

# health club management

JULY 2009 £4.00

INTERVIEW

## CONSTANCE & PEDRO RUIZ

on expanding  
women-only  
franchise Vivafit  
outside Portugal

## exercise & the brain

Harvard professor  
John Ratey outlines  
the benefits

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT...

### OVER-EXERCISING

SHOULD WE INTERVENE IF WE THINK  
MEMBERS ARE DOING TOO MUCH?



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publication  
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<sup>1</sup> Source: Euromonitor Sports Nutrition 2008 + AC Nielsen Sports Drinks 52 weeks to 27/12/08.



# training GPs

In this issue, you can read about the FIA's Summit and FLAME Conference which was held recently in Bolton (page 18) – congratulations to the teams at the FIA and Fitpro who made this such a thought-provoking couple of days.

At the Summit, FIA chair Fred Turok laid out the FIA's vision for the future with passion and conviction, telling delegates that a major direction for our industry must continue to be collaboration with the medical profession.

As we push forward with this work, we have three distinct groups to bring together: GPs and other NHS services, exercise scientists and fitness professionals. Our task is to build links between these three groups which are based on common expertise, research, respect and teamwork.

At the moment, there's little shared ground between doctors and exercise scientists, and little overlap between exercise scientists and fitness professionals, so we're not getting the benefit of the potential synergies which exist.

When you look at the bigger picture and at the clinical evidence which proves the importance of

exercise in relation to almost every aspect of health, from mobility to brain health (page 42) and from emotional health to overall longevity, it seems inconceivable that these disciplines are absent from GPs' training. However, when you overlay the training a GP receives with that of an exercise scientist, there's very little overlap.

Modern allopathic medicine mainly focuses on curative regimes – drug interventions, surgery, trauma and social care, for example – and GPs receive little training in areas which examine the impact of exercise on the body and its power to prevent and cure

**GPs' training should be lengthened to include an element of exercise science, so they're equipped to refer patients – as they do with ENT or cardiac specialists, for example**

disease. The current government has recognised the power of prevention and has steered policy strongly in this direction but, in spite of this, GPs still remain largely outside the loop.

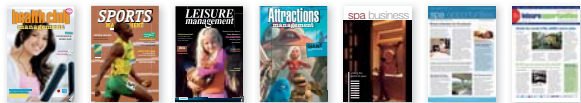
We would argue that GPs' training should be lengthened to include an element of exercise science, so they're equipped to refer their patients to exercise scientists and fitness professionals – as they do with ENT or cardiac specialists, for example. GPs are, by definition, generalists, and the system only works because they know enough to be aware when they need to refer a patient.

The final piece of the jigsaw will be the link between exercise science and the fitness profession, and this must also be developed and respected so that health club operators employ enough exercise scientists and high-level fitness professionals to ensure they have in-house expertise that allows the link back into the NHS to be a sound and sustainable one.

Much great work has been done in the exercise science community, and world class research exists to show the impact of exercise on health and wellness. This industry is now becoming ready to bear the scrutiny of the medics. We must look forward to a time when exercise science finds its place as a medical specialism, and the health and fitness industry respects it and is strongly linked to it, both in the way we train and recruit staff and also in the way we operate our clubs.

**Liz Terry, editor**

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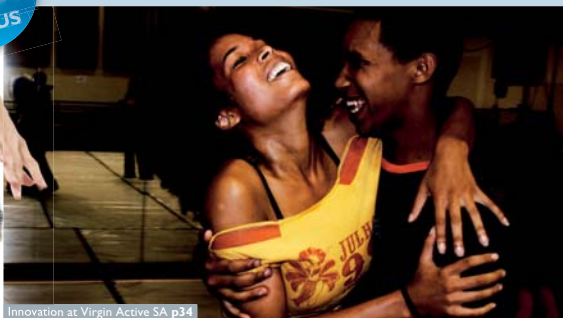
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# write to reply



Do you have a strong opinion or disagree with somebody else's views on the industry? If so, we'd love to hear from you – email: [healthclub@leisuremedia.com](mailto:healthclub@leisuremedia.com)

## co-operation with all potential partners is key to success

I read Lisa Taylor's feature on partnering with PCTs (*HCM* June 09, p46) with interest, as this is closely linked to the principles of strategic commissioning and outcome measurement – both of which are key in our drive to improve the services of the culture and sport sector.

Councils have a duty to promote wellbeing, but going forward there will be a 'comprehensive area assessment' which will assess all those involved – usually a local strategic partnership with a series of priority action areas and KPIs, often including health. So yes, there must be

close contact with PCTs, but also with all other bodies who have a direct interest. We must all work together to address issues around health – obesity, social cohesion, education, community safety. Find out if you have a local CLOA member and use them: contact us for help.

Lisa calls for an understanding of local government commissioning; she might need to wait while we gain this! But we're beginning to appreciate the need to understand our partners' agenda, especially the PCT, and really demonstrate how we can deliver. There are some excellent examples but, as Lisa says, this is a real challenge. We must engender trust in potential partners; to do so, we must be more confident in ourselves. A key issue is to understand that we can't just measure inputs: we must be much better at measuring outcomes and impacts.

The signs are that we're getting there. It will be a major challenge to engage the private sector within these partnerships, with barriers such as competition, trust, culture clashes and resources – but we miss these opportunities at our peril.

**david albutt**  
policy officer, cloa



**We need more programmes, like MEND, which measure outcomes**



**E-learning: Does it offer as much interaction as classroom studies?**

### online learning encourages active participation

I read the article Home Delivery (*HCM* June 09, p68) and the positive press about e-learning is exciting. We've been offering e-learning in fitness for over 10 years; during that time, we've overcome much criticism and objection from many non-believers. Thankfully, organisations such as Active IQ shared our foresight early on and not only supported our approach but began to do the same.

However, I contest the supposed lack of interaction students experience with e-learning. Physical isolation does not mean social isolation; the internet is all about connections. We use online study groups and, as a result, student interaction is extensive. Our system, provided by ALTeRD, enables students to discuss courses in much greater detail. All students may bring questions to the group and share knowledge and experience; in a face-to-face class, this can be prevented by lack of time, tutors and/or dominant personalities.

With e-learning, everyone has the opportunity to have their say, more experienced students help new students, new students bring fresh ideas to the table, and there is a whole internet of information that can be shared – all resulting in a great reference area for future instructors and personal trainers.

**michael betts**  
director, fitness industry education

## the letter of the law

**Taking early legal advice can often prevent a problem becoming a dispute. The team at Croner Consulting answers readers' questions**

**Q** A new fitness club has opened up down the road with a very similar name to ours. Is there anything we can do?

**A** It's important to distinguish between a company name and a trading style. The company name is that which is registered at Companies House, whereas the trading style will be the brand under which the business trades. If the registered company name is the same or very similar, you can object to the adjudicator through the UK Intellectual Property Office. If it's the trading style, and yours is registered as a trademark, you will have to show that the competitor's mark is the same or so similar as to cause confusion among the public, and that you had prior use of the name. If so, the competitor will be presumed to be infringing. If the trading style has not been registered as a trademark, the case is much more difficult. However, the courts will sometimes prevent other companies using an unregistered trading style where it is particularly distinctive.

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# DARE TO BE DIFFERENT?

Taking a chance on one of the many latest innovations in CV equipment is not without risk, but it's also not without reward

**G**et it right, and you've made an inspired choice, one that will have members singing your praises as they enjoy a workout on your new wonder machine. Get it wrong, and your expensive new asset will look increasingly redundant with every spec of dust it gathers.

With varying degrees of success, equipment manufacturers continue to introduce 'new generation' CV products, with the aspiration of providing members with something they simply can't do without. There's certainly a potential pot of gold for gyms, as many of the early adopters following the 1995 launch of the elliptical cross trainer will testify.

Acquiring a popular new piece of equipment invigorates members. It can provide new impetus for moderates becoming tired of traditional CV staples such as the treadmill, and can also

dissuade advanced fitness enthusiasts from casting admiring glances towards other facilities in the area. Aside from improving retention, new equipment can also help to catch the eye of potential new members. When conducting tours, operators are never slow to highlight equipment that they hope stands them out from local competition. After all, such differentiation can prove to be the unique selling point that turns a potential customer into a new member.

## the new category

Precor's Adaptive Motion Trainer (AMT) has just celebrated its second birthday, and the popularity of this world-first continues. With multiple awards to its name, and thousands of units now shipped to over 60 countries, the AMT has not only evaded the 'niche' tag, but has created a new category,

much the same as Precor's trailblazing cross trainer did 14 years earlier. So, why has the AMT succeeded where so many others have failed?

In reality, a number of factors determine a new entrant's success or failure but, ultimately, the fate of any new type of CV equipment is decided by the member. Many new movement products fail because the user doesn't find the machine intuitive and enjoyable enough to use on a regular basis, while just as many fail because the user doesn't feel that it's helping them get results.

In terms of a facility's CV equipment, treadmills and cross trainers are the 'ever presents', and the reasons behind this are the very same reasons behind the AMT's burgeoning profile in gyms across the country. Treadmills remain popular due to the freedom of movement afforded to the user, the 'get on and go' ease of use, and the high rate of perceived exertion, which makes for a rewarding workout. Meanwhile, cross trainers also have a broad member appeal, by providing an intuitive, low-impact workout, which engages a variety of muscle groups and offers a versatile fitness experience. The AMT effectively combines the most attractive elements of both types of machine – providing a zero-impact, free-motion workout that's as different and challenging as every individual user wants it to be.

## freedom of motion

Toby Giles is an exercise specialist and personal trainer, who has specialised in the areas of strength and weight loss while working with clubs across the south of England. Giles says: "I think the reason the AMT has been so successful is that a vast majority of users adapt to the natural movement of the machine within seconds of stepping on to it. The complete freedom of stride length and variety of resistance levels keeps both the beginner and the advanced member coming back for more, because they can see the positive results. Like the treadmill and elliptical cross trainer before, the AMT has provided 'everything for everyone', and that's why it's succeeding."



**Climb:** Similar to stair climbing, this exercises all the muscles in the leg



**Short strides:** Similar to walking and great for calves and quads



**Mid-range strides:** Like a jogging motion, really works the hamstrings and glutes



**Long strides:** Similar to running, for total-body engagement



New category Precor invented  
the cross trainer in 1995 and now  
its AMT is another world-first



While the AMT boasts the technical merits to deliver superior results to members, ensuring instructors and members understand its potential has also been key. Members are often reluctant to try new machines and this situation can often be compounded if instructors aren't properly educated about the machine and its benefits. With this in mind, Precor has provided an array of educational materials to accompany the AMT, from instructor manuals, a bespoke website and tutorial DVDs for gym staff, through to point-of-sale materials to encourage members to incorporate the AMT into their workout routine.

Encouraging member feedback is always best practice and Precor has embraced this principle from the AMT's inception, by encouraging facilities to

survey their members. Hundreds of new users have completed questionnaires about their experiences of the AMT, and the quantitative and qualitative information obtained has vindicated investment made by facilities. Overall, 97 per cent of users surveyed enjoyed using the AMT, 92 per cent would recommend it to a friend and, as further endorsement, 45 per cent now consider the AMT to be their favourite machine.

#### ahead of the competition

Operators continually seek genuine competitive advantage, which is easier said than done in an ultra-competitive marketplace where members have such vast freedom of choice and all too regularly exercise that freedom. However, the proliferation of the AMT in such a short space of time suggests

that many operators have found an innovative new attraction and retention tool. Sports and Leisure Management (SLM) Ltd is one of the UK's most established leisure management contractors, managing 60 leisure centres and serving a customer base of nearly half a million people. SLM's commercial director, Neil King, concludes: "It's a genuine point of differentiation for us – we're attracting new members because we have AMTs, but we also know that our existing customers appreciate the investment we've made by bringing AMTs into our facilities. Our clubs now have a huge number of AMT fans, and these customers know that they won't necessarily find an AMT at a competitor down the road, which certainly doesn't harm retention rates."

## in brief...

**roefield gets the go-ahead**

Ribble Valley Council has approved proposals to improve Roefield Leisure Centre in Clitheroe.

A £1.1m investment will provide a new fitness suite equipped with 46 stations of Life Fitness cardiovascular and resistance equipment. There will also be daily access to services such as the Time Out Youth Activity Centre and the GP Exercise on Prescription Scheme.

Additional facilities at the centre, operated by Ribble Valley Sport and Recreation, will include a new aerobics and dance studio, meeting rooms and a crèche.

**upgrades to waverley clubs**

Waverley Borough Council is to invest £9.1m in refurbishing two of its leisure centres.

The council, in conjunction with operator DC Leisure, chose London-based design firm ISG to carry out the improvements at its Farnham Sports Centre and Cranleigh Leisure Centre sites.

Work at the Cranleigh property, which is due to begin early this month, will include a new, larger gym, an improved reception area and enhanced wet and dry changing facilities. Farnham will receive a new two-storey extension at the front of the building, a new fitness suite, and an upgrade of the sports hall and dry-side changing areas.

**new centre for croydon**

Construction work on a new leisure centre in Waddon, near Croydon, is expected to begin next spring.

According to the *Croydon Guardian*, the centre will feature a six-lane swimming pool, two dance studios, a sports hall and a gym.

The council is building the centre as part of its wider regeneration scheme, called the Urban Regeneration Vehicle (URV) – a joint venture with its private sector partner, development firm John Laing. Subject to planning permission, the centre is expected to open in 2011.

## first énergie fit4less opens

Fit4less, a new franchise budget club chain created by The énergie Group, has launched with the opening of the first club in Swindon, Wiltshire.

The 'no frills' centre – the first of 20 set to open by the end of 2010, including 10 in 2009 – will not offer contracts to members, has no joining fee and will cost £16.99 a month. The club offers a 50-station gym with free weights and 30 pieces of resistance kit, a solarium, studio area, changing facilities and a members' lounge.

Although many facilities associated with a health club – such as a sauna, swimming pool and spa – have been stripped away to cut costs, the gym does offer sports massage and a hair salon. Fitness classes and personal training will be offered at an extra cost.

"This is the ideal concept for anyone who likes to work out, shower and leave," says general manager Ben Palmer. "The majority of people who are members of a health club never use the pool or spa but continue to pay high prices. Fit4less can save people hundreds of pounds a year."

"It's still a professional gym and we demand high quality and high standards throughout. However, all the frills and



**The new Fit4less club has no contracts and costs just £16.99 a month**

'extras' have been removed to keep our own costs to a minimum, which allows us to pass this on to the customer."

Chief executive of The énergie Group, Jan Spaticchia, says: "We're looking to introduce Fit4less in multiple towns and cities in Britain through our successful franchise support scheme, which empowers people to own their own business and be their own boss."

The second club will open in Inverness, Scotland, in September, followed by four sites in north London. All first two clubs were once part of the Fitness First portfolio, recently acquired by The énergie Group.

## fx leisure opens flagship club



**FX Leisure offers 110 stations of Precor and Life Fitness equipment**

Independent operator FX Leisure has announced the opening of its flagship £4m health club in Leyland, Lancashire.

The 650sq m (7,000sq ft gym) at FX Leisure Leyland offers 110 stations of equipment, supplied by Life Fitness and Precor, plus three exercise studios, two Vibrogyms and a free weights area.

Other facilities at the 1,860sq m (20,000sq ft) club include two steamrooms, a Swedish sauna and a 20m indoor and outdoor swimming pool, as well as less conventional offerings such as a movie room where exercisers can train while watching blockbuster films, a free DVD rental service, a café and an independently-run hair and beauty salon.

FX Leisure currently has seven clubs – in Wigan, Warrington, Blackpool, East Manchester, Congleton and Gateshead – with another two due to launch in 2010.



## Changing the rules...

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Assuming we have a decent summer, many more of us will want to take full advantage of it by adding more outdoor activities to our exercise regimes. In fact what better way to exercise and keep fit than to do it in the fresh air!

There are so many activities that you can do to keep fit and enjoy. Of course many of us walk, run and cycle, but for those of you interested in challenging yourself, the summer brings us the triathlon season – so you can add 'open' water swimming to the list of activities too!

There are also lots of activities to improve strength, power and muscular endurance too. Outdoor circuit classes for example are becoming more and more popular either as individual sessions with a personal trainer or as part of an organised 'event'. The beauty about these activities is that they are varied, simple, fun, and sociable.

However, the key to maximising all of these activities is clear direction, goals and of course focus. This doesn't mean our outdoor activities have to become strictly 'training' per se, but rather that simple guidance and clear direction on what to do, when and at what level will improve the chances of any individual achieving their fitness goals.

#### Nick Morgan

Head of Sport Science for Lucozade Sport

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Cybex has equipped the new gym

## gym overhaul for queen's club

Queen's Club in West Kensington, London, has undergone an £85,000 refurbishment to its fitness facilities.

Established in 1886, the club was named after its first patron, Queen Victoria, and is one of the first Lawn Tennis and Racquet clubs in the world.

The facility, owned by members of the Lawn Tennis Association, has had its gym doubled in size to 1,672sq m (1,800sq ft). The new gym, converted from former meeting rooms, has been fitted with £50,000 worth of Cybex kit, including 15 CV stations and strength equipment from the Eagle and VRI Dual ranges.

There is also a dedicated stretch area and two treatment rooms for massages, osteopathy and physiotherapy. The old gym has been transformed into an aerobics studio.

The club also offers 45 courts: 12 grass, 10 indoor, eight shale and clay, four plexi and four artificial grass courts, in addition to two racket, two real tennis and three squash courts.

## ricky hatton launches centre

Boxer Ricky Hatton has opened a new £2m health and fitness centre in Hyde, Greater Manchester, following eight months in development.

Formerly occupied by a print works, the 1,000sq m (10,764sq ft) Hatton Health and Fitness Centre opened on 12 May and features an 85-station gym equipped by Cybex, along with two Power Plate machines.

A new floor has been added to provide a boxing area – including two rings, bags and speed balls – while two studios offer a range of classes such as group cycling and conditioning.

Facilities at the centre, which had already secured more than 300 members ahead of its opening, also include a reception and refreshment area, a shop selling Hatton's clothing line, a sauna and changing rooms.

Wellbeing treatments and therapies such as sports massage are also provided as part of the offering.



Boxer Ricky Hatton (centre) with members of the Power Plate team

## new outdoor gyms for liverpool

New outdoor gym equipment has been installed in six Liverpool parks after research revealed that local residents over the age of 50 were unlikely to use a conventional gym to keep fit and healthy.

