



## Meeting The Real Mada in Los Angeles

By Melanie Campbell

Mada Abdelhamid 'The Real Mada' has quite the CV. Celebrity personal trainer for 'Aquaman' (Jason Momoa) and former WWE wrestler, you are undoubtedly apprehensive about what to expect upon meeting him.

It's a sunny weekday in L.A. and I greet Mada in the Hollywood Hills, it is the first time we have met, and he immediately strikes you as an imposing figure. At 5'3" myself, he acknowledges his towering size and jokes that when he and Jason Momoa are together it is quite amusing, not being able to go under the radar as they are both giants!

Some people have the ability in a very short space of time to make you feel like you have known them for years and Mada soon puts me at ease. Smiling and personable, we talk about our shared passions of sport and business; his wife Maryam pops in and out talking about what they might have for dinner and I quickly feel relaxed and like part of the family.

Mada's life is a fascinating story, originally from Egypt, Mada lived in Saudi from the age of six, but his family fled in difficult circumstances when he was just 9 years old.

Ending up in New Zealand and not being able to speak the language, it was real adjustment for Mada and he admits that he struggled to fit in. He recalls other kids getting him to go and say silly things to teachers just because they could. This knocked his confidence and what compounded that was his insecurities about the way he looked. Mada felt 'larger' than his counterparts and not just in height. Body confidence issues meant that in an environment that is all about going to the beach, he didn't want to even take his top off.



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Motivational



“I thought Jason Momoa was a bum when I first met him, I didn’t want him to get the gym equipment dirty.”

So what changed? Mada’s inspirational journey from a pre teen lacking confidence to an adult career based on physical aptitude came when he started watching pro wrestling on TV. He recalls being around 12 years old and watching the likes of Batista and The Rock and the realisation that he wanted to emulate them. A ‘lightbulb’ moment, Mada made a pact with himself to set about learning about nutrition and exercise to attain the body shape he craved and to channel his intensity.

Mada’s early sporting passion was basketball and he became a player/coach in high school, he comments ‘as soon as I touched a basketball I fell in love with it’. Playing at a high level and getting scouted, Mada was one of the first players recruited from New Zealand to play basketball in the U.S. he credits playing basketball for New Zealand as a career highlight, especially getting the opportunity to do the haka at the World Games in front of the King of Thailand.

Mada’s ambitions then turned to fitness and acting. Aged 25 he met his would be future wife (Maryam) in Virginia and then moved to L.A. to seize his dreams.

Mada’s dreams of being a pro wrestler were realised in 2015 when he earned a spot on WWE reality show ‘Tough Enough’ and although he didn’t quite make it to the final stages, his popularity meant he was offered a professional contract. Even though Mada credits it as a fantastic experience, the reality didn’t live up to the dream and in 2017 he requested to be released from his contract.

At this point, Mada had had an offer of a different kind, one that he really couldn’t and moreover didn’t want to refuse, he had been asked if he wanted to train Aquaman.

So, how has this come about? How did Mada meet Jason Momoa? At some glamorous Hollywood party? No, Mada comically describes their first meeting as somewhat the opposite. They met randomly in a gym in L.A. Mada was working out and he said this ‘bum’ came into the gym and all that was running through Mada’s head was that this guy was going to get the equipment dirty. Scruffily dressed, it was not apparent at all to Mada who Jason was. They formed a solid friendship and it was a number of weeks before one of Mada’s friends informed him in that the guy in his gym (Jason) was in fact Khal Drogo from Game of Thrones(!).

A competitive rivalry in the gym ensued, with Jason being motivated to workout with Mada. This led to Mada becoming Momoa’s trainer and travelling to Australia with him for the filming of Aquaman.

That friendship has lasted the duration, Mada and Jason have joint business ventures, often travel together, their families play together and Mada even this Summer organised a surprise party in London for Jason’s 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, getting Guinness (Jason’s favourite drink) and their friends in on the act!



It is clear Mada is a passionate and naturally motivational person and that seems to transcend every part of his life. Mada's new venture '**Real Deal Lifestyle**' @GoRealDeal is a self-confessed passion project.

Something he has really spent a lifetime working towards.



It is a vision to empower people to be the best versions of themselves with resources and tools that come from a wealth of experience from Mada and those around him. The intention is to be 'real', hence the name. No rubbish supplements, no making people feel bad because they don't have a six-pack, just pure inspiration, motivation and encouragement. It might sound cliché, but the project aims to make everyone realise their 'superpower' is within them.

**'Be Real, Be You'.**

Launching soon, Real Deal Lifestyle will be a community that encourages and supports each other. Transparency and accessibility are key to the concept and Mada is keen to create a really inclusive movement, so that no-one feels like an 'outsider', he doesn't want anyone to feel the way he did in his younger years.