

# health club management

MARCH 2010

## A SPORTING CHANCE

Sports-specific training  
to reach new markets

### INTERVIEW

#### JOHN KERSH

of Anytime Fitness on global  
expansion and the challenges  
of fitness franchising



a leisure media  
company  
publication



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## being coached

In this issue we look at the growing interest in small group training (page 56) and examine how this is changing the way gyms are designed, equipped, staffed and managed.

Few clubs now have staff in the gym to offer advice, so small group training fills the gap between paying out for a personal trainer – something many members can't afford – and soldiering on alone, taking pot luck on the advice which is occasionally available.

There are other more subtle advantages – not having to ask for help being one. Many people, especially new joiners, are too intimidated to speak out if they need support; even if there's a member of staff around, they may not want to 'impose' by asking for help or guidance.

However, if there's coaching on offer on an accessible and routine basis, they'll immediately take advantage of it, especially if they don't have to pay extra for it. DW Sports Fitness offers a range of group sessions on the gym floor, on the hour every hour, so members know they can get instruction and coaching without having to ask for it – and these are included in the price of membership.

The popularity of classes gives a good indication of how much people enjoy being coached and encouraged. Certain types of members join simply to go along to them and don't end up using the gym much, if at all.

Levels of commitment can be strong, with some following, and being exceptionally loyal to, particular instructors in whom they have faith and with whom they feel at ease. This bond with the instructor is another reason why small group training is working so well, as it harnesses that kind of loyalty and brings this dynamic onto the gym floor.

**When asked about the impact of mentoring and coaching programmes on retention levels, 77 per cent of companies said they'd had a positive impact on the retention levels achieved**

Most people have played sport at some stage in their lives and enjoyed the close instruction and coaching associated with it. Sports coaches motivate and reassure, as well creating a new level of enjoyment as skills are taught, problems overcome together, milestones celebrated and new goals developed. It's just this type of approach that we need in our health clubs to take the industry up a gear in terms of success.

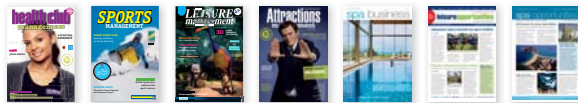
Mentoring and coaching are very powerful retention tools which are used in all areas of life. When asked about the impact of mentoring programmes on retention levels, 77 per cent of companies which used them reported that they had a positive impact on the retention levels achieved.

To date, the industry has largely missed out when it comes to harnessing the power of coaching and mentoring. However, there's a strong argument for adopting these methods to cement relationships with members and to strengthen their commitment both to the club and to their own exercise programmes. There are also advantages for staff, who will find this work extremely rewarding.

As well as offering members access to expert advice, coaching and motivation, small group training enables them to interact with each other and make friends. Feedback on this is so positive that we may eventually see the end of gyms where no-one talks to anyone else and works out in silent rows plugged into headphones. There will still be a place for the lone workout as part of the mix, but it won't be the only option in the gym and the addition of these classes will really strengthen the offer.

**Liz Terry, editor**

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# great strides

Although industry veterans may attest that it only feels like yesterday, 2010 marks the 15th anniversary of the launch of the world's first Elliptical Fitness Cross Trainer™ – the Precor EFX544.

Today, elliptical trainers are a staple part of virtually every gym and form the basis of workout routines for millions of users worldwide. However, one of the most significant developments in the world of commercial health and fitness had rather humble beginnings. American designer Larry D. Miller sought a solution that would enable his daughter, a junior athlete, to enjoy a good, weight-bearing workout, without the impact inherently associated with running.

After initially filming his daughter running alongside the family car, Larry returned home, and repeatedly replayed the video in slow motion on the family television – meticulously tracing her footpath. He then set about designing a machine that could mimic the stride motion as closely as possible. The elliptical fitness trainer concept was born.

## putting science in motion

After reaching a licensing agreement with the inventor, Precor set about applying

scientific and technological principles to Miller's initial concept. History and hindsight now tell us that the launch of the first cross trainer was an inspired move, however, in the early 1990s, significant challenges lay ahead before the product could be brought to market. After all, concept is one thing, but successful execution is quite another.

The Precor design team studied the needs of potential users, researching areas such as stride lengths and rotations, to understand how a broad member demographic could benefit from using the machine. The mechanical elegance of Larry Miller's rear flywheel design concept was at the very heart of the machine's smooth, rhythmical motion. Therefore, throughout the development process the design team never lost sight of the importance of maintaining a sense of natural movement, which would provide a consistently smooth and fluid workout experience for a variety of users.

One of the most innovative breakthroughs during product development was the introduction of a patented adjustable ramp, the CrossRamp. Research established that different ramp angles placed more emphasis on the various muscles of the lower body. High ramp angles were proven to work areas such as the upper hamstrings and glutes, whilst lower angles targeted muscles including the quads and lower hamstrings. The adjustable CrossRamp feature added a new dimension – by exercising a variety of leg muscle groups – and set the product in a class apart, as a true cross trainer, rather than simply just an elliptical machine.

Precor then made a bold decision: to launch the EFX544 into the commercial market. Such a strategy had rarely been adopted before, with new types of fitness machines traditionally being firstly tested on the home user market. The commercial market certainly

## also in 1995...

- Toy Story – the first ever wholly computer generated film – is released.
- Ebay is founded.
- Steve Fossett becomes the first person to make a solo flight across the Pacific Ocean in a hot air balloon.
- DVD – the optical disc storage media format – is launched.

offered a quick route to high visibility and sales momentum, but instant exposure to the demanding commercial arena was also not without risk. The Precor designers would need to accomplish the feat of transforming a basic prototype into a robust end product which would not only capture the imagination of a highly discerning market, but would also stand up to the rigours of a commercial gym.

## unique offering

While the development challenges were many, the opportunity for an innovative new entrant was evident. By 1995, bikes, treadmills and stair climbers were the stalwarts of any respectable fitness facility, but none offered the cross trainer's enticing blend of stride-based cardiovascular and resistance training. Jim Birrell managed the Precor design team during that period and vividly remembers the formative years of the EFX544: "The EFX offered so many attractive qualities, smooth, fluid motion, a weight-bearing exercise without the impact, and a lower perceived exertion level than the treadmill – it had it all."

Regardless of many clear merits, the fate of the EFX544 lay firmly in the hands of the user when it launched in 1995. Deservedly for Precor, the EFX's star rose quickly, and shone brightly. Jim recalls: "Gym owners and other buyers liked the motion but, as with any new product, they bought one or two initially,



◀ **Broad appeal** The EFX series remains a firm favourite in clubs worldwide.

1995



2010



▲ 1995 Precor's EFX544

▲ 2010 The EFX576i is the world's only cross trainer to feature both moving arms and a CrossRamp.

to 'test the water'. However, it wasn't long before they were ordering more, and in many clubs sign-up sheets and people waiting for the current user to finish became the norm."

### the impact of low impact

And the rest, as they say, is history. In time, other manufacturers realised the potential of the EFX and launched competing products, elevating the category to mass market status within just a few short years. To this day, Precor

remains the leader of the category. There have been a number of functional and aesthetic modifications to the EFX series over the years, culminating in the launch of the EFX576i – the world's only cross trainer to feature both moving arms and a CrossRamp, delivering a total body workout.

The emergence of the elliptical fitness cross trainer was not only one of the fitness industry's most significant developments, but it also forged the Precor reputation as a pioneering global

leader in equipment manufacturing. Jim concludes: "From the inception of Precor in 1980, innovation was a major component of its DNA, so thinking back, the company was inherently prepared to launch a product like the EFX."

Prior to 1995, the company wanted to become a force in the commercial market, but needed a point of differentiation. The EFX 'opened the door' and became the catalyst for getting Precor to the admirable position it's now in – at the forefront of the commercial cardio industry."

# 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)



**ZigZag dance mats and Expresso bikes capture kids' workout information**

## channel needed to collate the data being gathered

It's encouraging to read that more than 400,000 families have signed up for the Change4Life programme (*HCM* Feb 10, p39). At Tone Leisure, we're passionate about encouraging people of all ages to find ways of keeping fit that they enjoy.

Tone Leisure recently secured more than £200,000 from The Big Lottery Fund's Young People's Fund Programme – money we used to develop Z3, an interactive ZigZag Zone at Wellington Sports Centre. The zone for 10- to 16-year-olds, which opened in January, was driven by a specially established young people's committee made up of local youngsters, who were tasked with ensuring it would appeal to their peers.

The Sport England funding application required targets to be met – namely, 5,000 participants a year. In the first few weeks, we've achieved double the target of 100 different young people a week; if this level of interest continues,

we could be on track to achieve 10,000 participants in the first year.

Obviously we're delighted with the response to this great new facility, but these Sport England targets are based on participation only. In fact, the equipment we've installed at Z3 – the ZigZag dance mats and Expresso bikes – also captures a range of workout information that could be used to truly measure the effects of this exercise on our next generation.

We believe this is already a great example of operators and suppliers working together, using the next generation of 'tools' to measure the actual outcomes of our efforts. However, if we're to see longer-term health results, it's high time a channel was found to collate, analyse and distribute these sorts of figures, creating coherent reports from which the government, PCTs, schools and parents can learn.

**joel chapman**

*commercial director, tone leisure trust*



**MEND advocates the importance of fitness in child obesity treatment**

## holistic approach key to addressing childhood obesity

I was interested to read about the US research project, which demonstrates that school children who are physically fit achieve higher academic grades and have fewer problems with attendance and discipline (*HCM* Feb 10, p34).

We at MEND echo the importance of fitness within child obesity treatment and prevention programmes. Our courses adopt a multi-component approach, educating the whole family about nutrition and how to enjoy physical activity, and are scientifically proven to be a long-term solution to the obesity epidemic.

Indeed, I would like to bring your attention to a British study (published last month in *Obesity*) that proves the effectiveness of our programmes for seven- to 13-year-olds. Children who took part in the independent study – a randomised controlled trial conducted by a team at University College London's Institute of Child Health – lost weight, lowered their BMI and waist circumference and improved their physical activity levels and cardiovascular fitness. Their general health, including self-esteem, also improved.

To tackle the unprecedented levels of child obesity in the UK, it's essential that we take a holistic approach and provide families with the right skills and information to become fitter, healthier and happier for life.

**harry macmillan**

*ceo, mend*

*Johnny G*  
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# write to reply

## ► get people active by tapping into a desire to help others

I'm not alone in having put in hundreds, if not thousands, of hours into discussing the barriers to exercise – the myriad reasons people can't, or won't, get active. And the simple answer is: there is no simple answer.

However, the terrible earthquake in Haiti recently has got me thinking. Are there broader issues – areas of public interest that lie well beyond personal wellbeing – that we can tap into as a way of encouraging people to take action?

The whole fitness industry could work together and organise a charity walk, let's say, or even a three-month campaign – Get Healthy for Haiti.

It would be something the general population could participate in, structured and guided by the fitness industry. That sort of thing might just bring people out of their doors – people who might not come for fitness itself but who will come for something greater. It could just help bridge the gap.

I'm not saying we should turn a tragedy into some kind of benefit for the fitness industry by any means, but we need to find creative ways to compel people to take action. Marketing campaigns that communicate messages along the lines of: "Get off your couch today so you don't have a heart attack tomorrow" are certainly one part of the mix, but there are bigger and broader things we can initiate that might help people to get physically active.

If something like this tragedy can compel people to take action for themselves – or, more accurately, to take action to help others while at the same time helping themselves – then perhaps it's worthy of our consideration.

**john kersh**  
vp international development,  
anytime fitness

*Please turn to page 32 for a full interview with John Kersh*

## Paintballing can be used as a fun activity to help retain members

### we must rethink the spend on sales vs retention

Why do health clubs spend inordinate amounts of money, time and effort on marketing and promotional campaigns? As an experienced health and fitness professional, I've witnessed for so many years this money, time and effort being wasted on prospects who in all honesty may never step foot inside your facility.

Why not flip the coin and invest in the most important people: your current members? After all, these are the loyal people who pay their membership fees month in, month out, year after year.

Studies have shown that it's almost three times as expensive to recruit a new member as it is to keep an existing one – so why are operators not doing more to keep existing members happy?

At Healthy Balanced Generation, we go the extra mile to appreciate and recognise our members' loyalty, which I can confidently say not enough health clubs do. Over the past 18 months, we've set up sponsored 5km/10km runs and bike rides for our members, organised Christmas meals, taken them paintballing, organised a day of rounders and a BBQ, and are due to complete the Three Peak Challenge. Having this attitude has resulted in a retention rate of more than double the national average. Maybe it's time for change and a rethink in the whole acquisition versus retention debate.

**mark mckeganey**  
fitness co-ordinator, healthy  
balanced generation



John Kersh suggests charity campaigns could be a good way to get people fit





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## in brief...

**personal training studio for newmarket centre**

Leisure trust Anglia Community Leisure (ACL) has opened a new dedicated personal training facility at the Newmarket Leisure Centre.

The new studio offers a range of equipment including Technogym's Kinesis One cable-based system.

Jo Gathercole, health and fitness manager at Newmarket Leisure Centre, says: "This is a fully equipped private area where customers can complete their personal training session without interruption from of other users or the frustrations of unavailable equipment."

**digital fitness channels merge**

Body in Balance TV and Fitness TV have merged their businesses to form a new venture called Media Health and Fitness.

The new company will retain the two channel platforms formerly occupied by the original companies on Sky (SKY 275 and 282).

Mark Wood, former chair and CEO of ITN, will head the newly merged company.

Wood says of the merger: "The combined business is a great launch pad to build a global brand in fitness and lifestyle content and develop an e-commerce and merchandising portal."

Fitness TV was launched in 2009 on the SKY platform, setting itself an ambitious target of attracting 600,000 viewers each week.

**£15m centre for tyneside**

South Tyneside Council (STC) is set to move forward with plans to develop a new £15m swimming pool and health club in South Shields.

The facility, which will be located on the town's seafront – Pier Parade – will include a large health and fitness club, a 25m swimming pool with spectator seating, a learner pool, leisure waters and a sauna.

A multi-purpose space, a tourism information centre, a library access point and an outdoor performance area linked to the park are also included in the plans, which are expected to be submitted in the spring.

STC lead member for culture and wellbeing, Tracey Dixon, says: "The Foreshore pool complex is an investment for the future and the building will be designed to ensure it's sustainable and energy efficient."

"It's great news for the people of South Tyneside because the pool will bring great benefits for them; it will

also make our stunning seafront even more attractive for visitors who will have even more reason to return to South Tyneside for holidays and visits."



**Plans for the centre include a 25m swimming pool with viewing area**

**nuffield to upgrade clubs**

**Four clubs have been redeveloped**

Healthcare charity and fitness and wellbeing club operator Nuffield Health is investing £500,000 in redeveloping four of its sites.

The four centres – in East Kilbride, St Albans, Warwick and Bishop's Cleeve – will be kitted out with new equipment supplied by Life Fitness.

The St Albans centre has already received 56 new pieces of fitness kit, including Life Fitness' Engage Elevation CV range, which includes integrated 17-inch TVs with touch-screen, iPod connectivity and Virtual Trainer.

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The quarterly report aims to monitor the mood of the fitness industry

## leisure-net launches new survey

A new quarterly survey, which is designed to gauge the confidence levels of managers working in the fitness industry, will be launched in April.

Produced by research and consultancy provider Leisure-net Solutions, the Health and Fitness Confidence Survey is an online-based qualitative survey targeting senior managers from both the public and private sectors.

The survey will ask managers to look back over the last three months, as well as forward to the next quarter, and offer their thoughts on the industry's confidence, the major challenges it faces, awareness and attitudes towards government initiatives, and investment

trends. Mike Hill, Leisure-net's MD, says that more than 100 of the health and fitness sector's "top people" will be invited to complete a short online survey. The headline results will be released to the entire sector.

The survey will be sponsored by Leisure Industry Week and is backed by the Fitness Industry Association (FIA).

The FIA's executive director, Dave Stalker, says: "Anything that improves our understanding of the sector is a positive step. During this time of challenges and rapid change, it's particularly important that we listen and learn from the thoughts and experiences of senior people within our industry."