The study was carried out by Liverpool City Council (LCC) and Liverpool Primary Care Trust (PCT). As part of the city's Year of the Environment initiative, the PCT has invested £100,000 in the new scheme to get more people active.

Wicksteed Playscapes has provided the equipment, which has been installed at Croxeth Country Park, Dovecot Park, Calderstones Park and Otterspool

Park, as well as Everton Park and Walton Hall Sports Centre.

LCC executive member for the environment, Berni Turner, says: "Liverpool still has huge health problems and we have one of the highest levels of heart disease in the country. Ideas like these will only help to improve fitness."

"Research shows that older generations don't like to use conventional gyms, so giving them another, greener option will suit them better. This equipment can be used by the family and will set a great example to the younger generation when they see their parents or grandparents getting active."



Proposed centre will offer facilities designed to increase local participation

## plans for £58m aquatic centre

Plans for the £58m Birmingham Aquatics and Leisure Centre have been revealed for public consultation.

The proposals include a 50m swimming pool and an Olympic diving facility able to accommodate training sessions by visiting teams during the Olympics, as well as a leisure pool with slides and a teaching pool.

A fitness suite will house exercise studios, saunas and steamrooms, while sports facilities on offer will include an eight-court sports hall, four five-a-side pitches and a two-storey climbing wall.

The community leisure and swimming pool complex will also provide a crèche,

a soft play area, a café, meeting rooms and a community policing room.

Cllr Martin Mullaney, cabinet member for leisure, sports and culture, says:

"One of our biggest challenges is to increase sports participation in Birmingham and this development forms a major element of our city-wide sports facilities strategy.

"It's important to stress that this is not just about providing a facility for elite performers and attracting Olympic teams prior to 2012. We're looking to provide the people of this city with the top-class sports facilities they deserve." Work is scheduled to start in October.

## council acquires roko health club

Bournemouth Borough Council (BBC) has acquired the town's ROKO Health Club from The Sport and Leisure Group to provide more public leisure facilities for the local community.

The centre will be rebranded as Pelhams Park Leisure Centre and memberships will be transferred.

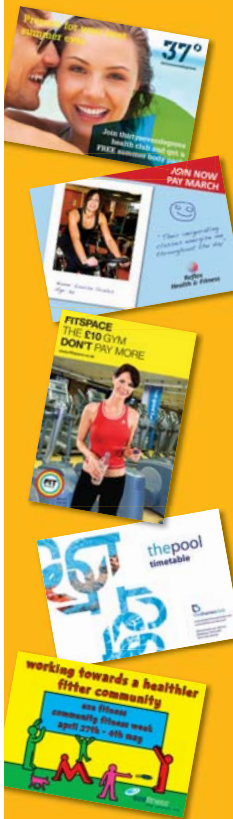
Current facilities at the club include a gym and aerobics studio, a beauty salon and three tennis courts, although the gym and aerobics studios will not be available for 'pay as you go' use until October.

## gll signs 15-year contract

Sports trust Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL) has signed a 15-year partnership agreement with Hackney Council to manage six leisure centres in the London borough.

GLL has managed the facilities for the past three and a half years on an interim basis and has achieved Customer Service Excellence accreditation for all six leisure centres. GLL now plans to invest £7.4m in developing the facilities.

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## training news

## leeds college joins nsa

Leeds Trinity & All Saints college in Yorkshire has introduced a new foundation degree for people aspiring to be physical activity teachers.

As Academy Provider for Community Sports Enterprise – accredited by the National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure (NSA) – the college has introduced Supporting Learning: Sport, Physical Education and Health. This work-based degree programme is designed for teaching assistants, sports coaches, youth workers and health advisors who are looking to learn new ways to educate young people about healthy lifestyles.

A variety of short courses have also been introduced including Sports Nutrition, Sports Drinks, Fitness Testing, Eating Disorders, Sports Psychology and Doping in Sport.

## new course for minorities

YMCAfit is re-running its free kids' fitness instructor course to get more women from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities working in the fitness industry and participating in physical activity.

The course is the fourth of five government-funded programmes to run since November 2008, aimed at unemployed women from Bangladeshi, Pakistani or Somali communities in London's Newham and Tower Hamlets areas.

The 10-week scheme offers BME women the chance to become a qualified kids' fitness instructor. It's the second time this YMCA Kids' Fitness Play & Games Instructor course has run, following its success in February 2009.

The course is designed to equip women with the skills to plan and teach exercise classes for children, as well as monitor changes to their fitness levels and wellbeing.

Each participant is supported by a mentor and, once qualified, receives help in finding a job or to source further training. The courses are co-financed by the Tower Hamlets Council, Newham Council and the European Social Fund.

## trixter directors complete mbo



Murray, Mills and Rice at the Indoor Mountain Bike World Championships

Three directors of UK-based fitness equipment supplier Trixter have completed a management buy-out (MBO) of the company.

Chief executive Michael Rice, managing director Patrick Murray and service director John Mills have purchased the core businesses, global rights, intellectual properties, products and services to all Trixter brands.

The management team secured a financing package worth more than £1m to complete the deal, which includes the

new company Trixter Europe, as well as subsidiaries Trixter North America and the i3Sport software arm.

Rice says: "This deal puts the Trixter brand and products in a much stronger position in the current economic climate and provides us with a clear platform to fund worldwide expansion."

Trixter has recently taken on distributors in South Africa and Australia, to help service Virgin Active clubs in these countries, and is in talks with distributors in Germany, Italy and Benelux.

## cybex's new pink treadmill to support research



In the pink: Cybex's new treadmill

Cybex International will launch its first pink treadmill to support The Breast Cancer Research Foundation during Breast Cancer Awareness Month – October 2009.

For every mile logged on the pink 750T treadmill in the United States throughout the month of October, Cybex will donate 10 cents to the Foundation. The pink treadmill is aimed at health clubs, YMCAs, hotels, spas and gyms.

## star trac scores football deal

Star Trac has announced it will be sponsoring the 2009 Master Football Cup for the fourth year running.

Star Trac installed five Spinner NXT exercise bikes for use by the players in between games, to help maintain their fitness levels. The event started in June and will end in a grand final in September.

"Star Trac has built a strong relationship with Masters over the past

four years and we're proud to continue to work as a successful partnership.

"Our involvement with Gatorade has helped them come on board as official drinks partner, so now the players not only reduce the risk of injury by warming up on our equipment, they can also keep themselves sufficiently hydrated during the game," says Matt Pengelly, UK managing director of Star Trac.

# REDEFINING THE USER EXPERIENCE

EXPECT MORE WITH THE NEW MATRIX 7 SERIES CV & STRENGTH RANGES

**M**atrix Fitness Systems is redefining the user experience with its new, innovative, premium CV and strength equipment, the 7 Series.

The 7 Series CV range all include Vista Clear Television Technology, available with either 15" LCD touch screen consoles in the 7xe models or a 7" LCD for the 7x models.

The 7xe CV range made its first UK appearance at The Country Club Group (CCG) sites in Cranleigh, Surrey in June and Slinfold, West Sussex in July – the first two CCG clubs to be developed from golf-only to a full country club offering (see *HCM* May 09, p34). Abbeycroft Leisure Trust will also incorporate 7x and 7xe CV products, plus the G7 strength series, at Haverhill Leisure Centre in July.

"We chose to work with Matrix primarily due to the superb new equipment range which provides cutting edge design, attractive proportions and competitive prices. In addition, the support provided by the Matrix team during the development of the two clubs has been excellent," says Charlie Parker, CEO of The Country Club Group.

Jon Johnston, Matrix Fitness MD, says: "The launch of our new CV range brings a number of advantages for the customer and the end user, including ease of maintenance and advanced connectivity features. We're delighted to be raising the bar and changing customers' expectations of high specification CV products in the market. We can now offer a premium, fully-integrated entertainment solution with a user-friendly interface and a lower total cost of ownership than our competitors."



**G7 strength series** Combining form and function, with a sleek low-level design and enhanced ergonomics



**7xe CV range** Making its first UK appearance at The Country Club Group sites

Coming to the market soon, the G7 strength series combines form and function perfectly, with a sleek low-level design and enhanced ergonomics to ensure maximum comfort and a biomechanically correct action. There are also features to enhance the user experience: the integrated rep counter automatically tracks repetitions, activity time and rest time; Action Specific Grips are ergonomically designed to reduce stress on contact points; and instruction placards clearly demonstrate correct usage, the muscles used, equipment adjustments and muscle stretches.

A new partnership agreement with Abbeycroft Leisure will see Matrix Fitness equip the gym at Haverhill Leisure Centre in Suffolk. Managed by Abbeycroft Leisure for four years, the 1970s site is undergoing a £6m refurbishment, predominantly funded by St Edmundsbury Borough Council. Closed since July 2008 for the redevelopment – which includes expanding the gym to twice its former size, with 100 stations divided into zones such as CV, strength, functional and core stability – the centre will also offer a combat and personal training area.

"We invited the five key fitness equipment suppliers in to tender," says general manager Dom Greenwood.

"Matrix turned our heads from the beginning with its innovative approach and creative flair. We strongly believe the company is doing something different, causing a stir in the industry, and this is something we want to be part of. We'll be the first leisure centre in the country to offer the new G7 strength range, and new Myride console, and the first public sector site to have the new 7 series CV range."

With the new Matrix 7 Series CV and strength ranges, you really can expect more. By introducing this new series, Matrix can cater for all budgetary allowances, from entry-level to premium.

## 7 SERIES RANGE

The 7 series models include:

- Integrated LCD consoles with Vista Clear Television Technology
- FitTouch Technology on the 7xe models for intuitive touch-screen functionality
- Compatibility with iPod for video and audio playback, charging and on-screen selection
- Three-speed personal fan
- Embedded FitLinx wireless transmitter within the console

## in brief...

**vivafit's charity drive**

Vivafit has gathered more than 26 tonnes of food to help adolescent mothers and their babies.

The Portuguese fitness chain (see p30) organised a national campaign to support the social work of the country's non-governmental organisation Ajuda de Mãe. The campaign – 'Cuide de si, cuidando dos outros' (Take care of yourself by taking care of others) – asked members, staff and local partners to donate non-perishable food.

Engaging the entire network of 96 gyms, and more than 40,000 members of the female-only clubs, contributions included more than 60,000 items of rice, pasta, baby food, cookies, breakfast cereals and UHT milk. These will be distributed to the various shelter houses and other social institutions run by Ajuda de Mãe and marks the largest ever food donation in the 18-year existence of the organisation.

**technogym's design award**

Technogym has been awarded 'red dot' design awards for three pieces of equipment: FLEXability, Jog Excite and Pure Strength.

Every year, winners of the international red dot design awards are selected to exhibit in Singapore's red dot design museum, which has been created to showcase design excellence.

**european forum**

The Central European Fitness Forum (CEFF) took place on 18–19 May.

The event, organised by EHFA, was attended by 46 health and fitness industry experts from 14 European countries, and showcased the success achieved by EREPs since its inception last year. EREPs director Cliff Collins spoke about the need for the industry to ensure the quality of its staff, recognising the advantages of self-regulation.

Other presentations included an overview of the EU fitness market, plus an analysis of trends, and a review of the work carried out by the EHFA Scientific Advisory Board.

## shokk for holmes place iberia

SHOKK is working with Holmes Place Iberia in Portugal to deliver the chain's Fit Families project.

Designed to promote health throughout the community, the Holmes Place Fit Families project aims to improve quality of life through practical, regular,

inclusive physical exercise, encouraging families to get active together.

Andre Groen, Holmes Place Iberia's development director, explains: "We have a social responsibility to help local communities get active and we've taken active measures to do this. We've set several objectives, specifically for young people, which is where SHOKK came in. We were keen to offer a place for eight- to 16-year-olds to get active while having fun with their friends; the SHOKK concept offered exactly that."

The new club in Lisbon (see story below) will therefore offer a wide range of family-orientated facilities, including group-based classes for young people. There will also be a 35sq m SHOKK youth gym offering CV, interactive and resistance products.



**The SHOKK youth gym will offer interactive products**

## new kempinski opens in croatia

The five-star Kempinski Hotel Adriatic Istra, in Croatia, will open this month.

The hotel offers a Technogym-equipped fitness suite with cardiovascular and resistance kit, as well as personal training. There are also options for jogging and cycling in the lush green countryside surrounding the hotel.

Situated on its own private beach, the 186-room hotel also offers a 3,000sq m spa, one indoor and two heated outdoor pools, four tennis courts and an 18-hole championship golf course.

Facilities at the spa include eight treatment rooms, including two couples' rooms, a manicure/pedicure room, and a range of heat experiences.



**The hotel will offer a fitness suite and a 3,000sq m spa (above)**

## holmes place opens 19th portuguese club

Holmes Place Iberia is set to open its latest club, the chain's 19th in Portugal, in Lisbon this month.

The 3,500sq m club – located entirely on one floor – is situated in the Dolce Vita Tejo shopping centre, the largest shopping centre in Portugal.

The club offers a Technogym-equipped gym – including cardiovascular, resistance and free weights areas – as well as four group exercise studios. There are also, as noted in the SHOKK story above, a range of children's

activities and a SHOKK gym. These facilities are complemented by a swimming pool, sauna, steamroom and spa pool, and a Sensations spa.

Targeting the local residential population, the club also offers free parking for members, large changing areas and a restaurant/bar.

Holmes Place Iberia has 28 clubs: 11 in Spain and 17 in Portugal. It also has three new clubs in the pipeline for Portugal, to open next year, and is actively looking for sites in Spain.

edited by kate cracknell email: [katecracknell@leisuremedia.com](mailto:katecracknell@leisuremedia.com)



Gym has been equipped by Precor, including the new C Line strength range

## arroyomolinos complex opens

Construction of the new €12m Arroyomolinos complex in Arroyomolinos – south of Madrid, Spain – has been completed by Arroyomolinos Council in association with the state leisure organisation EMUVISA and the private leisure management company Deltanova.

The complex, which opened in three phases, is now complete and provides the surrounding area with a one-stop-shop for health and wellbeing.

Facilities include a 1,200sq m fitness suite, fully fitted with Precor cardiovascular and strength kit including the new C Line resistance range and eight Adaptive Motion Trainers. There are also three heated swimming pools,

a luxury spa and two 300sq m group exercise studios.

The complex also provides the community with a physiotherapy centre, sports doctor, crèche and coffee shop. "Our aim is to make the Arroyomolinos centre the best health, wellbeing and sport complex in the region," says Cristina Alcazar, GM at Deltanova.

Iñaki Cabrera, business manager for Precor Spain, adds: "A huge amount of thought and research has been put into creating a centre that will inspire the local community to commit to a healthy lifestyle – it's well designed, offers an impressive list of services and has been built to be user-friendly and long-lasting."

## anytime fitness to open in nz

New Zealand's first Anytime Fitness club is set to open this August.

The club, located in Christchurch on the South Island, will measure 380sq m and offer a full range of Life Fitness CV and resistance equipment.

The expansion to New Zealand follows a 12-month period in which Anytime Fitness opened eight clubs in Australia. The brother-sister team of master franchisees in charge of the Australian development – Jacinta and Justin McDonnell – will also direct all of the franchise's operations in New Zealand.

"Our research tells us that the New Zealand market will be very receptive to our lower fees. Many competitors specialise in group fitness classes that require three-year memberships at rates of NZ\$80-plus a month," says Jacinta. "Our monthly fees will start at NZ\$59.95 and we'll be the first provider of 24/7 access."

The McDonells also expect to open 10 new clubs in Australia in the next two months, and five more by the end of the year. Plans for New Zealand are not yet as detailed, but their hope is for "dozens" of clubs within the next two years.

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## public call for prevention tactics

Most consumers believe that the healthcare sector undervalues the importance of exercise in the treatment of lifestyle diseases such as obesity and asthma.

In a survey among 2,072 people, conducted by YouGov on behalf of the FIA, 75 per cent of respondents said they believed that healthcare practitioners do not take the role of exercise seriously enough in the prevention of lifestyle diseases.

More than half (60 per cent) believed the NHS isn't focused enough on prevention, and 66 per cent felt practitioners are more likely to prescribe medicine than exercise.

Andrée Deane, CEO of the FIA, says: "The survey's findings send a very clear message to every doctor, health visitor, PCT official and healthcare strategist in this country. The British public thinks that there is an over-reliance on pills and the knife at the expense of exercise and prevention.

"Common sense tells us that balancing 'calories-in' and 'calories-out' is probably the most cost-effective solution to the nation's obesity time bomb. Yet expenditure on pharmaceutical products, surgery and the treatment of diseases continues to outstrip any investment in exercise and prevention.



**YouGov survey results: The British public says there's an over-reliance on pills**

"Why the preoccupation with drugs, treatment and surgery? Perhaps the sad truth is that, as an industry, we do not have the financial muscle to

compete for the hearts and minds of doctors and other prescribers, so we have to rely on logic, reason – and, now, the wishes of the general public."

## sweat in the city results revealed

Women aged 16 to 24 are only half as active as males of the same age, according to the results of the Sweat in the City pilot scheme.

Managed by The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, in collaboration with the FIA, the activity scheme was designed to monitor changing attitudes towards fitness during a 12-week exercise programme completed by female Londoners who did little-to-no exercise.

The initiative offered free access to more than 100 London clubs, providing the opportunity to try traditional gym activities as well as the less conventional fencing, boxing and rowing.

Of the 2,000 women who participated, 30 per cent have gone on to secure memberships at the gym they used, and 20 per cent have developed a more positive opinion about their bodies.



**Sweat in the City: Engaging 16- to 24-year-old women in physical activity**

The proportion of the women who said they enjoyed sport and exercise also rose from 5 to 30 per cent, with 90 per cent of participants pledging to stay active in one way or another now that the programme has ended.

## new expert guide available

The FIA has published its latest business handbook.

Entitled an *Expert Guide to Understanding Consumer Behaviour*, the handbook is designed to help operators wishing to improve their acquisition and retention strategies by gaining a better insight into their customers.

Subjects addressed in the book include the application of the Kano model and the thinking behind a consumer's decision when selecting a particular club to join.

The new handbook joins two existing volumes in the series: an *Expert Guide to Marketing* and the *Expert Guide to Retention and Attrition*.



