My alarm sounds at 4.30 am every day except Sundays- the one day in which I can rest. Although I am not hungry at such an early hour, I know I have to eat in order to have energy for the grueling swim session at 5.45 am. Breakfast consists of a banana and a protein drink. It is my first breakfast. My second comes when we are out of the pool, and consists of fruit and porridge.

I have a tough schedule. I begin in the pool for two hours. Although the coach is motivational and encouraging, he is also strict and will not accept excuses. For these two hours we are pushed beyond our normal limits with timed laps and races. Although I am friends with the other swimmers, there is often an element of competition between us as we all fight for first place and personal bests.

After the first pool session, we take a two hour break to replenish our energy, and then begin a two hour session in the gym. We work with a personal trainer who monitors our progress in both cardiovascular and strength training. It is important that we finish the session with intense stretches and massage as swimmers use every muscle in the body, and without proper cool downs, the muscles can tear and strain.

Once we are finished in the gym, I go home for a sleep- I am often exhausted after such intense training, even after starting at such a young age! I began professional swimming at high school. Mum would have to drive me to pool training sessions both before and after school every day. I would do my homework in the car and often crash out in bed as soon as I came home. There were many sacrifices made by both myself and my family, and there was never a promise of success. Even now, as a professional athlete, there are no luxuries. My life revolves around training and competition.

Life as a professional athlete is structured. You have to monitor what you eat, how much you sleep, and how many hours you train. I try to get eight hours sleep a night; however, there is often a lot of travelling as you move between competitions, which makes it difficult to keep to your normal routines. And of course, there are some days when all you want to do is sleep and eat burger and chips!

It has never crossed my mind to give up swimming as I love the sport so much. Competitions are exciting and there is no greater feeling than winning a race, or achieving a personal best. Although it is tough, the retiring age of an athlete is young, so I know I should make the most of it while I can.