## essex facilities set for cash injection

Three leisure centres in Essex are set to benefit from a share of £930,000 after Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) recommended plans to invest in improved facilities.

Last month, the council's cabinet approved £800,000 in funding to go towards the creation of a new movement studio, as well as an extended health and fitness suite, at Loughton Leisure Centre.

Meanwhile, a further £130,000 is set to be invested in new

equipment for Epping Sports Centre and Ongar Leisure Centre.

The council's policy on the use of its capital assets is that this should result in either income generation or a decrease in the use of revenue. Its report states that: "Proposals put forward by SLM [which manages the centres] appear to meet those primary objectives, in that the provision of £930,000 of capital will result in a revenue saving, through a reduced management fee, of approximately £150,000".

WRITE  
IN TO WIN



Hopefully everyone has settled into their 2010 training programme by now, but with the warmer months not far away it's more than likely many are thinking even more about picking up the pace and achieving their goals.

As many of you are aware, at the Lucozade Sports Science Academy (LSSA) I spend a large portion of my time working with professional athletes and coaches talking about how nutrition can underpin performance. Unfortunately, this work is not always applicable to general exercisers, quite simply because the concept of 'performance' is not appropriate.

However, from research into the general exerciser it is increasingly clear that identifying sports nutrition, specifically in relation to fuel and hydration can be crucial to enjoyment, well-being and total work done in the gym. For this reason, the LSSA team are continually working to help develop and evolve the Lucozade Sports Nutrition range to ensure that the variety of needs sports participants have are met.

So, at a time when the achievement of a goal is even more important to clients, attention to appropriate nutrition strategies and education is crucial to the total service provision. I would like to invite HCM readers to forward their sports nutrition questions, which could be featured in my bi-monthly in this column.

I look forward to receiving your questions!

### Nick Morgan

Head of Sport Science for Lucozade Sport  
Email questions to:  
[nickmorgan@leisuremedia.com](mailto:nickmorgan@leisuremedia.com)

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## update

## news



The Ysbyty Alltwen NHS hospital

### new fitness trails for nhs

Nearly £50,000 will be invested in the installation of fitness trails within the grounds of two hospitals in Wales.

Outdoor schemes are set to be piloted at Nevill Hall Hospital in Abergavenny, South Wales, and at Ysbyty Alltwen in Tremadog, Gwynedd, to promote healthy lifestyles to all National Health Service (NHS) staff.

The planned trails, which will also include five or six stations of specially-designed outdoor fitness equipment, will form part of the Welsh Assembly Government's new 'Creating an Active Wales' project.

Welsh health minister Edwina Hart explains: "Earlier this month, the Welsh Assembly Government launched a plan to encourage people to become more physically active – 'Creating an Active Wales'. One of the aims of the plan is to develop a physical environment that makes it easier for people to choose to be more physically active."

### ihrsa reveals green survey

The results of IHRS's first Green/Sustainability Survey reveal that, overall, health club operators have a positive attitude towards integrating environmental friendliness into their daily business practices and see 'going green' as a way to have a positive impact on club performance.

The purpose of the survey was to gain an insight into the opinions and practices of health and sports club operators around environmental sustainability.

More than 130 respondents provided data, revealing that 70.7 per cent of them had a strongly positive perspective on implementing green practices, while 54.7 per cent saw green practices as having a moderate priority within their organisation; 33.1 per cent felt they were a high priority. Other figures to emerge from the survey indicate that 38.8 per cent of respondents think implementing green practices would increase membership retention, while 48.9 per cent believe it would increase club profits.



Going green could increase retention

### london sports forum gets ifi nod

The London Development Agency (LDA) has awarded a four-year grant to the London Sports Forum for Disabled People (LSF) to project manage Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) London.

IFI London – a partnership between the LDA, LSF and the national Inclusive Fitness Initiative – has been tasked with getting a further 150 fitness facilities on-board and ensuring they comply with the IFI Mark accreditation.

There are currently just 25 IFI Mark-accredited facilities in London.

David Croisdale-Appleby, chair of the IFI, says: "This is a significant development for the IFI and provides

another major step towards achieving 1,000 inclusive fitness facilities throughout the UK by 2012."

The news comes just days after the DA2000 System, supplied by Derby-based company Deaf Alert, became the first product to receive IFI Recognised Product status.

The IFI Recognised Products scheme provides suppliers with an opportunity to showcase their accessibly-designed products, identifying them as leaders in inclusion within the UK fitness market.

The DA2000 provides fire alarm warning and messaging for deaf and hard of hearing people.



The opening of the Meridian Centre was delayed for more than a year

## meridian centre opens in louth

East Lindsey District Council's (ELDC) new £12m Meridian Leisure Centre in Wood Lane, Louth, Lincolnshire, has finally opened to the public.

The existing Louth Swimming Pool and Fitness Suite, on the town's Riverhead, closed during early January to allow the centre's staff to be trained ahead of the move to the new building.

Facilities at the new centre include a 25m, eight-lane swimming pool with moveable floor; a fitness suite with sauna and steamroom; a child care area with both indoor and outdoor play areas; a café; a leisure pool with flume; a sports hall and multi-purpose room;

dance studios; an IT suite and exhibition space; and outdoor changing rooms.

The council had been due to take ownership of the centre in December 2009, but this was postponed after construction company UCS Civils entered administration. Lincoln-based Gelders Group was subsequently appointed by ELDC to complete the final stages of the project.

ELDC portfolio holder for leisure, councillor Adam Grist, says: "This new leisure centre will provide people living in East Lindsey today, and in the future, with excellent opportunities to lead healthy and active lives."

## renamed poole centre opens

The former Dolphin Swimming Pool in Poole, Dorset, has fully re-opened to the public seven months after a fire forced the centre to close.

The centre, which has been renamed and rebranded as Everyone Active Leisure Centre: Poole, has undergone a redevelopment funded largely by the insurance payments.

According to a spokesperson, the revamp included the rewiring of the entire centre and an extensive redecoration project.

## another trust axes sunbeds

Sports and leisure trust Freedom Leisure has become the latest operator to remove all sunbeds from its leisure centres.

The operator, which manages 19 leisure and fitness facilities across Sussex and Kent, previously offered sunbeds at six of its sites.

The decision comes six months after a study by the International Agency for Research on Cancer deemed sunbeds harmful to humans.

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## independent news

### one-to-one relocates to pontypridd

Privately-owned health club One-to-One has relocated and re-opened in Pontypridd, Wales.

The owners have invested £60,000 in securing two empty warehouse units and transforming the space into a 930sq m (10,000sq ft) health club.

Facilities at the club include a wide range of CV and resistance equipment supplied by Star Trac, a free weights area and two exercise studios, with classes offered at the gym including group cycling. A local karate club will also make One-to-One its new home.

According to Victoria Thomas, director of One-to-One, future plans include the opening of a second site, after the club attracted more than 100 members before its opening date.

She says: "The equipment in the gym will appeal to a wide audience – whether it's sports specific and weight trainers,



The new club will use Star Trac kit

or women who are specifically looking to lose weight and tone up.

"With a monthly membership of £30, we're positive that our membership will increase. Hopefully, in a few years' time, we'll be toasting our success with another fitness facility.

### time fitness launches glasgow club

Time Fitness is set to open its second club – in Glasgow, Scotland – during the first half of March.

The 465sq m (5,000sq ft) club will include 15 resistance stations, 15 pieces of CV kit, two exercise studios, a sauna and a steamroom. The club will be managed on an interim basis by Time Fitness director Josh Bicknell.

Bicknell says the company has set a target of attracting between 600 and 900 members at the club.



Club will be the company's second

### girlzone adds fat-free service



The service will be free to every member of the Girlzone club

Women-only health club Girlzone in Basingstoke, Hampshire, has expanded its services by launching a new "flat stomach programme" for its members.

The new programme combines a diet of whole foods, protein, carbohydrates and healthy fats with a CV and resistance exercise regime designed to reduce body fat. The basic diet and exercise programme will be issued free of charge to all members who are interested.

For an extra cost, Girlzone will also offer participating members a range of ongoing support measures such as individual menus, weekly measuring and bespoke exercise programmes.



## supplier & training



The specialist equipment will be supplied by Denmark-based Kompan

### 'senior playground' for london

Danish equipment supplier Kompan has been appointed by Westminster City Council (WCC) to kit out a 'senior playground' in London's Hyde Park.

The area, which has been designed primarily to provide exercise for people over the age of 60, will be installed in the park's Pavilion tennis and bowls centre this spring.

The equipment, which will include a cross-trainer and a sit-up bench, is set to occupy an area covering 125sq m (1,345sq ft). It will also be available for use by people under the age of 60.

First proposed by the Knightsbridge Association, a local residents' group, the

Hyde Park Senior Playground scheme has been funded by the council under its Ward Budget Scheme and will be project managed by the Royal Parks.

Madeline Elsdon of the Knightsbridge Association says: "We proposed the playground because many older people find indoor gyms intimidating and expensive, and therefore aren't exercising enough.

"As well as the physical and mental benefits, we hope that the playground will encourage users to socialise and have fun together. People need to stay active and maintain independence – and we're never too old to play."

### exf launches seminar scheme

Supplier EXF Fitness has launched a series of special one-day 'Learn By Doing' seminars.

The company has lined up a team of experts in physical conditioning and performance, and the seminars will take place up and down the UK.

The sessions aim to offer fitness professionals a chance to study the latest theory and practice from the world of elite sport and apply those principles to athletes and clients for optimum performance results.

### analyser for harrods club

The Power Plate Studio at Harrods in London has installed an InBody 230 Body Composition Analyser, supplied by Derwent Healthcare.

The analyser was purchased after a two-month trial; members can receive a 15-minute consultation, which includes a comprehensive printed report of their personal results, to provide them with the necessary information to help them work towards their specific goals.

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Wattbike accurately monitors 29 parameters 100 times a second so there's plenty of data to keep an eye on. And thanks to the Expert software that's included free with every Wattbike, it's the ideal platform for group training. Simply connect the bikes together and to a screen and any one of 10 parameters can be displayed for all to see. If the mood takes you, you can even race up to 14 bikes with a visual display.

And outside of the group situation, because Wattbike doesn't have a fixed crank it's perfect for individual training as well.

So for less than the price of some other group training solutions, why not look instead at Wattbike. Visit [www.wattbike.com](http://www.wattbike.com) to find out how your gym could benefit.



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## in brief...

**michelle obama: let's move**

First Lady Michelle Obama announced the launch of 'Let's Move' at the White House last month.

With the goal of solving childhood obesity within a generation, the campaign will encourage more physical activity for kids, as well as pushing for healthier food in schools and clearer food labelling.

"It wasn't that long ago that I was a working mom, struggling to balance meetings and deadlines with soccer and ballet," Obama said. "There were some nights when everyone was tired and hungry, and we just went to the drive-thru because it was quick and cheap."

"One day, my paediatrician pulled me aside and told me: 'You might want to think about doing things a little bit differently.' That was a wake-up call that I was the one in charge, even if it didn't always feel that way."

Organisations behind the initiative include The Food and Drug Administration, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Football League and media brands Disney, NBC and Viacom.

**espinners for virgin active**

Virgin Active sites in Italy, Spain and Portugal are investing in Star Trac's eSpinner® to cater for the growing demand for Spinning® at the clubs.

The bikes take the experience of Spinning onto the gym floor, with a 15" screen offering instructor-led workouts. A total of 32 bikes will now be installed in 16 clubs across Italy, with four bikes going to Virgin Active Zaragoza in Spain and another four being installed in Virgin Active Gaia, Portugal.

**lama awards for holohan**

Dublin-based Holohan Architects won two awards at last month's Zurich LAMA Awards ceremony. The €16.6m NUI Galway Sports Centre won 'Best Sporting Facility - Not Publicly Funded' while the €7.5m Aura Youghal Leisure Centre won 'Best Recreational Facility'.

The national awards look at how projects enhance local communities.

## swiss fitness goes airside

Airport Fitness Studio, the first ever health club to be built within a flight terminal in Switzerland, opened in Zurich airport in December.

Owners Thermalbad Zurzach AG wanted to build a fitness facility to accommodate the 24,000 workers and

20,000 visitors at the airport, as well as being open to the local community.

The 2,000sq m fitness and spa centre features a split-level fitness suite equipped with the latest Life Fitness cardio and strength equipment, plus a full schedule of group exercise. The gym has been laid out based around the Life Fitness Journey, with zones – differentiated by colour – including the Circuit Series Space, Hammer Strength Space, Core Space and Personal Training Space for one-to-one sessions. The centre also offers an extensive spa/wellness area – including hammam, steamroom, ice room, a range of saunas and relaxation rooms – and a restaurant.

Members are welcomed into the centre by a life-size replica of an aeroplane cockpit, measuring 6 x 4m.



**The 2,000sq m centre features a full-size replica aeroplane cockpit**

## international fitness week

Fitness First clubs around the world hosted special events during International Fitness Week (1–7 Feb), a campaign that encouraged people to 'find what works for you' and get active.

Each day of the week was themed. On the Monday, for example – which had a 'health' theme – clubs in Hong Kong offered free body MOTs. France held a weight loss and health seminar on the Tuesday: 'shape' day. In the UK, on 'career fit' day (Thursday), emergency service workouts tested people's fitness levels against those of the police/fire service. And on the Friday – 'business day' – clubs in the Philippines held postural analysis workshops for sedentary office workers.



**Former Spice Girl Melanie Brown gives her support to the initiative**

## dir to venture into lower-budget clubs

Barcelona-based operator DiR is set to launch a new venture in smaller, lower-budget clubs.

The privately-owned chain has a strong presence in Barcelona's health and fitness market, with 14 gyms and a pilates studio already operational in the city and a further two sites under construction and due to open this year.

Founder and CEO Ramon Canela now wants to expand the chain's offering "to offer different options to clients". Membership at the new

lower-budget clubs will cost €25–28 a month, with the first sites due to open in September/October this year and a predicted three to four openings planned in total for 2010. As with the higher-end DiR clubs, all lower-budget facilities will be located in Barcelona.

The clubs will measure 1,200–1,500sq m and offer a gym with CV and resistance equipment, group cycling and one studio for group exercise. Towels, shower gel and shampoo/conditioner will also be included in the price.



The new state-of-the-art énergie facility in Doha, Qatar, cost £2m

## énergie: first middle east opening

The first énergie Fitness Club franchise in the Middle East launched in Qatar at the end of January.

Located on Airport Road in the capital city of Doha, the £2m facility offers state-of-the-art Precor cardiovascular and resistance equipment, a dedicated boxing/combat studio, a private personal training studio and locker rooms including a VIP locker room.

The club also offers énergie's émpower programme – a six-week, 'results guaranteed' fitness solution – as a means of introduction to a fitness club.

The expansion plans for énergie Group in the Middle East are headed by operations director Nad Miyani, who

says: "The response to the énergie fitness club concept in Qatar has exceeded our expectations and budget. We opened the club with 750 members and enquiries are at unprecedented levels."

énergie Doha Airport is owned by GSSG Holdings under a master franchise agreement from UK-based énergie (see HCM April 09, p28). Further club openings, in Qatar and across the Middle East, are planned for 2010.

Jan Spaticchia, énergie CEO, says: "This is a momentous time for the énergie Group. We have great plans for Qatar and the Middle East, which we believe will grow with the same success as we've had in the UK."

## world gym eyes global expansion

A team of experts has been recruited to build the international arm of one of LA's most famous fitness brands, World Gym.

Jim Teatun, former president of Nautilus' commercial division and senior market development director for Reebok International, and George Jackson, a club developer/owner and financial consultant previously with KPMG International, will handle the brand's international development and franchise growth.

Founded in 1976 by Joe Gold, one of the original 'muscle beach' ringleaders, World Gym targets 18- to 34-year-olds

with a mid-priced membership offer and innovative programming based on the 'West Coast California' theme, where serious fitness meets celebrity. World Gym already has more than 200 locations worldwide – in the US, Canada, Central and South America, Africa, Russia, Asia, Australia and the UAE. It was recently purchased by the Cammilleri family, who have invested in a major rebranding exercise and plan to elevate the brand to a pre-eminent position in the global market.