## 2009 flame awards

The winners of the 2009 FLAME Awards were announced at the Summit and Conference in Bolton last month. The level of entries was unprecedented, both in quality and quantity. We congratulate the winners and runners-up

**FLAME Club of the Year Award for clubs with less than 1,000 members**

**WINNER: Spirit Health Club in Taunton, Somerset**

Finalists: Kettering Park Hotel & Spa, The Valley Health & Fitness, and The Source at Meadowhall

**FLAME Club of the Year Award for clubs with 1,000–4,000 members**

**WINNER: Bristol Nuffield Health Fitness & Wellbeing**

Finalists: Chatham Park Golf & Country Club, Esporta Glamorgan Health & Racquets Club, and GL-14 Health Club

**FLAME Club of the Year Award for Clubs with over 4,000 members**

**WINNER: Benton Hall Golf & Country Club in Essex**

Finalists: David Lloyd Ipswich, Nizels Golf & Country Club, and The Warwickshire Golf & Country Club

**FLAME Centre of the Year Award**

**WINNER: Fareham Leisure Centre in Hampshire**

Finalists: Bath Sports & Leisure Centre, Egham Leisure Centre, Rainbow Leisure Centre, and Hillsborough Leisure Centre

**Spirit of FLAME Award**

**WINNER: Health Club at Cadbury House Hotel in Bristol**



Kevin Yates: Future of FLAME winner

### The Fitness Industry Lifetime Achievement Award



FIA CEO Andrée Deane was awarded for her contribution to the industry – for her commitment to improving the professionalism of the sector and establishing the industry as a government delivery partner

**FLAME Corporate Club of the Year Award**

**WINNER: RBS Health & Leisure Centre, Gogarburn**

Finalists: BP Meadhurst Club, Tesco Healthy Living Zone, and Fifth Dimension at HSBC

**FLAME Educational Club of the Year Award**

**WINNER: Pent Valley Leisure Centre in Kent**

Finalists: Featherstone Sports Centre, Newton Rigg Sports Centre University of Cumbria, and U Sport

**FLAME Leisure Centre Operator of the Year Award**

**WINNER: DC Leisure Management**

Finalists: Greenwich Leisure Ltd, Leisure Connection, and Lifestyles (Liverpool City Council)

**FLAME Health Club Operator of the Year Award**

**WINNER: Fitness First**

Finalists: Esporta Group, De Vere Group, LA Fitness, Spirit Health Clubs, The Club Company, and Total Fitness UK

**Future of FLAME Award**

**WINNER: Kevin Yates, health and fitness manager at Leisure Connection**

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## PARTNERSHIP FOR PREVENTION



Steven Ward, the FIA's public affairs and policy manager, reports on last month's FIA FLAME Conference and Industry Summit

Hosting the FIA Industry Summit in Bolton proved to be a logistical challenge. Members of Parliament have attended and addressed the summit over the past six years. However, the fact that this year's venue was not in walking distance of the Palace of Westminster, combined with a three-line whip resulting from an Opposition Day Debate on the dissolution of parliament, meant there was a distinct lack of political presence.

Regardless, the new Secretary of State for Health, Andy Burnham, set the mood the weekend before. In his first interview since taking the post, he said: "I will make it a personal priority to embed in the NHS culture the promotion of physical activity." What more could any politician have added, even if they had made it to Bolton?

### building the team

The FIA had conducted a poll in the week leading up to the summit, which showed

that the UK public was now expecting a greater focus on the promotion of physical activity as part of a wider prevention strategy (see p18). The survey showed that: 75 per cent of consumers think that fitness is not taken seriously enough in the prevention of illness; 66 per cent believe the NHS is more likely to prescribe medicine than exercise for diseases including asthma and Type 2 diabetes; and 60 per cent believe more investment is needed in fitness.

Fred Turok, FIA chair, therefore kicked off the summit by setting out a new vision of public health – one that spreads beyond the realms of governmental control and engages the breadth of interested parties. He called for prevention to be the objective, partnership to be the strategy, and exercise to be the key tactic in driving the wellbeing of the nation. He also stressed that government must maintain its commitment and not falter in the current economic climate. Strong political leadership was needed, he said,

and the comments of Burnham showed that it might have arrived.

Turok then outlined a team of partners to take this mission forward – a team which the FIA Summit had gathered as a panel, providing the basis for a passionate discussion, and one the government is a key component of.

The Department of Health's support of MoreActive4Life was, said Turok, "the flying start we needed", and he congratulated Will Cavendish, the director of health and wellbeing within the Department of Health, for "getting it" – understanding the scale of the problem we face and the need for urgent action to promote physical activity.

Cavendish returned the compliment in his speech by outlining how the fitness industry, through Fit for the Future and MoreActive4Life, has a vital role to play in delivering a more active nation.

The next component of Turok's 'Wellbeing Team' was the healthcare sector, which he accused of not doing enough to invest in the future health of the nation. He also pointed to the systemic problems in the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF), which rewards GPs too highly for smoking cessation in comparison to tackling obesity or carrying out exercise referrals. The FIA has been running a

**GOVERNMENT MUST MAINTAIN ITS  
COMMITMENT AND NOT WITHER  
IN THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE**



**Big questions (left to right) Why does the QOF score obesity programmes lower than smoking cessation? And why is the focus still on treatment, not cure?**

long-standing campaign to reform this structure, which provides 73 QOF points for smoking cessation, but only eight for obesity programmes and zero for exercise referral.

This view was supported by the fervent childhood obesity campaigner Tam Fry of the National Obesity Forum. With more than 30 years' experience in this field, Fry is too long in the tooth to mince his words – and so it proved in Bolton, where he challenged other members of the team to “step up to the mark”, with no-one completely escaping his ire.

Professor Alan Maryon-Davis, president of the Faculty of Public Health, took to the stage later in the day to outline his fear that, unless measures were taken, public health spending could be the first area to face cuts.

### industry challenge

Turok did not spare the health and fitness industry from a challenge. He asked whether the audience was truly ready to deal with the huge mass of people who had no interest in getting active or using our facilities. He wondered whether the industry really had the desire to reach out into the local community and bring back with it the swathes of inactive people suffering from chronic conditions manageable

through exercise. He asked whether the industry had sufficient Level 3- and Level 4-qualified staff to rise to this challenge.

Later in the day, Mark Jones of Liverpool City Council and Victoria French of Sunderland City Council presented case studies which proved that, with commitment and local investment, the industry really can make an impact on the health of their local communities. However, Turok challenged the industry to improve its monitoring and evaluation methods, to prove to potential funders that it is able to deliver. The importance of doing so was underscored by professor Gareth Stratton, the independent chair of the NICE Children and Physical Activity project group.

Turok also questioned whether the industry really knew its place in the wider continuum of physical activity. As Professor Willem van Mechelen of the EHFA Scientific Advisory Board commented, we need to change the wider environment in which we live. How integrated is our sector with the planners who are redesigning our cities, and the community groups taking sedentary people on their first steps to activity via walking groups? He called on the whole

industry to work together and embrace partnership at a local level. If the industry itself could not achieve that, why should anyone else want to work with it?

The final partner that Turok urged to play a full role on the team was Corporate Britain. Turok congratulated the large food, drink and advertising companies on the commitment they had made to Change4Life – £200m of in-kind support. However, he urged them to do more to engage in this agenda and promote it internally within their huge networks of employees.

Jane Holdsworth of Business4Life, the group of large companies supporting Change4Life, outlined her feeling that big businesses were already stepping up to the mark. This was evidenced by Breckon Jones of Unilever, who presented the Fit Business Programme being pioneered by Unilever – a wellbeing programme for its staff that proves the company is practising what it preaches.

Wrapping up, Turok said that if government, the healthcare sector, the physical activity sector and corporate Britain could align in partnership, greater progress could be made in “turning around the obesity tanker”.

## in brief...

### new pins for fitness pros as reps raises public profile

In the next six months, all REPs members can expect to receive a new lapel badge, featuring the organisation's re-designed logo, to make it easier for the public to identify fitness professionals.

Registrar Jean-Ann Marnoch says: "We've wanted to provide our members with something like this for a long time and are delighted with the badges. We hope to send them out at the end of this year, and annually thereafter."

### reps sets date for third national convention at liw

The Register will be holding its third national convention at Leisure Industry Week (LIW) on 24 September 2009.

Featuring a programme of speakers, workshops and seminars, as well as entry to the LIW trade show, the convention is expected to be more popular than ever following successful national and regional events. Places will be available to REPs members and non-members, and full programme details will be profiled next month. REPs members can earn CPD points by attending.

LIW will run from 22-24

September at the NEC Birmingham. Details: liw.co.uk

### gradual roll-out of new logo starts this month

The long-awaited new REPs logo has been approved by the Register's board of governors.

Designed to be a more modern version of the original, yet still recognisable, the logo adopts REPs signature colours – hot pink and purple – as well as the three figures.

Variations of the logo will be available for use by training providers, instructors, members and to advertise CPD points. The logo is anticipated to become fully available by the end of 2009.



Dedicated members' area means the rest of the site is more consumer-friendly

## site launched to educate public

REPs' revamped website has been launched, complete with the Register's new logo, in a bid to educate the public on the work it does.

REPs members now have a dedicated area. This frees up the rest of the site to be more consumer-friendly, outlining all the ways in which REPs helps to safeguard the wellbeing of the public.

System manager Robert McGregor explains: "We've made the new site much more user-friendly, with clear areas explaining the work we do, the qualifications structure we follow, ways

to find a qualified instructor and advice for those thinking of joining the industry.

"We currently have 22,000 registered users and, before the launch of this new-look site, were getting around 200,000 hits a month – so a good site is vital to the continuing success of REPs."

As well as featuring the new logo, which will be fully available by the end of 2009, the site now includes a section for frequently asked questions regarding qualifications, joining and insurance. There is also a page dedicated to Level 4 applications, and to ICREPS and EREPS.

## new journal publisher picked



Sportex already publishes a range of professional health and fitness titles

The winning publisher that will be tasked with developing the *REPs Journal* has been announced following a tendering process that saw four companies shortlisted.

Sportex will take over from the original publisher of four years to continue delivering the *REPs Journal*, which was voted the service REPs members rated most highly. Registrar Jean-Ann Marnoch says: "All the pitches were of a very high standard but we felt Sportex had everything we needed to take the journal to the next level.

"We're very excited about seeing the next issue and hope that all our readers will enjoy it too." Tor Davies, founder of Sportex, adds: "We know how important the journal is to REPs members and look forward to developing it further."

visit the reps online: [www.exerciseregister.org](http://www.exerciseregister.org)

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WHAT WE LIVE FOR

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**Orban is now permanent CEO**

## nsa appoints orban as ceo

The National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure (NSA) has formally appointed interim chief executive Florence Orban as the permanent CEO.

Orban joined the NSA last June and has played a crucial role in developing a strong network of employer-led training providers.

"The impact the NSA will have on the sport and active leisure sector inspires me to play a permanent role" says Orban. "I believe we can make a profound difference to the performance of employers of all sizes through better skills. Not only this, but we will also influence the career paths of thousands of individuals across the country while creating a more professional sector."

## in brief...

### new health secretary

Cabinet minister Andy Burnham has changed departments, leaving behind the DCMS to become the new Secretary of State for Health.

The move is part of Prime Minister Gordon Brown's cabinet reshuffle, and follows the resignations of a number of high-profile ministers. Burnham, who was appointed Culture Secretary in January 2008, has been replaced by former health minister Ben Bradshaw.

Bradshaw, the MP for Exeter, takes up the position after a stint as the minister for health and minister for the south west. He entered parliament in 1997.

## sporta elects board for new term

The sporta executive committee has been re-elected for a third term to ensure it maintains continuity across issues under discussion, such as VAT.

A new regional representative position has also been created for London and the South East, which will be filled by Phil Rumbelow, CEO of Jubilee Hall Clubs. The rest of the committee was re-elected: chair Craig McAteer, of Link4Life; vice chair Jon Argent, Halo Leisure; treasurer Mark Sesnan, Greenwich Leisure; honorary secretary Adrian Bailey, Barnsley Premier Leagues; and six regional representatives, originally appointed in May.

McAteer says: "During the next term of office, we will continue to champion the social enterprise model and use tangible, measurable outcomes to demonstrate the difference we are making to our communities."



**McAteer: Re-elected as sporta chair**

sporta represents 111 leisure and cultural trusts across the UK; its members manage more than 920 sites on behalf of local authorities, with a combined annual turnover of £625m.

## dc leisure: new regional managers

Operator DC Leisure has restructured its fitness team and appointed three new regional fitness managers to provide more resources to the fitness department and support for its centres.

Allan Reid, who joined the firm in 2002, has become fitness manager for the southern UK region. He was previously operations manager at Fleming Park Leisure Centre in Hampshire.

Mark Knight, who has also been with the company for three years, has been promoted to regional fitness manager

for the northern and western parts of the UK. Knight's aim is to "develop links and create partnerships with external agencies such as schools and PCTs to strengthen the centres' position within the community."

Finally, Tim Burrow is joining the firm from Freedom Leisure, and will oversee operations of centres in London and East Anglia. "I have been aspiring to this role for many years," says Burrow. "I aim to support the sites and help them to achieve their goals."

### cyber coach expands team

Online physical activity provider, Cyber Coach, has added four new people to its team and plans to add another two before the end of September.

Founding director of Bolton Technical Innovation Centre, Keith Harris, has joined as operations manager, while former NHS health worker and personal trainer Stephanie Goddard is now the firm's sales consultant for south London and south-east England. Financial advisor James Gregory – new to the fitness industry – has joined as Midlands sales consultant. Lesley Rignall is the firm's new customer sales manager.

### yates wins future of flame

Kevin Yates, national health and fitness manager for Leisure Connection, scooped the new 'peoples' choice' award – the Future of FLAME – in last month's FIA FLAME awards (see p19).

The category recognises an individual, nominated by peers, for their dedication to the fitness industry.

Yates, who has worked in the sector for 15 years, has had a raft of achievements including launching personal training packages for Harpers Fitness – increasing demand for personal training by 465 per cent – and promoting exercise referrals among GPs and PCTs.

## PEOPLE PROFILE



## keris marsden

Driven by a passion for group training, the freelance personal trainer talks about her new venture, Fitter London, and how she tries to keep her classes fresh and innovative

## What is Fitter London?

Group exercise sessions for Londoners tired of the treadmill. Created by me and my partner Matthew Whitmore, who's a full-time personal trainer at Fitness First Covent Garden, we hold one-hour sessions at the Fitness First club and in St James Park – and never repeat a workout twice.

Sessions range from group cycling, rugby drills, kettlebells, plyometrics and relays to egg-and-spoon races and tug o' war. The atmosphere you can create in a group session can instantly lift individuals and the camaraderie is a real motivator.

Gyms and classes can be intimidating if you're not particularly fit or a bit out of shape, so we try to make fitness much more fun, accessible and appealing to people of all fitness levels. With two of us running every class throughout the week, we're able to give the feel of personal training, but without the cost. We've also set up a Fitter London Facebook group to create a social network for exercisers and to inform them of classes.

## What are the challenges in running the company?

Always having to develop new class concepts that you hope everyone will enjoy, and that can be adapted to the different fitness levels, is time consuming. At first I wanted to please everyone in every class, but it's unrealistic with group sessions.



Fun sessions include space hopping relays and egg-and-spoon races

## And the benefits?

That's easy, the smiles on people's faces during the sessions, and watching how friendships develop, make every bit of hard work worthwhile.

## As the process was one of trial and improvement, what big lessons have you learned?

To consider the needs of all our members. The people who attend our classes cover a huge spectrum of fitness abilities. Some are almost athletes while others have never stepped foot in a gym before. Feedback from beginners has led us to start a class called Fitter 1st Timers for people just getting into exercise. I vividly remember how tough my first few runs were and how I wanted to give up so many times. When I started training, my first run lasted all of five minutes! This class allows us to focus our full attention on the newbies and help them conquer their exercise hang-ups.

Exercise is hard work and can be boring, so we've had to make a concerted effort to look for new training ideas, classes and equipment to continually keep exercisers motivated. Although we've become friends with the Fitter Londoners, we are the professionals and therefore have to plan sessions carefully so they run smoothly.

## How do you see Fitter London developing?

In small steps. There's so much we wish to do: recruit more trainers, start nutrition services, sportswear and social events. It's easy to get carried away. We're currently developing Fitter Friendships with companies that support what we're doing, such as Natural Balance foods which provides healthy cereal bars for the exercisers. But for now, we're focusing on building what we have before we progress – and eventually achieve our dream of a fitter world! Details: fitterlondon.co.uk

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# competitive edge

4-6 SEPTEMBER 09

## capgemini wild uk challenge

Test yourself physically and mentally on this exciting three-day competition, on which you will hike, bike and kayak 100 miles across breathtaking stretches of Somerset and Devon, racing against others and the clock. You can either enter as a group of four to six, or as an individual to be put in a team. Registration costs £150 per person and the minimum sponsorship is £800 per person. Money goes to the UK youth charity The Prince's Trust.

Details: [www.princes-trust.org.uk/wild](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/wild)



The 100-mile challenge includes hiking in Somerset and Devon



Join the celebs in the challenge

12 SEPTEMBER 09

## first monster challenge

Set around Loch Ness in Scotland, the First Monster Challenge is one of the UK's most popular duathlon events. Teams of four will take part in this 120km challenge, with each member running 10km and biking 20km. The official charity is Save the Children, but no minimum sponsorship is required. Entry costs £50 per person.

Details: [www.firstmonster.co.uk](http://www.firstmonster.co.uk)



'Swim the Channel' in your local pool

10-19 SEPTEMBER 10

## cycle china

Join TV celebrities Fern Britten and Professor Robert Winston – the scientist behind the BBC series *Making Babies* and *Child of Our Time* – in this women-only (plus one male doctor!) cycle ride across China. The 240km challenge will raise funds to help improve the health of women and babies through Professor Winston's charity: Women for Women. The route takes you alongside rivers, through steep gorges and past tiny villages, as well as famous sights such as the Great Wall of China, Tiananmen Square, The Forbidden City and The Summer Palace. The registration fee is £250 and the minimum sponsorship is set at £3,300. Details: [www.actionforcharity.co.uk](http://www.actionforcharity.co.uk)



Fern Britten will take part in the ride

14 SEPTEMBER –  
6 DECEMBER 09

## 10th aspire channel swim

The Aspire Channel Swim, now in its 10th year, is the UK's biggest annual sponsored swimming event. From September to December, thousands of swimmers across the country will embark on this epic water-based event, where they swim the 22-mile distance in their local swimming pool (although they don't have to do it all at once!) Monies raised will go towards helping people with spinal cord injuries. Details: [www.aspirechannelswim.co.uk](http://www.aspirechannelswim.co.uk)



The FIA Golf Day combines golf and networking for industry colleagues

## AUGUST

### 4 | FIA Golf Day

Venue Northamptonshire, UK

Summary

Industry golf and networking event.

