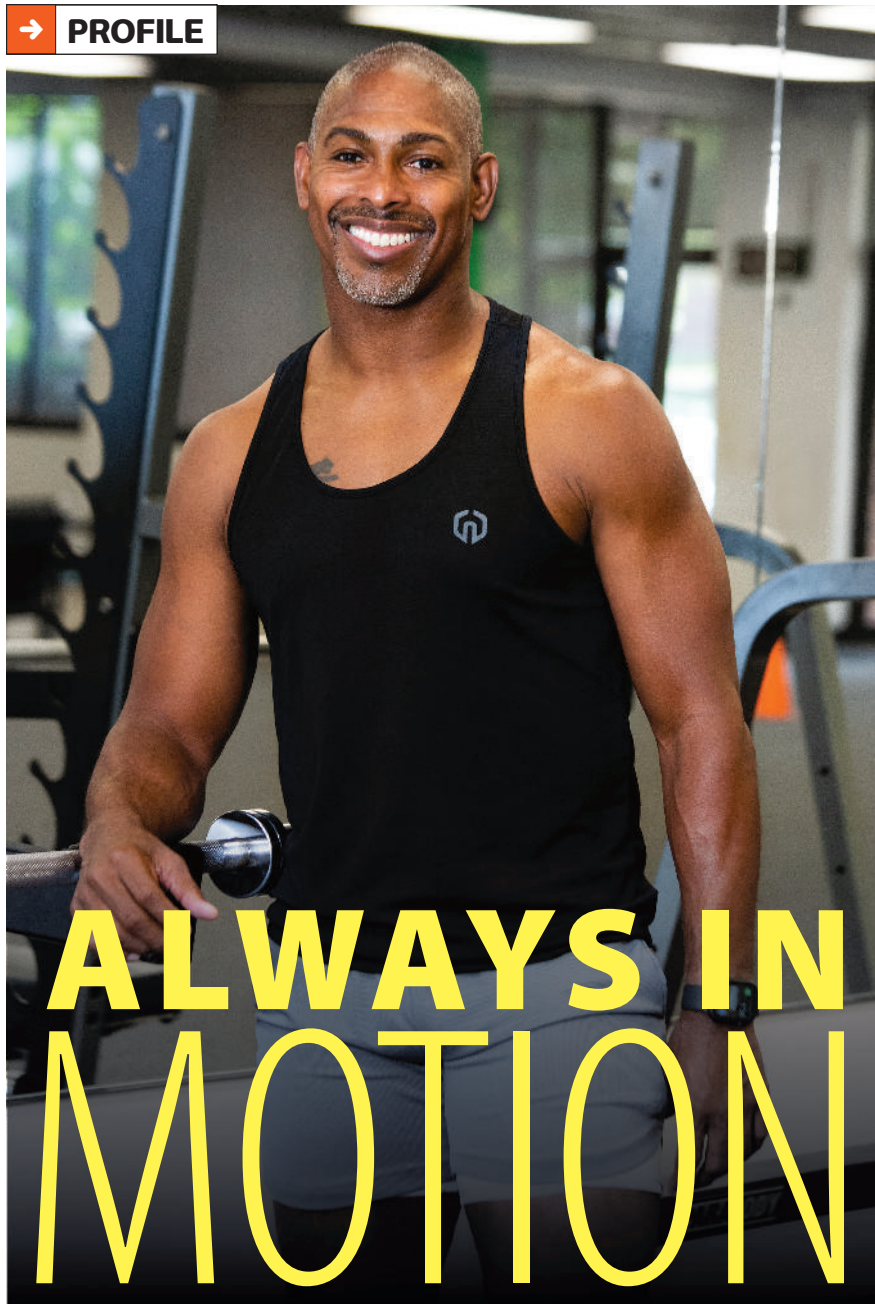


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As the creator of **VMS Movement Specialists**, former NFL running back **Vaughn Hebron** helps clients of all ages take a results-driven, team-based approach to improving lifelong fitness. page 24

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BY ERICA YOUNG | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALISON DUNLAP

As the creator of **VMS Movement Specialists**, former NFL running back **Vaughn Hebron** helps clients of all ages take a results-driven, team-based approach to improving lifelong fitness.

When it comes to building a health and fitness routine, sometimes the biggest deterrent to self-improvement can be one's own mind. That's especially true when someone has experienced sports- or workout-related injuries in the past.

Vaughn Hebron commits to defeating this mentality every day with VMS Movement Specialists, the functional movement fitness program he created after retiring from a career in the National Football League. With a focus on flexibility, core strength, balance, and strength through body-weight exercise, Hebron has earned a reputation for helping clients of all ages take back their bodies and their lives.

Hebron started his career as an NFL running back with the Philadelphia Eagles before moving on to the Denver Broncos, with whom he won two Super Bowl rings. In a game as

tough and hard-hitting as football, injuries are commonplace.