World Gym has chosen Precor as its primary fitness equipment provider.

escape 

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## from the board



## life changes

heather frankham •  
founder • lifetime

The health and fitness sector has long had an ambition to increase market penetration beyond the current 12 per cent of the adult population. So how can we engage the 88 per cent who are not members of clubs?

Change4Life creates public awareness and drives people towards behavioural change, but there's still work to do to move those who are sedentary into a more active lifestyle.

When I first joined this industry, many clubs were pre-sold before even opening their doors. The biggest challenge for operators was finding the right site to locate a new club. While facilities have not radically changed, the business models have, and the aptitudes of the leisure workforce need to change if we're to truly get 'more people, more active, more often'.

We need people with a greater health and wellness focus who are able to listen, empathise and mentor clients in a variety of settings. If we want to influence people in hard-to-reach communities, we must recruit people with leadership potential and the ability to be agents for change.

We also need to develop greater customer interaction skills – delivering true service to individual businesses' target audiences and, at the same time, building trust and respect with our customers.

## exercise referrals highlighted

Guildford Spectrum Leisure Complex played host to shadow health minister Anne Milton, the FIA's chief medical officer Dr John Searle, and local consultant cardiologist Dr Edward Leatham at an event designed to highlight the benefits of exercise for health – particularly for rehabilitation.

Partnership was the subject of the evening. More than 40 healthcare and exercise professionals addressed the fact that cardiac and stroke patients have better outcomes when they're supported post-operatively with a dedicated exercise programme delivered by specialist staff – in addition to helping other conditions such as obesity and mental health.

Tarzem Shoker, manager of Spectrum's Energy Level Gym & Spa says: "We're delighted to be developing our partnership work with our local healthcare providers, because together we can make a big impact on the long-term wellbeing for those with health issues within our community."

Dr Searle outlined the role of exercise in both preventative and remedial

medicine: "Partnership is the key to the health of our nation: a partnership between healthcare and activity professionals is vital if we're to succeed in our shared ambitions of creating a healthier nation and a more efficient NHS."

"There is well established evidence that 'exercise as medicine' works. All we need to do now is change the habits of prescribers, as well those of a nation that understands the principles of the Department of Health's 'eat well move more' message, but that needs help turning thought into deed."



Partnership was the subject of the event at the Guildford Spectrum

## meet the team

### stephanie creighton

public affairs officer



## WHAT DO YOU DO AT THE FIA?

Focusing on the House of Commons and House of Lords, and both government and the opposition, I'm tasked with promoting our industry as well as the benefits of physical activity. I also work with organisations ranging from the Youth Sports Trust and WSFF to charities that focus on specific lifestyle diseases.

#### WHICH THREE WORDS BEST DESCRIBE THE FIA'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND POLICY DEPARTMENT?

Intellectual, professional and fun.

#### WHAT ARE YOUR POLITICAL PREDICTIONS FOR NEXT YEAR?

I think there's going to be a tough fight at the next general election, with hard policy decisions coming from both sides. I'm looking forward to a new set

of MPs, who we've already been engaging with, who I believe will be excellent ambassadors for both physical activity and our sector.

## DO YOU EXERCISE?

I go to the gym as much as my schedule allows. What I like most is mixing up my exercise regime, whether that's hitting classes in the studio, getting physical on cross-trainers or gliding through a pool.

#### WHAT ACTIVITIES DO YOU DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

I enjoy watching my beloved Liverpool FC play. Well, I love watching Fernando Torres clock up the miles on the pitch in his shorts!

## WHAT'S YOUR GUILTY SECRET?

If I told you, it wouldn't be a secret!

See it.

integrate, educate and celebrate



This year's FLAME Conference and Industry Summit take place on 14 July

The skillbase of our workforce is increasingly emerging as a vital item on the industry's agenda. Over the next decade, gyms and leisure centres will be confronted by a new group of consumers, an economy still wearing the scars of the recession, and realigned healthcare priorities. The skill sets we've honed over the last 20 years will not be sufficient.

As the NHS hurtles headlong into the red, the government has to cut the cost of treating lifestyle diseases by getting people more active and eating more healthily. The opportunity for our sector is obvious, but the question is what, where and how do we change?

Informed opinion advocates a greater focus on how we communicate with consumers, partners and each other. This is a major focus of the FIA FLAME Conference, which takes place at Cheltenham on 14 July.

The conference will cover everything from a personalised service at reception to the perils of getting your communications wrong, and we've recruited some of the sharpest minds from the world of communications to share their insights.

This year's Industry Summit, which takes place on the same day as the conference, features keynote speakers including Bob Gray, who will address the implications of exercising the mind in tandem with the body. Meanwhile Graham Davies will focus on the devastating consequences of getting your communications wrong. Davies is a 'recovering barrister' and the man BBC, Sky and CNN call on when their communications are amiss. And John Ratey MD will present on the body-brain connection and the link between physical activity and psychological function (see *HCM* July 09, p42).

## diary dates

### FIA & LIW IHRSA Trip 10–13 March 2010

Find out what's new and what's in the pipeline, as well as networking and enjoying everything San Diego has to offer.

### FIA & LIW FIBO Trip 22–25 April 2010

Major European trade show located in Essen, Germany.

### FIA Golf Day: 13 July 2010

At Lillibrook Golf Course & Cheltenham Park Hotel, Cheltenham.

### FIA FLAME Conference: 14 July 2010

The industry's annual business conference will be held at Cheltenham – and there could be some celebration of the FIA's 20 years of service to the UK's health and fitness industry!



**CLARITY**  
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# all-change at westminster

Steven Ward,  
the FIA's director  
of public affairs and  
policy, reports on  
the likely impact  
of a dramatic  
turnover of MPs



It's a problem that's causing concern across the policy community: the next election is going to lead to a turnover of as much as 40 per cent of parliamentarians. Any company that lost 40 per cent of its leadership team overnight would struggle – and this particular company, Houses of Parliament Plc, is in control of the laws of the land.

Factors such as the expenses scandal, the need to declare second jobs and the general age profile of the average MP, combined with an unstable political mood, are leading to the largest turnover of MPs for over a decade. Thus far, 138 members of parliament, possibly rising to 200, have already announced that they will retire at the next election. There are predictions that a further 100 might follow them thanks to the 'political swing' of voter intentions, which could lead to could lead to a large number of seats changing hands. Whoever comes out the overall winner on 6 May, and with whatever majority, it's safe to say that there will be a lot of new faces around Westminster.

There's nothing wrong with handing over the keys to the next generation – a group of people untainted by the scandals of recent times and with a mandate to move the country forward



The next election will lead to a turnover of as many as 40 per cent of MPs

in what remains a challenging economic environment. However, for areas of policy such as ours – where issues of obesity, physical activity and prevention form our major policy hook – what guarantee is there that the new breed will understand the gravity of the problems we proclaim to help solve? What guarantee that our causes will not be dismissed as part of the 'nanny state', with a spotlight shone on them as a target for the first swathes of the impending fiscal cuts? This is of course unknown for everyone in the policy field, whatever their focus may be.

What we do know is that the nation is facing a public health crisis and whoever forms the next government will have to settle in quickly and set to work on tackling the rise in lifestyle diseases. The fact is, we have an ageing, sickening and

fattening population, and this demographic trend makes our industry important, not just now but for decades to come. Coupled with the need to deliver a legacy from 2012, there's much to be done.

## advance party

The FIA team started work early to get a sneak preview of who the possible future MPs might be, and to encourage a smooth transition. Almost 12 months ago, we began tracking retiring MPs, identifying key swing seats and researching the likely winners in each area. We've built up an overview of the 250 most likely future MPs, their interests and their local support structure.

We then contacted them with a survey to begin to establish their views on the areas close to our heart. The survey questions Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) on a broad range of topics, from how they stay healthy to how healthy the nation is and what they intend to do get the nation healthy.

With the support of Technogym, we will be publishing a full report on the findings. They make interesting reading and provide a unique insight into the benchmark we're presented with by

“Will our causes be dismissed  
as part of the 'nanny state'  
and targeted in fiscal cuts?”

leisureopportunities is the official recruitment magazine of the fia





PICTURE: WWW.ISTOCK.COM/GREG CHRISTIAN

**Touch it.**



**We have an ageing, sickening, fattening population; fitness has a key role to play**

the 'new breed'. For example, we found that more than a third of those polled were members of a health club or leisure centre; a staggering 50 per cent were not aware of Change4Life; only 31.3 per cent could accurately recognise the proportion of the adult population predicted to be obese by 2050; and 65.6 per cent played down the significance of the obesity crisis.

Interestingly, 65.7 per cent of PPCs believe that businesses should be given incentives to improve the physical wellbeing of their employees, with two-thirds of those advocating this saying it should be in the form of tax relief.

**'fit to sit' challenge**

The FIA will be following up this survey with a challenge for PPCs to see if they are 'Fit to Sit', again supported by Technogym. Technogym will supply the PPCs with accelerometers – which measure quantity and quality of steps taken – to see if they practise what they preach with regard to physical activity.

The challenge will track their activity levels during the campaign and establish if there's a correlation between miles pounded on the campaign trail and votes won at the polls.

Luckily, the FIA is not the only agency with a desire and need to raise the issue of public health, prevention, physical activity and sport with the new core of parliamentarians. The FIA has excellent policy relationships with the major NGOs – such as the British Heart Foundation, Diabetes UK and Heart UK – as well medical bodies such as the Faculty of Public Health, the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Faculty of Sports and Exercise Medicine.

Together with our public affairs colleagues at bodies such as CCPR, the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation and the Youth Sports Trust, we will embark on a focused awareness-raising exercise to ensure we're ahead of the curve – but even with all this groundwork, 6 May 2010 will mark the start of a frantic period of activity for my team.



**Gilpin takes over at LED this month**

## new ceo for devon trust

Peter Gilpin has been named as the new chief executive officer of Leisure East Devon (LED), the charitable trust that operates leisure facilities on behalf of East Devon District Council.

Gilpin – who is a former managing director of Avalon Leisure – will take over when current leader David Pagett retires in March.

He says: "I am taking over just as LED and East Devon District Council are facing considerable challenges in the face of unprecedented economic constraints. I am very much looking forward to the challenge and working with the team at LED, the council and customers."

## in brief...

### new chair for scw

Professor Laura McAllister, the new chair of the Sports Council for Wales (SCW), has announced her ambition to place sport at the centre of Welsh culture in the coming years.

This is just one of a number of goals that McAllister is hoping to achieve after taking up the position at the organisation – soon to be renamed Sport Wales – at the start of the month. Among McAllister's other ambitions are ensuring that every Welsh child is given the chance to become "hooked" on sport, and identifying untapped talent.

## mark talley joins la fitness

Health club operator LA fitness has appointed Mark Talley as its new national fitness manager.

Talley, a former regional boss at leisure trust Fusion Lifestyle, will be tasked with overseeing the group's fitness operations, including research and development and the creation of new fitness concepts.

He will also be part of the team implementing LA Fitness' £30m redevelopment programme of the company's 81 UK clubs.

Talley will be tasked with helping the group bring to life its new "customer-focused experience".

Chief executive Martin Long says: "Mark's appointment is another plank in our strategy to recruit and retain both more members and quality employees."

"Mark already has vast experience of ensuring leisure facilities put their



**Talley will assist with the group's £30m redevelopment programme**

customers first and we're confident that this, along with his excellent knowledge and understanding of the science behind health and fitness, will be a key contributor to our future success."

## premier appoints victoria branch

Training provider Premier Global has appointed Victoria Branch as its new global marketing manager.

Branch joins Premier from public access leisure provider Leisure Connection, where she spent the past two and a half years.

She started in her new role on 22 February and has been tasked with marketing the entire Premier Global portfolio, including its Premier Training International arm and the awarding body ActiveIQ.

At Premier, Branch will report to sales and marketing director Mark Botha, who also joined Premier from Leisure Connection in October 2009.

Branch says: "I'm looking forward to working for a growing company, and to the challenge of integrating its marketing across the digital and social networking platforms."

Premier Training International was founded in 1992 by Norman and Jane Basson under its original name of Premier Fitness Instructor Training.

### grey-thompson enters lords

Paralympian Tanni Grey-Thompson has been appointed to the House of Lords, where she will serve as a crossbench peer. One of the most successful disabled athletes in the history of British sport, Grey-Thompson retired from competitive sports in 2007 after winning a total of 16 medals at Paralympic Games held between 1992 and 2004. UK Athletics chair Ed Warner says: "I would like to pass on my warmest congratulations to Baroness Grey-Thompson. This is an honour that reflects her unrivalled success on the track."

### new boss for hillsborough

Hillsborough Leisure Centre in Sheffield, Yorkshire, has appointed a new operations manager.

Andy McGrath is a familiar face in the Sheffield International Venues (SIV) group – he joins the Hillsborough team from Ponds Forge International Sports Centre and, before that, the English Institute of Sport – Sheffield (EISS), both of which are part of SIV's 14-strong portfolio of venues in Sheffield.

McGrath will be responsible for overseeing general operations of the facility, which includes a sports hall, gym, and leisure and teaching pools.

## PEOPLE PROFILE



## greg lappin

Lappin is the co-founder and general manager of the Rochester Athletic Club (RAC) in Minnesota. He is the most recent recipient of the Karl Shurson Award for quality in leadership

## how many years have you worked in the health and fitness sector?

Almost 40 years. My first job in the sector was while I was at college: I worked part-time at the service desk for a club that consisted of four indoor tennis courts.

## what was your motivation to work in fitness?

I played competitive tennis in college and got to travel the world for a few years afterwards, through tennis. I had no real plans in my 20s, but my first full-time job was as a tennis teaching professional. It was huge fun and truly satisfying to help someone else improve.

## how did your career take you from there to the ihrsa board?

After progressing through tennis teaching jobs and being given more responsibilities, I realised I wanted to open my own club. I risked everything I had and successfully secured investors for what was the flagship Athletic Club located in Eden Prairie in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It opened in 1985 and was one of the first clubs in the US that had multi-purpose amenities and a four-season emphasis.

In 1992, investors approached me to take the lead in developing our current club: the Rochester Athletic

Club. This revolutionised club design with a very open concept, built family locker rooms, added a water park, and established a serious commitment to family facilities and programming.

I did a stint on the IHRSA board – from 2002 until 2006 – which was a wonderful experience. Contributing back to the industry that gives us our livelihood is a great honour and obligation.

## how would you describe yourself?

I do not consider myself that smart or that creative. What I do is work very hard and observe what my customers are telling me. Most people think R&D means research and development.

I have come to understand R&D means Ripoff and Duplicate!

## what drives you?

I think there's a drive or need inside every one of us to feel our life has some worth. This is nothing to apologise for: it's normal human behaviour and a lack of such a feeling can lead to despondency. I also have Christian beliefs. The message of Jesus was the love to "feed my sheep", which means to care for each other. This drives me more than anything.

## what's the number one weakness in the fitness industry?

I think it's that we're in an artificial business. People were never created to sit on a bike and do steady state cardiovascular exercise, or sit on a bench and lift a plate of metal over their heads. We must understand we're not in the athletic club business but in the lifestyle change business. Most people find exercising to be 'discipline and drudgery' instead of 'reward and rejuvenation'. Our job is to get people who lead totally sedentary lives, due to the advancements of automation, to change and lead active lifestyles.



**RAC won the Better Business Bureau Integrity award for ethical values**

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The International Fitness Showcase takes place on 26–28 March

## MARCH

**10–13 | IHRSA 2010 – Annual International Convention & Trade Show**

Venue San Diego, California, US

## Summary

The 29th annual exhibition, conference and networking event for the health and fitness industry (see preview, page 77).

Tel +1 617 951 0055

Web [www.ihrsa.org](http://www.ihrsa.org)**18–21 | ECA/One Body One World**

Venue New York, US

## Summary

A theatrical event with a strong dance programme plus yoga, pilates, indoor cycling, management training, nutrition, exercise design and resistance training.

