

02.30 wake up
02.45 prayer time
03.15 breakfast
03.40-5.15 workout
05.30 post-workout meal
06.00 shower
07.30 golf
08.00 snack
09.30 cryo chamber recovery
10.30 snack
11.00 family time/meetings/
work calls
13.00 lunch
14.00 meetings/work calls
15.00 pick up kids from school
15.30 snack
16.00 workout #2
17.00 shower
17.30 dinner/family time
19.30 bedtime



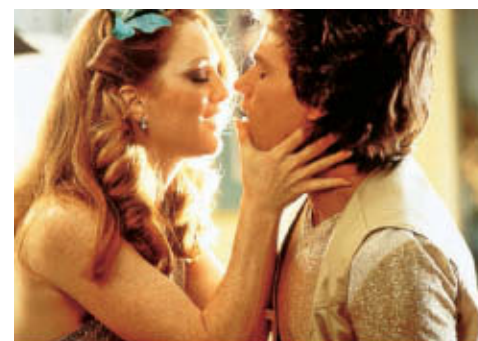
WORK OUT. PRAY. SLEEP. JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE LIFE OF MARK WAHLBERG

Details of Mark Wahlberg's gruelling routine – including a gym session before dawn – went viral this month. He tells Helena de Bertodano how he transformed from teenage drug addict and criminal to clean-living family man and Oscar-nominated actor



Mark Wahlberg, 47, photographed by Barry J Holmes at Wild Card West Boxing Club in Santa Monica, California. Inset: pre-dawn workouts. Far left: his daily fitness regime, as posted on his Instagram feed

With his wife, Rhea, and their children (from left) Ella Rae, Grace Margaret, Michael and Brendan, 2015. Right, from top: in his Marky Mark days, 1991; with Heather Graham in *Boogie Nights* (1997)



Mark Wahlberg often dreams that he has returned to jail. “I have recurring dreams [about being behind bars]. It’s always nice to wake up in bed beside my wife, or even with one or two of the kids piled up between us.”

The transformation of Wahlberg, who has a permanent felony record, is one of the best stories in Hollywood. “There’s a darkness in him,” says his friend Peter Berg, who directs Wahlberg in the new action thriller *Mile 22*. “He could be dead or have killed someone and be in prison. Yet somehow, something came into him – he might credit God or certain people in his life – and he saw another path.”

Now one of Hollywood’s most celebrated actors, Wahlberg has appeared in nearly 50 movies to date – from his breakout role in Paul Thomas Anderson’s *Boogie Nights* to his Oscar-nominated performance in *The Departed*. After his stint in jail, he rebuilt himself as a rapper and songwriter, became a Calvin Klein underwear model, then an actor, producer (*Entourage*, *Boardwalk Empire* and

‘IT’S 3.55 IN THE MORNING. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN THE GYM TEN MINUTES AGO’

In Treatment) and businessman – his family run the Wahlburgers chain of restaurants. He is married to the model Rhea Durham; they have 4 children aged between 8 and 14.

Yet Wahlberg grew up “dirt poor” on the mean streets of south Boston. The youngest of 9 children in an Irish Catholic family, he was a drug addict by the age of 13. At 16 he beat up 2 Vietnamese men so badly that he was charged with attempted murder. He pleaded guilty to assault and was sentenced to 2 years in jail, serving 45 days.

“I have been to places where people don’t ever want to have to go,” says Wahlberg, who credits his parish priest with helping him turn his back on crime. “But it benefits me as an actor. I have an upper hand on most people in the industry because I have a lot of real-life experience. I’ve been through a lot and I am able to draw on that. It helps me to be more realistic and authentic in the roles I play.”

Today he is playing the role of the reluctant interviewee – at least at first. We meet at a boxing gym in Santa Monica, where he is promoting *Mile 22*. He is not the easiest subject; he does not stand on ceremony or indulge in fake bonhomie. For the first minute of our interview he does not look up, scrolling through the messages on his phone. Then he puts his phone down and raises his eyes, without a smile. “How’s it going?” he asks tersely. Fine, I say. Happy birthday by the way. (It was his 47th birthday the day before.) “Thank you.” Were you on a plane most of the day? (I know from his prolific Instagram feed that he started the day on the East Coast.) “Yes.” Coming back from the East Coast? “Yes.” Do you spend a lot of time there still? “No.” Does it still feel like home? “No.”

