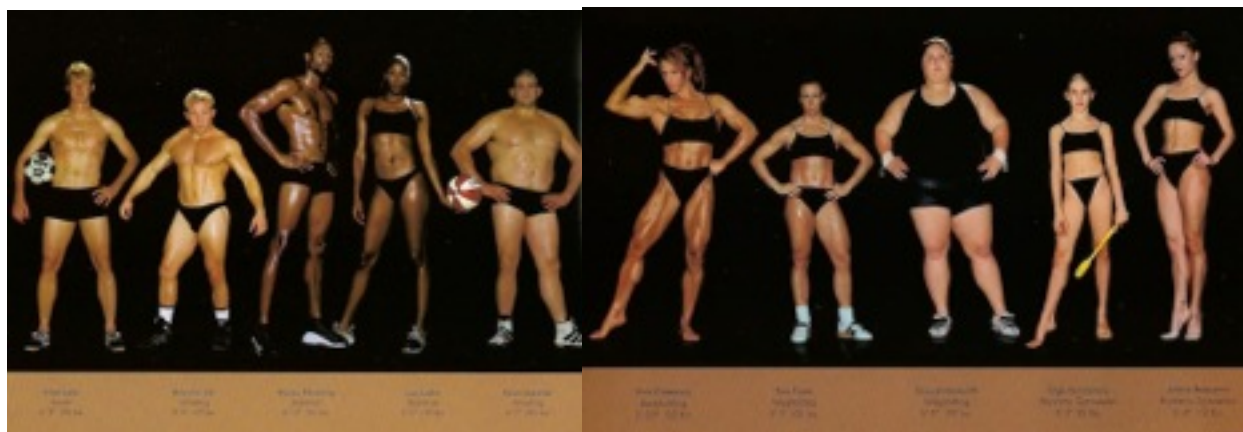


## What Is Your Inner Athlete?

Visualization time... Take a moment and picture a world class athlete in your mind. What image is coming? If you're like most people, you're probably visualizing a tall, lean, muscle-bound (or at least very muscular) man or woman, the epitome of brawny human form. On the flip side of this exercise, of course, that means you're likely not thinking of anyone who's short, stocky, slight, overweight, exceptionally tall, etc. And yet athletes, even world class athletes, come in literally all shapes and sizes. You may have seen [these pics](#) (a few of which are embedded below) making the rounds recently (or remember them when they were [first published by Howard Schatz](#) about twelve years ago or so). On the surface, the idea of body "variety" isn't all that novel of an observation, but I'm still struck when I look at these photos.

The pictures themselves drive the point home in a way that the general concept can't touch. The broad diversity and profound individuality of body shapes, forms, and musculature jumps off the page, and yet all of these people are world class athletes. (Inherent to this message, too, is the diversity of sport itself as physical endeavor that uniquely cultivates the body). It's fascinating, I think, to see what the human body is capable of – not some "perfect," standardized, conventionally "ideal" physique but a real body with individual uniqueness and stunning utility. In this case, it's a wide spectrum of body types. When you look at these folks, it makes the fluffy enhanced images on magazine covers look that much more ridiculous



**It also makes me think how many people assume they aren't "athlete material" because they don't believe they have the body for it – or so they've been told (directly or indirectly). Sure, most of us will never be professional athletes. Most of us are not and never will be 7-foot tall basketball player material. But the fact remains: if you have a body, you're an athlete. The identity and intention dwell in your genes themselves.** Whether you're a 5 foot tall rhythmic gymnast waiting to happen or a lanky dude who's built for covering long distances quickly, there's a niche for you. You embody in some way the athletic mission of our species.