Tel +1 516 432 6877

Web [www.ecaworldfitness.com](http://www.ecaworldfitness.com)**24 | Spring Outdoors for a Healthier Life**

Venue Highpoint Conference Centre, Leicester, UK

## Summary

This event, designed by ISPAL, targets all those professionals who work to promote the use of outdoor space to achieve healthy lifestyles.

Tel +44 (0)118 9298355

Web [www.ispalevents.org.uk](http://www.ispalevents.org.uk)**26–28 | International Fitness Showcase**

Venue Winter Gardens, Blackpool, UK

## Summary

Showcasing the latest exercise classes, along with workshops and lectures.

Tel +44 (0)113 277 3885

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

## APRIL

**7–10 | ACSM's 14th Health & Fitness Summit & Exposition**

Venue Austin, Texas, US

## Summary

Translating recent scientific findings into immediately applicable methods. Includes workout sessions with master trainers, demonstrations and panel discussions.

Tel +1 317 637 9200

Web [www.acsm.org/summit](http://www.acsm.org/summit)**9–11 | FitPro Spring Convention**

Venue Loughborough University, Leicestershire, UK

## Summary

Workshops, lectures and seminars for UK fitness professionals.

Tel +44 (0)20 8586 0101

Web [www.fitpro.com/convention10](http://www.fitpro.com/convention10)**14–17 | International Congress on Club Management**

Venue Villaitana Golf Resort and Spa, Benidorm, Spain

## Summary

A congress – educational presentations, forum discussions and debates – targeting sports, health and fitness and leisure club owners, operators and managers.

Tel +44 (0)1428 606466

Web [www.cmaeurope.org](http://www.cmaeurope.org)**14–17 | SPATEC UK & Europe**

Venue Split, Croatia

## Summary

A two-day forum at which UK and European spa owners, directors and senior personnel meet one-to-one with more than 70 international spa suppliers.

Tel +44 (0)20 8547 9830

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# competitive edge

2-5 JULY 10

## 6 peaks challenge

International development charity WaterAid is looking for groups of three to six walkers (supported by two drivers) who want to attempt to climb the six highest peaks in the British Isles in just 72 hours. This is big step on from the traditional three peaks challenge and requires serious stamina. WaterAid enables the world's poorest people to gain access to safe water – at least 4,000 children die every day from diseases caused by unclean water and poor sanitation. All costs are given online. Details: [www.wateraid.org.uk](http://www.wateraid.org.uk)



2009's winning team from the Shepherd Neame Brewery, Kent



©STOCKPHOTO.COM/VOLLE

Trek passes through spectacular Petra

30 OCT – 6 NOV 10

## tri-jordan 2010

This challenge for Marie Curie Cancer Care will see participants explore the spectacular desert landscape, unspoiled wilderness and archaeological treasures of Jordan in the Middle East. For the first stage of the route you can choose to travel on foot, bike or horseback. These three paths then converge, so all participants enter the ancient city of Petra together. Registration costs £250 and the minimum sponsorship is £2,500. Details: [www.doitforcharity.com](http://www.doitforcharity.com)

Jump to it for Alzheimer's!



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19-28 NOVEMBER 10

## cuban revolution cycle 2010

Anyone who visits Cuba – one of the few remaining communist states – is touched by the friendliness of the natives and the pride they feel for their country. In aid of the children's cancer charity CLIC Sargent, this 10-day expedition covers 350km from the capital, Havana, to Trinidad on the south coast. Sights include the Che Guevara monument, large American Chevys and Buicks that dominate the roads, colourful fruit orchards, sugar plantations and magnificent coastlines. Entry costs £395, plus £2,775 minimum sponsorship. [www.clicsargent.org.uk](http://www.clicsargent.org.uk)



©STOCKPHOTO.COM/STOFFE

Classic cars fill the roads in Cuba

## THROUGHOUT 10 parachuting

Jump at the opportunity to raise money for the Alzheimer's Society with a parachute challenge. No experience is required and there are four types of jumps to choose from: a 10,000ft freefall, a 3,000ft or 2,000ft static line jump, or an accelerated freefall. The society is the UK's leading care and research charity for people with dementia, their families and carers. The minimum sponsorship starts at £360 (depending on the type of jump) with at least £140 of this going to the charity. Details: [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)



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everyone's talking about . . .

# celebrity endorsement

Do we need celebrities to get involved and champion our industry if we're to encourage mass interest in fitness? If so, how should we go about selecting these role models?

**T**here's no question that celebrity endorsements work well for the fitness industry: sporting stars from Kelly Holmes and James Cracknell to Ian Wright have all been involved with successful campaigns. The US health club chain 24 Hour Fitness even sets up clubs in partnership with star athletes such as cyclist Lance Armstrong, baseball champion Derek Jeter and basketball's Magic Johnson.

But what about tie-ups with more mainstream celebrities, who may originally have shot to fame for reasons other than sport or fitness? LA Fitness, for example, has just signed-up Alesha

Dixon – first known as a pop star before winning the BBC's popular *Strictly Come Dancing* show – in a four-year deal to devise dance and exercise classes for its clubs.

Every new year we're bombarded with exercise videos from music and TV stars, but such workouts are generally seen as gimmicks with little substance. If health and fitness operators choose role models based on their fame or popularity over sporting prowess, could this undermine the credibility of the services we offer?

For years now, we've been talking about the need to be taken seriously by the medical sector. Could we be

putting this in jeopardy by jumping on the frivolous fame bandwagon?

On the other hand, by choosing role models for the size of their fanbase rather than for their evident fitness/sporting prowess, are we widening our appeal and our ability to reach new audiences? As Mike Crockett, MD of Soho Gyms, recently said (see *HCM* Nov/Dec 09 p26): "We need more role models, but not just athletes, because that's quite elitist. It's glamour that tends to reach people, whether we like it or not. If Cheryl Cole were to promote going down the gym, it would help persuade today's youngsters to make it a part of their everyday life."

IS CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT THE WAY FORWARD? EMAIL US: [HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM](mailto:HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM)

## mike crockett

md • soho gyms



**"A**ll of the most successful brands, such as Nike, use celebrities for promotional activities. Our industry needs to play catch-up. We can still do the groundwork, but we need to get an edge and inject some glamour into what we're doing too. LA Fitness, with its signing of Alesha Dixon, is obviously thinking this, while Change4Life has

brought in footballer Frank Lampard and, most recently, dance group Diversity from *Britain's Got Talent*.

This is opening up the industry to new audiences and makes it more current, but I still don't think we're reaching young people as much as we'd like to. If you're going to get to the 16–25-year-olds, you need a role model who's in the magazines, who wears the fashionable clothes, who's on the TV and who sings the music they relate to. Wouldn't it be great if we could get Lady Gaga?

How careful do we have to be in who we choose? I think you need to decide what you're after – the kind of celebrity you want and the audience you want to attract – and understand that things can go wrong. We wouldn't want a role model associated with drugs or violence. However, the person should still have an edge or a bit of controversy. It's a very fine line."

## kevin yates

head of commercial development • leisure connection



**"I**f a celebrity can drive people to your facility and get people active, it can only be a good thing. However, there clearly are risks involved: all celebrities, even sports people, rise and fall in status and we need to be hugely careful who we choose as role models.

We need to ask if the celebrity is doing it for the love of getting people active. Athletes like Dame Kelly Holmes and Roger Black clearly are – they're true advocates of our industry. But the majority of celebrities do it for personal and financial gain: to raise their profile, sell more fitness DVDs or to help promote something else. Does this drive people to a health club? Probably not.

Operators need to carefully align their brand with the right person. Fitness First has wisely chosen a health celebrity, Dr Hilary Jones, as its medical advisor. As Leisure Connection's focus is on getting local communities active, we'd go for people on the sporting scene. With the Olympics coming up, there's a prime opportunity for the industry to align itself with genuine sports people rather than wishy-washy celebrities. Choosing people who are going to win medals, as well as those who have already won them, is key to inspiring the next generation."



**LA Fitness has signed up Alesha Dixon, pop star and former winner – now judge – of the BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing***

## tony orme

marketing director • la fitness



**T**here's room for sporting personalities and mainstream celebrities depending on your brand strategy. We didn't go down the sports star route because it's what everyone would expect, it's quite niche and the audience they appeal to may already be tuned into health and fitness.

We wanted to reach a broader market and that's where a [non-sporting] celebrity can help. Alesha Dixon has a more widespread appeal. She's a major recording artist, is on *Strictly Come Dancing* – one of the BBC's most popular programmes – and possibly has more media exposure than athletes. She's lively and fun, which fits with our strategy to make fitness more enjoyable, and at 31 she's the ideal age for our members, who range from 18 to 80 years old.

First and foremost, however, she's credible when it comes to health and fitness. Not only is she a great dancer, but she's proactively interested in keeping fit – she's always worked with a personal trainer and enjoys going to the gym. She's an aspirational figure to someone who wants to get more active.

There are risks with choosing any celebrity to represent your brand, but that's why you do your research.”

## simon middleton

author • build a brand in 30 days



**B**ona fide athletes such as Kelly Holmes or James Cracknell are credible role models, but ordinary people could be alienated by them. If you want a more mass market approach, there is an argument to use a non-athlete as the face of your business.

Could using a mainstream celebrity be seen as a fad? To be honest, health clubs

tend to use gimmicks and offers anyway. But it really depends on whether the celebrity can be taken seriously. It's a difficult call – pop singers, dancers and TV personalities all make fitness DVDs, and they may even sell lots of them, but whether they make a suitable face for a fitness brand is another matter. Using Alesha Dixon is a good call. She's proved her fitness through dancing, but she isn't an athlete. She's also very down to earth.

The fitness industry needs to be terribly careful using sporting personalities, however, because they have fragile reputations which are easily damaged – Tiger Woods, John Terry and Ashley Cole are all recent examples of this. Operators may be able to insure themselves against it, but the only safe thing to do is not use a high-profile celebrity. There are many other routes to engage people's imaginations.”



# JOHN KERSH



Personal trainers can be independent or employed by the club, depending on the owner's preferences

The vice president of international development for Anytime Fitness talks to Kate Cracknell about the challenges of fitness franchising and the company's international expansion plans

“**F**ranchising is an entirely different game from fitness,” says John Kersh, vice president of international development for US-based health club franchise Anytime Fitness. “If you have a successful fitness company, it’s easy to think that you can just step into franchising – that it would be a natural transition. But it’s not so natural and it’s certainly not easy.”

Formerly director of international development for IHRSA, Kersh left the organisation in 2004 to pursue interests in franchise-based start-ups. It was, he says, an interesting time in the industry, with a large number of franchisors emerging in the wake of Curves’ success.

“There was a land rush for franchising without necessarily having profitable, proven concepts,” he says, “but after a while there was a wake-up call: growth began to stall and various types of fitness franchise began to close.

“What attracted me to Anytime Fitness [which he joined in 2008] was how solid the concept itself is, and how successful many of its franchisees are. It has a lot of staying power.”

## striking a balance

Kersh continues: “Ultimately, as I say, fitness and franchising are very different. If you’re operating a club, your concerns relate primarily to your members. If



**Anytime Fitness aims to provide a convenient, affordable, welcoming environment in which to exercise**

you're a franchisor, your individual franchisees are your primary focus on a day-to-day basis, and they in turn serve the members. The franchisor's concerns are of a direct business nature – not whether the showers are clean or the equipment's working properly.

"Every franchisee also has his or her own concerns regarding the operation of their business and their relationship with the franchisor. It becomes a much more complex relationship than between club operator and end user."

Judging by the company's reported results – see information box, p34 – Anytime Fitness seems to have struck the balance just right in that franchisor-franchisee relationship. Company policy is to support and advise, but also to allow owners the freedom to inject their individual personalities into their clubs.

"It's a very delicate issue when it comes to franchising in any industry, and certainly in fitness," says Kersh. "McDonald's, for example, tells franchisees exactly how long a hamburger must be cooked on each side to ensure the product is consistent in every McDonald's around the world."

"But with fitness, what's the product? It's not a hamburger. It's personal interaction, it's an experience, and the delivery of 'experience' is difficult to specify – a lot of it's based on personality. So yes, if you went to an

Anytime club in the US and another in Australia, there would be a lot of similarities – but at the same time we encourage our franchisees to put their own personality, their energy, their heart and soul into the business. It's about creating a club culture that people want to be a part of.

"In many ways, health clubs aren't such different things from one brand to another, so it's all about execution. If our franchisees can find a better way to do things – some way of making it more interesting or more exciting for their customers – then we encourage that personal touch.

"However, the truth is that our top performers are those who do things in the specific ways that we recommend. Maybe that's following a sales system or using certain marketing materials. Generally, the more closely people adhere to the things that have been proven to work, the more successful they will be. Inversely, we find less successful franchisees are usually not following our recommendations."

## **role model**

Flexibility aside, then, what makes for a typical Anytime Fitness club? "We have a very focused offering of equipment-based fitness: there's no pool, sports halls or group exercise studios," says Kersh. "Because of that, we can generally get away with a reduced staffing requirement. Certainly we have personal trainers – that's a big part of our business – but the fitness offering itself is very specific.

"Our aim is to provide a convenient, affordable, welcoming environment in which to exercise. We're constantly adding more clubs, filling in the [geographical] gaps, to make fitness as accessible as possible. And our clubs are open 24/7. We still have the same peak usage patterns as every other operator, but people appreciate the flexibility to come and go when they please. It doesn't completely change the dynamic of club capacity, but it certainly makes it more convenient.

"We also recommend visible locations that are easy to get to using any mode ▶

**"THE TRUTH IS, OUR TOP PERFORMERS  
ARE THOSE WHO DO THINGS IN THE  
SPECIFIC WAYS THAT WE RECOMMEND"**



Anytime clubs are typically located in suburban environments, with an average size of around 370sq m (4,000sq ft)

► of transport. However, we discourage franchisees from setting up in expensive retail locations, because that stresses the economics of the business model. Typically, we're located in suburban environments where rents are lower and space more readily available. The average site would be around 370sq m (4,000sq ft), with 700 members after 12 months of operation.

"Fees vary slightly by area and demographics – we can't dictate prices. However, in the US for example, we do ask franchisees to stay in the US\$30-40 a month price bracket. It's about being affordable rather than being cheap: our customers are not exclusively price-driven.

"A warm welcome is key. If I use the example of Starbucks: Starbucks is somewhat impersonal compared to the local coffee shop – what we call 'Mom and Pop' – who've been trading in the neighbourhood for 20 years. Anytime

Fitness fits into that 'mom and pop' model – independently owned and operated clubs in which the owner, the franchisee, is often very involved. And you can tell. You can feel that personal attention, feel that they really care. That's why they opened the club in the first place – because they want to help people."

### expansion plans

"I think there's always an evolutionary process when you grow, whereby some of your early assumptions may change over time," observes Kersh. "For example, Anytime believed at one point that it would have franchises in a lot of places like airports, corporate offices, hotels and so on. If the opportunity were to arise, I think we'd still consider exploring those avenues one day, but so far it hasn't really happened. People talk about saturated markets, but we're still opening successful clubs all over the US in very competitive areas. While we still

have that opportunity, we're not going to get distracted by the possible alternative business models."

The business has, however, actively pursued international expansion opportunities via master franchise deals in Australasia, India and Mexico (see information box below). So how does it prioritise potential new markets?

"First of all, there should be a reasonably developed franchising culture – people already looking to buy franchises, and with no major government restrictions in place that might deter them from doing so," says Kersh.

"Second is the fitness culture. We're expanding very well in mature markets such as the US and we're getting in at a very early stage in India – a less developed market but with a real emerging passion for fitness.

"Contrast that with a market like China, which is a difficult market to enter and which has a very under-

## ANYTIME FITNESS

Established in 2002, Anytime Fitness is said to be the world's fastest-growing 'co-ed' fitness franchise, with a portfolio that currently extends to 1,300 sites – plus 680 in development – and a forecast total turnover for 2010 in excess of US\$300m (individual club turnover plus Anytime Fitness corporate revenues). More than 60 per cent of the company's franchisees own more than one site.

The critical mass of the business remains, at least for now, in the US – 1,200 clubs, with Anytime Fitness HQ in Minnesota as the franchisor. The company is also franchisor for most of the 70+ sites in Canada.