Tel +44 (0)1628 630363

Web [www.promotepr.com](http://www.promotepr.com)

### 6-7 | Health and Fitness Business

Venue Denver, Colorado, US

Summary

Free conference for those working in all areas of the fitness industry.

Tel +1 949 226 5712

Web [www.healthandfitnessbiz.com](http://www.healthandfitnessbiz.com)

### 12-16 | IDEA World Fitness Convention

Venue Anaheim, California, US

Summary

An event for fitness professionals which aims to "inspire the world to fitness".

Tel +1 858 535 8979 ext. 7

Web [www.idealife.com](http://www.idealife.com)

### 18-20 | 28th Annual National Fitness Trade Show

Venue Reno-Tahoe, Nevada, US

Summary

Annual trade show for club owners, managers, fitness directors and PTs.

Tel +1 541 830 0400

Web [www.nationalfitnessradeshow.com](http://www.nationalfitnessradeshow.com)

## SEPTEMBER

### 1-3 | BASES

Annual Conference

Venue Leeds University, UK

Summary

Promoting the use of evidenced, innovative practice in sport and exercise sciences.

Web [www.bases.org.uk/annualconf.asp](http://www.bases.org.uk/annualconf.asp)

### 10-13 | Inner Idea

Venue Palm Springs, California, US

Summary

Featuring mind-body-spirit programming.

Tel +1 858 999 4332

Web [www.inneridea.com](http://www.inneridea.com)

### 10-13 | SIBEC North America

Venue Pasadena, California, US

Summary

A one-to-one meeting forum between owners/operators and suppliers.

Tel +1 954 942 8143

Web [www.mcleaneventsinternational.com](http://www.mcleaneventsinternational.com)

### 22-24 | Leisure Industry Week

Venue Birmingham NEC, UK

Summary

Europe's largest exhibition for the leisure industry, with representatives from fitness, health, spa, sport and attractions.

Tel +44 (0)20 7955 3969

Web [www.liw.co.uk](http://www.liw.co.uk)

## OCTOBER

### 10-11 | International Fitness Forum Convention & Expo

Venue Chelsea FC, London, UK

Summary

A trade show for instructors, plus a convention covering personal training, group fitness and mind-body sessions.

Tel +44 (0)20 7093 2650

Web [www.multitrax.com/fitnessforum](http://www.multitrax.com/fitnessforum)

### 22-25 | IHRSA European Congress

Venue Dublin, Ireland

Summary

Presentations from business leaders from within and outside of the industry, as well as networking opportunities.

Tel +1 617 951 0055

Web [www.ihrsa.org](http://www.ihrsa.org)



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# over-exercising

Exercise is good for us, but overdoing things in the gym can be harmful. Should clubs intervene when a member is doing too much, or should the individual take responsibility for their own health?

**U**sually the problem is getting people into the gym. However, getting carried away with fitness can be detrimental to our health.

Short periods of intense exercising, particularly after months of inactivity, can cause injuries, while excessive exercising can also weaken the immune system as the body is using all of its energy to work out, leaving little power to fight off disease.

There's nothing wrong with exercising a few hours a day to keep fit, yet over-exercising is also linked to people with eating disorders. Doctors say that 75 per cent of compulsive

exercisers will have eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia. When combined, under-eating and over-exercising can be potentially dangerous: bones, heart muscle and kidney function can all be seriously damaged, and the harm can be long-term or even fatal.

That's why the UK eating disorder charity, Beat, recently called for fitness centres to "acknowledge their responsibility for the health of their customers" and help people who do a dangerous amount of exercise.

At present there are no industry guidelines dealing with compulsive exercisers, although Beat has been in talks with the FIA. But are written

rules really the answer, or is this just taking us one step closer to becoming a nanny-state industry?

Not only that, but spotting someone who's obsessed with fitness might not be easy – especially if they hide their addiction, only going to a gym for part of the time and exercising in secret elsewhere. So what warning signs should operators look out for?

Then there's the difficulty of approaching someone about such a sensitive subject. How should an operator go about tackling this? Do staff have the right to intervene and, more importantly, should health clubs even be accountable in the first place?

**SHOULD HEALTH CLUBS INTERVENE WHEN PEOPLE OVER-EXERCISE? EMAIL US: [HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM](mailto:HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM)**

## susan ringwood

chief executive • beat



**"T**here are clear behaviours to look out for, including someone who continues to exercise even when injured or ill, signs up for every session or several gyms, has dropped out of team sports to exercise alone, or becomes agitated or panicky if they can't work out. Gyms should also realise that it's not just about being underweight:

anorexia nervosa only makes up 10 per cent of eating disorders. Other sufferers are likely to be of normal weight.

While females aged 12–25 are most at risk, eating disorders can affect anyone at any age. Men are more likely to use exercise to control their body shape and size than to diet excessively.

Gym members already complete health questionnaires. We'd like to see extra questions such as: Do you continue to exercise when you know you're ill? Do you exercise to compensate for eating too much? Do you feel very anxious if you don't exercise when planned? If people answer yes to two or more, it would be good practice to ask for a GP's approval to exercise, as is the case with other medical conditions. We'd also like to see training for fitness staff in identifying the early signs of compulsive exercising and in giving appropriate support."

## mario pederzoli

managing director • fitrooms



**"T**he fitness industry already has policies and safe working practices to deal with this issue. This includes giving members advice on the frequency, intensity, duration and type of exercise most appropriate to their current level of physical health.

That said, a client has the responsibility to follow that advice. In extreme cases

of overtraining, I agree we have a duty to highlight associated risks and intervene where appropriate. However, the fitness industry cannot be held ultimately responsible for an individual's actions, particularly if they've chosen not to follow advice. It's also incorrect to assume that compulsive exercisers train in one place. They may exercise alone or in more than one gym to avoid attracting the attention of others, including trainers and gym staff.

Specific questions on compulsive exercise are not necessary: well-written pre-screening questionnaires and inductions already enable members to highlight all relevant aspects of their lifestyle and physical condition. Terms and conditions of membership should also ensure that the member has a responsibility to inform the club of any condition that may be detrimental to his/her health."



## Boys and young men are more likely to use exercise rather than extreme dieting to control their body shape and size

### lynsey bowman

young ambassador • beat



**"I** used to be addicted to exercise. I'd work out for a minimum of two hours a day, but some days I'd do up to seven hours. When I was at my worst, however, my parents stopped my gym membership (I was under 18).

I'm not sure how my gym could have helped because, once I was addicted, nothing anyone said would've made me

stop: I would've just exercised at home, although it's easier to hide it from your family if you're exercising in a gym.

I actually work at a gym now, so I know how hard it is for staff to intervene. You don't want to encroach on someone's privacy, nor do you want to falsely accuse them. Yet intervention is key. First, staff need to talk to a person to gauge their mindset. They could then advise on the consequences of over-exercise or, if they keep exercising too much, staff could begin to log each visit with the member to show on paper how much they're coming – just in case the reality hasn't sunk in.

But until there are guidelines, I don't think instructors will feel confident to act on their instinct alone. These need to come from government: they won't work if only a few gyms follow the protocol, as the addict will just find another gym to go to."

### rob beale

health and fitness manager • david lloyd leisure



**"T**he main challenge we have is getting people to exercise more, but there will always be the odd member who becomes addicted to fitness and we have a duty of care to recognise and help these individuals too.

As part of the FIA's go programme, our Warrington club works with 150 girls aged 15–16. We understand that

teenage girls are most at risk in terms of eating disorders, so we look for signs such as over-exercising or gaunt appearances; my view is that it's important to look out for these and address them as and when they occur.

If a problem does arise, we try to build a rapport with a member and find out their goals. Once a sufficient relationship has been established, we then offer advice on appropriate exercise and the correct nutrition to help them achieve their targets. But this is not a quick process.

We strive to ensure our members are exercising properly and safely, whether someone is over-exercising, lifting weights incorrectly or running too quickly on a treadmill.

You can, however, only give so much advice. In the end, it's their body and their choice."

The owners of Portuguese women's fitness chain Vivafit talk to Vicky Kiernander about creating a successful franchise, expanding into Spain and plans for the future



## constance & pedro ruiz

WORLD  
FOCUS

**W**inning IHRSA's European Club Leadership Award in 2008 was a defining moment for Constance and Pedro Ruiz. It wasn't just that the international accolade acknowledged the dazzling performance of Portugal's largest and fastest-growing women-only express fitness chain, but for Constance particularly, that it was bestowed by the organisation she had so long respected. "I've learned so much from IHRSA over the years through its conventions, research and networking opportunities, that the award was extra-special for me. It was just wonderful," she says.

### going it alone

Constance previously worked at Holmes Place in Portugal for six years, where she supported the group fitness

programming for the opening of the first six clubs in Portugal and also assisted in the company's expansion into Spain, Germany and Austria. It was while she was monitoring her international colleagues in 2002 that the express fitness franchise concept caught her eye and sparked her imagination.

After a visit to her native America to see the clubs in action, Constance convinced her Spanish husband Pedro to do the same. A former naval architect and owner of a number of businesses, Pedro immediately saw the potential and contacted Curves requesting the master franchise for Portugal.

However, the couple eventually decided to go it alone, convinced they had the necessary skills to make a success of the business. They launched their first Vivafit & Pilates Fit club

(now known as Vivafit) in January 2003. Situated next to a picturesque lake in Oeiras, approximately 10 miles from Lisbon, it was a poor choice of location. Pedro laughs: "The place was beautiful, but it was in the middle of nowhere. We didn't realise it needed to be in a commercial district."

However, as he explains, it was the best test that the Vivafit concept could ever have had: "We had to improve our systems quickly to make it work. That meant everything from marketing and prospecting to customer service. We knew that if we could make Vivafit work there, it could work anywhere."

And it did. Six years later, the club is still thriving with 400 members and is just one of 97 Vivafit clubs in Portugal.

### lessons learned

Vivafit is by far the biggest health club group in Portugal. Holmes Place has 17 sites, followed by Solinca with nine. It's also the largest women-only fitness chain in the country, with more than seven times the number of clubs as Curves.

"There are some independent franchise sites too, but these seem to close after a couple of years. We've seen that happen to at least five now,"

The recession is just getting rid of unprofessional clubs that should have closed a long time ago



**Circle of success** One of Vivafit's USPs is the combination of circuits (all pictures above) with short-format group exercise classes

explains Pedro. So why has Vivafit enjoyed such prodigious growth?

Constance believes the husband and wife team's combined know-how has much to do with it. "People think that a fitness franchise is an easy business to run. However, I have the industry knowledge and Pedro has the business expertise, and you need both," she says.

Despite this, they cheerfully admit to making every mistake in the book. These included giving members the choice of a three-month or one-year membership, but not providing a big enough incentive for them to take the latter option – with the result being that most only joined for three months. This has now been altered. Members make a one-year commitment to the club and can only terminate their membership for free if they move, become pregnant or suffer illness. Any other reason requires payment of 50 per cent of their annual membership fees.

When they first started selling franchises in 2004, the couple sought people who had the skills to manage

the sites themselves. They soon saw the error of their ways. "We found that it was the investors who worked on the business [removed from the site, developing the business strategically], rather than in it [managing the sites themselves], who were most successful," explains Constance. Today, all franchisees must dedicate 50 per cent of their time to this type of business development.

Such experiences have helped the Ruizs to refine the Vivafit concept and distinguish it from its competitors. It does so in a number of ways, but chiefly in the support it offers franchisees, says Constance: "Our monthly royalty of €980 is more expensive than our competitors, but our franchisees receive a lot more in return."

She explains that Vivafit works like a standard health club chain in

supporting its clubs, such as planning monthly marketing campaigns across the group and supplying each site with the necessary materials to roll them out. An additional monthly fee of €210 goes into a national fund to pay for television commercials and advertising in newspapers and magazines. The group supports a variety of national charities, and sites are also encouraged to adopt ones closer to home.

On top of this, staff also receive training in all aspects of the business, from sales to operations and human resources. They meet every three months to review the marketing campaigns and plan new ones, and once a year attend the Vivafit Convention. International speaker Casey Conrad will address staff at this year's convention, where the latest member research conducted by Vivafit will also be unveiled. ▶

**Helping hand** Vivafit has a strong support team (above) to assist all franchisees

**Growing in number** Staff from across the chain – currently 97 in Portugal and two in Spain – attend the Vivafit conference



► The company also has a 24-strong team to support the clubs. Field reps visit each site regularly, a telephone line is open from 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday for any issues, and forums exist for clubs to share their experiences.

### crossing borders

This level of support helps explain the success of Vivafit, but there are other reasons why the chain has never had to close a club. The experience in Oeiras taught the company the importance of location and it now approves all new sites. The clubs themselves are also stylishly designed with fresh colours and marble sinks in the bathrooms. Around 160–200sq m (1,722–2,153sq ft) in size, the facilities include the main circuit area, complete with 10 pieces of Portuguese hydraulic equipment simply called Circuit Equipment, interspersed with recovery platforms, a stretching area, reception and changing facilities.

Unlike many express fitness concepts, Vivafit also offers group fitness classes in the form of pilates and, more recently, Body Vive, after receiving permission from Les Mills to run a 35-minute version of the programme. It's the condensed form of both classes – pilates is 45 minutes instead of 60 – as well as the 30-minute circuit which attracts so many women to the chain, says Constance: "It's a psychological thing. So many of our members don't feel they have time for a traditional gym, but they can spare 30 minutes or so for a workout."

Around 40,000 members belong to Vivafit, and such is the success of the group to date that it's seeking to expand into neighbouring Spain. It opened its first site in Madrid in 2008, followed by

a second club in Badajoz, Extremadura, in April this year. Lying close to the Portuguese border, the region is an obvious choice for expansion, says Pedro: "We have a huge waiting list of people wanting to open a franchise in Lisbon, but there are no locations left. Extremadura is only two hours away, so it makes sense to expand there."

Their experience in Madrid has shown that, aside from language, there are few differences in running the Vivafit franchise in Spain. The company therefore plans to open five new sites there by the end of 2009 and have 13 up and running in Badajoz, Mérida, Cáceres and Plasencia – all in Extremadura – in the next five years.

Another 20 sites are scheduled to open in Portugal by the end of this year, bringing the total number of Vivafit gyms by the end of 2009 to 120. And it doesn't stop there: the Ruizes plan to have over 400 sites and five master franchises in Europe, South and Central America and the Middle East by 2014.

### business as normal

But are these plans realistic given the current economic climate, which is spelling the end of many a business and which is unlikely to be conducive to the launch of new ones? Pedro believes so: "There are lots of clubs closing in Spain at the moment, but most of them were badly-run businesses and had always lost

money. The recession is just getting rid of unprofessional clubs that should have closed a long time ago."

He does concede, however, that with banks holding a tighter rein on their cash, would-be investors are finding it harder than ever to access credit. "We know, if people don't have €30,000 in cash, they won't get the credit they need for the franchise," he adds – Vivafit requires an initial fee of €100,000 for the building and equipment, and franchisees need a further €20,000 to see them through the first months of trading.

Despite this, Pedro says they are seeing no decline in the approaches made by investors and are continuing to open sites at the same rate.

Sales have been a struggle, but the launch of Body Vive in January and the introduction of a new monthly membership fee – €49 including all classes instead of €39 and charging extra for classes – has seen a large proportion of members convert to the higher monthly rate.

In addition, Vivafit continues to work hard on retention and on delivering an experience that keeps members coming back for more. It's a constant challenge, says Constance: "People think the fitness business is easy. They think that franchising is easy. They're not. We're continually trying to understand the behaviour of our members, tackle retention issues and deliver a professional service. It's hard work."

But her husband says their efforts will most certainly continue to pay dividends in the future: "A lot of clubs won't survive this crisis and the market will be a better place for it. This is a time of opportunity for Vivafit."

**By 2014, there will over 400 sites in Europe, South and Central America and the Middle East**



vicky kiernander  
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# CLARE WINNER

WORLD  
FOCUS

Virgin Active South Africa's new flagship health club in Claremont, Cape Town, is attracting attention – and members – with its state-of-the-art equipment and stunning views. Rhianon Howells reports



**Double up** Split across two floors, the club has views of Table Mountain (above right)



**Waving the flag** The new club is one of 25 flagships for Virgin Active in South Africa

**V**irgin Active Claremont – the group's newest flagship in South Africa – has much to recommend it: with an enviable location in one of Cape Town's upmarket suburbs, this super-modern health club is packed with some of the most innovative kit money can buy. Not only that, but, from both floors, the split-level facility offers panoramic views of Table Mountain, the iconic, flat-topped landmark that towers above Cape Town and that's universally loved by its residents as a barometer, compass and symbol of home.

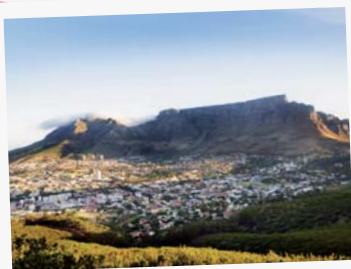
Opened late last year, the 4,444sq m (47,835sq ft) facility replaced an existing, smaller Virgin Active club in Claremont, around 2km from the current site. According to Darren Jacobson, head of product for Virgin Active South Africa, moving the club allowed the company not only to upgrade the facility, but also to access a more varied market by bringing it closer to newly-opened residential developments in the business-dominated district.

## **a sacred space**

At Claremont, one of 25 flagships in Virgin Active South Africa's portfolio of 89 clubs, the architects have certainly made the most of the location: floor-to-ceiling glass windows offer clear views of the mountain, as well as filling the spacious, open-plan club with natural light. "It's designed to feel like a sacred space," says Jacobson. "Very light, airy and connected with nature, despite being on a busy main road."

