms to her breasts—“now they're just gone.” She has toyed with the idea of breast implants but says she's “60-40 against it. I got a Brazilian hair straightening after my shoulder surgery in 2007—I had a torn rotator cuff and had to take a few months off training. The hair straightening was supposed to make my life easier, since I couldn't lift my arms to put my hair in a ponytail. But even that made me feel like a fraud. It wasn't me. So if I felt that way about my hair, how would I feel about getting a boob job?”

Scorecard

Life is so much more than a beach. The facts and figures—and gold-medal count—of Walsh and May-Treanor:

3

Number of world championships they've won

2

Number of Olympic gold medals

8

Number of abdominal muscles visible when Walsh wears a bikini

220

Number of pounds May-Treanor can squat-lift

9

Number of bikinis May-Treanor will take to London

11

Number of times Walsh works out each week

2,500

Number of calories Walsh consumes each day in training

2,000

Number of calories she consumes each day while not training

400

Number of times Walsh spikes a ball each week

8

Hours May-Treanor sleeps every night, on average

8

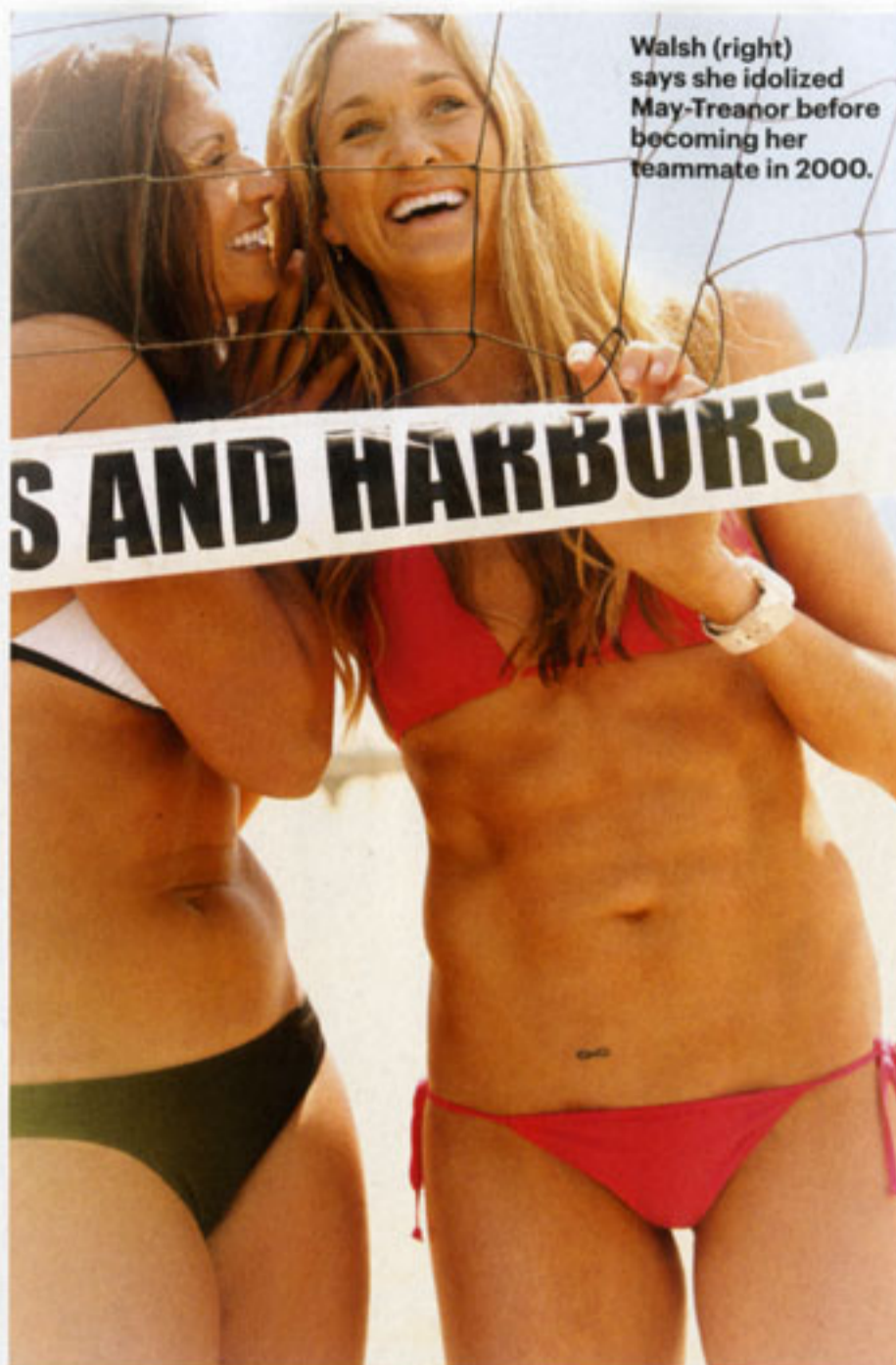
Hours she sleeps the night before competing for an Olympic gold medal