Anytime Fitness also owns around 10 clubs itself in the US. "We set them up if we identify an opportunity," says Kersh, "but typically end up selling them on as a going concern – perhaps to the manager who's been operating the club on our behalf, or to a franchisee looking to open in that territory. We'd probably own and operate more, but

we're so busy on the franchising side that it's not practical to devote the resources it would require."

In 2008 the brand launched in Australia and New Zealand, with 27 clubs already operating across those markets. Meanwhile, the first Indian sites are scheduled to open by the time this feature goes to print, and a new master franchise deal for Mexico should see clubs opening there in the next few months. Europe – including the UK, Germany and Benelux – is now very much on the radar, as is Japan. Membership to one club gives access to all Anytime Fitness clubs across the world.

"Our vision is to continue changing lives of both members and franchisees, and to be a great brand in the fitness and franchising industry," says Anytime Fitness CEO Chuck Runyon. "We take a great deal of pride in delivering a business model where members feel comfortable to work out and franchisees enjoy a balanced life."



The one thing  
our partners  
must have is  
a passion for  
health and  
fitness. That's  
fundamental  
to success in  
our business

developed fitness industry. In my opinion, it's going to take a long time for conditions to accelerate there, so we're not in any rush.

"We have a list of high priority countries, but from there it comes down to opportunity: waiting until the right opportunity comes along, which primarily means finding the right master franchisee for each market."

Those partners may or may not have actual fitness experience but, stresses Kersh: "The one thing they must have is a passion for health and fitness. That's fundamental to the success of this business. If they don't have that passion, they might as well run an automotive or restaurant franchise. We want them to be involved in this business because they see the need for it and want to help people, and that's something we can't train."

He continues: "Each master franchise agreement includes a development schedule that spells out the minimum number of clubs we anticipate should open in that market in every year of the agreement. However, it's very hard to predict, so we keep those expectations moderate. What's the potential in India, for example? We'd like to see as many as 500 clubs there, but what's the reality? Maybe it's 300 clubs. Maybe it's 2,000. There's just no way of telling how well the concept will work over time and how franchisable it will be in that market."

"I don't think we'd enter a market unless we thought there was potential for at least 100 clubs, but it's not until you're on the ground that you really know how well you'll perform there."

#### on these shores?

As for Europe, Kersh says: "Some of the more developed fitness markets in Europe are interesting to us, including the UK, Germany, Holland, possibly Spain. We're already looking at opportunities and we're confident that



Kersh believes the Anytime Fitness model will work well in the UK market

we'll be operating in at least one or two European markets by the end of this year.

"In terms of the offering, generally we try and avoid too much variation in the model. However, we recognise that it may be necessary in some markets – I imagine the Indian clubs will be slightly more luxurious, for example, as well as being able to take on more staff thanks to the lower cost of employment there."

"But I can see the concept working very well in the UK without any major variations. They'll probably be new clubs as opposed to acquisitions, as I think it's harder to convert a club than it is to start afresh, although any smaller operators who are struggling may benefit from converting and coming under the Anytime umbrella."

"I'd expect property to be the biggest challenge and we may have to look at some first-floor locations – in the US, we always choose ground floor sites. Other than that, though, I don't think we'll need to change anything. Our preferred suppliers in the US – Life Fitness, Precor and Star Trac – also have a presence in Europe, so we'd hope to extend those relationships over here."

"We don't underestimate the quality of operators in the UK market right now, but we do believe that what we have, and the way we deliver it to our customers, is strong enough to make a difference in the UK."



kate cracknell  
healthclub@leisuremedia.com

# made in japan

David Minton gives an insight into the Japanese fitness market, with a whistle-stop tour around some of Tokyo's more innovative clubs

**I** rasshaimase' is a Japanese greeting given to all customers on entering a shop, restaurant or fitness club. It literally means 'welcome' and, although you're not expected to answer it, can act as a nice introduction if you're either shy, as many Japanese are, or if it's your first visit, when it can help break the ice. We're going to hear it a lot as we embark on a whistle-stop tour of some of Tokyo's more exciting fitness clubs.

## market insight

Before I start the tour, let me provide an update on the industry in Japan. Although the Japanese economy has been in recession for a decade, which means salaries have been declining and consumer demand has at best been stagnant, I've found few outward signs of this economic slowdown. There are no empty shops, as in many town centres across the UK, and no heavy concentrations of charity shops, while the equivalent of the pound shops are well hidden. New developments are full as soon as they open; a good example is

the Marunouchi development near Tokyo Station where the fourth largest fitness brand, Tipness, has taken space.

The Japanese are experiencing an L-shaped recession, which means the economic recovery is fragile and, unlike the UK, no-one is expecting this to change before 2015 at the earliest. So it's heartening to discover that the private fitness industry, as in the UK, has been quite resilient to this long-term economic downturn.

Although the private sector recorded a fall in membership sales of 1.2 per cent in both 2007 and again in 2008, the number of sites increased from 3,040 in 2007 to 3,269 in 2008. The clear trend towards the end of this 10-year recession is towards smaller format clubs with either a circuit-based offering or single studio/gym facility.

When I talk about the UK having a penetration rate four times higher, at 12 per cent, there is some consternation about how it can be so different between our two island countries – but then I discover we're not comparing like with like. The 'official' figures are not inclusive

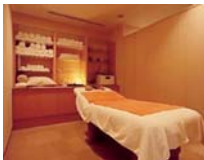
of the as-yet-undefined public sector, although some private sector companies, like the colossus Konami Sports, manage a large number of public facilities. In the UK, this would mean companies like Nuffield Health, which work in both the public and private sectors, only putting forward their private sector numbers and ignoring the numbers generated by their leisure management business.

The 'official' penetration rate – which again only covers the private brands, independents and the newer, smaller circuit/studio-based clubs – shows a slight decrease of 0.1 per cent in both 2006 and 2007.

## on tour

My tour starts in a railway station. If you imagine layering the London mainline stations of Victoria, Euston, Liverpool Street and Paddington into just one station, you'll get an idea of the size of mainline stations in Tokyo. Between all these layers at Ueno Station, railway engineers found some non-commercial 'floating' space which they converted into a Jexer Fitness and Spa Club. This is not the first club at a railway station but, at 5,000sq m (54,000sq ft), it's the biggest. The entrance has that *Harry Potter* feel about it as you walk along platform 17 and drop down through a doorway, descending into the club while trains speed past just a few feet away.

**"It's heartening to discover that the private fitness industry, as in the UK, has been quite resilient to the economic downturn"**



The Liberty Hill Club is modelled on a US-style country club and includes a two-court indoor tennis dome on the roof



At the Jexer Fitness and Spa Club, which 'floats' between levels at the Ueno railway station, you can swim as you watch the trains go by

To say the club is a feat of Japanese engineering is a bit of an understatement: after all, how many clubs do you know where you can swim and sit in the hot, soda and cool spa pools while watching the trains go by? The Jexer brand is number 14 in the top 20 private brands in order of value and is owned by Japanese Railway. It has 11 clubs open and two more being built, and each one is different. Some are actually built on land, like former railway sidings, while one 'hangs' underneath railways lines, like Jexer Akabane. But my favourite is Jexer Ueno, which just 'floats' between the eight levels in the station. For this experience, members pay £75 a month.

To go from Ueno in north-east Tokyo to Ebisu in the south-west, I need to take the Hibiya Line. Right outside the Ebisu station is the Oasis Rafeel. This is a new concept club geared towards professional females who make up 70 per cent of the membership, paying £115 a month. The quality is more akin to Relais & Chateaux and features a large women's day spa – which I wasn't allow to see but I'm told is really cool – a Daradara relaxation area and a hot yoga studio. The gym is on level three, with good views across the city. Although half the space is given over to women, men can use the rest of the facilities. The Oasis Rafeel is owned by ▶

**"Cleaning is ongoing throughout opening hours, but most clubs also close for one day a week for deep cleaning and maintenance"**

©STOCKPHOTO.COM/ANERHALANG

Since 2000, Central Sports has incorporated wellness into its health club offering



▷ Tokyo Sports Oasis brand, seventh in the top 20 brands by value, operating 33 clubs in Tokyo and Osaka. This club is closed every Monday.

From Ebisu it's only one stop to Shibuya, where Ridley Scott could easily have filmed scenes from his futuristic movie *Blade Runner*. I jump onto the Tokyu Toyoko Line and head for Liberty Hill Club. As the name suggests, this facility is modelled on a US-style country club, reduced in scale to fit a smaller Tokyo footprint. At £150 a month it's the most expensive club I will visit on this trip and the standard, as expected, has been raised again. Every inch of space is well used, from the three-high car stacking system to the two-court indoor tennis dome on the roof. A golf driving range hangs off the back wall. Inside we have a pool in the basement; the gym, with its personalised Life Fitness equipment in Liberty Hill livery, is on the second floor; and there's also a stunning dojo and a spa. The club lounge is one of the most comfortable and welcoming I've seen.

From the single site of Liberty Hill, I head off to one of the serious family brands. Central Wellness Club at Seijo is part of Central Sports – the second largest brand in Japan with 160 sites and around 400,000 members, including 130,000 children. The group started after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics as a swimming school; gymnastics came next, followed by outdoor sports in the 70s. In the 80s, fitness was added and, from 2000, wellness. The club has three main memberships: £90 a month for a full adult membership, £60 off-peak, or £56 for evenings only. The concept is a 'Wellness Town' which includes a real thermal spring and spa area along with a big gym and three studios.

The club appeals to a wide age group: the second largest membership category consists of those over 60 years old,

who account for 22 per cent of the membership, while the largest age group is surprisingly the 40-plus age group, who make up 27 per cent.

### service with a smile

All the clubs mentioned – plus the ones I didn't have space to tell you about, like Konami, which has almost one million members across some grand to mediocre clubs, or Big Sport with its ground-breaking posture analyser – have a number of things in common which are not always so noticeable in UK clubs. The Japanese expect and receive a level of service – in hotels, restaurants, shops and their fitness clubs – that's simply incomprehensible when set alongside the often dire service levels we put up with in the UK. Staffing ratios are far higher than any UK club could sustain: to find four or five people just on reception is quite common. Dedicated gym floor assistants are highly trained and ready to assist and advise customers as standard. The vast majority of clubs have no dedicated sales staff, as everyone can do a tour and complete new membership forms.

The Japanese also expect and receive a higher level of cleanliness than any other country I have visited. The majority of clubs close for one day a

week for deep cleaning and maintenance. An eight-year-old sauna looks like new, with no sweat marks on the wood. There's no sign of dust on any of the ducting or those hard-to-reach places. The pools are engineered not to leak. The equipment has no chip marks or 'out of order' signs and looks as good as the day it was installed. Cleaning of equipment and surfaces is ongoing during the opening hours of a club.

And then there's the welcome: from the cleaner to the gym floor staff, the receptionists to the beauticians and the food and beverage staff, they all sing out 'Irasshaimase' with a smile whenever you come into view. And yes, I really do feel welcome, which is not always the case as I travel around the UK and Europe.



David Minton

healthclub@leisuremedia.com

We're all familiar with David Minton in his role as director of The Leisure Database Company – but what you may not know is that he's also visiting researcher at the Research Institute for Sports Business at Waseda University, Tokyo. His introductions at the IHRSA Asia-Pacific Forum last November encouraged discussion between the Fitness Industry Associations of Japan and the UK, and the two organisations have now agreed to work together, sharing knowledge with a view to expanding the industry.

**"The Japanese receive a level of service that's simply incomprehensible when set alongside the service levels we put up with in the UK"**

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# being lifesmart

Kate Cracknell talks to Carole Caplin, founder and MD of Lifesmart, about the centre's all-embracing approach to health and wellbeing

## what is lifesmart?

Lifesmart is a health, fitness and wellbeing centre where we address all elements of your lifestyle to ensure meaningful, lasting results. We aim to make people as knowledgeable and independent as possible in looking after their own wellbeing, so that our role eventually becomes no more than fine-tuning.

## why did you want to create the centre?

I knew a long, long time ago that one day I would do this. I used to be a dancer, but then moved into business, working in sales. I was smoking 10–15 cigarettes a day, on the pill, eating chocolate and McDonald's, you name it. I ended up three and half stone overweight, couldn't move from my waist down, was covered in acne, had ME... and an osteopath gave me some home truths about the state I was in: she wasn't going to help me any more until I helped myself.

I finally recognised that I needed to do something and I went back to all my old training haunts, but nobody really had the expertise to help me – nobody was piecing everything together, so I did things in a very fragmented way, without any real understanding as to where I needed to begin and where it was going to end.

Eventually, I worked with two cranial osteopaths and slowly taught myself to walk again, but I very much had to figure it out for myself. I learnt a huge amount from all that. The textbook



Caplin: Personal experience led her to create Lifesmart

stuff is very important, but that real life experience means I genuinely understand the mental barriers to lifestyle change – the anger, the tears, the desire to just give up sometimes, the need to continually reinforce your decision to make a change.

It also made me realise that health and fitness has to work in stages, starting with a really comprehensive check of a person's history. Everyone's body is different, but the most important thing is to be as intelligent and as thorough as you can.

## who are you targeting?

We attract a lot of business people – bankers, hedge fund executives, judges, journalists and so on – as well as elite sportsmen and women. But we also work with people who need to address specific health issues: families with an anorexic child, for example; people with structural issues and injuries; people who've had heart surgery, who are terrified to start using their body again and upset about the changes they might have to make food-wise.

## so how does lifesmart work?

A large part of our work is as near to preventative as possible, or else it's rehabilitating people who've got themselves into hot water either cardiovascularly or structurally.

The Lifesmart centre teaches people to cook healthily



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**lifesmart**  
at The Albany



Facilities at Lifesmart include a kitchen, studio area and two treatment rooms – all housed in a former church building

It starts with a consultation that's designed to stop the mad cycle of trying everything: yo-yo diets and the like. You sit down with the individual and you work out, in no uncertain terms, what's worked in the past, what hasn't, what information they haven't been given that they need, what they've already been advised to do but haven't done, things they don't understand... and by the end of it, there's no mystery, just an order of priority of what they need to do.

My favourite thing is that, at the beginning, they're asked to list what they want to get from coming to Lifesmart. Most people say they want to lose weight, perhaps increase their energy, get a bit fit. Then you go through their questionnaire and you come up with a list as long as your arm – irritable bowel, headaches, bad breath, ulcers, low concentration levels, waking up not feeling refreshed... and you say to them: "OK, so what were you intending to do with this lot!"

We work out what's aggravating those conditions and explain that, if they follow our advice, they won't even need to worry about their weight – it will take care of itself when we address all the other issues. We don't tell them it will be easy, but we place a strong support structure around them and, as long as they're consistent in doing mainly what they're told, they know they'll get the results they want.

Our ethos is far removed from the 'lose a dress size' approach. We don't ask anyone to cut anything out of their diet until we've given them alternatives

what are the core elements of Lifesmart?

Lifesmart's all about real life, and everything we do with our clients has a practical application. Nutrition, exercise and relaxation – the know-how to look after yourself – therefore form part of everyone's programme.

We have a kitchen in the centre where we teach people to cook healthy meals, so they understand that food isn't about being restricted. It's actually about being completely expansive and knowing what your choices are. Our approach is far removed from the whole 'lose a dress size' approach you see all the time, and we don't ask anyone to cut anything out of their diet until we've given them alternatives they enjoy – why would you tell people what *not* to eat when you can, instead, show them everything they *can* have? It's like giving ▶

- them a huge gift parcel, and it has a dramatic effect on their levels of inspiration and attention.

Nobody starts an exercise programme without being biomechanically measured and assessed, and everyone works with a personal trainer. They can work out on their own, too, but we put in the foundations and building stones first, so they know what their parameters are. And we always ensure we're progressing them – that's the reason they keep coming back.

Knowing how to relax is also vital. We give people very thorough treatments, but we also go through all the different natural products that can help them and even their families, effectively giving them an education into natural first aid. We can then give them maybe four or five items to take with them the next time they're away on business, to relax them and boost their immune system.

So that's our core work here. After that, the three most popular things are homeopathy – because it's the only other thing that works constitutionally – osteopathy and PSYCH-K.