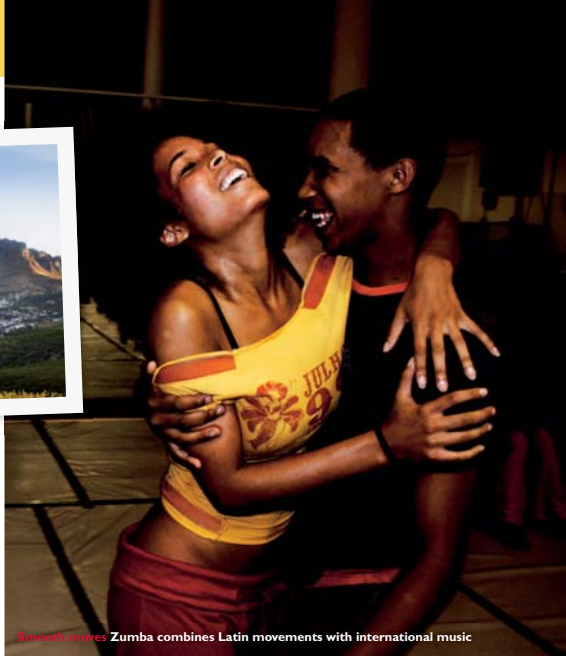
The fit-out is no less impressive. Around 2,000sq m (21,528sq ft) is dedicated to training, including substantial areas for cardio, free weights and selectorised resistance machines,





including one 'super-circuit', all supplied by Technogym. There are also two areas for functional training: one using Technogym's Kinesis range, and the other using HumanSport from Star Trac. When it came to choosing kit, functionality on the floor was key, says Jacobson. "The cages on Technogym's machines are much lower [than on other models], allowing straight lines of sight across the gym floor. This ensures our staff are visible and enables members to clearly see where our different areas are."

Other facilities include a mind-body studio, a general group exercise studio, a group cycling studio with 50 bikes, a Power Plate studio with six units, a 25m pool with an underwater sound system, and an 'aqua lounge' (steam, sauna and spa pool) with mountain views. There's also a health café called Kauai, with free-to-use internet stations; a Virgin Life Care HealthZone, more of which later; and Club V Max, a kids' facility with attractions including a pool, climbing wall and soft-play area and a PlayStation.



**Smooth moves** Zumba combines Latin movements with international music

### fresh thinking

"Virgin Active has a reputation for innovation, for challenging the norm and doing things differently," says Jacobson. "We want to put that to the test, which is why we've brought in some new products and concepts at Claremont to deliver a club that's truly world-class."

In line with this, the club has made a significant investment not only in Kinesis, HumanSport and Power Plate, but also in Technogym's new FLEXability range. It was also the first club outside the US to

trial Star Trac's eSpinner: a Spin bike with an integrated screen featuring hundreds of programmed, instructor-led rides, enabling users to do a Spinning workout on their own if a class is not available.

A successful trial at Claremont has led to the five eSpinners becoming a permanent feature at the club, with the concept also rolled out to four other Virgin Active clubs across the country. According to Jacobson, they're as popular with beginners as with hard-core Spinners. "We've found that ►



**Group offering** The new club has a range of studios for group exercise, including Kinesis and group cycling





► members who come to the club just to Spin love it, because they don't have to wait for a class to start any more," he says. "But it also makes Spinning more accessible to those who've never done it before, as they can try it in their own time without having to go into a class, which might be a bit intimidating."

It's not only in terms of kit that Virgin Active Claremont is pioneering new fitness trends: group exercise is another area where it's leading the way. In addition to the usual range of classes, the club has recently introduced Zumba® – a dance-based programme combining Latin moves and international music for a fun, dynamic workout. Virgin Active has exclusive South African rights to the programme, which was launched in May across the entire portfolio. According to Jacobson, the launch was so successful that thousands of people across the country attended a Zumba class in the first three days.

**Sounding it out** The swimming pool has an underwater sound system that keeps members motivated while they do their lengths

Another interesting offering is the Virgin Life Care HealthZone, a fully automated 'health kiosk' where members can undergo a comprehensive health and fitness check – heart rate, blood pressure, weight, body mass index, body fat percentage and so on. This information is used to provide personalised exercise and eating plans, and users also have access to a personal, online web page where they can track and review their progress.

An added bonus is that members who belong to one of the participating insurance schemes – Discovery Vitality and Momentum Multiply – can earn reward points simply by accessing Virgin Life Care services; achieving set goals earns them even more points (see HCM March 09, p56).

However, those who still feel the need for human, as well as computerised, support are not neglected. The Claremont club employs a biokineticist specialising in sports rehabilitation, as well as a team of personal trainers.

**position of strength**

Memberships have risen steadily since the new club opened, with a growth of around 10 per cent since October. The majority of members are currently 18- to 36-year-olds – students and

young professionals – but there is a growing base of 40- and 50-somethings,

while Club V Max is successfully attracting young families with children.

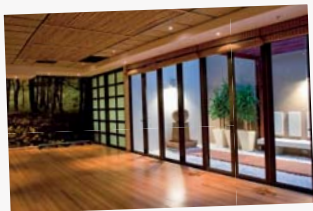
Local competition includes South African chain Planet Fitness, an independent club called The Zone, and a number of small personal training and mind-body studios – but Jacobson is confident that, as far as multi-purpose facilities go, Virgin Active Claremont leads the way. And in the Cape Town area generally, Virgin Active has all its bases covered, with a second site in Kenilworth, a third in Cape Town proper, a fourth in Constantia and a fifth – Waterstone Village – opening this month.

The group also has a dominant position across South Africa as a whole; Planet Fitness, second in terms of size, has around 20 clubs. Says Jacobson: "There are a lot of niche operations opening up, and the industry is getting more competitive, but we're certainly the market leader." Virgin Active also has a number of new openings in the pipeline this year, in spite of the recession. "The industry is fairly robust which, combined with our brand and reputation, is helping us to survive the pressures quite well," explains Jacobson.

Yet despite this position of strength, there's no temptation for the group to rest on its laurels. "Our mission is to bring about positive change in people's lives by making it fun to move," he continues. "We constantly evolve our product to ensure that our members enjoy achieving their wellness goals, while always staying focused on the actual experience – that's critical for us."



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**Haven of tranquility** The mind-body studio offers a calm environment

In the first of a two-part series, Melvyn Hillsdon uses a case study to outline the initial steps in the development of a retention strategy – starting with how to gain an understanding of the problem

# PROBLEM SOLVING

**I**n the current economic climate, retaining club members is more important than ever. Maximising sales and retaining them for as long as possible is the key to financial success. However, compared to the investment clubs make in resources for selling memberships, the investment in membership retention pales into insignificance. A more systematic approach to membership retention, that yields more monthly payments, would not only increase profitability but also reduce both the demand for new memberships and the accompanying costs.

In this article, I will take a sample of data from a well-established private club and use it to show how to develop a retention strategy. In developing solutions and strategies to tackle any problem, there is a cycle of events (see Figure 1, below). The most important task is to fully understand the size of the problem, and whether the problem is more prevalent in some members than in others. This will lead to possible solutions in sales and marketing, and in policies and procedures.

Once solutions and interventions have been decided upon, it's imperative to develop key

performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor their implementation. We then need to revisit – measuring the problem to see if any change has occurred following the intervention and, if so, whether it has occurred equally in all members.

In this article, we will focus on defining the problem, as well as on sales and marketing solutions. In the next feature (to appear in *HCM* Sept 09), we will consider retention interventions and how to measure their effectiveness.

## what's the problem?

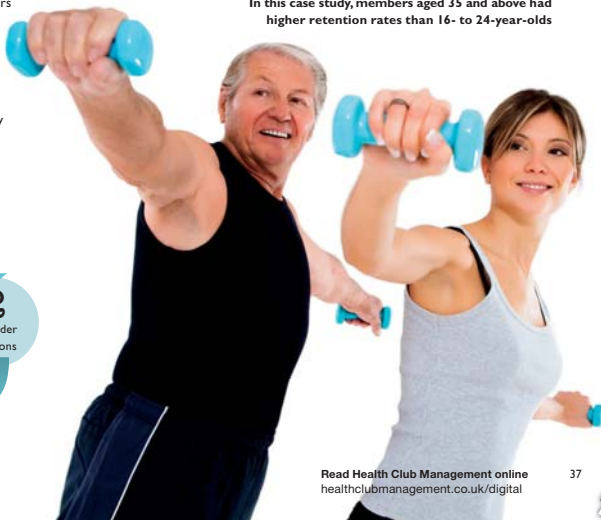
The first task is to define the problem and see if this varies by type of member. We will consider four measures of retention that answer the following questions: what proportion of members stay a predefined period of time, eg three months, 12 months etc? (retention rate); at what rate do they leave, ie what is the churn rate?

(attrition rate); on average how long do people stay and therefore how many membership payments do they make? (lifetime value); and at what point in their membership are they most at risk of quitting? (risk rate)

Our club has 10,309 member records with join dates between 1 January 2006 and 9 April 2009. Of these members, 64 per cent have cancelled and 36 per cent are live. The retention rate is presented in Figure 2 (see p38). The horizontal axis on the graphs shows the time lapsed since joining, taking 0 as the start of a membership. The vertical axis shows the proportion of members who do not cancel. The graphs show the overall retention rate and the rate by age, gender and year of joining. Overall, 50 per cent of members retain their membership for at least 12 months, 26.5 per cent for 24 months and 15 per cent for at least 36 months. We can also see ▶

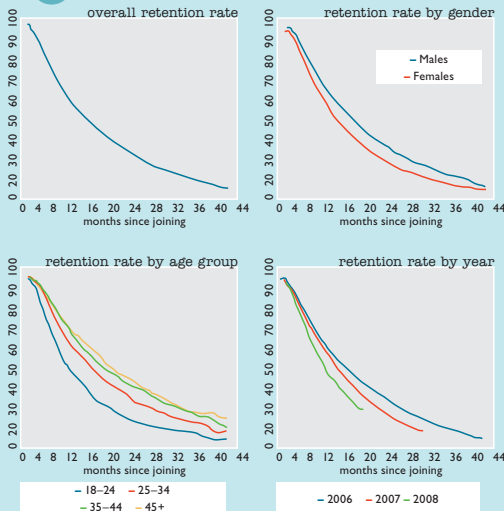
**In this case study, members aged 35 and above had higher retention rates than 16- to 24-year-olds**

## 1 retention strategy development cycle



## 2

### retention rates



- that males have a higher retention rate than females, and members aged 35 years and older have higher retention rates than 16- to 24-year-olds. The last graph indicates that the recent trend has been a year-on-year decline in retention.

Overall, the club loses members at a rate of 54 per thousand members each month (attrition rate) and on average each member yields 12 monthly payments

(lifetime value) – see table below. This means that, to maintain the current membership level, on average the club needs to sell 54 new memberships per thousand each month. As we've already seen, there are marked differences between males and females, as well as age groups. Each month 17.5 per cent more females than males leave, and nearly double the number of 16- to 24-year-

olds leave compared to those aged 45+. Compared to 2006, in 2008 the club lost 45 per cent more members each month. It's clear from the table that not all members are of equal value. Older members yield twice the number of payments compared to the youngest age group, so have twice the value. Males and members aged 35+ are higher yield members compared to females and younger members. Should we consider paying sales staff more commission for selling high yield memberships?

Figure 2, and the table of attrition rates and lifetime values, reveal that changing the gender and age distribution of the membership at the club – increasing males and older members – would automatically lead to an improvement in retention, a drop in attrition (less demand on sales) and extra membership yield per member. But in fact, between 2006 and 2007, the proportion of younger members increased, as did the proportion of female members. Little change has occurred since then. This leads us to consider whether one possible explanation for the downward trend in retention is the change in the age and gender distribution of members.

Figure 3 (see p39) repeats Figure 2 but controls for differences in age and gender between years; this assumes that there is no effect of age and gender on retention. We can see that the difference between 2006 and 2007 shown in Figure 2 goes away (the lines for 2006 and 2007 are on top of each

### attrition rates and lifetime values

	attrition rate (cancellations per thousand per month)	lifetime value (months)
GENDER		
male	51	13.0
female	60	10.8
AGE GROUP		
16-24	80	8.0
25-34	54	12.0
35-44	45	14.7
45+	42	16.1
YEAR OF JOINING		
2006	47	14.1
2007	57	12.2
2008	68	9.5
2009	40	23.0*
OVERALL	54	12.0

\* Only a short follow up and therefore limited time to cancel

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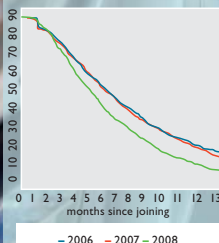
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A closer look at figures reveals that, on average, 17.5 per cent more females than males left each month

## 3 retention rates by year adjusted for age/gender



other in Figure 3), but 2008 still has a lower retention rate. This means that the observed difference in retention between 2006 and 2007 is indeed due to the differences in age and gender. In other words, the increase in females and younger member between 2006 and 2007 led to the drop in retention. However, this does not explain the reduced retention rate in 2008 – it's possible that the lower retention rate for members who joined in 2008 is a reflection of the downturn in economics at the end of last year, or a change in a policy or procedure in the club.

## towards a solution

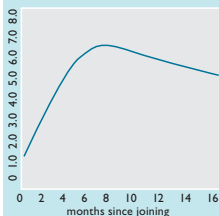
So far, we've learned what proportion of members survive each period after joining, what the average rate of membership cancellation is, and how long each member stays. We've also found out that retention is higher in males than females and in older rather than younger members. Recent trends in membership are partly explained by changes in the age and gender distribution of members.

Based on this, we can set a marketing and sales target. The minimum number of sales per month to maintain the status is 54 for every thousand members. As we started with 2,873 live members at the start of 2009, that's an estimated 155 new members required per month. Further, we want to provide incentives to the sales team to sell more memberships to males and members aged at least 35 years.

Finally, we want to establish where in the membership the greatest risk of quitting is, so we can target interventions at the right time. Figure 4 (below) shows the month-by-month risk of a member cancelling (the risk rate). If a member survives the first month, what is the risk they will cancel in the second? In the first month the risk of quitting is just over 2 per cent, or 2-in-a-hundred, and peaks at month 6–7 at 6.5 per cent, after which it declines again. This means that any retention intervention needs to be delivered earlier in the membership.

In part two of this series, we will consider what interventions could be delivered and how to monitor the effectiveness of these initiatives.

## 4 month by month risk of quitting



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James Balfour, the son of Fitness First founder Mike, and former Fitness First operations manager Tony Cowen talk to Andrea Jezovitz about launching their new Pure Health & Fitness chain in Poland



## JAMES BALFOUR & TONY COWEN

### Q HOW DID YOU EACH GET INTO THE INDUSTRY?

**JAMES:** Fitness First was founded 16 years ago by my father, Mike Balfour, and I worked for them at various times, but I had a career as a stockbroker before becoming involved in Pure.

**TONY:** I used to run hotels and had my own restaurant in Stafford; I've worked in basically all areas of leisure except casinos. In 1998, I wanted to get into health and fitness because it looked like a nice way to earn a living, and joined Fitness First in sales. Four weeks later I was promoted to general manager. I worked my way up to regional manager, then became one of the operations directors for the UK.

### Q HOW DID YOU GET FROM THERE TO RUNNING PURE HEALTH & FITNESS?

**JAMES:** Tony and I knew each other from Fitness First. He was anxious to do his own thing and approached my father

about it. I'd just finished stockbroking and was going to take a year out to do some mountain climbing, but in between my trips I had nothing to do. My dad knew I was frustrated and that Tony wanted to start something, so he suggested we meet. We got talking and it went from there.

### Q WHY DID YOU CHOOSE POLAND?

**JAMES:** We moved here in August 2007 after doing a study on eastern Europe. Poland came out on top due to its market size, demographics and booming economy. When we came over to Warsaw we also saw that there was an opportunity here – people wanted to exercise but there wasn't the right offering.

### Q WHAT CLUBS HAVE YOU OPENED SO FAR?

**TONY:** We opened our first club in Warsaw in July last year, in the Blue City

shopping centre, which has been very successful. Our second club, in Krakow, has been even more successful, and we have lots of sites in the pipeline.

### Q WHERE WILL YOUR NEXT CLUB BE LOCATED?

**TONY:** Our next club opens at Golden Terraces in central Warsaw, probably the best shopping centre in central and eastern Europe. There was a lot of competition for the site, so we're really excited about securing it; it's going to be beautiful, with a spa and beauty offering, an outdoor terrace, a huge gym and loads of really cool water features. It opens this summer as our flagship club.

### Q WHAT'S YOUR VISION FOR PURE HEALTH & FITNESS?

**TONY:** We're trying to bring health and fitness to central and eastern Europe. Only 0.6 per cent of the population in Poland currently have gym memberships, but obesity is as much of a problem here as anywhere else.

Membership in Poland tends to be expensive, but our clubs offer value



**Funky fitness** Pure delivers a vibrant, welcoming environment with extra perks like free coffee and DVD rentals





**Mix and match** Pure clubs feature Life Fitness CV and resistance kit, as well as core training equipment from the Reebok Professional range

for money: 150–200 PLN (£30–£40) a month for high-quality facilities and equipment. Our clubs are funky, fun, vibrant places to get healthy, with a focus on fitting into people's schedules. It's all about making people welcome, providing a warm and safe environment, and finding real ways of helping them. It's not about gimmicks, just the truth – and the truth is that people need to exercise to keep healthy.

We train our team almost daily, and it's about the basics: saying hello and goodbye to people, smiling, keeping eye contact, being honest and sincere, and making sure the club's presentable. We don't like to confuse people with jargon. We don't talk about biceps or triceps – an arm is an arm and we get our team to talk that way as well.

#### Q WHO IS THE CLUB AIMED AT?

**TONY:** Having a health club within a shopping centre works very well. It's a community and people visit regularly. About 70 per cent of the people who come into shopping centres are female, and 58 per cent of our members are women – our clubs even include women-only gym areas.

**P**ure Health & Fitness launched its first location, in Warsaw's Blue City shopping centre, in July 2008, followed by a site in Krakow's Galeria Kazimierz shopping centre in January 2009.

The 1,800sq m (19,375sq ft) Blue City club and the 1,900sq m (20,451sq ft) Galeria Kazimierz club both feature Life Fitness resistance and CV equipment, the latter with integrated TV screens. Core training equipment from the Reebok Professional range – including decks, mats, Swiss balls and medicine balls – has been supplied by Escape Fitness, and the clubs also feature the latest Power Plate technology. Escape will also be working with Pure to design its future health clubs.

Each club features a group cycling studio, women-only gym, group exercise classes, sauna, steam and a relaxation area, changing rooms, sunbeds and a café with free coffee, Wi-Fi and DVD rentals for members.

Pure's new 2,200sq m (23,680sq ft) flagship club, to open at the Golden Terraces shopping centre in Warsaw this summer, will feature a spa and an outdoor terrace.

