

From red
blood sucker to
red carpet.



Rutina Wesley

The beautiful and impressively fit star of HBO's *True Blood* tells *Hers* how she preps for such a physically challenging role—and why even a TV vampire deserves a big juicy burger after a wrap

BY AMY SCHLINGER

HOW IMPORTANT IS STAYING FIT FOR YOUR ROLE ON *TRUE BLOOD*?

When you're an actor, you have to be in shape year-round. Sometimes I'm on hiatus, but as soon as that's over, I'm like, "Oh, wait, I have to have a six-pack right now!" And on this show, you never know when you're going to have to take your clothes off.

WHAT'S THE MOST PHYSICALLY CHALLENGING THING YOU'VE DONE ON SET?

In Season 4, when I was a mixed martial arts fighter, we did a bunch of our own stunts, which meant punching, kicking, a lot of running, and landing hard on the floor. The whole fight was 2½ minutes, but it got cut down to a minute or so. It was an intense workout!

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR SCENES LIKE THAT?

Three or four times a week I try to do both cardio, to burn fat, and Pilates, to tone up. Sometimes I'll go for runs with my husband, though he's a lot quicker than I am. And I love Pilates because my trainer is constantly switching up my routine; I never know what to expect. She helps me work hard—I'm usually sore walking out of my session.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE EXERCISE?

It's not just an exercise, but I've always enjoyed baseball, and I love going to the batting cages. I'll stay in there between 45 minutes and an hour. It's a great arm and core workout. And I'm proud to say I can hit a 70 mph pitch. I don't think many ladies can say that!

DO YOU FIND IT DIFFICULT TO EAT WELL WHILE YOU'RE FILMING?

Well, for starters, I have to remind myself that the fun-size Snickers are for the crew, not us! Now that my character is a vampire, we shoot very early in the morning, so I try to avoid having anything heavy like steak or chicken for dinner the night before. Instead I stick to chopped salads, yogurt, and granola bars. When we aren't shooting, my cheat meal is an In-N-Out burger.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER TARA?

I love that Tara is constantly growing and evolving in her own right. She's become the thing she hates most—a vampire—and has to change her views on herself. Tara is a very vulnerable woman, and it's great to finally let her fences come down and allow love into her life. Playing a character with so many notes has challenged me, but I believe I do her justice!