However, I don't think any one part is more important than another. What's key is bringing it all together. Complementary medicine is fantastic, but it has to work hand-in-hand with the orthodox side of things. Without that partnership in place, you never know the full story.

#### what's psych-k?

It's a one-to-one session that breaks existing negative behavioural patterns via subconscious belief change. It looks at the emotional imprint of things that have affected you, and that continue to affect the way you react to things without you even realising it, and it works on that. It's incredibly subtle, so you can come out remembering on an intellectual level what you went in with, but you have no emotional memory of it so you stop reacting in the same way. It's phenomenal because it's so simple. It doesn't involve any hypnotherapy. It's probably

closest to NLP (neuro-linguistic programming), but NLP isn't able to touch on the emotional imprint in quite the same way.

you mention rehab and preventative care – what medical expertise is on-hand at Lifesmart? I've been in the industry for years and that experience means I can spot when there's something likely to be going on. We have practitioners who work out of the centre but, whenever I think it's needed, I also have access to a whole army of first-class GPs, consultant physicians, surgeons, osteopaths, neurological specialists and so on – an external network of people I can immediately refer clients on to. I don't rent space out to consultants though; I simply put in a call when I feel their expertise is needed.

For example, one lady I took on a few years ago hadn't realised she had a life-threatening spinal problem. She decided not to have an operation, as even that only offered a 50 per cent survival rate, and instead worked with us and one of the osteopaths we now use at Lifesmart. Today you just wouldn't know – she's nearly in her 60s, is fitter than most people her age and looks incredible.

#### the whole thing sounds incredibly personalised...

I wanted somewhere people would feel comfortable and supported – somewhere they feel at home and where they can really commit to making a change. We have about 50 clients at the moment and I'll help them shop, show them where to buy new types of food, help them arrange their kitchens so they can prepare it, visit the restaurants they use for corporate entertaining and discuss dishes they can eat with the chefs. If you take time to do all this properly once, you never have to do it again and it cuts out years of them walking into brick walls. But you can't separate any of it: it's all interlinked.

I wanted somewhere people would feel comfortable and supported – somewhere they feel they can really commit to making a change



Lifesmart's fitness suite includes resistance equipment made especially for the centre, which can be adjusted to each client



## a personal touch

Located in a former church building in Regent's Park, London, Lifesmart opened in March 2009. Funded by Bill Kenwright, the theatre producer and chair of Everton FC, and his partner, the actress Jenny Seagrove – both long-standing friends of Caplin's and firm supporters of her wellbeing concept – the £1m refurbishment has resulted in a beautiful, welcoming environment: upmarket yet entirely homely and with understated attention to detail.

Spread over five floors, facilities at the 600sq m (6,500sq ft) Lifesmart centre include:

- Two fitness suites offering SportsArt CV kit and bespoke Jon Bowskill resistance equipment
- A large studio used for personal training, as well as group exercise classes on request
- Kitchen and lounge areas
- Two treatment rooms
- Luxurious changing rooms including sleep zones and individual showers with built-in steam facilities

Standard membership costs from £100 a month, with consultations and personal training charged in addition, subject to individual requirements.



ALL PHOTOS © ARNETT/KING CO.UK

**Although the London club is high-end, Caplin wants the educational element to be rolled out and made available to all**

Even when the business grows – we have the capacity for 200–250 members here – that personal touch will be maintained. I have a fantastic team of people here who'll always ensure personal attention for every one of our clients.

### how about your work with local schools?

I work with a co-ed school in Kilburn – it's 95 per cent ethnic minority with a police presence – and I love it. The first time we went in, the kids weren't immediately receptive, but we talked to them about drinks and energy and headaches and time of the month. Once we'd finished explaining hydration and what it would do for their concentration levels, their memory, their breath and so on, they were fantastic – they went away, drank water, came back and gave us fantastic feedback. We also covered breathing, posture and stretching, and I took in products that were good for their hair and skin types. They were interested in everything. And then it gets to the point that they'll talk to you about emotional things as well: lifestyle and moods, how you deal with the world and so on.

The school wants to take the initiative out into the community now, and I'd absolutely love to do that, but I probably need to clone myself before that can happen!

### what are your longer-term plans?

This is my first club, but I want roll out the Lifesmart approach in all sorts of ways. Essentially it's an education and I want it to be available to everyone – but without stinting on quality.

However, it will probably have slightly different flavours depending on where it is. For example, I'd like to roll out the nutrition element through the re-introduction of cookery lessons in schools, or by creating eateries on the high street where people can get nutritional input – information on food allergies and so on – while getting their breakfast, lunch or dinner. Or it may be that I approach a company, or supermarket such as Tesco, with a view to running on-site physical assessments, exercise classes and cookery workshops.

I've been talking about this sort of approach for years and it's finally starting to become more widely accepted. However, until everyone in the fitness industry – the FIA and all its members – are willing to work as part of a team, not just flagging up their own interests but getting together with complementary practitioners, GPs, spinal and neurological experts, people like us at Lifesmart... only then, when we all band together, will we have any way of making the government sit up to the point where it becomes impossible for them *not* to enter into working with us.

Saying all that, I've never seen government as a way of getting this sort of thing off the ground. Whoever sits in government, the main goal is to score points – there's barely time to make a dent where health and intelligent wellbeing is concerned. So you have to go out there and you have to do it yourself.



**kate cracknell**

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It's estimated that more than two-thirds of UK health club operators offer pilates classes as part of their core programming. But while clubs have been quick to deliver matwork in a group training format, they have shown considerable reticence when it comes to incorporating equipment training.

Chris Onslow, MD of Pilates Solutions, which distributes STOTT PILATES equipment and training, feels it may be a case of once bitten, twice shy. "In the late 1990s, a couple of big operators attempted to install equipment studios in their clubs following a US model," he says. "Lack of suitably qualified instructors, however, meant the studios sat unused.

# STUDIO TIME

Can health club operators afford to ignore the growing interest in pilates equipment training? Neena Dhillon investigates

This setback resulted in a delay of almost six years before they felt comfortable reconsidering an equipment model."

However as Ken Endelman, founder and CEO of Balanced Body, explains: "Although lack of space and quality instructors used to be major inhibitors for clubs trying to start an equipment-

based pilates programme, innovations in equipment and education have really made those non-factors today. What we see as the biggest challenge now is a failure to market the programme. Everybody's heard of pilates, but not everyone really understands what it is – that includes members, potential members and club employees. It's essential that a club designates someone as a pilates champion – a staff member solely responsible for keeping the programme visible both externally and internally."

## supply & demand

So are leading UK chains now willing to take the plunge and invest in dedicated studios? Newly appointed director of fitness for LA Fitness, Mark Talley, says: "We've responded to the demand [for pilates] by providing mat-based courses and classes, which have proven popular and which satisfy both members and prospective new clients. However, within our clubs the key consideration is space, which is at a premium, and we have to weigh up whether our members are requesting pilates versus other forms of equipment and exercise."

While Talley acknowledges that a studio could enhance the product offering and generate revenue, he argues that limited desire from members does not currently warrant initial investment in, and space for, pilates equipment.

Elaine Coulthard, national fitness manager at DW Sports Fitness, expresses a similar sentiment. "One thousand people pass through one of our clubs on a daily basis, so the studios are in use all day, every day," she says. "Pilates equipment can make a studio less flexible and we can't afford to tie up space in this way."

Instead, Coulthard says members are educated through group matwork classes and courses, run by highly qualified instructors in the clubs' mind-

**Training on equipment such as the STOTT PILATES V2 Max Plus Reformer should be fee-based for individuals or small groups**





Nuffield still offers matwork classes, but is also leading the way in offering equipment-based sessions in response to growing member demand

body studios. "Most of our member demographic is not aware of equipment training, so we have to take a judgement call on the best use of space," she adds.

But this is not the case at Nuffield Health Fitness & Wellbeing, where consistent interest has resulted in the organisation investing in STOTT PILATES equipment at its Surbiton site – in which both matwork and personal equipment training is available – and a GRAVITY pilates studio at its City location, offering both personal training and group classes for up to eight participants.

MD Nick Burrows says the provision of more equipment training is under consideration. "We'll continue to evaluate the success of these programmes to determine whether a wider-scale rollout should form part of our group strategy moving forwards," he says. "In certain markets – where we have the required number of interested members prepared to invest in training, and in clubs where we have the space – we believe a pilates studio would be feasible. The model could be based on an increased membership rate for access to group training or a regular number of one-to-one sessions, or on a sessional payment basis."

#### business models

As with Nuffield, it's also early days for London Health & Fitness, owner of the

We weren't active enough with promotion, so we missed some opportunities to recruit clients

37' health clubs. Having opened a pilates studio at its Tower Bridge site over a year ago – complete with cadillac, two reformers, stability chair and smaller accessories – the operator is now launching a second studio at its Kensington Olympia location. Replacing what was a golf simulation lounge, the studio provides personal training, as at Tower Bridge, but also group reformer classes. All options are open to members and non-members, who pay a fee per session or block of sessions.

Pilates instructor Katherine Brown, who runs both spaces, provides more details: "The club has invested in the studios and equipment and I pay a flat monthly rental fee in return. If the month is particularly profitable, there's a bonus system in place for the club."

Echoing Endelman's comments, Brown admits lessons have been learned from the first studio launch: "Neither the management or I were active enough initially in promoting the facility, so we

Boomerang Pilates at David Lloyd Kensington is open to members only





**Peak Pilates recommends limiting group equipment classes to a maximum of eight participants, to ensure quality of instruction**

► missed some opportunities to recruit clients. However, after a slow start, we've had a good uptake at Tower Bridge, with 15 to 20 one-to-one sessions a week. At Olympia we have more stability, because there are small group reformer sessions fixed in the schedule."

Interestingly, the Tower Bridge location is also in the process of adding pilates circuit training for groups of up to five clients – a trend already emerging in the UK market.

Following a slightly different business model, the David Lloyd club in Kensington rents out space to instructor Amanda Kitchen, who pays a monthly fee and a share of profits after a set target is met. She has personally invested in the equipment – five reformers, cadillac, chair, ladder barrel, spine corrector and arc barrels – and runs sessions exclusively for members who are charged per session or for a block of sessions. Open since October 2008, the Boomerang Pilates Studio – which used to be a stretching and relaxation area – provides group classes for up to five people, divided by experience level, and personal training.

Kitchen has identified that her clients particularly enjoy the atmosphere of group training, because everyone can work on the same movement – while limiting class numbers means she can still take individual body circumferences into account. "As an instructor, your job is to progress people through precision and control, so I would recommend teaching a maximum of between six and eight participants per class," she comments.

Reflecting on the benefits for David Lloyd, Kitchen says: "Matwork – only a small portion of what Joseph Pilates intended – restricts what people can achieve. By investing in equipment, operators can attract new members and retain those who are tired of the

gym or matwork classes. Our uptake has been rising steadily as clients notice the difference that equipment training makes to their bodies."

### number crunching

Looking to the future, it seems that operators could risk losing clients to independent shopfront studios unless they look into equipment training options. What are the alternatives, and how far can clubs go with this model?

Peak Pilates recommends that a 55sq m (600sq ft) studio with six Peak PilateSystem units, two Split Pedal Low Chairs and one High Ladder Barrel – requiring an equipment and education investment of US\$36,862 – can generate a return on investment of 327 per cent in the first year if a mix of 25 personal training (US\$70 each), five semi-private (two clients to one instructor, US\$45), 10 group equipment (US\$25) and 15 mat sessions (US\$15) are achieved each week. Peak Pilates also recommends a maximum of eight participants in a group equipment class to ensure quality of instruction is maintained.

Leigh Robinson, MD of Body Control Pilates, UK distributor for Peak Pilates, outlines other requirements.

"Operators must be prepared to get members to pay for such classes as a way of earning their investment back.

"Just as important, they need to think about how they're going to prepare clients for reformer classes, for example, because newcomers cannot safely jump

on to large equipment. Ideally, a course of matwork classes should be offered to bring clients up to speed and feed them into equipment training."

While Robinson is confident that operators can earn their investment back within a year, he says clubs do need to ensure they have adequate space and access to suitably qualified instructors. "All instructors should hold a REPs Level 3 Pilates Matwork Teacher qualification," he adds. "Unfortunately, only a small percentage have gone on to achieve a reformer qualification, so these instructors are in demand."

As a less ambitious alternative, Peak Pilates suggests installing flexible equipment such as Pilatesstick into a group fitness space, which means a separate studio does not have to be installed; sessions for between six and 15 participants can be charged at a more affordable price than private training. "This keeps people interested in pilates within your facility and, once you recoup this investment, you can move on to a small group training room," adds Sharon McCauley, international business development, Peak Pilates.

Pilates-Mad managing director David Elliott thinks there's a good opportunity for clubs to introduce small pieces of equipment, such as arc barrels, through group matwork classes. A compact studio aimed at active gym members and those interested in rehabilitation can then be installed, with premium prices reflecting the level of specialist tuition.

He explains: "Equipped with three or four reformers, a cadillac, ladder barrel, four combo chairs and a selection of accessories, a studio could offer group equipment training for up to six clients simultaneously, under the supervision of one instructor. However, more studios need to be launched in gyms to increase awareness."



**Operators must get members to pay for classes as a way of earning their investment back**



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### ► staff know-how

Onslow recognises that many club owners may feel they lack sufficient pilates knowledge at managerial level to establish a studio project. Another potential issue is that clubs are accustomed to implementing new concepts at breakneck speed, relying on their fitness instructors to adapt after a few days of training. "This is why," he says, "there's a real need for organisations such as STOTT PILATES to work directly with managers from early planning stages, providing the expertise they require to phase in appropriate programming and train staff [six months for a matwork teacher to learn reformer instruction]. Alternatively, we can help to source suitably qualified instructors looking to manage an equipment studio, and integrate them into the business while existing staff are trained to cope with future demand."

He continues: "Virtually all the UK models in operation within health

**Pilates-Mad MD David Elliott says a compact studio can be installed, with premium prices reflecting the level of specialist tuition**

clubs involve a tie-in of a key instructor, either through shared ownership or a lease-and-profit share. In the US, however, there have been clubs which have treated the capital purchase of pilates equipment in the same way as gym equipment. The hope might be to generate additional memberships from pilates enthusiasts who would otherwise not have attended the club."

So what insights can be gained from the US? Carol Tricoche, executive director of full solutions for STOTT PILATES, was instrumental in the conversion of a racquetball court to a 74sq m (800sq ft) equipment studio at The Claremont Club in California.

Following an initial investment of US\$55,634 on STOTT education and equipment, the studio generated US\$310,000 within three years of opening and doubled in space due to demand.

"Keep matwork classes as part of group exercise within your membership and use them as feeders to fee-based equipment training by utilising the same instructors," Tricoche advises. "For the best return on investment, you need to offer a combination of private (60 sessions per week), semi-private (20) and group reformer (18) training in your studio. Private sessions can be charged from US\$50–100 and groups from US\$25–30 a head. At Claremont, the studio was open to non-members, but they couldn't take advantage of package

pricing devised for members. This aided club retention and encouraged pilates enthusiasts to join."

Operating 86 clubs across 19 states, Life Time Fitness has installed pilates studios in 64 locations, either in a compact format with five Peak Pilates Total Workout Systems, or larger spaces between 46 and 74sq m (500 and 800sq ft) which offer a wider range of equipment. National director of mind-body programmes, Eduardo G Perez, explains that equipment training is offered at an additional cost exclusively to members as a key feature of personal training programmes.

Life Time Fitness has also designed its studios as unique destinations, giving them their own entrances and ambience to differentiate them from the rest of the club. "We identified early on that you need dedicated space and comprehensive marketing plans to sell to individuals and small groups," explains Perez.

He continues: "There's a major shortage of suitably qualified instructors, but you can overcome this by partnering with an organisation that has an educational branch. We've seen that it's possible to recoup return on investment for first-tier training after three months. Pilates equipment has enhanced our offering as a one-stop club, and we've made the necessary return on investment."

Whether in the US or the UK, it seems equipment training has a role to play in the club environment. Before embarking on a programme, however, it's important that operators have marketing plans in place and devoted space available, along with qualified instructors, to ensure studios are busy and capable of generating all-important additional income.



