



Magnus Scheving is the star, creator, producer and director of the world wide hit children's TV show [LazyTown](#).

He has 3 children and is married to Ragnheiður.

Magnus is a former Olympic gymnast and aerobics champion and was voted Iceland's Athlete of the Year in 1994.

### Dad in profile – Magnus Scheving – aka Sportacus from LazyTown

There's no denying the huge popularity of the off-the-wall children's series, [LazyTown](#) (currently shown on ABC, Nickleodeon and Nick Jr). The multi award-winning series is now shown all over the globe with press in the UK crediting the program with more influence in changing the eating and exercise habits of young children than any government or commercially funded campaign.

[LazyTown](#) takes the traditional formula of goody vs baddy in the quest to keep [LazyTown](#) healthy and active and combines traditional puppetry and real characters with computer graphics and state of the art technology.

Sportacus encourages the kids of [LazyTown](#) to eat "sports candy" (his word for fruits and vegetables of all kinds), and to play outside instead of just sitting around indoors playing video games or eating junk food.

Magnus Scheving, the show's star, creator, producer and director is a father of 3, former Olympic gymnast and aerobics champion.

**C4K:** You have three children. Did your experience with them give you the inspiration for the show or how did it come about?

**MS:** My kids have been my best teachers without a doubt. They have been my mini test-market and have been endless resource of ideas and motivation on how to improve.

**C4K:** How long did it take you to pull the project together? And given it's the most expensive children's show in the world, how on earth did you fund it?

**MS:** In the old days, I used to work three jobs. I was a carpenter, fitness teacher and a motivational speaker. I managed to put some money aside and that helped me with the initial financing. [LazyTown](#) started as a book in 1993 and soon turned into a play. Things started rolling slowly after that. I wrote more books and in 1999 there was another play, where Robbie Rotten was introduced to [LazyTown](#). I soon realized that [LazyTown](#) could go international but it would cost a lot of money. I had endless meetings with banks and independent investors. It may sound strange, but I used a lot of my experience from when I was a carpenter. It's obvious that you can't put in windows if you don't have any walls. So I set up milestones and deadlines for my business which I followed thru and investors learned to appreciate that. I often talk about the 111 rule. You get 1 for the idea, 10 for financing it and 100 for making it profitable. [LazyTown](#) is in 11

**C4K:** It's widely believed Icelanders are mad as cut snakes (as the Australians say!), and [LazyTown](#) is really quite a head spin for the average adult, even though the kids just accept it without question! How on earth did you come up with the mad mix of graphics/puppets and real characters?

**MS:** I wanted to create something that could be time-less. That explains the look of [LazyTown](#) It can be 1964 or 2064. Computer graphics give you the freedom to bend and twist things. Puppets give you more freedom and they don't age. Real characters give the human touch. You actually see Sportacus doing the things he does. It gives the show credibility and kids pick up on that. When you see Superman fly, you know it's a trick. When you see Sportacus do a double somersault with a twist, you know you can do that stuff if you practise. We put extreme work into the props. Everything is hand-made and we thought of every little detail. The look gives you a quality feeling and combined we have this wonderful world called [LazyTown](#).

**C4K:** The overall concept/message for the show is so simple and it's almost old-fashioned in its comic book feel, but it's obviously hugely complicated from a technical and creative perspective...How long does it take to put together each episode?

**MS:** The secret behind the episodes is extremely talented staff that all had the same goal; to create a top quality show for children with a healthy message. It turned out that everyone wanted to work with us. Some came because we used ground breaking HD technology. Some people came because they loved to work with puppets etc. Another big factor is that everything is done under one roof. From an idea of a script

to a final HD master. Each episode took 6.1 days in shooting. Then it took ca. 4 weeks in post production. I have one golden rule. I never cut corners when it comes to kids. It didn't take long for my staff to pick up on that and everyone gave their 150% - always.