But then he flicks a mental switch, sits forward and starts to make an effort. He talks enthusiastically about the character he plays ➔

in *Mile 22* – a CIA operative who, he says, is a departure from his usual taciturn tough-guy roles. Still tough, just not taciturn. “He’s not the familiar brooding man of few words; he’s very talkative and opinionated. Once he gets the green light, he’s in charge. He decides who lives, who dies – and everything in between.”

The film, he says, is “intense and violent”: the poster features him toting an assault rifle and the trailer makes it clear that guns are centre stage. Does he ever have conflicting feelings about glamorising guns in his movies? He hesitates. “I think these films are made for a mature audience ... But you do think about the sensibilities of Europe or the UK, where sex and nudity are more acceptable than violence and [bad] language.”

Does he think there should be more gun control in the States? “I think that people who are going to use them to protect others should have them, and obviously we need to take them out of the hands of people who are dangerous and are going to cause harm to other people. But that’s a very difficult thing to do, very tricky.”

The publicist has been looking uneasy ever since the subject of guns was raised. When I ask if he has any say in the image on the movie poster, she decides enough is enough. “I think we should move on from this topic,” she says.

Wahlberg, who was about to answer, shrugs and smiles equably. “There you go ...”

Yet he volunteers that he worries about games for children with violent themes. “My wife and I are sick of watching our kids play these video games where they’re always shooting.” Does he set limits on what they can play? “Yeah, I’m constantly taking their technology away from them.”

Dressed casually in a golf polo, grey jeans and Jordan trainers, Wahlberg has a white baseball cap pulled over his head, which he later takes off and props on his knee. Is it too neat to say that his difficult childhood was actually the making of him? “I guess everything happens for a reason,” he answers. “I had a very interesting, colourful childhood, and it could certainly have gone the other way.”

His father was a delivery driver and his mother worked as a bank clerk and a nurse’s aide. They divorced when Wahlberg was 11, which his mother later said might have triggered his change in behaviour. Three of his brothers and one of his sisters also did time in jail. By the age of 13 he had developed an addiction to cocaine and did not graduate from school. Indeed, he only received his high-school diploma 5 years ago, when he was 42. “At least if my kids say, ‘Dad, you didn’t finish school,’ I can say, ‘As a matter of fact I did – and it was much more difficult to do at 42.’”

Although his father took him to see many movies as a child, it did not occur to him to try acting. “I’d never seen anybody go off from



‘AS A CHILD, I’D GO OUT AT 7AM, COME HOME AT 9PM. THAT’S A LOT OF TIME TO GET INTO TROUBLE’



where I came from and become an actor, so that didn’t seem realistic. I wanted to be an athlete, and then I wanted to be the baddest guy on the planet. And that didn’t get me anywhere.”

As a child, he was left to his own devices. “You go out at 7am and come home at 9pm. That’s a lot of time to get into trouble running around the streets. Not too many kids said, ‘Hey, let’s go to your house and read a book.’” He chuckles at the idea and warms to the theme. “Let’s go and find some short stories.” In fact, as he once said, “Every day was wake up, go out, hustle, make money, steal, sell drugs, rob people, do drugs.”

Wahlberg had his first taste of fame as the younger brother of Donnie Wahlberg, of the successful boy band New Kids on the Block. Although Mark was one of the group’s

Left: with his friend, the film director Peter Berg, at Wild Card West Boxing Club.

Below: Wahlberg as a CIA agent in Berg’s new action thriller, *Mile 22*

original members, he left after a few months, re-emerging with his own, tougher rap band, Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch, earning a No 1 hit with *Good Vibrations*. His physique and crotch-grabbing dance moves attracted Calvin Klein, which used him in a series of underwear ads, sometimes accompanied by Kate Moss. Annie Leibovitz famously shot Wahlberg in underwear for *Vanity Fair*’s annual Hall of Fame issue.

To get a measure of how insufferable he was in those days, you only have to look at his 1992 book, *Marky Mark*, which begins, “I wanna dedicate this book to my dick.”

