

# FAMILY, FIGHTING AND FITNESS

WWE SUPERSTAR IVY NILE GIVES FANS A BTS LOOK INTO HER GRUELING WORKOUT ROUTINE.

BY MIGUEL COSTA // PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSHUA TOTTENHAM

Ivy Nile's hard-nosed approach to fitness culture has been an integral part of a career path that has seen her chiseled 126-pound frame "rolling" with former MMA teammates at Jiu Jitsu dojos, conditioning with 2023 CrossFit Games Champion Jeff Adler, and rising in the ethos of pro wrestling for one of America's highest-grossing sports entities.

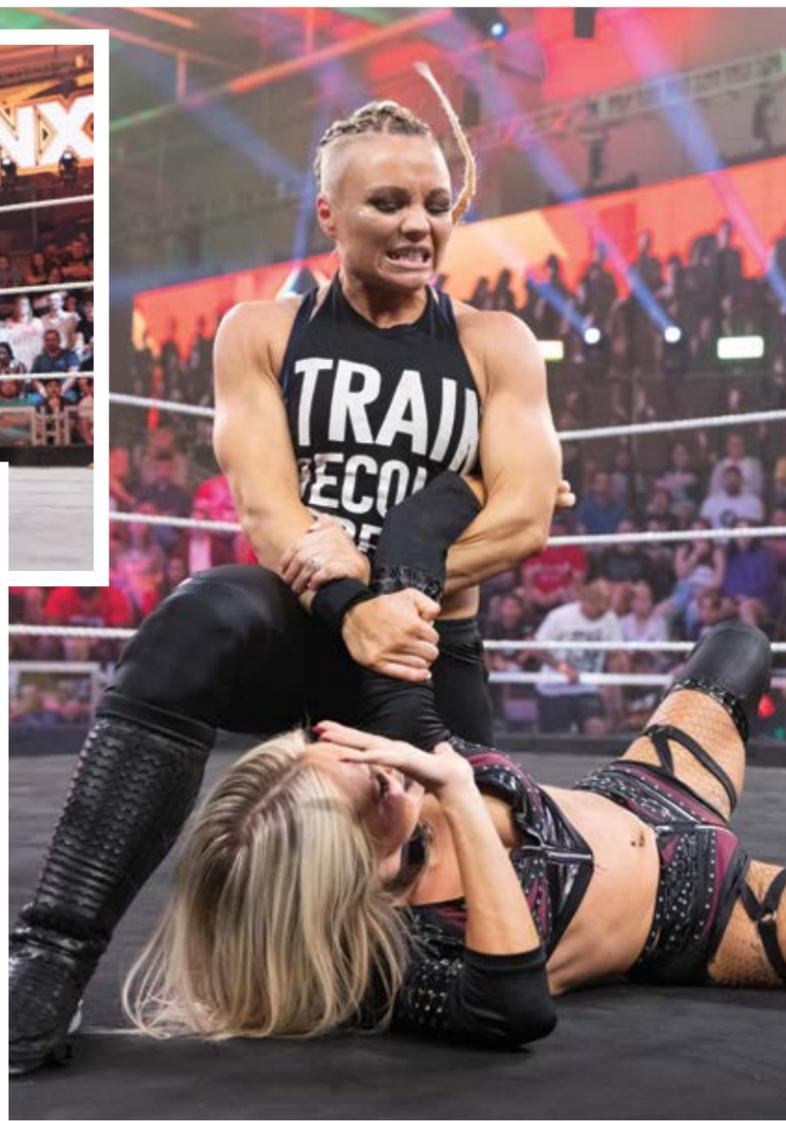
Nearly four years after making her February 2020 in-ring debut with the WWE, Nile faced Rhea Ripley, perhaps the promotion's most popular female performer, for the Women's World Championship. Her pursuit of a coveted title reign in the company is an ongoing and pervasive goal shared by many in what is by far the most competitive era in the history of women's professional wrestling. It entails a jam-packed work schedule where Nile is on the road for nearly half a year, in and out of hotels, toting suitcases, attending TV tapings, and appearing in wrestling rings with her kayfabe colleagues The Creed Brothers.

For Nile, operating under a time crunch is an ordinary hurdle that harkens back to the 2010s, when she routinely worked out with an athletic trainer named Charlie Petrone inside his Nashville-based "Woodgym" at six o'clock in the morning. Sometimes, Petrone would emphasize developing bulk and upper body strength by placing a hefty 20-pound chain over the neck of his ambitious client as she executed pull-ups and dips.

When the drills finally concluded and Nile removed the weightlifting chains of steel, she reported to her 9-to-5 job as a massage therapist. One hour later, she would drag herself to Dr. Tom Prichard's pro wrestling academy for night classes, where from 6 to 10 pm, she and her fatigued peers navigated multilayered curriculum about character development, wrestling techniques, taking bumps, all-important cardio drills, and more.

The demanding cycle, before the fame, established a work ethic and muscle memory that hasn't been forgotten in the busyness of the vast WWE Universe. The notoriety has been gratifying. Still, something sentimental about an explorative excursion to a sweaty hole-in-the-wall recreational center motivates her to power through her training, no matter how many travel days fill her calendar.

"I've found some of the most unique gyms on the road in these cities that I've been to," Nile said. "I don't want these cookie-cutter [air-conditioned] gyms. That's not what I'm looking for. I'm looking for the grungy, no A/C, old-school types of gyms because that's where I feel the most accomplished."