**C4K:** Do you do all your own stunts and moves?

**MS:** No, but that said, I do many of them. Some shooting days could be really intense. I think the record was 3000 various jumps in one day!

**C4K:** What's been the high point of the [LazyTown](#) journey for you so far?

**MS:** It has been an unbelievable experience to realise that [LazyTown](#) works. We get thousands of mail and letters from kids and parents, telling us that they have changed their lifestyle because of [LazyTown](#). Recently I was on a business trip in Chile. There was a knock on the door of my hotel room and a woman asked me if I was willing to come downstairs to the lobby to meet some kids from the kindergarten she ran. Of course I went downstairs and have never been so surprised in my life. 100 kids showed me all sorts of Sportacus and Stephanie moves they had been practising in their school and ended with showing me a short [LazyTown](#) play they had created. I don't want to sound too sentimental but this brought me to tears.

**C4K:** With everything that you do around the world as well as home, do you still have time to muck around with your own children?

**MS:** I can shift my focus pretty fast, so when I'm with the kids playing, I'm doing nothing else, and that's what we usually do at home. People often ask me how I have time to work out and I tell them that keeping up with my kids is the hardest and most giving work out I've experienced.

**C4K:** What do they think about you and [LazyTown](#)? Do they know you're Sportacus?

**MS:** My kids love [LazyTown](#). They have grown up knowing that their father sometimes dresses up in a blue suit and calls himself Sportacus. It has never been an issue really.

**C4K:** Who looks after the children while you and Ragnheiður run the [LazyTown](#) Entertainment empire?

**MS:** It's all about teamwork. Sometimes Ragnheiður goes home early to greet the kids when they come home from school. And sometimes I try to work from home so Ragnheiður can take meetings at the office. It's a cliché, but behind every man is a strong woman. I am extremely lucky to have Ragnheiður as my partner and best friend. Together we are an unbeatable team.

**C4K:** How do you stay fit and healthy?

**MS:** It's extremely difficult to define what's healthy. What's healthy for a 5 year old kid may be something totally different than what's healthy for a 65 year old woman. I always say it's a mental thing. If you truly believe you are healthy, you will be healthy. You will always find a way. Many people blame lack of time for not exercising. Well I don't go to the gym that often, but I try to look at the whole day as an endless opportunity to move. Take the stairs, do crunches while listening to a presentation, lift yourself up in the chair while sitting in on long phone-meetings. I even turn it into a challenge. How can I possibly turn this meeting into activity?

**C4K:** What's your key advice to parents trying to keep their children healthy and active?

**MS:** If there's only one thing I could say, it's this; Turn it into a game! The possibilities are endless. I sometimes tell the story about when my family starting biking together. Just biking around our small town wasn't that exciting, so I made up a small game. I wrote down a word, let's say Kangaroo, and then the kids had to find things that spelled that word, during our bike ride. Something that started with K, then something that started with the word A and so on. When we came home we played a little game of tag in the garden, where you could only jump like a Kangaroo. Then after dinner we watched an old Skippy movie. I love things like this. We managed to do many things at the same time. Exercise, practise the alphabet, have fun in the

garden and learn about an animal that lives on the other side of the earth!

**C4K:** What's your favourite Sport Candy?

**MS:** I still haven't tasted Sports Candy I didn't like. Frozen grapes have been an instant hit at my home. Just take fresh grapes, put them in a bag or a bowl, and put them in the freezer. When you want something sweet and fresh, they're the best thing ever.

**C4K:** How do you react to the accolade of being the yummy mummies' crumpet?!

**MS:** Terrific! It was something I never aimed at but it was a pleasant surprise when started getting fan-mail from, well let's say, not the target audience we had in mind in the beginning. But I think that is one of the key elements about [LazyTown](#). It has universal appeal and affects all ages. We even heard about one home for the elderly that shifted their lunch time for 15 minutes so they could catch [LazyTown](#) on the telly!

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