

# “Parents should make exercise fun”

Award-winning TV show *LazyTown* is back with a new series. We talk to its creator and star, dad-of-three Magnus Scheving, about healthy eating, Sportacus and dancing in the White House...

Whether he's robbing with the Obamas, defeating onscreen arch-enemy Robbie Rotten, or simply cycling around the countryside of his native Iceland with his children, Magnus Scheving is always on a mission. The 48-year-old former Olympic gymnast has spent the last two decades trying to spread the healthy lifestyle message to parents and children across the world. If his name isn't familiar, you'll probably recognise his blue-Lycra-clad alter-ego Sportacus, the acrobatic, clean-living hero of *LazyTown*, who helps Stephanie and her friends overcome the lary schemes of Robbie Rotten. The show, which is a mix of live action, puppetry and CGI, became a global hit when it first aired in 2004. Children everywhere wanted to try Sports Candy – the *LazyTown* name for fruit

and vegetables – and take a ride in Sportacus's airship. After a six-year break, the long-awaited third series will hit our screens in April. We caught up with Magnus to find out more...



Magnus is looking forward to his new series

**What was the inspiration behind *LazyTown*?**  
My parents were teachers, so the talk in our house was always "How can education be better?". When I was older, I looked at entertainment and thought there was nothing with real values about health. There was Popeye and he ate spinach, but he also smoked and hit people, so you'd think maybe he's not the best role model for children... I wanted to do something different, but I know the challenge would be huge, because how can education

and vegetables – and take a ride in Sportacus's airship. After a six-year break, the long-awaited third series will hit our screens in April. We caught up with Magnus to find out more...



## Celeb interview



to learn to clean their room! So those are the *LazyTown* characters and when people look at the show, they recognise these characters in themselves. No one wants to be a superhero all day long, so maybe you are Sportacus on your best day and the next day you're like Robbie Rotten. *LazyTown* is a tool for parents to raise healthy children.

**What are some of the practical things parents can do to encourage their children to be more active?**

I don't believe children should exercise or eat. I think parents should turn it into a game. Put fruit and veg around the house and call it Sports Candy. Get a picture of an animal and then go on a scavenger hunt around the garden finding things that start with the same letter as that animal, because then you're moving at the same time as learning and playing. In my household one year, I got a bowl and said to my children, "We're going to draw pictures of 32 activities that we've never done before and put them in the bowl." Then we picked one each Saturday and we did it. They loved it.

**You went to the White House in 2010 and met the First Lady, Michelle Obama. What was that all about?**

I wrote a book called Let's Move 16 years ago, so when she started her Let's Move campaign to encourage American children to get healthier, I thought, "That's great, I have already done it and can go and show her what we have done". She can shine the light on the issues because she'll be the first lady and will get an enormous amount of press.

We did a commercial together to try to get kids moving. I went into the White House in my Sportacus costume and she came in with her dog and we had children with us in a

fantastic room with crystal lights – I was really afraid that I would break them by jumping around! It was an amazing, unforgettable experience.

**We don't have anyone fronting a campaign like that in the UK – do you think we're doing enough to educate parents?**  
It's a tricky one. The British one doesn't [to Americans], they're a little like Icelanders – they don't want to be told what to do, they just want to do it themselves. I would like to motivate them without explicitly telling them. I think it's possible to do more, if you travel around the country, some cities are not that good from a health perspective.

**What's next for the *LazyTown* franchise? We heard that there were plans to open restaurants... Everyone is looking forward to the new series, as we haven't done one since 2006. Then we have a live show, and we are working on a *LazyTown* lifestyle club, to make your children healthier in one year. We give them 365 superhero tasks, such as brushing their teeth, eating vegetables and cooking, and they need to do one every day. We'll have it as a pack and you can sign up to be a member. We're going to take it worldwide. I've been working on the club for five years. I think it's really important to give parents those tools. They want to do a good job and they want help. But it's not telling them what to do – it's just giving them ideas. We have a restaurant concept and mini-movies too.**

Robbie Rotten in a seltzy villainous pose



**Series 3 of *LazyTown* will air on Cartoonito (Sky 819, Virgin Media 704) in April. Find out more at cartoonito.co.uk**

Clean-living Sportacus (above) inspires the residents of *LazyTown* (below)



<http://www.mediafire.com/?852vnwkadifpgjp>

<http://magnusschevinginterviewarchive.neocities.org>

<http://sportacus10.lazytown.eu>