"I learned through football that you're constantly dealing with how to get beyond certain injuries," Hebron explains. "In that environment, I became really focused on keeping my body healthy to promote injury prevention. I loved the training aspect of my football career, keeping my body right. The focus on injury prevention helped me form the philosophy behind VMS that we are still practicing today."

Fitness for All

VMS Movement Specialists' clientele spans a wide range of ages and lifestyles, from age six to 70, and includes athletes, professionals, grandparents, and more. Such broad appeal is understandable: The program's commitment to functional movement, or real-world biomechanical movements that strengthen the core with the use of body weight, benefits everyone.

"At VMS, we're focusing on the same things at all ages," says Hebron. "As we get older, a lot of people abandon that functional movement, but if you do everything in the right process with a focus on modifications, you should be capable of exercising as long as you want to."

Hebron built the VMS program entirely by himself, with clients testing and proving its effectiveness. His training evolves constantly. Therefore, so does the program.

"All of my clients do the same workout that I have done, and I'm going to ask from them what I think they are capable of giving," he says. "I am able to monitor certain movements by watching my clients, and then I build modifications that I work and build myself."

That mentality follows clients from one-on-one sessions with Hebron to his classes, which are now offered over Zoom for convenience. Hebron says he tries "to take all the excuses away" in his classes by putting clients together with people who are of similar age or involved in similar activities. As a result, clients find themselves pushing harder and making stronger connections with one another, which, in turn, keeps them motivated.

Building a Legacy

Many trainers would admit that their clientele has notoriously high client turnover, but not Hebron. His clients have been a part of the VMS Movement Specialists team for an average of eight years; more than 20 clients have been training with him for 12 years or longer.

George T. Stollsteimer, M.D., takes pride in his 20-year relationship with Hebron and VMS Movement Specialists. As an orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Stollsteimer has experience in all levels of exercise injury, hence his appreciation for Hebron's approach.

"I've seen many surgeries from workouts that are being done wrong, and being at an intensity that isn't executed correctly," says Dr. Stollsteimer. "Vaughn's workout is analytical

and functional. He's focused on making sure you're doing each movement in the correct form, which significantly decreases the risk of injury."

Fifteen years ago, Dr. Stollsteimer referred VMS Movement Specialists to fellow orthopedic surgeon Kim Clabbers, M.D., and they have been working out together ever since. Dr. Clabbers says seeing Hebron work out alongside his clients provides the extra motivation she needs.

"He puts his money where his mouth is and is doing this workout right alongside us," she explains. "He focused and tasked himself with making these workouts harder for himself, and he has transformed this time into a way of making these workouts more intense. ... You're not exercising to be comfortable. You're exercising to gain and to achieve, and that's what I get in my workouts."

That's by design, according to Hebron.

"Every time you see me, there will be a point in the workout where you're uncomfortable," he says. "You should have some nerves approaching your workout, some anticipation of a challenge ahead, because you're changing and you're challenging yourself every time to produce results."

Making It Last

Having a stable and long-tenured client base means that Hebron connects with his clients beyond just the average workout; in fact,

Hebron has seen his clients through many elements of life.

"In February of 2018, I had a massive heart attack," says Dr. Stollsteimer. "All of my years of exercise and the collateral blood flow that developed allowed me to keep getting blood to my heart and helped me survive. Vaughn came to see me in the hospital. I asked, 'OK, where do I go now?' So, he built me a recovery program, and here I am three years later, back to doing my normal classes and workout."

Another VMS client, Liz Andrade, has been with Hebron for almost four years, a period during which she has welcomed two daughters. With Hebron's programming—and alongside her physician's suggestions—Andrade has been able to continue her fitness program throughout both pregnancies.

"Before I had my first baby two years ago, I wasn't sure what I should and shouldn't be doing during my pregnancy," says Andrade. "I wanted to remain consistent, and Vaughn paid attention to me and my body and what I needed. I worked out until about a week before my delivery date with my older daughter, and the day before my delivery with my youngest."

Consulting with her obstetrician, Andrade was able to return to working out with Hebron in a healthy and productive way just two weeks after the birth of each of her daughters.

"We started slower, doing modified versions of full-contact exercises while reintroducing them in a way that is concentrated and focused," says Andrade, who as of press time was five weeks post-pregnancy. "This is a time in my life when so much of my body was reserved for my family and my children, so it's been so important for me to get back to doing something for me, for myself, and for my body."

The results speak for themselves. Andrade and other VMS clients stay with Hebron not only because of the ways in which their training has improved their health and fitness, but also because they have built a lasting connection that has positively impacted virtually every aspect of their lives.

"[Hebron] calls us his VMS family, and it really is," says Dr. Stollsteimer. "Vaughn is always out there giving everything he can." ■



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