#### Q WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

**TONY:** We have a site in Prague, Czech Republic, that will open in 2010.

**JAMES:** We'll also put clubs in Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia. There is a health and fitness industry [in this part of the world], but it's fragmented and not very developed. There are people who love fitness, however, and eastern Europe shows good potential – but at the moment we're sticking to the markets we think we can have the most success in now.

#### Q IS POLAND FEELING THE ECONOMIC CRISIS?


**JAMES:** Poland is doing well, with steady economic growth and falling unemployment. But it is feeling the crunch and everyone's very nervous that it's going to get worse – they're braced for it.

So our timing was good; it will probably be more problematic for new operators wanting to come in in the future.

#### Q HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELVES?

**TONY:** We try not to take ourselves too seriously and try to have as much fun as possible. We work hard, but it doesn't feel like work as we love what we do – maybe a bit too much, having business chats at 3am all the time!

**JAMES:** We're both very driven, and we'll try to develop a company culture where you can work hard and play hard, as long as everyone gets results. We just want to improve people's lives and have fun along the way.

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# dr john ratey

WORLD  
FOCUS



Kate Cracknell talks to the Harvard Medical School associate professor about his latest book, SPARK, which looks at the impact of exercise on the brain



©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/LEIGH SCHINDLER

**Baby brain** Pregnant women who keep moving are less depressed, and their babies tend to be more responsive

## Q What's your background?

I'm a psychiatrist and have been at Harvard Medical School for many years, focusing on attention deficit disorder (ADD) and aggression. I have always been fascinated, however, by the effect of exercise on mental health – on depression and anxiety, ADD, addictions and so on. Exercise has an impact on mental health across the board. In almost all my books, and this is the eighth, I mention exercise as a modality that deserves to be somewhere in the treatment plan.

## Q So what is SPARK?

SPARK, my latest book, pulls together the literal avalanche of clinical and neuroscientific information that's been published in medical journals over the last 14 years, and weaves this around stories and anecdotes. The studies, all of which look at the effect of exercise on mental health, have been conducted by hospitals, medical schools and scientists around the world.

## Q What topics does it cover?

The first chapter is about a remarkable school in Naperville, US. For the last 18 years, it has moved its PE offering away from traditional ball sports to a fitness-based daily PE programme. All the kids were included all of the time, measuring their heart rates with cardiac monitors to ensure they were in the correct training zone. And they've had amazing success: only 3 per cent of their kids are overweight, whereas the average in US schools is 37 per cent. Not only that but, in 1999, 98 per cent of the kids took the TIMSS test – the international science and maths tests – and they came top in the world in science and sixth in maths, even though they were spending 45 minutes a day devoted to physical fitness.

A school in Copenhagen took up the idea, with 250 kids in the senior high school taking part in a very vigorous fitness programme for 45 minutes each day. There was subsequently a 40 per cent increase in attendance, a decrease in discipline problems, and their average grade elevation for the four months of the initiative was a whole letter grade and a half.

## Q Are there also benefits for older people?

Yes, it applies across the board. In fact, most of our work has been done with middle-aged and elderly people. Most of the money to date has been spent on looking at preventing cognitive decline – the impact that exercise has on keeping our



**Bright sparks** Kids who exercise for more than 45 minutes a day show improvements in behaviour and academic performance

brain's cognitive abilities alive as we age, and its ability to cut the incidence of Alzheimer's disease in half. Indeed, exercise has been shown to delay the decline by as much as 10–15 years.

That's what us boomers were worried about, and it was noticed in the early 90s that exercise had a marvellous impact over and above its effect on the cardiac system. That led to the first studies looking at what exercise did to help protect the brain and actually make it grow, resulting in an avalanche of neuroscientific studies, and then clinical studies, which produced wonderful evidence of exercise's ability to preserve, and even improve, cognition.

#### Are there any other groups who particularly benefit?

There's a whole chapter on women because, believe it or not, women get a bigger bang for their buck out of exercise.

During times of hormonal shift, especially during pregnancy, it's very important that women should be moving. It keeps them less depressed, more able to deal with stress, and has a very positive effect on the baby's brain; studies show the babies of mothers who exercise are more responsive. We know that,

in rats, babies whose mothers exercise eventually have bigger brains, with more cells, and are smarter than babies of rat mothers which didn't exercise.

In England, there have also been studies into the effect of exercise on post-partum depression, which occurs in 14 per cent of women. This condition is mainly treated with medicine, but these studies added exercise into the mix too, and the mums in the exercise groups did better.

#### Are there any other areas where exercise impacts mental health?

The reason I started this project, way back, was a result of learning how exercise combats depression and poor mood. Scientists at Duke University in the US were looking at exercise as a treatment for cardiac problems and making the heart healthier, and they noticed that people were also less hostile, less anxious and less depressed. And so they began to study depression per se. Now there are a number of very significant studies looking at the benefits of exercise compared to anti-depressants, which have showed exercise to be just as effective. When you exercise, you release neural transmitters ►

► in the brain, which is what many of our psychiatric drugs are designed to do. But you do it naturally, and eventually you build up stores of these chemicals, and receptors for them, which change the brain so it's more ready to withstand the slings and arrows of life.

**Q You say people became less anxious. Does exercise treat anxiety?**

Anxiety and stress is the most important chapter in the book. It looks at how exercise reduces stress on many different levels, and how it affects the brain's response to stress – its ability to cope with it rather than over-reacting. If our nerve cells become more resilient, our brain does too, meaning that we're able to withstand more stress. We now have a tremendous amount of science showing how exercise does this on many, many different levels – it's quite miraculous what happens.

**Q You have a lot of experience in ADD – does exercise help this too?**

Yes, there's a whole chapter on addiction and attention deficit disorder. In fact, that's one of the reasons I got so interested in exercise: so many of the people I saw used exercise to help regulate their attention disorder, and if they stopped exercising they got much worse. Some people were even able to stay off medicine if they got into a very rigid exercise programme. The

poster boy for that is swimmer Michael Phelps. He was diagnosed at the age of nine and was on medicine for a while, but it only helped a little bit. He started to swim at the age of 10 and, by the time he was 11, he was swimming three hours a day and was taken off medication. He's never taken them since.

**Q What's the science behind all this?**

There are many wonderful things released when you exercise. It would take a long time to explain it all, but one such thing is a protein called BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor), which has a lot to do with mood and learning and preserving the cells. I call it 'Miracle-Gro' or 'brain fertiliser', as it enhances brain function by encouraging the growth of connections between brain cells.

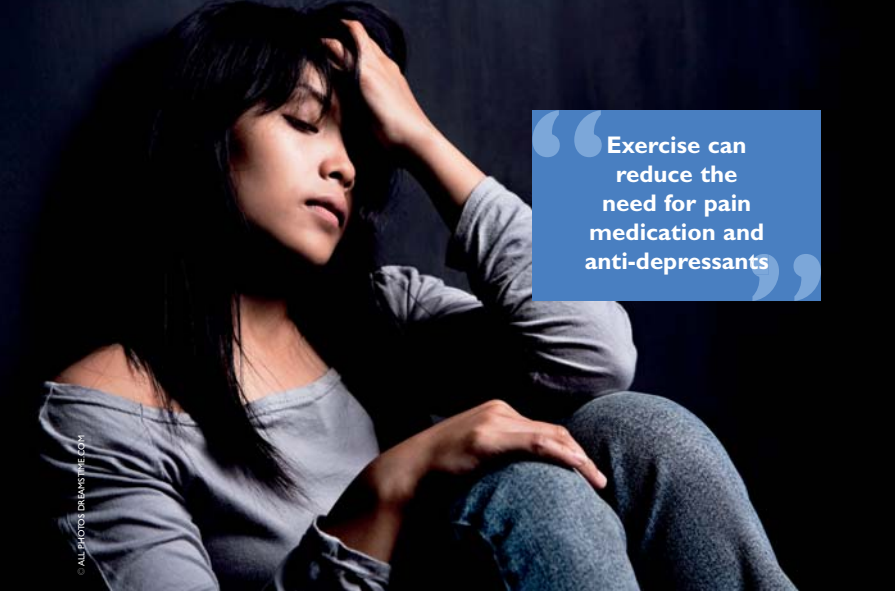
Also, although you don't release much human growth hormone when you're older – it decreases after adolescence – when you do a couple of 30-second intervals of very, very intense exercise, you release human growth hormone, as well as nitrous oxide which helps make the arteries young again.

We also know that fat content in the body negatively correlates with cognitive performance, and a lot of studies are now showing that obesity really begins to kill brain cells, particularly in children and older adults. In fact, many of the people working on Alzheimer's disease are calling it 'Type 3 diabetes', because it's so related to our sedentary lives and our overfed state.



Exercise has been shown to delay the decline of cognitive function by 10 to 15 years

**Short, sharp bursts** The brain benefits most from high-intensity exercise, such as sprinting in 30-second intervals



Exercise can  
reduce the  
need for pain  
medication and  
anti-depressants

**Hormonal imbalance** Exercise is said to help treat post-partum depression and improve stress and anxiety management

### Q Did anything surprise you?

The chapter on women was originally twice as long as it is now in the book – I just couldn't believe what a positive effect exercise had on women. I knew about its effect on maintaining cognitive function in women's brains after menopause, but the big surprise was its effect on women in pregnancy. In Germany they even have exercise bikes in their labour and delivery suites, as their studies have shown that exercise can reduce the need for pain medication.

And then there's the whole idea of exercise as stress inoculation. I'd written a book on the brain in 2000, called *A User's Guide to the Brain*, and thought I knew it pretty well, but as I started again in 2006 I was just blown away by how much more information we had on what was happening inside our heads. A lot of that has to do with good stress, where you challenge your brain and then have a recovery period during which growth occurs. When you learn French, for example, you only stress one part of the brain – but when you exercise, you stress and consequently grow your whole brain because of everything your body's doing. All that was brand new information for me.

### Q What sort of exercise brings about these brain-enhancing benefits?

The big thing is getting your heart rate up, so aerobic training is best – the really, really good stuff is sprinting – but there's a very positive effect from anaerobic or weight training too. And it's not just about intensity. The amount of time is important too – going as fast as you possibly can for 30 seconds. With deconditioned and overweight people, though, you won't be able to start there. You'll need to build them up, focusing on conditioning and building muscle to reduce fat.

Balance training is also important. We're learning more and more, for example, that balance has an effect especially on

attention, memory and moods. It's therefore of benefit across the board – for older people and for children with conditions such as dyslexia or ADD. The Dore programme, for example, involves a series of exercises that are basically balance and cerebellar exercises to help train the cerebellum and improve reading and attention. Their research was pretty good at first but has not been repeated much – it was a big controversy in the field. Nevertheless, I think balance is important – a lot of people who have ADD and learning problems do also have co-ordination problems.

### Q How can health clubs tap into all this?

Instructors should not only build people up towards the ideal intense bursts of activity, but should also continually challenge people with different kinds of exercise challenges. Running on the treadmill will get your heart rate up, but if you add in a cognitive challenge at the same time – moving in a certain way or having to run around obstacles, for example – you will experience even more benefits. The more thinking you have to do while you're moving, the better the effect on the brain.

What the book does is add a whole new area of rationale as to why people should exercise. It's not just about the body beautiful or losing weight, but about improving mental health and cognitive ability. There are clubs in the US and Canada giving a copy of the book to each new member when they join, to give them an added incentive to keep attending the gym.

The momentum behind the use of exercise for mental, as well as physical, health is gathering pace. But my objective is to fundamentally change our culture, so we re-learn the benefits of exercise and work it in as part of our everyday lives.



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# THE ROAD TO REHABILITATION

Amanda Baker looks at the stages of rehabilitation, and at how fitness equipment can be used to help deliver rehab programmes

“**H**ighly tailored therapies are no longer just a concern for healthcare service providers

such as physiotherapy practices and rehabilitation centres,” says Holm Hofmann, UK business development manager for milon International.

“Health clubs are increasingly becoming a port of call for would-be patients with orthopaedic, neurological or other non-surgical complaints.

“However, the demands of these potential new recruits and the pressure to achieve results are also increased. Here, results are not simply about pain relief or treating medical conditions but also about the speed with which this is achieved.”

So how can manufacturers of fitness equipment help health club operators to effectively rehabilitate their customers after injury? To answer this question, it's vital to understand the stages of rehabilitation.

## STAGE 1 STABILITY

A classic approach to rehabilitation is to stabilise first – ensuring relevant structures and joints remain in a relatively neutral, aligned position – and then, after a period of conditioning, gradually mobilise.

Stability can be progressively challenged and this typically engages the proprioceptors – sensors in the limbs that provide information about joint angle, muscle length and tension, which is integrated to give information about the position of the limb in space. These proprioceptors can be damaged and limit these signals. Joints, muscles and tendons will need rehabilitating, but nerves therefore usually require rehabilitation too.



Julia Dalgleish, master trainer for Cybex International UK, says: “When an individual sprains an ankle, we know that there may be some muscular damage and probably some tendon and/or ligament damage. Most instructors know that the ligaments and tendons will take significantly longer to heal than muscular damage. However, few instructors will consider that neural damage will take even longer to heal than ligaments/tendons. Hence, even after muscles, tendons and ligaments have healed, it's not uncommon for another sprain to occur. This is often the result of the poor neural transmission, despite all the other tissues involved being fully healed.”

One way to achieve stabilisation is using resistance. Selectorised strength

**Less is more** The ‘Same Side Forward’ action of the arms on Cybex’s Body Arc Trainer mean less spinal torsion and quicker recovery

machines represent a vital part of the process, as they can stabilise the body and joint positions and isolate the necessary joint actions to focus the work where it's required.

“One often neglected exercise in knee rehabilitation is the use of the leg extension machine,” says Dalgleish. “On our machine, the start and end point of the movement can be adjusted in 10-degree increments. This ensures that load is applied to the joint angle in accordance with the training principle ▶

**Resistance in milon's Train Tec series is provided by an electric motor, which allows resistance to be raised in 1kg increments**

- of specificity – namely, the muscle can be challenged in the specific range which requires strengthening. You can also vary the resistance to maintain the optimal level of force throughout the range of motion, taking into account the individual's limits and abilities."

Hofmann adds: "Research indicates the benefits of eccentric training: the neuronal mechanisms involved in this type of training are activated even under low loads. Greater contractile strength can also be achieved in the early stages of rehab, which means that the affected structures are stabilised more rapidly and rehabilitation achieved more quickly. This form of training can strengthen the joints' connective-tissue structures.

"The milon Train Tec series enables individuals recovering from injury to train solely eccentrically. Resistance is provided by an electric motor which allows the training resistance to be raised in increments of 1kg."

There are also a variety of other ways to train using other forms of resistance. Grant Powles, national master trainer



for Technogym UK, says: "Kinesis [Technogym's cable system] offers a consistency of force in all ranges, allowing 360 degrees of movement via a closed loop cable system. For example, for the shoulder, the force produced follows the movement and is not fixed. This enables a safe environment to increase proprioception of the stabilisers within the shoulder joint."

Meanwhile, HUR's use of air as resistance overcomes the additional

effort required to lift a static weight at the beginning of an exercise and slow it down at the end. This produces a smoother resistance curve or profile that reduces stress on joints and connective tissues while optimising muscular effect. Range limiters and a zero-resistance option also facilitate passive and assisted mobilisation, allowing rehabilitation to begin at the acute phase or, for chronic conditions, to improve daily function.

## EXERCISE 4 ALL

**E**xercise 4 All is an award-winning rehabilitation centre that's designed to help improve the lifestyles of people in Derbyshire – helping those with disabilities or people suffering from major illnesses to cope with their condition and improve their general wellbeing. Clients range from 14 to 92 years old.

Joyce Coupe, GP referral consultant at Exercise 4 All, says: "Our role is to help each individual to improve their health and lifestyle in the most effective way possible. Instructors begin by taking patients through a 15-minute warm-up on a recumbent bike, set to a manual programme. This helps prepare the muscles for exercise and allows the instructor to check the patient's heart rate and prescribe the correct level of resistance.

"Next, the patient's session follows a cardiovascular circuit format. For example, we treat an 85-year-old lady who suffers from a number of complaints, including arthritis in all major joints. She

visits the centre three times a week and her circuit consists of five minutes on an upright bike – we will eventually build this up to 10 minutes – followed by walking on a treadmill for five to 10 minutes, then two minutes on a cross-trainer and finally finishing on the recumbent bike. The main objective of the programme we have designed for her is to improve her overall mobility, fitness and lung efficiency.

"While patients are exercising, team members monitor blood pressure. They use a number of methods to do this: the RP scale, measuring exertion rates, observation and a talk test. This process is very important, as blood pressure is a strong indicator of how the patient is coping with their rehabilitation."

The centre works with 15 GP surgeries, with a number of hospitals in Derbyshire also recommending it to their patients. Matrix supplied the centre with a range of equipment including treadmills, upright bikes and cross-trainers.



Rehabilitation normally includes work on bikes, treadmills and cross-trainers

HUR's use of air resistance overcomes the effort of lifting static weights at the start of an exercise



Zero resistance is particularly useful for vulnerable joints such as knees and shoulders. Adjustments in load can be made at any time during the range of available movement, which enables the practitioner to, for example, load a joint isometrically or eccentrically.

#### STAGE 2 MOBILITY

The second stage of the rehabilitation process focuses on mobility. Range of movement restrictions in any joint mean the body is out of balance. Over time, the body compensates for this, with additional work performed by other areas either above or below the restricted joint, which may lead to pain, further injury and limited performance.

Powles says: "Increasing mobility and restoring movement can be achieved via Kinesis' 5m cable range. This allows any range of movement under a consistent force production, from the smallest isolation all the way up to full chain work."

Dalgleish adds: "Cybex's selectorised strength machines ensure that the cam design matches the force curve of the muscle being trained, so the right amount of resistance is provided throughout the range of movement, however restricted the range of movement may be. The consistent torque around the joint reduces the

stress at the joint often associated with common free weight exercises."

CV equipment may also be used to increase mobility. Jon Johnston, MD of Matrix Fitness Systems, says: "The Krankcycle is ideal for people with reduced lower body mobility who want a cardiovascular workout. The low impact exercise ensures it's safe for all users, and the independent and adjustable arms provide a way of improving the range of motion and building strength for people with reduced mobility in the upper body."

Dalgleish adds: "The Same Side Forward action of the arms on our Total Body Arc Trainer [same arm and leg moving together, see photo p49] means less spinal torsion, which assists the return to function for those recovering from spinal injuries."

