

Charismatic character

JAMES SET HIS HEART ON BECOMING THE ULTIMATE GLADIATOR AND MADE HIS MARK AS THE HUGELY POPULAR HUNTER

Words by: Lucy Speed



I have to confess my knowledge of James Crossley extends beyond this interview. He's a friend. A very close family friend. He was our best man and gave a speech that will go down in history! Because of that familiarity, I jumped at the chance to interview him because to know James is to be fascinated by him.

Everyone who comes into his trajectory (with a few sporadic exceptions!) is immediately drawn into his orbit.

He strikes an imposing and magnetic figure. Over 6 foot tall and 110kg, with the wingspan of a 747 and, as my dad would say, muscles on his muscles. None of those things, though, are the immediate pull or enduring impression. Instead, it is an indefinable essence. A charisma, warmth and humour that is rambunctiously irresistible. His booming laugh and apparent joy and immersion in the moment are intoxicating. He attracts characters as fascinating as he, forever swimming new waters, absorbing others, and making them tick as ferociously as he learns new skills and commits to old habits. He, very happily for my husband and me, is equally loyal to old friends too.

James does not talk about himself. This is one reason that his company is so keenly sought. He's interested in everything and everyone, and it feels like living. Real top to toe living, and we all like to be around that. It rubs off. Embracing opportunity entirely is a talent and a task in equal measure. One that James seems to have trained himself to do from a very early age. I wanted to know how he managed to have the lightest disposition in the heaviest of vessels. Is it coincidence or design? A bit of both? James is very clear where his journey began; that clarity is an enduring thread in his life and perhaps the very reason his achievements have been so abundant and impressive.

"I knew from aged 12 what my goal was and was blinkered in my pursuit of it," he tells me.

His brother played no small part in planting the seed. Older and bigger and like all big brothers, less inclined to let his little brother play with him and his friends. This twinned with a healthy obsession with 80's tv show *The Incredible*