Maybe you haven't figured out what that embodiment is yet. It's always eluded you, or you always shunned the prospect so entirely that you struggle against identifying with it at all. We tell ourselves a whole lot of [self-limiting stories](#), and this arena might be prime territory for that unfortunate tendency. **Let me say point blank: find your athletic embodiment in your lifetime. You won't be sorry you did and will likely always wonder if you don't.**

With that in mind, find your niche. Find your sport. Figure out – or flat out decide – what kind of athlete you are or want to be. There's no need to play perfectionist and opt out because you can't be LeBron James or Lindsey Vonn. We don't let ourselves play defeatist that way in our careers, hobbies or social lives. (Right?) Why on earth would we hold ourselves back from enjoying cultivating our bodies to their full and creative potential because someone on the T.V. can do a skill better (that they get paid millions of dollars a year to do of course)? It should be about vitality and fun. It's about self-actualization and the unique thrill of it.

When someone tells me they're not an athlete "type," I often tell them they haven't found the right sport for their inner athlete. Maybe they bristle against the athletic "type casting" their build suggests to people, or (again) maybe they rejected the athletic potential of their bodies period. Maybe they shrug off the possibility now because of age. (Another lie to discard...) The fact is, your body is so much more than your build – or your years.

Here's a novel thought perhaps – an extension of what those photographs suggest. Do what you want to do. Do you think you have to be lean and willowy to be a yoga guru. No, you have to be committed and passionate to be a yoga guru. And guess what? You have to be committed and passionate to be a soccer player or a wrestler or a dancer or a body builder. The same holds for every activity and sport. If you can show up with a good attitude and consistent determination, you'll be able to enjoy yourself and develop within a sport. It might not be the "natural" fit for your body, but it can be the best, most fulfilling choice for your personality. **When we do what we love for exercise, it doesn't feel like work. How much more ideal can it get?**

Primal exercise is a flexible set of general principles that mirror the basic patterns of our ancestors' exertion – period. How you fulfill these in your modern life is entirely your choice. **Be whatever Primal athlete makes sense to you and you alone.** By all means, make it as fun as possible. Your fitness should enhance more than your physical health but be a meaningful, self-affirming, self-exploratory part of your life. It's the best of all Primal worlds.

- 1) Take a moment and reflect back on what you thought of when you were asked to picture an ideal athlete's body, describe what you first thought of. Then list what Heath and Skill concepts you thought this body type, those characteristics of fitness made them good at. (Concepts of Fitness: Speed, Muscle Endurance/Strength, Flexibility, Balance, Agility, Reaction Time, Power, Body Composition, Coordination)
- 2) What physical activity did you associate this person with, why?
- 3) Describe your body type. How do you feel about it, in relationship to self-esteem and physical activity?
- 4) Do the research, find out what body type you might have and what type of physical activities lend themselves to your body type.

(Body Types: Endomorph, ectomorph, mesomorph. Some helpful articles <http://www.brianmac.co.uk/bodytype.htm>, [http://www.uh.edu/fitness/comm\\_educators/3\\_somatotypesNEW.htm](http://www.uh.edu/fitness/comm_educators/3_somatotypesNEW.htm), <http://www.bodybuilding.com/fun/becker3.htm> )

- 5) Do you, have you ever, or would you ever, consider participating in those activities?
- 6) Now forget body type, what type of movement do you enjoy? Do you regularly participate in any physical activities?
- 7) Describe your favorite physical activity, does it work your cardio system, build muscles, does it require endurance?
- 8) What type of physical activity have you always wanted to try but never done? What haven't you tried it?
- 9) What are your goals for being active? The recommended amount of movement for teenagers is 60 minutes a day, 5 times a week. What is realistic for you?
- 10) How does working out, playing sports, being active make you feel? Describe at least two different emotional or cognitive responses you have during or after exercise?
- 11) What do you want out of your activity as far as your body? Do you want to build muscle, tone, loose fat, maintain your body composition, get stronger or just feel better/great?
- 12) What stops you from working out? What encourages you to workout?
- 13) You are an athlete. What kind are you? What is your 'primal' exercise?

*("Be whatever Primal athlete makes sense to you and you alone. By all means, make it as fun as possible")*