Wahlberg never officially trained as an actor – unless one includes his recurring real-life roles in front of judges, feigning his innocence. But using his modelling career as a springboard, in 1993 he made his acting debut in the TV film *The Substitute*. The following year he appeared in the Danny DeVito feature *Renaissance Man*. But it was his role as a deluded teenage porn star called Dirk Diggler in the 1997 film *Boogie Nights* that brought him widespread attention, despite his hesitation about taking it on because he was concerned what his friends back home would think. “I was always worrying about being perceived as being cool,” he admits.

He mentions that a couple of his childhood friends from Boston are visiting him in Los Angeles at the moment, and later posts video footage on his Instagram feed of himself driving his friends – two tattooed heavies – around Beverly Hills in his new car, an Oldsmobile 442. He introduces them to sushi at Nobu (they don’t look impressed) and to golf, then they board Wahlberg’s private plane. His feed, which has 10.4 million followers, is full of pictures and videos of his glamorous life: his palatial home; rock-grotto swimming pool; the celebrity-stuffed 40th birthday party he threw for his wife, Rhea. It is as if he is still trying to prove himself. Not just his wealth, but also the effort he has put into reaching – and remaining at – the top.

The details of Wahlberg’s astonishing daily routine, posted on his Instagram feed, went viral earlier this month. The born-again Christian gets up at 2.30am to pray at 2.45am before a breakfast of oats, peanut butter, blueberries and eggs at 3.15. He’s seen in his darkened kitchen before dawn, preparing to go to his private gym to work out. “It’s 3.55, I’ve already said my prayers, read my prayer book, should have been in the gym ten minutes ago ...” After 95 minutes working out, he goes on a 7½ mile uphill hike, then prepares a sheep’s-milk smoothie. After his workouts, Wahlberg ➤

gets a session in a cryotherapy chamber kept at minus 150C. Family time is at 11am and 5.30pm, when he eats “some sort of white fish” for dinner. Later he posts another video from the gym with this pep talk: “Do I work hard because I’m in this position? No, I got to this position because I work hard: 30 years putting in the work, working harder than everybody else, getting up earlier than everybody else.” The message is clear: there is nothing effortless about Wahlberg’s career. It is a monumental feat of self-motivation: mind over matter. If ever there were a self-made man, Wahlberg is it. All the energy he used to put into creating havoc now goes into making him one of the world’s best-paid actors. He earned \$68 million last year, and is reportedly worth \$225 million (£175 million). Woe betide anyone who might suggest his career is down to luck.

His concern with how he is perceived also made him dubious about taking on *Ted*, the 2012 Seth MacFarlane movie in which he plays a character who wishes his teddy bear were real. “I’d heard the idea and thought it was absurd: a teddy bear and his friend hanging out, doing stupid shit. It’s a hard movie to pitch. If somebody says, ‘Look, I know this sounds crazy, but this guy doesn’t have too many friends and makes this wish that his teddy bear would come to life – and the wish is granted,’ I’d be like, ‘Stop, you lost me there.’ But if you read it and you don’t think about the teddy-bear thing too much, you think, ‘Wow, what a great buddy comedy.’”

He trusts his instincts and says that he is usually right about a film. “I’m pretty intuitive – you’ve just got to go with your gut and then do everything you can to make it as good as possible. I think I’ve dodged more bullets than had regrets about passing on movies – even though they may have been tempting for financial reasons.”

Ted was so successful that it spawned a sequel, *Ted 2*, and now he has just finished shooting another comedy called *Instant Family*, about a couple who decide to adopt through the foster-care system, only to find themselves raising three wild kids who have no interest in being parented. “It was a nice change of pace after *Mile 22*. I always like doing the complete opposite of the last thing I did. So after being blown up and having the crap kicked out of me, I look forward to making people laugh.”

These days, he worries more about what his children might think of his films rather than his friends’ opinions. “I’ve got to make my kids proud,” he says. They are too young to have seen many of his movies, although he has let them watch *Invincible*, *Daddy’s Home* and *Transformers*. He sighs affectionately. “They did also say they sneakily watched some of *Shooter* and *Lone Survivor*.” He is extremely proud of his role as a devoted family man, posting frequent professions of love for his wife

on social media or pictures of family outings: a shopping trip with his youngest daughter to American Girl; swimming with his four kids.