#### STAGE 3 RESTORING MOVEMENT PATTERNS

Phase three is to return the individual to specific functional exercises and sports-specific movement patterns. Having established stability and returned mobility to the injured area, there now needs to be integration of the joint(s) into full body movement patterns.

Peter Hope, business development manager for BalanceMaster, says: "The ▶

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Krankcycle and BalanceMaster can be used to improve mobility and functional movement



► BalanceMaster machine provides a series of programmed exercises that involve eversion, inversion, plantarflexion and dorsiflexion of the ankle joints, with simultaneous rotation of the hips. The machine is ideal for situations where improvements in balance and functional ability are required, as it provides a progressive system of training; it's safe for anyone to use, provided they're able to stand for short periods of time."

Philip Newton, from the Lilleshall Hall Sports Injury and Rehabilitation Centre, adds: "Many professional footballers come to us after surgery on the ankle and need considerable work to reduce the resulting stiffness. The BalanceMaster is appropriate because it allows stretching exercises while in weight-bearing mode – something that's essential for the rapid rehabilitation of the ankle, which is designed to

work under load. The treatment of Achilles tendon ruptures and ligament reconstruction is also greatly assisted.

"The preordained way the BalanceMaster moves is great for helping those with ligament injuries, as it helps them regain balance and ease stiffness in a way that's much better than the traditional wobble board."

Meanwhile Moira Merrithew, executive director of education at STOTT PILATES, says: "Pilates is a perfect modality for rehabilitation from a sport-related injury or any other kind of injury. Not only is the focus on strengthening the deep supporting muscles of the area, but complex movements that integrate the injured body part into full-body functional and sport-specific movements are also incorporated.

"Muscular compensations are identified, and then specific movement patterns are designed to strengthen the mind-body connection. When a pilates practitioner trains a client with a knee injury, for example, the body is seen as a whole and the movement patterns are designed to strengthen the support structures throughout.

"The variety of exercises available, as well as the ability to modify these movement patterns, allow the targeting of specific muscles or muscle groups. By changing the angle or strength of resistance, injuries can be precisely addressed. Knees, hips, shoulders and particularly the spine can be rehabilitated effectively on the Reformer, as well as using the Stability Chair and Cadillac Trapeze Table."

## BODY ACTIVE DEVON

"A female patient aged 62 came to see me in March 2005," says Dr John Searle, a qualified personal trainer at Body Active Devon. "She'd had rheumatoid arthritis for 35 years and needed help with many daily living activities. On assessment, there was wasting of the muscles of the upper and lower limbs, with restricted movement of all limb joints. However, her goal was to live a normal, active life.

"Three things were necessary to achieve her goals: increased range of movement in her limb joints, increased aerobic fitness, and improved muscle strength. If these could be achieved, then her overall motor function – such as balance and co-ordination – would also improve. She came to the gym three times a week, and I saw her once a week for four weeks, once every two weeks for eight weeks, once a month for the next 18 months, and I now see her once every two to three months. "Her introductory programme for the first four weeks consisted of

walking on a treadmill at 2km per hour for five minutes. Over four weeks, this was gradually increased to 10 minutes. She used a Swiss ball from the outset, sitting on it and putting her upper limb joints through as wide a range as she could. She also used the ball to squat against the wall, but only a very small range of movement was possible.

"After four weeks, she was able to increase the speed on the treadmill and walk for 15 minutes. She also began to use a cross-trainer. After about six weeks, she began to do resistance exercises, initially using machines. As she became confident and could move a light resistance, she moved over to light dumbbells and resistance bands. The resistance exercises were functional, using large muscle groups.

"The programme changed every month and, by six months in, she was also doing core work on the Swiss ball. The intensity of her programme increased each month. After 12 months she was completely independent."



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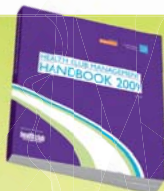
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# on the MONEY

**T**he way members are charged to use a fitness facility can vary – fixed contract, pay-as-you-go and so on. And what route the operator decides to go can have a big impact on monthly cashflow.

So what models are out there and what are their pros and cons? We ask the experts for their thoughts and take a look at a selection of companies that provide the technology and software to support each payment approach.

Are you using the right member payment method in your club? We look at the pros and cons of a variety of models

## traditional contracts

**Typically an agreed fee paid by direct debit each month over a set time period**

"A major benefit of contracts is that they enable a stable and predictable cashflow process, which is particularly appealing in the current economic climate," says Alistair Rollins, CEO of The Retention People. "Asking people to commit to a contract may put them off signing up, but there is no solid research to show this."

"The other less obvious benefit is the improvement in retention. Our research shows that members on contracts stay on average five months longer than those paying on a month-by-month basis. Taking an average fee of £35 a month, this equates to £175,000 additional income per 1,000 members."

"A 12-month contract has also been shown to improve the member lifetime beyond the contract. However, the danger lies in assuming that a contract is a retention strategy. Our findings show that less than 40 per cent of members renew at the end of their contract period, although this still leaves a higher proportion of members still paying than if there was no contract at all."

"One final word of warning is to check your average life membership. While some clubs offer a reduced price for a 12-month commitment, you may find that your members stay longer than these 12 months, so you will end up with less income if the contract is offered at a lower monthly price."



PHOTO: WWW.ISTOCK.COM/SCOTT DUNLAP

**Online function** With Harlands' Snap system, you can join a gym and sign up for monthly payments to be automatically debited from your account

## software support

### the harlands group

Harlands offers an outsourced direct debit management solution: there's no need to purchase software as the payment process is handled remotely. A web-based log-in area enables operators to view and download member and payment information. In some cases, the Harlands system can be integrated with on-site management software to enable member data to flow to and from the site. For members joining online, Harlands' Snap system allows data to transfer in real-time to a club's front desk.

## ► value for money

**A payment system where members on a set contract may be offered a discount each month if they go to the gym less than an average amount**

"Monthly electronic fund transfers (EFT) have played a significant part in the development of the modern fitness industry over the last 15 years," says Rod Hill, who runs a project funding consultancy called Calgary. "However, as the industry has matured, we're seeing one large flaw with the EFT system: if a member doesn't use a club very often, they're not getting value for money from

their membership, which ends up in a cancellation. Although pay-as-you-go methods work well for leisure centres, they take away the 'club' effect that many operators want to achieve.

"I'm in favour of modifying current EFT systems to give better value for money. For example, if a member pays £50 per month to use a club, but only goes three times in one month (which is well below average usage) we could think about reducing the amount of money we take from that person's account. This could be accompanied by a letter saying: 'Dear member, we've

noticed that you have only used our club three times this month, so we are only going to charge you 25 per cent of the full membership price'.

"The drawback to this system is that operators risk a reduction in revenues by moving away from guaranteed monthly dues. On the other hand, the no-usage scenario is not sustainable and attracts bad press and a negative public perception. Another possible solution could be to develop an Oyster card-type system, where people pre-pay for a certain amount of visits and only pay for what they use."



**Flexible use** Pay-as-you-go has allowed those out of work due to the recession to keep exercising, says Steve Philpott

## software support

### fiserve

Fiserve's i4 software has two very different membership payment options. Firstly, a value for money option can be operated where members on a traditional contract are charged less in a month where they use the club less than a pre-set quota. These members would be batched together and an email merge message sent out advising them of the discount. Secondly, and in complete contrast, is the incentive bonus scheme which is popular in the US. Here, club members are offered monthly discounts if they meet an agreed quota of gym visits.

## pay-as-you-go

**Under this payment scheme, customers only pay for what they use each time they visit the gym**

"One of the fundamental principles of local authority leisure provision is that it will be socially inclusive and accessible to all sections of the community," says Steve Philpott, CEO of DC Leisure, one of the UK's leading private operators of local authority leisure centres.

"As a result, we're in a different position from private fitness operators. A pay-as-you-go method is regarded as essential in our sites, with annual or monthly direct debit payments viewed as a convenience option for users.

"The ability to pay as you go has definitely proved valuable for some people during the economic downturn, as it's given them greater flexibility and enabled them to continue exercising without the commitment of a monthly payment.

"One of the disadvantages of this system is that it lacks the financial

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**In demand** Adopting a yield management system would allow clubs to charge members more or less subject to the popularity of classes or how busy the gym is

► attendance-spurring commitment of contracts: 'I'm paying for it, so I'd better use it'. If there's no ongoing financial commitment, it can be difficult to maintain regular usage if motivation and enthusiasm have waned. There's also an argument that a members-only club has a certain exclusivity, which may also be part of the appeal for some people, but is obviously not appropriate for DC Leisure. In addition, there are the extra cost and security issues associated with handling and managing cash."

#### software support

##### the gladstone plus2

The Gladstone Plus2 membership system has two features which reduce the burden on reception staff who have to handle ad-hoc pay-as-you-go bookings and usage. Using the Connect2 web portal, gym members can make bookings and payments over the internet on a real-time basis. And Kiosk2 is a self-service unit that members can use to book and make payments on-site, without having to go through the reception staff.

#### yield management

**A payment system where members are charged different prices for general gym usage, classes and even staff time depending on how in-demand they are or how busy the club is**

"The advantage of a yield management payment system is that you can create extra revenue during quiet times," says Thierry Delsol, CEO of The Club Company. "We offer off-peak and peak memberships, but it's quiet for us between 1pm and 4pm, so we're looking to introduce a special rate for more mature members during this time. However, we're carefully looking at age profiles of our existing members, as we wouldn't want them to downgrade to this special rate. There's also a danger that charging two-star prices for a four-star facility, for example, could devalue an operator's offering.

"Another disadvantage is that too many memberships would become confusing. I would suggest no more than five,

although this depends on the operator and the facilities available. Any more than that, however, and members start to worry about whether those training next to them are paying less than they are.

"Where yield management could work particularly well, however, is on a pay-as-you-go basis. This works for the golf side of our business, where we charge up to five different tariffs a day. Members get priority, but they use the facilities at very specific times: in the mornings and up until 1pm. So we have a traffic light payment system. Red means members' time (between 8am and 1pm), when we don't offer any discounts. Orange is a compromise, mid-afternoon, where we offer a small discount of about 20 per cent. On the green tariff, usually after 6pm, there's lots of space, so we offer a greater discount of 50–60 per cent.

"Pay-as-you-go facilities have more flexibility to adopt yield management methods and charge different prices at different times of the day: it can be

argued that 'ad-hoc' customers may not be as loyal or demanding as those on a monthly membership."

#### software support

##### ez-runner

The configuration of Ez-Runner's software offers the flexibility and scope to mould around clubs' many different services and payment tariffs. Operators can control the day and hours of membership payment packages: peak only, off-peak, weekend only etc. There's also a 'session' membership feature so clubs can offer 'pay-as-you-go', and time zones can be set at point of sale so the price of an item sold (ie a visit) changes according to the time of day.



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STOTT PILATES PHOTOGRAPHY © HEATHREW

# FITNESS AL FRESCO



Nordic Walking has proved so popular that énergie is considering a UK rollout

**M**ost clubs offer exercise classes to attract non-gym users, but how many reach out to the growing market of outdoor enthusiasts?

Councils and PCTs are recognising that free-to-use outdoor gyms not only encourage physical activity in the community, but are also good for the environment as they're powered by a user's body weight, plus they're accessible and can be used by anyone older than 12 without the need for supervision.

Some operators are now taking steps to cater for outdoor exercisers by forging links with councils or introducing outdoor training sessions. We investigate.

## STRIDING AHEAD

Client: énergie fitness club, Milton Keynes

**Activity provider:** Nordic Walking UK

**Cost:** Flat fee of £595 to set up the offering, plus a monthly fee of £95

**Location:** Campbell Park in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

**Start date:** June 2009

**Description:** Nordic Walking delivers outdoor programmes ideal for those who prefer not to use a gym; énergie has introduced the activity to its Milton Keynes site, formerly a Fitness First club, as part of the rebrand.

The basic package includes the training of one instructor and one

walk leader, a pack of walking poles (for groups of up to 12 people) and a marketing launch pack and manual.

The programme not only delivers a cardiovascular workout, but also works 90 per cent of skeletal muscles. Participants can be of any age or fitness level, with any goal.

énergie is looking to offer a Nordic Walking UK membership after the success of its taster workshops; almost all 32 workshop participants have signed up to the club's four-week Nordic Walking course at £59 each.

**Details:** nordicwalking.co.uk

## SENIOR SESSIONS

Client: Herne and Broomfield Parish Council

**Supplier:** Wicksteed Playscapes

**Cost:** £14,500

**Location:** Cherry Orchard Playing Field in Herne, near Herne Bay, Kent

**Installation date:** April 2009

**Description:** Installed with senior citizens in mind, but suitable for use by anyone aged 12 and above, this outdoor gym features seven stations from Wicksteed's 13-strong Xerscape range, including a chest press, a skier, a pull-down exerciser, sit-up benches and triple pull-up bars. The kit was

created in conjunction with Staffordshire University's Centre for Sport and Exercise.

The installation was jointly funded by an Awards for All grant, the Co-Op Community Fund, Kent International Airport, Action with Rural Communities and the council. Wicksteed Playscapes has also installed fitness facilities dedicated to senior exercisers in Blackley, Manchester and Bromham in Bedford. **Details:** wicksteed.co.uk

It's aimed at older adults, but anyone aged 12 and above can use the gym



## FAMILY FUN Client:

Southwark Council, London

**Supplier:** The Great

Outdoor Gym Company

**Cost:** £20,000

**Location:** Peckham Rye Park in Southwark, London, situated near a skate park and children's playground

**Installation date:** March 2009

**Description:** Aimed at providing all ages of the community with free access to modern fitness facilities, the unsupervised Peckham Rye Park Green Legacy Gym comprises 15 stations including a double-station cross-trainer, a fitness bike, a ski machine, a double-station leg press and a chest press, pull-up bars, dip bars and an abdominal bench. Each piece of kit is has step-by-step instructions and diagrams for use.



Units include instructions for use

## REHABILITATION

**Client:** Westminster City Council and King George's Hostel in Victoria, London, with support from Hungerford Turning Point drugs service

**Activity provider:** British Military Fitness (Community Division)

**Cost:** Free – BMF runs the scheme on a not-for-profit basis

**Location:** Sessions are conducted in Hyde Park, London

**Start date:** The programme was piloted from April–May 2008 and has continued twice a week ever since. Its success has led to BMF signing a similar contract with London's Genesis Housing Group.

**Description:** BMF provides one-hour supervised exercise sessions to hostel residents wanting to reduce their drug use. Activities include individual and group exercise and circuit training, supplemented with running and gym sessions, as well as advice on nutrition and relaxation organised by the Hungerford Drug Project. Classes cater for six to 12 participants, and there are always two BMF fitness instructors on site.



## ACTIVE LEARNING

**Client:** Harrington Hill Primary

School in Hackney, east London

**Supplier:** Caloo

**Cost:** Approximately £10,000

**Location:** School playground

**Installation date:** January 2009

**Description:** The school purchased Caloo's powder-coated steel Workout Bundle, comprising eight stations of kit offering a low impact cardiovascular

workout, including the cross-rider, air walker and body twist. Motivated by Change4Life, the government's public health initiative, and a visit to China where outdoor gyms originated, the school decided to install the kit to encourage children and staff to develop and maintain active lifestyles during and outside school hours.

**Details:** caloo.co.uk

In addition to the physical benefits, the BMF programme has provided users with a new focus, helping to reduce anti-social behaviour



Apart from the physical benefits, the programme has provided participants with a new focus and structure to their day, helping to reduce anti-social behaviour and make lifestyle changes. Two participants have recently completed their first 10km race, while others have started college courses or been re-settled in their own accommodation. BMF is currently in talks with council-operated leisure centres to offer outdoor training sessions as an alternative form of group exercise.

## SUPERVISED SERVICES

**Client:** NHS Camden and the London Borough of Camden

**Supplier:** The Great Outdoor Gym Company in partnership with Park Leisure and The Armoury Health Club in Hampstead, London – part of charitable sports trust Jubilee Hall Clubs.

**Cost:** The trust is covering the cost of instructors for the first three months, but hopes to gain a £10,000 grant through the National Lottery's Awards for All scheme to extend the trial for 12 more months.

**Location:** Lismore Circus in Gospel Oak, north London

**Installation date:** July 2009

**Description:** The London Borough of Camden installed eight outdoor gyms, funded by a PCT, and has called upon Jubilee Hall Clubs, as well as local operators Greenwich Leisure, Central YMCA and Camden Active, to staff six of the eight gyms to encourage usage. Jubilee Hall Clubs runs three sessions a week – an outdoor workout class, a junior circuit and a senior circuit – and the PCT is monitoring the results to see if participation is higher than at the two unsupervised sites.

On-site services include drop-in gym inductions, help and advice with exercise programmes at set times, and supervised classes conducted in the 18-station gym.



caroline wilkinson

healthclub@leisuremedia.com



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# MEMBER MANAGEMENT

**M**embers' expectations of service have risen almost as rapidly as technology has developed. Not only do users expect information instantly and at a touch of a button but, due to the internet and wireless devices, also effortless access to data from remote locations.

Equipment manufacturers are consistently building on the ways a health club – and members – can track progress and activity levels, both inside and outside the gym, and deliver or obtain

guidance and motivational feedback. Inefficient, time-consuming paper-based systems just won't cut it any more if expectations are to be met.

The evolution of the exercise management system has upgraded a user's experience and a club's operations by ensuring staff, management, equipment and users are all connected in a targeted effort to boost retention levels.

With a number of manufacturers developing such systems, Caroline Wilkinson looks at a selection to see what makes each different.



Pulse's Smart Centre uses a card which automatically adjusts kit to the right settings

## pulse smart centre

The latest version of Pulse's Smart Centre software is packaged in a new-look touch-screen kiosk and is compatible with all of Pulse's fitness equipment. A member's data and training programme is downloaded onto a small card and, like many management systems, holds pre-set equipment settings and workout data. All staff members can access a user's profile and monitor attendance from a central kiosk in the club. Details of a member's progress, health and medical issues can also be accessed.

The package also allows staff to send pre-templated automated messages via internal or external emails to deliver advice, motivation and information – freeing up time to interact with users on the gym floor. This function is especially useful to connect with members whose attendance levels are declining, which are also flagged up by a warning system. Management can also track staff efficiency and identify club trends.

The system's new built-in activity centre, the likes of which are becoming a more common function of management software, also enables members to log physical activities outside of the gym – such as exercise classes, swimming or walking the dog – to help them progress towards their end goal. This is intended not only to improve motivation but also to ensure that all members, not just those who use the gym for all their exercise needs, feel involved in the club.



