

THINK YOU'RE FITTER THAN DAVINA?

Bubbly Davina McCall is looking forward to the final of TV's ultimate weight loss challenge, *The Biggest Loser*. But, as our TV Editor discovered, the show's "last-chance training" is not for the faint-hearted

Back at the start of the year, Davina McCall launched the latest series of ITV1's *The Biggest Loser*, TV's ultimate weight-loss challenge. Since then, the programme has been putting its heavily overweight competitors, just a handful of whom are now left in contention from the original line-up of 13, through the most physically punishing exercise regime, centred on a daily five-hour workout with its three personal trainers

– Richard Callender, Charlotte Ord and ex-SAS man Rob "Killer" Edmond. "All three trainers have very different methods," Davina explains. "Charlotte is amazing, very motivational. Her team love her. Rob is tough and takes no prisoners. And Richard is just a fantastic trainer." But exactly how gruelling are those workouts? When Davina plucked up the courage to try one for herself, joining the contestants for what's known as

"Last Chance Training", she admits she didn't entirely know what had hit her. "They worked me so hard that I couldn't pick up my phone for two days!" she says. "I pride myself on being quite fit, and I'm telling you it was tough." Not everyone, however, has been quite so complimentary about *The Biggest Loser's* personal trainers. Our TV Editor Mike Ward recently dared to poke fun at their

no-nonsense methods, unimpressed by all that yelling and bawling. In Mike's case, however, it might have been wiser not to share such thoughts – because, just a few days later, the show got in touch. Apparently, Rob, Charlotte and Richard had seen what he'd written – and decided that Mike would benefit from some Last Chance Training of his own. Here, Mike relives his *Biggest Loser* ordeal...

“THEY WORKED ME SO HARD THAT I COULDN'T PICK UP MY PHONE FOR TWO DAYS”
DAVINA McCALL

THE BIGGEST LOSER, TUESDAY, 9PM, ITV1



Richard Callender (left) puts Mike through his paces.



"I'm not really patronising, am I, Mike?" Charlotte Ord gets her revenge



Left: ex-SAS soldier Rob Edmond



Davina McCall prides herself on being "quite fit" but admits the show's Last Chance Training is "tough"

A SORE LOSER

TV Editor Mike Ward takes *The Biggest Loser* challenge

Fitness trainer Rob "Killer" Edmond has just instructed me to become a wheelbarrow. The type, that is, whose approximate shape you're encouraged to adopt for the traditional school sports day race. I haven't the heart to tell him, but this is never going to happen. We're barely 20 minutes into our training session on London's iced-up

Clapham Common, and already I'm a spent force. My legs feel like blancmange and my arms a pair of squelchy, month-old cucumbers. My lungs also appear to be on fire, which I'm fairly sure isn't meant to happen. "I'll lift you by the ankles," Rob tells me, his enthusiasm undiminished for this latest daft exercise, "and you'll just

'wheel' yourself up to that big lump of snow over there, OK?" Er, no. Not OK at all. As Rob is just about to discover... "Right," he cries, oblivious. "Three, two, one – GO!" Sure enough, on Rob's command, "go" is precisely what I do. Specifically, I go "splat" – face-first, straight into the ground. I have wheeled not a single inch. This session, I should explain, is my own stupid fault. The reason I'm here, being put through hell by Rob and his *Biggest Loser* colleagues Charlotte Ord and Richard Callender, is because I'm being taught a lesson. Writing recently about this show, in which morbidly obese people

compete to shed the greatest amount of weight, I somewhat disrespectfully described no-nonsense trainer Rob as... erm, well, I believe the word I may have used was "twonk". I also poked fun at that nickname of his, "Killer". I mean, seriously, mate? Digging an even deeper hole, I also labelled Charlotte "patronising". And Richard? For some reason – possibly a space shortage in that issue, I can't recall – Richard was spared any slurs. Not that this is making him any more charitable towards me in today's training session. The trio have teamed up to get their own back for what I wrote – and, while this is not something I feel should typically be

allowed to happen to dedicated, hard-working TV critics (imagine, for example, if *EastEnders'* Phil Mitchell rang up with a score to settle from several years of my Soapbox columns), in this case I feel it's only fair. So, here we are, on a stupidly cold Thursday morning, the three of them taking turns to do their worst. Richard has me running backwards and forwards with what appears to be a heavyweight broom handle raised aloft. "Trust your body!" he screams, as I struggle with the pointless backwards-running bit. Followed by: "Keep going, soldier!" Neither command has much effect on me. The fact is, I'm not someone who responds well to being shouted at –

even when, as I'm sure is the case here, it's well intentioned. As for "soldier", does Richard seriously see me – specy, lardy, gasping for air – as a potential candidate for Her Majesty's Armed Forces? Right now, I could be floored in a single blow by *Dad's Army's* Private Godfrey. In some ways, Charlotte is the scariest of all, possibly because she looks the least intimidating. "I'm not really patronising, am I, Mike?", she chuckles, fiendishly, relishing her chance to exact revenge – and yelling at me to pick up the pace of this thrusty-type exercise she's forcing on me. "No, Charlotte... you're... not..." I wheezily concede, wisely deciding

not to reveal the more appropriate adjectives now flashing through my mind. With significantly less than half an hour of our session completed, I am officially done for. We retire to a nearby coffee shop, where I find a sofa and collapse into its blissfully squidgy embrace. I feel I may never leave. The trainers, to their credit, are polite about my efforts. Or at least, no one uses the word "twonk". "You did well, considering you don't do much training," says Rob. "It's just a matter of mindset." So how come the people on the show – some of whom, with respect, are enormous (I realise I'm no stick insect myself, but these contestants can be colossal) – are able to get through a whole hour of that? Charlotte assures me they can't, at first, but says they find the benefits of the training kicking in after three or four weeks. "And then they want to push themselves further. You can play on their competitiveness." Oh, fair enough. And the shouting? "It's never to do with humiliation," Charlotte stresses. "It's about pushing people out of their comfort zone. For some people it's not appropriate, but others actually love it." "There is also something programmed into people genetically," adds Rob. "If they hear me shouting, there are certain natural responses that this triggers." Oh, indeed. On that point, at least, we're in full agreement...

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