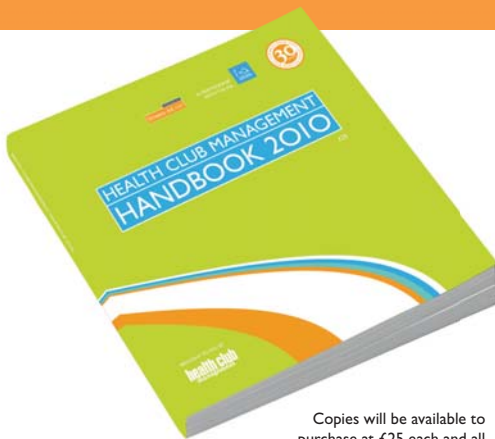
**Life Time Fitness designs its studios as unique destinations, with their own entrances and ambience, to differentiate them from the rest of the club**

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# research round-up

Swedish scientists have suggested that too much sitting can increase the risk of disease – even if we also exercise

## sitting targets

**W**e all know exercise can help prevent conditions such as obesity, high blood pressure and cholesterol, and metabolic syndrome: a combination of disorders that increase the risk of developing heart disease and diabetes.

Yet findings of a study published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* suggest that, while exercise can reduce the risk of disease, too much sitting can increase it – even if we're moderately or even very physically active at other times.

### paradigm shift

The scientists from the Karolinska Institute drew on the findings of 12 studies and are now urging people to rethink the definition of a sedentary lifestyle. Lead author Elin Ekblom-Bak says: "Until now, the expression 'sedentary behaviour' has misleadingly been used as a synonym for not exercising. Sedentary time should be defined as muscular inactivity rather than the absence of exercise."

The researchers point to a 2005 Australian study in which each extra hour of sitting and watching TV increased the prevalence of metabolic syndrome in women by 26 per cent, irrespective of the amount of moderate to vigorous intensity exercise they also performed. Meanwhile, the decreased risk brought about by an extra 30 minutes of physical activity was 28 per cent – implying that being a couch potato can cancel out the benefits of exercise.

The scientists therefore propose a new paradigm of inactivity physiology based on the following four tenets:

- Sitting and limiting levels of 'non-exercise' activity [eg taking the car to the shop when we could walk] may independently increase the risk of disease [ie independent of how much moderate to intensive activity we also do]



Each hour of sitting watching TV can cancel out the benefits of 30 minutes' exercise

- Sedentary behaviour is a distinct class of behaviour with specific determinants and effects on disease risk, separate from the behaviour of leisure-time exercise
- The molecular and physiological responses in the human body of too much sitting are not always the same as the responses that follow a bout of additional physical exercise
- People already insufficiently active will increase their risk even further by prolonged sitting time

### cause and effect

The scientists say much more research into the physiological mechanisms of sedentary behaviour is needed to establish a link between muscular inactivity and the various diseases.

However, one possible mechanism has already been proposed in a study of lipoprotein lipase (LPL), an enzyme that plays a vital role in our metabolism by breaking down fat into other usable forms such as free fatty acids. Although based on animals, the 2003 study showed that LPL activity was significantly lower in rats with restrained muscular activity – indeed, it was down to one-tenth of the levels seen in rats which were allowed to perform 'non-exercise' activities such as standing and walking.

Overall, the message is that: "We need to consider that we are dealing with two distinct behaviours and their effects: the benefits of regular moderate to vigorous-intensity physical exercise; and the risks of too much sitting and limited 'non-exercise' everyday life activity."

# a sporting chance



In the first part of a new sports conditioning series, Vicky Kiernander looks at the opportunities for fitness facilities to work with football and rugby enthusiasts

**A**ccording to the Football Association (FA), the nation's favourite game has some seven million participants and 37,500 clubs in England alone. And figures from the Rugby Football Union (RFU) suggest that the sport has 2.25 million players across the country. These figures are set to rise, with the RFU currently employing a raft of measures to create a new adult team in every club, to bring the total to more than 5,300 players by 2015/16.

It's likely that many of these non-professional sports players belong to a health club, leisure centre or gym; if they don't – particularly given the significant participant numbers noted above – then perhaps it's time they

did! Many health clubs already cater for niche groups within their membership – pregnant women or those with specific health needs, for example – so why not target their offering to rugby and football players too?

## sport-specific needs

Rugby and football are extremely demanding sports, even at amateur level. Players of both games require speed, strength, agility, power and endurance, and both sports include multi-directional work with changes of pace and direction. However, generally speaking, rugby players need more strength and power due to the physical nature of the game, combined with good endurance and repeated workload

There are some seven million footballers in England, as well as more than two million rugby players across the UK

capabilities, while football players require an ability to perform high intensity, intermittent exercise over 90 minutes of play, which requires a high aerobic capacity as well as the ability to perform frequent bouts of high intensity repeated sprints.

As former head strength and conditioning coach at Fulham and Tottenham Hotspur, and as consultant for the FA as well as a number of sports teams – including rugby – Alex Reid of Perform Fitness is used to preparing performance athletes for their game.

When training players, she focuses on three main areas: general aerobic and anaerobic conditioning, strength work and injury prevention.

The key, she says, is to keep the training relevant: "Whatever you do in the gym has to transfer to your performance on the field."





A balanced physique is shown to be less injury prone and more able to cope with unexpected movement patterns



▶ Many elite players are already using the sort of equipment that's found in health clubs to improve their performance on the pitch. For example, Hull City FC currently uses Star Trac's total body trainers, upright bikes and steppers, while Fulham FC, the British Lions Rugby Union Club and the England Rugby Union team work out on its NXT Spinner® bikes to boost aerobic fitness. Likewise, Matrix Fitness Systems supplies kit to Stoke City FC to improve cardiovascular fitness, speed and endurance, while the Scottish national rugby team uses the Dual Adjustable Pulley System from Life Fitness to perform a range of exercises that mimic movements on the pitch.

In addition to equipment, players can boost their fitness by taking part in classes such as group cycling or circuit training. Many clubs are also investing in pilates equipment to target unbalanced musculature, and to develop core strength and deep stabilising muscles around limbs and joints:

**Bond Fitness (above) offers elite expertise to amateur sports players; and (left) the British Lions rugby squad in training with York Fitness**

Proactive Health supplies STOTT Pilates equipment to football clubs including Bolton Wanderers, Newcastle United, Manchester City and Charlton Athletic, as well rugby clubs such as the Welsh RFU and the New Zealand All Blacks, all of which advocate pilates to their players.

"Pilates targets the rebalancing of the physique to compensate for the unbalancing effects of the sport itself," says Chris Onslow, director of Proactive Health and Pilates Solutions. "A balanced physique has been shown to be less prone to injury and more able to cope with unexpected or unplanned movement patterns – for example, when tackling or in scrums."

Given that many health clubs already offer both the equipment and the classes that elite football and rugby players employ in their training, they might consider marketing these facilities to local clubs, which often don't have the funding for their own gyms. Health clubs could also introduce specific programmes for their rugby- and football-playing members; in doing so, they may be able to attract new members too. As Reid points out: "A lot of my private clients are recreational athletes. They would jump at the chance of having a rugby- or football-specific programme."





## functional fitness

One of the first things Reid did when she starting working with Tottenham Hotspur was to ditch the fixed weights in favour of free weights, which she says are more useful in performing functional movements. "Unless a player is in specific rehab that indicates its use, sitting someone on a fixed weight machine doesn't prepare them for running around on the pitch, because it isolates muscles. When you play rugby or football, your body works as a unit."

But she urges caution in using free weights: "Recreational athletes need to be taught excellent technique if they're to work with free weights safely."

Jenny Wildi, owner of Capel Gym in Kent, agrees. Her members include a number of enthusiastic rugby and football players who are attracted by the gym's wide range of free weights, supplied by York Fitness. "The players tend to do their sports-specific training at their [rugby/football] club, but these don't always have a huge range of facilities in terms of weights, so they do their strength training here," she says.

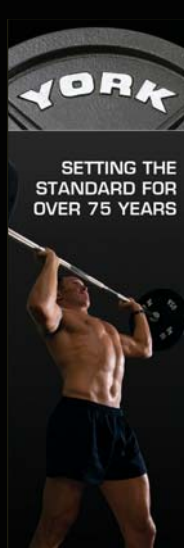
Wildi believes many of the larger health clubs and gyms shy away from offering large free weight areas because they're scared of the risks. But the risk

**Easy Tiger:** Leicester RFC players are put through their paces. Regular measurement is key to ensure progress is being made

of injury due to poor technique can, she believes, be minimised by ensuring clients receive adequate training and supervision. "We work with a lot of young, amateur players who need to learn to use weights correctly, so we provide a lot of training with staff who know how to lift weights," she says.

As Tom Haynes, commercial director at York Fitness, notes: "It's generally these smaller gyms that have Olympic lifting instructors and employ local personal trainers who have experience in training athletes."

One man with precisely this sort of experience is Steve Bond, who has just opened a fitness studio, Bond Fitness, attached to the Hertford Rugby Club. A former rugby player himself, Bond has spent his entire career in sport, which includes working with Premiership rugby players and footballers. He believes it's time the public had access to the type of training usually reserved for professional players. As such, Bond Fitness has been equipped by Escape Fitness to



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New members could be attracted by creating specific programmes for amateur footballers and rugby players, using kit already in the gym

- ▶ offer a functional fitness space with dumbbells and discs, lifting platforms and performance racks. The studio also offers kettlebells, medicine balls and Bosu balls, along with a vibration training suite, outdoor boxing and bodyweight training areas – but there's no CV kit. The idea is that the facility replicates a lot of the techniques employed by professionals, which are suitable for amateur players and the general public alike.

### testing, testing

Regular assessment is key to any training programme, but particularly so for sports people. The assessments at Bond Fitness test flexibility, strength, balance, stability, lung function, movement patterns, kinetic chain assessment, and muscular and skeletal imbalances. Clients may be re-assessed daily depending on their goals, but generally re-assessments take place every four to six weeks.

Reid agrees with regular re-testing to evaluate the success of the training programme. "If your client isn't improving, either they're not working hard enough or there's something wrong with your programme," she says.

Keiser UK works with 16 Premiership football clubs including Manchester United, Chelsea and Arsenal, as well as with a range of national and Premiership rugby teams including the Welsh RFU and Leicester, Gloucester and Northampton. MD Tim Colston says the Keiser Air machines allow clubs to precisely measure the power output of each athlete and monitor this over time. "This gives a true progression of the



Alex Reid recommends ditching fixed weights for free weights, which she says are more useful in performing functional movements



## Many recreational athletes injure themselves because they're not conditioned enough to perform

athlete's achievements and allows the appropriate development of their key goals," he says.

As well as regular testing, health clubs wishing to cater for rugby and football players must also focus on injury prevention. "In professional sport, my job is to keep the players fit and out of the physio room. A lot of recreational athletes injure themselves because they're not conditioned enough to perform," says Reid.

Here again, health clubs may already offer equipment that's being used by elite players to prevent injuries. For example, BalanceMaster is currently used at Middlesbrough FC, as well as at Lillieshall Sports Injury Rehabilitation centre, for both injury prevention and rehab. "Ankle sprains are the bane of footballers' lives and account for more than one in 10 of their total injuries," says Peter Hope, business development manager at BalanceMaster.

"The Football Association Medical Research Programme recommends that pre-season conditioning of the ankle and controlled rehabilitation are both key in promoting the long-term fitness of players."

Meanwhile, a wide range of Premiership football teams including Manchester United, Chelsea, Fulham, Tottenham Hotspur, Everton and Manchester City – as well as the Welsh RFU, Northampton and Doncaster rugby clubs – use Power Plate to assist with preventative training. It can help improve balance and co-ordination, both of which are essential when on the pitch.

Proprioception can also be improved, helping to decrease the risk of injury.

Power Plate's director of commercial sales UK, Jeff Davis, believes health clubs should consider how they can cater for the needs of local sports teams or clubs, as well as regular members. Last year, the company collaborated with Snowsport GB to offer Sno Camp classes at all Virgin Active gyms in the UK, focusing on ski-specific exercises to improve strength, power and balance.

"Similar programmes can be created for other sports including football and rugby. All we need to do is assess specific requirements and we can create a programme accordingly," says Davis.

Tom Haynes of York Fitness agrees: "Many gym chains choose not to cater for the needs of athletes, as they see it as a small market, but if they looked more closely at their members, many will probably play sport for fun, whether it's football, rugby, tennis or running. All of these can benefit from using the right equipment and training methods to prepare them for their chosen sport."

Catering for rugby and football players, whether via a targeted programme for members or working with local clubs, should be no different from catering for any member group in the club, concludes Wildi: "All members want results and it's the gym's job to address the needs of the individual, whether that be to lose weight or excel in a sport. There should be no difference."



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# FLOOR IT!

Andrea Bickford looks at the growth of small group training on the gym floor

**S**mall group personal training is an emerging trend, its popularity growing not least due to cost – people like the idea of personal training but can't always afford it. But it's not just small group personal training on the rise: what we're also beginning to see is a move towards small group training on the gym floor, not as a secondary revenue stream but as something that's included in the membership as a way of engaging more members, making the gym floor more dynamic and boosting member loyalty.

This concept has been developed by DW Sports Fitness over the past two years, working in conjunction with Escape Fitness, and today the chain's main focus is on small group training and education. Each new and refurbished club has a functional training area offering an array of equipment from TRX suspension training systems and *bodycore* functional training platforms to wobble boards, medicine balls and steps.

This zone lies at the heart of a new training culture in DW clubs (see also *HCM* Jan 10, p34). Workshops – covering techniques including kettlebells, TRX, vibration training and SAQ – are offered every hour, as are circuit training sessions. Meanwhile, small group sessions crop up on an ad hoc basis all over the gym floor – from crewing

classes to combat workouts. Each instructor is set the target of training at least 40 members a shift.

"Members are engaged immediately," says Steven Sykes, customer solutions manager for Escape Fitness. "They're trying something new, fun and effective, and because they're so motivated they see results quickly."

## driving loyalty

"It doesn't matter if the member is male or female – if you can get them involved in group exercise, they'll stay with you for longer," says Rob Beale, group health and fitness manager for David Lloyd Leisure. As a result, the chain has expanded its group exercise offering beyond the studio, creating a series of small group sessions on the gym floor – using Power Plate, kettlebells, Keiser's Strider, circuit training, TRX and so on. "This makes the gym floor more energetic and interactive, boosts participation in group exercise and gives members the confidence to use the equipment when training on their own."

According to Elaine Coulthard, national fitness manager for DW Sports Fitness, small group training succeeds because it replicates the three key loyalty-driving elements of studio class attendance, which she sums up using the 'FAB (fun, achieve, belong) Principle'.

Firstly, she explains, the sessions are fun for both instructors and members: "The other day I walked into the Wigan club and found a group of six ladies, over the age of 70, wearing boxing gloves and sparring – albeit in hysteresis. That's what it's all about. We must remember that fitness clubs are more than places of exercise: they're meeting places, and group exercise classes harness the social element for members."

Secondly, people achieve their goals more quickly – they're more interested and therefore more motivated. Beale agrees: "Members want to exercise on equipment that looks and feels different from the norm, and they want quicker results. Group training provides this."

Finally, group training creates a real sense of belonging. "A buzz is created on the gym floor, with members engaging with each other and with our coaches," Beale continues. Greg Sellar of GRAVITY agrees: "People enjoy that sense of 'group', rather than feeling they're alone in their training goals."

Like DW Sports, the idea behind LA Fitness' small group training sessions is to make them interesting, fun and different. Following successful pilot schemes, the chain has rolled out Crew Classes and Workshops across all its clubs. Crew Classes typically involve six to eight members completing 10- to 15-minute



**Multi-purpose** A functional training zone at DW Sports Fitness (left), and (right) a GRAVITY small group training session



**Getting results** If members have fun, they're more likely to reach their goals, which leads to an increase in retention

routines on Striders, rowers and studio bikes, while Workshop sessions make use of all sorts of equipment, targeting a variety of body parts – the 'Bingo Wings Buster Workshop' is just one example. "If we engage with members, ensuring variety and fun in their workouts, they will achieve their goals – and this leads to an increase in retention," says Tony Orme, marketing director at LA Fitness.