### fitlinxx

Accessed via a touch-screen display console attached to the fitness equipment, FitLinxx software is networked into a central database which provides exercisers and staff with access to data on individual progress, as well as motivational tools.

FitLinxx also offers a wireless activity monitor called the ActiPed, which records physical activity throughout the day. Containing patented accelerometer technology, the device can distinguish between different types and intensities of motion – such as walking, running and cycling – and tracks steps, calorie burn, time and distance. The data is then uploaded to a user's online account, accessible via the ActiHealth website: [actihealth.com](http://actihealth.com)

**FitLinxx software is compatible with many different makes of equipment, such as Precor (above)**

### shokk tactics

SHOKK's activity management system, Tactics, is designed specifically for monitoring young people's fitness and participation levels, either in a gym environment or while participating in a physical activity-related project. As a web-based solution, it can be used in a number of settings outside a SHOKK gym, including schools, sports partnerships, leisure centres, health clubs and weight management projects.

Children log their own data – what they've done that day or week in the way of exercise – onto the system, which recognises 147 out-of-gym activities, including walking the dog, playing football and even kabbadi, an Indian team sport. There's also an option to record daily food intake.

Data is accessible to the member and to staff on-site via touch-screen computers, using either a personal membership number or biometrics, as well as off-site via Tactics' website.

The software comes with activity programmes installed, which can be modified as a user progresses, while pre-set tests can be used to assess fitness levels. An in-built incentive points scheme also aids member motivation, while alerts notify instructors of physical and behavioural issues.

Other features include online video streaming of exercises and techniques, news for users, new research and reports for staff development, support forums and an instant messaging service where staff can chat with members.

### star trac efitness system

Star Trac's new online solution to exercise management is compatible with most manufacturers' kit, including Matrix, Life Fitness, Cybex and Precor, as well as Star Trac's own ranges of equipment. A member's data and exercise programme is recorded on a personal USB device, which connects to the machines via USB docking stations. The system then captures all cardiovascular data, including heart rate, from wireless devices.

eFitness enables facilities to issue member group challenges and competitions, promoted by banners and posters or via internal emails, to provide motivation and to encourage the formation of the club's social networks and communities. Users are also able to log their other activities, such as exercise classes and team sports, and upload all their data to a personal account on the eFitness System website. ▶



**Data is stored on a personal USB device**



Technogym was one of the first companies to introduce an exercise management system

#### ► technogym wellness system

Technogym's Wellness System was one of the first exercise management systems on the market, launching in 1996. Members access the system using a wireless TGS key, which holds details of their customised training programme. Performance charts can be monitored from the club's touch-screen kiosk or online at Technogym's training room, built into a club's website.

Non-gym activities can be logged, so the system can be used to collate data from all members, not just frequent gym-goers. Meanwhile, an interaction management system called Contact Manager (an add-on to the Wellness System) alerts personal trainers to members at risk of dropping out based on their attendance and activities.

The benefits for low-staffed clubs also include an online joining process where a new member can purchase a personal training programme based on their completed profile and train using pre-designed workouts and exercise guidance videos. The system can also be used to evaluate the efficacy of exercise referral schemes, allowing GPs and health professionals to analyse physical activity and exercise data to assess progress.



gym80's Software has the ability to track, in real-time, who's on which machine

#### gym80 software

Offering guidance and feedback throughout a workout, Software by gym80 International is compatible with all brands of cardiovascular equipment using the C-SAFE port, and on gym80 resistance machines via an integrated high-quality LCD screen. Members access their programmes on the equipment using either a transponder or a five-digit pin number. gym80 recommends a networked system in clubs to enable improved versatility of the LCD screens.

The LCD screen, known as Workout Point, is positioned in front of the user while working on a resistance station for maximum ergonomics during exercise. It offers varying graphics to guide the member through their workout. During the resting period, the screen can convert into a TV or a messaging point to communicate club news or advertising to generate additional revenue.

When creating a programme, the instructor can take into account the speed of the concentric and eccentric phases of the exercise, seat positioning, weight and range of movement so a member can

feel confident they're training correctly. The system also has the capability of tracking who is working out on which machine in real-time. An instructor also knows if a member is not completing their programme as prescribed, as they are alerted by the machines via a hand-held PDA, which can be configured to be more sensitive for certain groups such as the elderly, rehab patients and GP referrals. gym80's system also includes FreeExercisePoint, a free-standing screen with an instructor demonstrating exercises that don't use equipment.

The software has a WebPoint module allowing members to access training information 24/7 and get workout guidance at home. Colin Carter, MD of gym80 UK, says: "The purpose of the software is to help instructors become closer to members, and to help members achieve their goals. Improving service and customer satisfaction will attract new members and improve retention."



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### WRAP UP WITH ICE

Ultimate Ice Wraps has launched a new range of wraps to treat specific body parts and muscle groups.

Consisting of eight wraps, the collection is suitable for athletes and exercisers, as well as for use as part of a rehabilitation programme. They can be used to treat body parts including the neck, shoulder, ankle, elbow, back, knee and calf.

The wraps are held in place with Velcro and can be worn underneath clothing. They are claimed to last longer than gel packs.

fitness-kit keywords: **ultimate ice**

### A BREEZY ALTERNATIVE TO TRADITIONAL AIR CON

The Breezair cooling system rollout is continuing with the installation of a system at the new Gold's Gym in Camberley, Surrey, by the exclusive UK distributor CoSaF Environments.

A direct evaporative cooling system, Breezair uses air from outside of the building and combines it with water, rather than using refrigerant gases.

The system is claimed to reduce running costs by up to 80 per cent when compared with more traditional air conditioning systems. Not only that, but no air is recirculated, which helps to eradicate germs and airborne contaminants – air changes are carried out every few minutes.

Four Breezair Icon coolers have been installed on the roof of the Gold's Gym building, with stale air removed via extractor fans. Temperature is controlled at a touch of a button via Breezair's Industrial



Wall Controller. And an aerodynamic fan provides a constant, even flow of air over heat-exchanger pads to provide cool air with minimal noise and low energy consumption.

fitness-kit keywords: **cosaf environments limited**

### IDEA LAUNCHES VIDEO EXERCISE LIBRARY

The IDEA Health & Fitness Association has introduced a video exercise library on its website, [ideafit.com](http://ideafit.com), which provides a resource for industry professionals.

Comprising 243 videos, the collection provides one-minute clips covering a variety of strength, flexibility, core and balance exercises, as well as speed and agility workouts. Those who log on to the site can also filter their exercise search by body region, body part, specific muscle or type of fitness equipment.

Launched in 1982, IDEA provides personal trainers, group exercise instructors and health club owners with information, health and educational opportunities.

fitness-kit keyword: **idea**





# research round-up

Pavements are the key to physical activity in towns and cities, and could be the answer to boosting public health, say researchers

## chasing pavements

**W**hile health clubs are ideal places to work out for those living in urban jungles – who are often starved of outside space in which to exercise – it's no secret that something else is needed to get more people more active across the world.

A new study by the San Diego State University has suggested that designing neighbourhoods to support a number of physical activities, such as walking and cycling, could be the answer.

The research, part of which was published in the June issue of the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, found that people who live in city neighbourhoods close to stores, transport stops, pavements, bicycle facilities and low-cost recreational facilities could be twice as likely to get enough exercise as people who have no access to these amenities.

The lead author James Sallis, a professor at the university, has called for the findings to be considered as a public health priority across the globe.

### **gathering data**

Previous studies have also shown how people living in communities characterised by mixed land use (such as shops and houses) and well-connected street networks are more active, but these have been limited to just one country. This study looked at data from 11,541 survey participants from 11 countries including the US, Lithuania, Brazil, Sweden, New Zealand and Japan.

The majority of respondents (70 per cent) lived in towns and cities with populations of 30,000 or more. The genders were well balanced and ages ranged from 20–64 years.

The amount of physical activity people did was gathered via an interviewer-



**Having access to pavements helps people meet physical activity guidelines**

administered questionnaire, based on their previous weeks' movements. Country-specific examples were given to help them recall activities with an appropriate intensity level – individuals were considered to do enough exercise if they reported doing moderate-to-vigorous activity at least five days a week for at least 30 minutes each day.

### **the results**

Seventy-seven per cent of participants in the study met the guidelines for physical activity. It was found that having access to pavements was the single most important factor for physical activity, possibly because people use them for recreation including jogging and roller blading, as well as for transportation.

The next most influential contributor to physical activity was having a public transport stop within a 15-minute walking distance of home. This was followed by having shops close by, access

to cycle-ways, and access to low-cost recreational facilities.

People who had all of the favourable neighbourhood attributes were twice as likely to meet the physical activity recommendations as those who lived in neighbourhoods with no activity-friendly amenities, or in neighbourhoods designed for cars. The possibility of getting more exercise increased with each extra amenity available.

Sallis concludes: "Many countries are building new developments to accommodate car travel without enough attention to walking and biking. Our study results are a warning that such neighbourhoods could be hazardous for health, and policies to promote activity-friendly developments are needed."

"A specific recommendation for the health club industry is to locate your facilities so your patrons can walk, bike or take public transport there, thus helping them get even more physical activity."

# holm hofmann

Kath Hudson talks to the UK business development manager for milon, one of Germany's leading health and fitness suppliers, about broadening its reach under new ownership – with the UK one of its main targets



## **Q** What's the company philosophy?

To offer sophisticated exercise concepts that help clubs be successful. With our gym circuit, people achieve results quicker, which has a positive impact on retention. There are currently 1,400 milon circuits in clubs across Germany, with almost one million users; many of these clubs have a 95 per cent retention rate.

## **Q** What's milon's USP?

Our name originates from the legend of a Greek Olympian, Milon of Croton, who did the same exercises each day with a growing calf on his shoulders; by the end of the year he was carrying a full-grown bull. The milon training concept is based on the same principle of progressive overload.

People love the milon circuit, because it takes 35 minutes to complete and only needs to be done twice every seven to 10 days to guarantee results. We've just won the FIBO Special Award for most effective exercise concept to retain existing members and acquire new ones.

We've also taken the exercise concept of eccentric loading – used by elite athletes and experienced weightlifters – into the mainstream. When you use our equipment, the weight coming back is 20 to 40 per cent heavier than the weight pushed out. The system is also very precise and users can increase weights by 1kg at a time.

The equipment is made in Germany and is extremely reliable. A service team of seven is all that's required there to do one installation a day, and service the 1,400 existing circuits in a 72-hour response time.

**Intelligent technology** The smart card stores a user's personalised programme



**Circuit sessions** Laps consist of a structured mix of cardio and eccentric loading resistance training

#### **Q What equipment does the circuit comprise?**

The standard circuit has eight stations of strength endurance and CV kit, consisting of three cross-trainers and three bikes. It's designed to work all the main muscle groups to give you a full body workout. All it requires is a minimum of 42sq m (450sq ft) floorspace. Each exerciser does an individualised 35-minute programme which is stored on a smart card.

#### **Q Why do you think the circuit is so effective?**

The main consumer benefit is that the machines are so easy to use: all you have to do is insert the smart card and, in less than two seconds, the machine adjusts itself to your personal settings – weights, seat, handle and lever positions.

Results are guaranteed based on the right combination of rest period (30 seconds) and six intervals of strength endurance training (60 seconds) plus two four-minute CV sessions per lap. Each training session is then logged on a dedicated PC, which runs milon's exercise documentation software, ml.

A study we carried out with the German Sports University of Cologne proved that the eccentric loading made

our system 30 per cent more effective than training with conventional weight stack-based resistance machines.

#### **Q How are the individual programmes created?**

Staff training is really important as the circuit is a precision tool that has millimetre settings on the range of motion and seat positions. The trainer, who sets this up and programmes the card, has to get it right. We usually spend a week or two on-site completing training.

We've also just launched the first bodyscanner in Zurich – a 60-second, 3D laser scan of the body's dimensions. This data is stored on the smart card,

with the programme created automatically and the machines setting themselves up with 99 per cent accuracy. The data can also be used as a visual 'before and after' tool, showing people how they have progressed over a certain period of time.

#### **Q How do UK and German clubs differ?**

In Germany, joining a club isn't just a lifestyle choice. People expect value for money. In a good club, you can expect someone to interact with you on the gym floor every time you visit, and make sure you're using the machines correctly. You don't have to buy extra personal training, which I think is the main difference between the two models.

British clubs look nice, but I have a feeling UK consumers will increasingly think about what they're getting for their money. The recession will force people to make tough choices, as it did in the German recession of 2001. They will assess the value of their membership fee against the results they're seeing.

#### **Q What could the UK health and fitness industry learn from Germany?**

In a recession, clear positioning is key. Clubs need to decide who they want ▶

### **COMPANY BY NUMBERS**

**Head office:** Emersacker/ Stuttgart, Germany, with subsidiaries in UK and Switzerland. Distributors in Holland and Belgium  
**Annual turnover:** Not disclosed, but the company had a 500 per cent growth rate from 2001 to 2006 and is now growing at a rate of 50 per cent a year  
**Number of employees:** 90



## WHO'S WHO?

**Owners:** Mario Goerlach/Hubert Haupt  
**Managing director & finance director:** Johann Huber  
**Managing director of milon software:** Dean Groening  
**Business development UK:** Holm Hofmann  
**UK sales manager:** Ewald Schliep

**Fitness boost** Exercisers will reap the benefits doing no more than two 35-minute sessions every 10 days

► to attract and where they want to be. German clubs specialised and became experts in their field, and they also work very closely with the medical profession. Educating members is, for many clubs, a top priority – for example, offering free nutritional, weight loss and sports physiology seminars run by well-known experts. More and more clubs try to reach out to the wider community – to people with special needs, or with back and joint problems, for instance.

If you reach for this different section of the market – people who haven't had gym membership before – you find they are often a bit older, or retired, so they have more time and more disposable income, and will be more loyal rather than flitting from club to club. At the moment, however, gyms in the UK are still chasing the same consumer segment all the time.

The German market could learn as much from the UK market, though, because it's very professionally run here and there are clubs with some very well-qualified fitness staff. Plus some clubs are beautifully designed with a lot of attention to detail.

## Q How do membership levels compare?

The population of Germany is around 82 million, compared to 60 million in the UK, but the penetration rate

is lower in Germany: it's only 8 per cent, compared to 12 per cent in the UK. There are 5,000 health clubs in Germany, against 5,800 in the UK. In Germany, 80 per cent of clubs are run by independent operators – a slightly higher number than in the UK.

## Q Which overseas markets is milon in now?

We've sold to Benelux, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Switzerland. The UK is a very important market: we think the milon circuit is a particularly good product for this market as it offers an efficient use of floorspace, accommodating 40 people per hour. Also, members are more pushed for time here!

We've just delivered the first circuit to a fully-fledged health club – the Marlow Club in Buckinghamshire. That's a very exciting project because the

team is very dedicated and so excited about the project, and that excitement has been passed on to the members.

## Q What trends do you predict going forward?

There will be more consolidation and consumers will demand higher quality and value for money. From talking to clubs, I anticipate that there will be a re-emergence of strength training, inspired by young men wanting to look like Daniel Craig!

The medical fitness market will further develop, buoyed by the government-led Change4Life campaign, and the medical fraternity and fitness sector will work closer together.

## Q What are your plans for the next 12 months?

At least another five or six projects in the UK by the end of the year, and then steadily grow the business over the next five years. Hopefully we will get to the same place in the UK as we are in the German market now.

## Q What's the best piece of advice you've received?

There's a German saying: "Don't swim where all the fish swim."

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## FAVOURITES

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**Film:** *Meet The Parents*  
**Music:** Walker Brothers  
**Place:** London  
**Food:** Sushi  
**Season:** Summer  
**Leisure activity:** Playing music and triathlons



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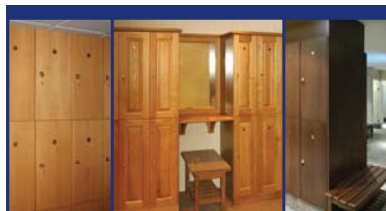
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# lightweights

## MORE THAN JUST A GYM BUDDY FOR SOME

Out of breath, sweaty and sometimes smelly: we're hardly at our most attractive when working out. But despite the odds, fitness facilities are becoming increasingly popular places in which to find a partner who's more than just a gym buddy.

In fact, the pastime has become so popular that there are now online dating websites aimed specifically at those who like to keep fit.

One of the biggest sites in the UK is dateactive.co.uk, although there are many more in the US such as fitness-singles.com, fitnessdates.com and fitkiss.com. They're all aimed at people who are dedicated to staying in shape, but who may lack passion elsewhere in their lives. The websites are similar to regular internet dating sites: users post up a photo and brief description of themselves, plus details of vital statistics, how they like to keep fit, and a history of fitness achievements to date.



## ANIMAL PLAYTIME COMES TO LONDON



Wildfitness, the outdoor fitness specialist, is set to host a seminar in London's Regent Park on 29-30 August where participants will learn a range of practical games and techniques to add a new outlook to personal training.

The seminar, called Exuberant Animal, will be led by US movement guru Frank Forench (see HCM April 06, p38) who thinks one key to sustaining interest in fitness is to introduce an element of play as displayed by animals in the wild. Practical sessions will also cover functional training principles and partner-resistance training.

## active words make you eat

It's ironic: posters for fitness campaigns make people eat more, instead of encouraging them to go to the gym, according to recent research.

The study, published in the journal *Obesity*, was conducted on college students who were split into groups and asked to look at a series of exercise and non-exercise posters. Both groups were given raisins after the test, but unknowingly the students from the

exercise poster group ate about 18 calories each, compared to 12 calories consumed by those in the other group.

In another test, students were split into groups and asked to read a list of words typically used in exercise campaigns – such as 'go' and 'active' – while the others read neutral words such as 'moon' and 'pear'. When both groups were offered snacks, the ones exposed to action words ate more.



ALL PHOTOS THIS PAGE: WWW.ISTOCK.COM

## BRISK WALK COULD HELP CHOCOHOLICS

The next time someone trying to lose weight complains about an addiction to chocolate, you could suggest they actually try to use exercise to curb their habit.

Researchers at the University of Exeter have found that a just a 15-minute walk can reduce chocolate cravings.

After three days of abstinence, 25 regular chocolate eaters were asked to either rest or take a 15-minute brisk walk. All participants then performed tasks that would normally bring on chocolate cravings, such as unwrapping a chocolate bar or performing a mental challenge. People who walked had lower cravings than those who simply rested.



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