Wahlberg is known in the industry for his professionalism. From the moment he receives a script, he reads it from beginning to end twice a day until shooting starts, so that he is familiar with not just his lines, but everyone else’s as well. According to one anecdote, he continues to re-read scenes that have already wrapped. I ask him if that is true. “Yes, it is, because you have to know where you are in the story and we’re never shooting in continuity. It’s important always to be on top of it. I make sure I’m more prepared than anyone else.”

Sometimes he says he finds it hard to shake off a character. “In *The Gambler* [in which he plays a literature professor with a severe gambling addiction], I was constantly in that head space; after a 12-hour day, I can’t all of a sudden go and be normal again. So we continued gambling.” He chuckles. “That doesn’t go over too well with my wife, though. I try to just keep [the character] on the back burner.”

‘DO I WORK HARD BECAUSE I’M IN THIS POSITION? NO, I GOT TO THIS POSITION BECAUSE I WORK HARD’

He keeps saying that he wants to slow down and spend more time with his family; he once said he would retire from acting at 40. “Then I went to 50 ... It comes down to the pace at which I am working. If I was single and didn’t have any kids, I could do a Jack Nicholson and work until I’m 80.”

The uncertainty of the business sometimes gets to him – he needs to be in charge of his life, not waiting on the whim of Hollywood. “I like to create my own destiny, so I don’t sit around just waiting for studios to send me scripts. I’m constantly going out and trying to find new source material. I’ve got five or six things that are ready to be shot. It’s just a matter of figuring out the order.” Among current projects, he is developing the science-fiction action movie *The Six Billion Dollar Man*, based on the TV series *The Six Million Dollar Man*.

Earlier this year he found himself unwittingly caught up in the Time’s Up movement, when it was revealed that he had been paid \$1.5 million for reshoots of Ridley Scott’s *All the Money in the World* – whereas his co-star Michelle Williams received an \$80 per diem allowance totalling less than \$1,000. Both actors had agreed to return to the set when Kevin Spacey was fired from the movie, due to sexual misconduct allegations, and replaced by Christopher Plummer.

When news of the pay discrepancy emerged, Wahlberg responded by donating his entire fee to the Time’s Up Legal Defense

Fund – in Williams’ name. I ask him if it just felt like the right thing to do. “Yes, absolutely,” he replies.

Peter Berg, the director, ambles into the room, fresh off a plane from New York. “Hey,” exclaims Wahlberg, lighting up. Berg has worked on three previous movies with Wahlberg (*Lone Survivor*, *Deepwater Horizon* and *Patriots Day*). The two men have a similar work ethic as well as being good friends. “We like to work hard and play hard,” explains Berg. “We love food; we love wine. We take the work seriously, but we’re not operating on children’s brains; we’re making movies.”

I am sent downstairs to continue chatting with Berg while Wahlberg has lunch. We are shown into a room with a treatment bed where boxers have physical therapy. Berg lies down on the bed. “Can you do a massage?” He sits up quickly. “That’s a joke. Now I’m going to get into trouble. You can’t even joke any more.”

He jumps off the table. “Do you want to fight instead?” he asks, making two boxing fists. Not really, I say. Berg sighs and folds his lanky

frame into a chair under a framed pair of shorts with the words “Dirty Pete” on the waistband, a gift from someone who claimed he played dirty in the boxing ring (“It’s not true”). He explains that he and Wahlberg both gravitate towards the same sort of people, preferably those with a sense of humour. “Neither of us tolerate conceited people who take themselves too seriously. What you see with Mark is what you get. You see a hardworking guy who’s fair, who doesn’t suffer fools. If you’re wasting his time, he’s probably going to walk out. If you’re straight up, he’s straight up.”

Wahlberg relaxes as the day goes on, patiently shooting take after take of advertisements for *Mile 22* in multiple languages. Later, as he walks through the boxing gym to the photoshoot location outside, he playfully whacks the punchbags dangling from the ceiling. Although he has a gym at his home, he spends a lot of time here with Berg and seems comfortable. Other gym members, grunting through their training sessions, barely give him a second glance.

It’s been a long journey from jail cell to private jet; from “baddest guy on the planet” to Hollywood superstar. Wahlberg once said that the fear of finding himself back inside is what drives him. Does he still feel that way? “I think about it all the time,” he says, nodding soberly. “It keeps me on the straight and narrow.” ■

Mile 22 is out now