“Me and The Creed Brothers have been finding rock-climbing gyms as well,” she continued. “Julius [Creed] loves rock climbing, so before [Monday Night Raw], we go find a rock-climbing gym. Fitness means more to me than just the physical stuff. It gets me right in the mind... I love learning how to work out on

improving her intake of carbs, fiber, fats, and protein. This is an admitted conundrum when she’s out on the road and the appropriate food options aren’t nearly as plentiful as the growing list of time-based tasks she faces as a WWE superstar.

Thankfully, time allows Nile to return to her home in Orlando, Florida, a few days a week. The homebound stretch doesn’t last long, but it’s just enough time for her husband Ari Levy, a personal trainer and the director of PRIMUS CrossFit, to arrange

a steady selection of healthy homecooked meals to help her replenish.

The married couple of four years allocates Nile’s small amount of free time for customary workout sessions at a home gym inside their garage. Generally, Nile prefers the process to involve a rigorous method made of deadlifts, power cleans, power snatches, a little martial arts training, and CrossFit-style

workouts where her heart rate could peak at 190 bpm (the bpm for exercisers within her demographic usually ranges from 96-162 in a similar setting). In a recent interview with *Muscle & Fitness*, Nile shared her rundown of what an at-home workout with her husband looks like.

“Our gym is a huge garage gym; we have no A/C and we’re just dying and sweating to death — it’s amazing,” Nile said. “My ideal workout would be 30 minutes of not sprinting at all, just learning how to breathe [and] learning how to get through those 30 minutes of hell. And then, a portion after that would be accessory stuff.

“We’ll do wide-range pull-ups with some other kind of bodybuilding type workout,” she shared. “At the end, we’ll do a burnout with 100 pushups, some crazy number of handstand pushups or handstand walks, and maybe we’ll do sled pushes, glute pulls, farmer’s carries, or something like that. Usually, it’s a strategic five-part workout that takes about an hour or an hour and a half, depending on how fast we’re moving. Then we’ll do a sauna, even though we’re already

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the road because I know it is hard. But, if all I have is a hotel gym, I’m going to make it work, [even if] it’s intervals on a treadmill, you don’t need much to make it work. It’s about having the mindset.”

While plugging away in a less-than-ideal setting seems to be a comforting ode to her humble beginnings as an athlete, the 32-year-old does not have the luxury of suddenly

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in a sauna [laughs]. Then, we'll do some recovery stretching... and then, if I have more energy, maybe I'll wrestle."

Nile's depiction of sacrifice and the grind is on brand for a competitive fitness enthusiast who relishes high-stakes moments such as her WWE tryout in April 2019. She recently looked back on the life-changing occurrence before admitting, "At my trial, I was willing to blackout. I was not leaving until they gave me this job."

Nile controls her stamina and endurance activities with caution. This is essential considering her work schedule with the WWE may call for a long-winded wrestling match against a wide range of talent from a WWE Women's Division that features former gymnasts like Charlotte Flair, ex-track stars such as Bianca Belair, MMA strikers like Shayna Baszler, and accomplished bodybuilders such as Alexa Bliss. Backstage, this eclectic mix of toned-up co-stars presents the opportunity to gain

a wide range of workout techniques for the biceps, abs, legs, back, shoulders, etc. The fun atmosphere has inspired viral exercise videos like the clip with TNA Knockouts Champion Jordynne Grace and a growing list of workout buddies.

"Right now, there's a lot of girls that are on [Monday Night Raw] and [WWE Smackdown] that are working out with me and we're kind of building a group together. It's pretty cool," Nile said. "I tell them, 'Nothing will compare to what a match looks like or how you feel when there's nerves and you're running around getting body slammed.' It's different, but [our workouts] are as close to it gets to a feeling like a match."

The surplus of muscle group workouts and fitness tips flowing amongst her contemporaries elicits an interesting question in the spirit of friendly competition: Who's the strongest woman on the WWE roster... besides herself?



"See, it's all relative," Nile explained. "Let's break it down. Pound for pound, the only person that I would probably legit have a good toe-to-toe battle with in the gym would be Bianca Belair, of course, because she got [discovered] doing CrossFit. She is definitely someone that I just really admire. She is into lifting and taking care of herself. You can see it physically. I'd say Bianca [and] Rhea [Ripley], the way she just flings people around is absolutely insane."

In the not-too-distant future, perhaps the "Pitbull" from Knoxville, Tennessee, will hoist the WWE Women's Championship belt like her decorated workmates Belair and Ripley. Nile navigates unpredictable terrain in the wrestling business, where on-camera time is distributed among several faces, storylines can change at any moment, and unforeseen injuries can uproot the roster's pecking order in just one night.

Nile's mom still calls her after every televised match with the same concerns she had about her daughter's safety since she was a 5-year-old martial arts student. Fortunately, Nile's fitness-based lifestyle has evolved over the years under the tutelage of mentors like WWE Hall of Famer Kane, aka Glenn Jacobs.

As Nile continues to push herself at her home gym, her husband's PRIMUS CrossFit gym, and the nearby WWE Performance Center, she has worked on expanding her diverse arsenal of wrestling and acrobatic moves. A repertoire that already includes the "Superman Punch," the "Torture Rack," the "Kip-Up," and her signature submission hold "The Dragon Sleeper." Similar to prominent mainstays such as Rey Mysterio and Trish Stratus, Nile aims to remain an active wrestler beyond her 40s.



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