But I get up, eat my multi-grain Eggos with almond butter, and keep a clean diet—I know how to prevent joint inflammation by eating lots of fruits and veggies—and I want my kids to learn to do the same.”

Walsh, who says she “works better with routines,” also gets a manicure every two weeks. This summer, she plans to try a look her sister turned her on to: nine nails one color, the tenth a contrasting color. “I know it’s silly to get a manicure when my hands are always in the sand—polish loses its luster instantly. But it makes me happy. It’s the ritual of it. When you’re over six feet, you have to do what you can to feel feminine.”

That sand is part of life—and something to battle constantly. “You can’t believe how grimy you get,” says Walsh. “Last year in Brazil”—where they won a world championship—“Misty had the Clarisonic face brush, and I got obsessed. It washes every last speck of dirt off your face.” For her part, May-Treanor has a weakness for spa treatments. “It’s more like a necessity,” she says of her weekly massages and biweekly facials. “With the amount of sunscreen I wear, I have to get facials.”

Not surprisingly, the two have a dermatologist’s worth of sunscreen knowledge. “I’m really bummed at my younger self for not taking better care of my skin, but now I know, and I’m constantly covered,” says Walsh. No matter how diligent they are, though, “even the best sunscreen in the world is going to sweat off,” says May-Treanor. “Plus, you’re constantly toweling off and wiping it away, and you’re not going to reapply in the middle of a match.” Then there’s the



Walsh (right) says she idolized May-Treanor before becoming her teammate in 2000.

sunscreen arcana no dermatologist in the world would think of. Says Walsh, “You can’t use anything oily because it will get on the ball and it’ll get covered in sand.”

But are they tempted to swipe on some lip gloss when, say, a billion people are watching? British track athlete Jessica Ennis recently admitted that she wears full makeup when competing. Not May-Treanor and Walsh; even at the Olympics, they wear nothing more than sunscreen.

for me to take criticism well.”

For now, the two are laser-focused on their game—there’s a (younger) team from Brazil looking to usurp the Americans—and getting back to their “fighting weight,” says Walsh, who plans to lose five pounds before the Olympics. They’re busy lifting, working on their serves, spiking, and diving, and when the time comes for the television cameras, says Walsh with a coy smile, “we’ll be flicking the sand out in a way you’ll never see.” ♦

Screen Time

When three teenage surfers approach Walsh and ask to take a picture, she smiles for the camera. “Have fun! Wear sunscreen!” she tells them. “You need more than you think,” she explains. Walsh and May-Treanor name their favorites.



Banana Boat Sport Performance SPF 30.

“You have to have something with a spray so you can get your back,” says May-Treanor.



Neutrogena UltraSheer Dry-Touch Sunblock SPF 45.

“This is the most durable sunscreen I’ve tried,” says May-Treanor.



Coola Plant UV Sunscreen SPF 30.

“This is an organic line I first got for my kids,” says Walsh. “It’s not greasy but gives really good coverage.”