Orme also maintains that sessions have to be relevant and meaningful to people's everyday lives – they need to be able to understand the exercises and relate to them. Coulthard and Sykes agree. "It's about moving the whole body via activities such as running, pushing, pulling and lifting to bring about improvements in speed, agility, balance, strength and power," says Sykes. Coulthard adds that it's important the sessions educate members, allowing them to learn and grow in confidence.

The time factor is also appealing. "Many people now are 'time poor' with less time to spend on leisure. This means they need quicker, high intensity exercise to fit in with their lifestyles," says Tim Colston, MD of Keiser UK. With most studio sessions lasting a minimum of 45 minutes, gym floor group training sessions – which can take as little as 10 or 15 minutes – are far better placed to meet this demand.

Another advantage of small group training is its inclusivity. "Members may initially be nervous, but because sessions



**Staff who prefer to work one-to-one should be supported into a career as a PT**

take place right in front of them on the gym floor, they can take it all in and see how much fun it is," explains Coulthard. "More and more people are getting involved and surprising themselves by how much they enjoy it."

### staff training

There are undoubtedly many advantages of small group training sessions on the gym floor, but are there any drawbacks?

Operators agree that perhaps the main challenges are the issues of recruitment and staff training. "Colleges and training providers tend to prepare

the student well in terms of theory, but less well in how to work a gym floor," says Coulthard. "Our gym instructors need to be comfortable dealing with 10 or 15 people at a time. You usually find that, if there is passion, this can be taught, but our instructors tend to find out quickly whether they're in the right job or not. Those preferring to work on a one-to-one basis would be directed towards, and supported into, a career in personal training."

Orme agrees: "This concept is new for staff, so there needs to be a training commitment to existing and new





**Space saving** In many clubs, simply moving existing equipment around can help create space for gym floor workshops

► team members. It's not just about the technical skills. It's about engaging and interacting with members."

Janette Rose, brand manager at Matrix Fitness Systems, observes that staff motivation can be given a boost by providing opportunities for education, personal development and career progression. However, she cautions that: "Group training instructors must be trained to a level whereby they're capable of catering for people of very different abilities and experience. They need to be able to develop effective exercise progressions for each individual to keep it fresh and interesting for all."

### making space

Most clubs find they can provide the necessary space and equipment required for effective gym floor group exercise with relative ease and minimal outlay: many simply make use of existing areas of the gym and existing equipment.

"The likes of rowing machines and treadmills can simply be re-arranged for crew classes and circuits," says Colston. "It can be a case of simply using existing equipment in a different manner." Coulthard agrees – the cost to DWV Sports Fitness has not, she says, been high. Indeed, in their older clubs, they've simply moved equipment around to create space for their workshops.

Manufacturers recommend using kit that's multi-purpose, portable and versatile, meaning use can be made of spaces traditionally standing empty; as Orme points out, it's easy to get six or seven Swiss balls in the stretching area.

However, Colston says he's increasingly seeing the removal of 'traditional' multiple rows of fixed, single-station machines in favour of creating more space for gym floor group exercise. "I've never seen a change happening this fast," he observes. "In my experience, the removal of duplicate single station machines can effectively create the space required to introduce the equipment for small group exercise sessions."

Sellar agrees: "I think gyms can afford to drop some of the isolation equipment that's been around for the past 40 years. A bicep curl machine, for example, only does one thing for the user. To me, it's not good business sense to fill your gym exclusively with this sort of equipment. Most gym refurbishes these days include the creation of a 'functional zone' where you might find, for example, a Power Plate, TRX, GRAVITY Training System and some kettlebells."

### future trends

So is the growth of small group training set to continue? Colston certainly thinks

so: "Anything that drives member interest and encourages them to commit to the gym is a good thing. The model also stacks up: more versatile equipment, used more often by more members, creating more activity on the gym floor. We live in an 'instant gratification' culture, so quick, effective, high intensity and results-driven programmes – which small group exercise on the gym floor delivers – should have a great future."

Operators that have already introduced the concept are convinced that small group training on the gym floor is here to stay. While it's a little too early for quantifiable results, subjective feedback is extremely positive and the change in the gym environment speaks for itself: reports are of a dynamic, innovative vibe with people having great fun and more interaction among members, as well as between members and staff.

Sykes also believes that operators will see a very high return on any investment by optimising use of the gym and/or exercise studio throughout the day. Beale agrees, and also reports an increase in revenue through spin-off courses and classes at David Lloyd.

Coulthard sums up by saying: "I think the fitness industry takes itself too seriously. We need a fresh approach: it's about time our members left the gym fired-up, enthusing about the great time they had and counting down to their next visit."

**"INSTRUCTORS MUST BE TRAINED TO A LEVEL WHEREBY THEY'RE ABLE TO SIMULTANEOUSLY CATER FOR PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT ABILITIES"**

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# BLACK, WHITE ... AND GREEN

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Mike Hill visits the new Les Mills club in Christchurch, New Zealand, where they've pulled out all the stops to make the club both a healthy environment for members, and healthier for the environment

**B**etter known in the UK for its domination of the group exercise market, Les Mills actually runs 10 clubs of its own in New Zealand, including a completely refurbished flagship site that's just re-opened in Christchurch.

The building, which dates back to the 1800s, first opened as a gym in 1980. After several extensions, the company realised the club needed a more dramatic overhaul and effectively undertook a new-build on the site, knocking down the old building and starting from scratch. The project took 15 months, with the official opening in October last year. Total investment was NZ\$10.4m (around £5m) and has resulted in a club that offers more than 3,350sq m (36,000sq ft) of exercise space and the capacity for around 5,000 members; current membership is 4,100.

Ian Turley, marketing and business development director for Les Mills, describes the typical customer: "Les Mills sees itself as the premium fitness brand in New Zealand, but if you want a white towel experience, we're not for you. We clearly position ourselves as clubs that can attract both the first-timer and the seasoned, more serious gym bunny – but ultimately we're for people who, while having great fun, also take their workouts seriously."

The newly re-opened Christchurch club, located in the city centre, targets the commuter market. John Dunford, regional manager of the two Les Mills clubs in the city, explains further: "We market ourselves to stylish singles, generally the younger age group, 20-30s, mainly professional, city centre, CBD (central business district)-type workers."

## CREATING A BUZZ

The club provides around an acre of fitness facilities over three floors. Entering the spacious office-like reception area, you're immediately impressed by the light, airy design and welcoming post-workout chill-out area. Behind reception is the first of two dedicated cardio studios with fully automated environment, light and sound. The second floor offers an expansive main gym with dedicated boxing and Kinesis areas, with black flooring and equipment. Next to this is the second dedicated cardio studio, behind which sits the ladies-only gym, with its predominantly white décor contrasting with the black of the main gym.

Equipment – provided by Life Fitness, Technogym, Cybex and Trixter – is much more orientated towards free weights than tends to be the case in the UK, reflecting the more serious training approach of the club.



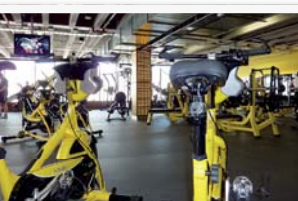
The overall impression is of a facility with a real buzz about it at peak times, reflecting the Les Mills aim of stimulating the mind to keep the body moving. Nowhere is this more evident than in the two massive group exercise studios, with an entire third floor dedicated to providing 73 classes a week encompassing the eight Les Mills programmes – the club only offers Les Mills classes.

"We have two fantastic studios, one of which can hold a maximum of 220 participants and the other a maximum of 120," says Dunford. "On a busy, rainy Monday, we often have more than 600 members coming through for classes, and we estimate that around 63 per cent of our members regularly use the group exercise programme."

Indeed, it's worth pointing out that although hour-long gym inductions are available – with three 'on-track' chats also included within the first 90 days of membership – not everyone takes this offer up, as many members only visit the club for group exercise.

Not only are the studios imposing, with full stages for the instructor

**Around 63 per cent of members regularly participate in the club's group exercise programmes**





The new Christchurch club features large windows, filling it with natural light (this photo), and a vibrant chill-out area (left)

and great vistas offered of the city, but everything from the light and sound to the air conditioning is controlled automatically and linked to each individual type of class: the air temperature in the room can be changed by five degrees centigrade within 11 minutes, to cater for a move from a very active Body Combat class to a more sedate Body Balance session. Put this together with quarterly launches of new programmes – when members are invited to bring a guest to sample the new sessions – and you can see why Dunford believes the group exercise offering to be the club's USP.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

In fact, the whole building is on a centrally controlled and computerised Building Management System, with all lights, temperatures and air conditioning operating on a pre-programmed basis that takes into account opening times and the external climate.

Philip Mills, the company's CEO, is very keen on making Les Mills buildings as environmentally-friendly as possible. Dunford explains: "There are totally new building concepts incorporated into this site, with sustainability the priority from design to operation. It's about the

use of natural materials, maximising surfaces for solar gain and efficiently managing our water, power and ventilation. For example, we pre-heat our water using jackets filled with water recirculated from the showers, thereby reducing the energy expended to heat water throughout the day."

Lighting bills are also kept to a minimum thanks to large windows on all floors allowing lots of natural light, and the club is virtually paperless, with flatscreen TVs used to keep members updated.

#### QUALITY ASSURANCES

Apart from the much larger emphasis on free weights and group exercise, the other key difference compared to your average UK club is the reliance on personal trainers. The Christchurch club has around 29 qualified PTs, as well as eight trainees at any one time, and established trainers have up to 50 members on their books, working 25–30 hours a week. Many also have waiting lists, acquiring new clients through referrals. PTs pay a monthly rental fee to operate within the clubs and typically charge clients NZ\$60–100 an hour (equivalent to £30–£50); around 15 per cent of members employ the services of a personal trainer.

Personal training aside, club membership is quoted in weekly payments in line with the fact that many people are paid weekly or fortnightly. The standard weekly price is NZ\$29.95 if people commit to a 12-month contract – equivalent to around £60 a month. Annual memberships are rare and not as incentivised as they are in the UK.

Les Mills is keen to ensure quality of staff at its clubs. All personal trainers must complete the six-month Les Mills PT course, at a cost to the individual trainer of around £1,250, before they can work in the club. In terms of staff on the club's payroll, Dunford says: "We give regular internal training and set aside 4 per cent of every individual's salary towards their own individual training budget. We need to do this because of the young market we attract. While quite forgiving, we do nevertheless have quite high expectations in order to maintain our premium position in the marketplace.

"Kiwis are not naturally great customer service people, but with good training they can deliver service as well as any western European country."

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# mrs sporty



The brainchild of husband and wife team Valerie and Niclas Bönström, and tennis legend Steffi Graf, the German fitness concept Mrs Sporty targets women who believe gyms aren't for them. Kath Hudson talks to MD Valerie Bönström about the secret of the company's success

## what is mrs sporty?

It's a health and fitness club for women only. When we were researching the market, we found that only 10 per cent of women in Europe reached the minimum recommended levels of activity. We looked at reasons for this and found that accessibility was an issue – a lack of sport at school, for example, and the fact that physical activity is not yet a natural part of our lives in Europe.

We therefore set about coming up with a concept that was easy to get to, comfortable to spend time in, and with maximum effect in only 30 minutes. We wanted to create a neighbourhood club, allowing women to combine a visit with a trip to the supermarket or bakery, or meeting up with friends.

We see ourselves as a Starbucks with a good conscience – a place to meet friends while working out. Equipment is arranged in a circle so members can chat and laugh while they work out, while the trainer in the middle is on-hand to correct and motivate.



Valerie Bönström (above) and her husband Niclas opened the first Mrs Sporty in Berlin in May 2004

## what's the usp?

The trainers know the members by name and really care about motivating them to achieve their goals. We have a maximum of 600–700 members per club, which enables the trainers to give a level of attention that's almost like personal training.

## how does it work?

We offer a 30-minute circuit using 16 pieces of Technogym hydraulic equipment. But it's not really about the equipment – it's more about the group feeling and the trainer who gives everyone individual exercises.

## when did the idea for the concept first come about?

We first started talking about it in late 2003 and opened the first club in Berlin in May 2004 – we felt the best way to develop the concept would be to actually test it with members.

## how successful has mrs sporty been to date?

From that pilot club in 2004, we've grown rapidly through franchising the concept and now have 340–350 clubs. Most are in Germany, but we have 20 in Austria, five in Switzerland and five in Italy, where we're building another administrative office. Franchising isn't popular in Germany, but we felt this



## what's your involvement with mrs sporty?

I was involved from the beginning through a business colleague of my husband [Andre Agassi].

I liked the concept because I believe many women want personal assistance during workouts. In addition, I liked the combination of physical activity and nutrition, and contributed a great deal of my own personal experience to the nutritional aspect.

I see myself as an ambassador, and would like to pass on my own experiences and inspire as many women as possible to exercise.

## what do you think mrs sporty offers that other clubs don't?

At Mrs Sporty, we address women's individual needs in the areas of

movement and nutrition and create an atmosphere where workouts are fun and the women feel comfortable.

In contrast to many other gyms, women at Mrs Sporty clubs don't feel as though they're being watched – our clubs are modestly-sized and there are no men. The workout concept doesn't require any previous knowledge or use of complicated equipment. And women appreciate the opportunity to get individual assistance on-site, especially as many are working out for the first time in their lives.

In 2004, we started with two clubs in Germany and, when they proved to be a success, we expanded into Switzerland, Austria and Italy. In November 2009, we celebrated the opening of our 333rd club and are happy to report a grand total of around 100,000 members.



**Mrs Sporty is equipped by Technogym, but Bönström says the key aspect is the group feeling and individual attention**

was the fastest way to grow. However, we did underestimate the amount of knowledge that we'd have to pass on to our franchisees.

We're also seeing huge success at a member level. Lots of people think exercise is about more pain, more gain, but ours is such an efficient workout: you see great results by going to the club every other day for 30 minutes. As a result, we have 96.5 per cent member retention.

### who's your target market?

It depends on the region and the franchisee, but our members are aged between 35 and 70 and, on average, are in their mid- to late-40s. Eighty per cent of our members haven't done any sport or exercise since school.

### what does membership cost?

€40 a month. That makes us neither the cheapest nor high-end but, when you consider the services we provide, it's really good value.

### how has the concept evolved over the past five years?

We continually develop our systems and processes to ensure we're fully supporting our members, and the



**Each club is designed to be a sociable place where friends can meet while working out**



**Equipment is arranged in a circle, with an instructor in the middle to offer advice**

biggest change has been to develop the personal training element of our offering.

We've also enhanced the nutritional side of things and now offer 10-week nutrition programmes, supporting members in changing their eating behaviours. The idea is to help them lose weight and keep it off, so we also track them for six months afterwards.

### how do you ensure franchisees maintain the quality of the brand?

We've developed an extensive system of education for our franchisees, including intranet, online support and congresses, as well as the Mrs Sporty Academy.

The support side of things requires more work than we originally expected. All franchisees have their strengths and weaknesses, and we train them in the areas they're weak in. They all come for eight days' initial training, but some need more intensive training, including spending time in existing clubs. We also offer a continuing education programme.

Our reporting system ensures we know how clubs are performing. There have been individual cases where we've

had to close or resell clubs, but it's amazing to see how a club that's been performing badly can be completely turned around under a new franchisee.

### has the recession had an impact on business?

We haven't had any decreases in memberships or franchisees, but I think the growth would have been faster had it not been for the recession. However, crisis has its plus points: people think more seriously about what they do, and I believe that finding the resolve to face this sort of challenge makes you stronger.

### what are your plans for Mrs Sporty going forward?

I'm always focused on growing the company and on providing great opportunities to empower women to run their own businesses – most of our franchisees are women.

I believe there's endless potential for our brand with so many women out there to be spurred into action!



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# UNDER THE RADAR?

SHOULD OUTDOOR GYMS BE SUPERVISED?

LUKE TUCHSCHERER ASKS THE EXPERTS



The Great Outdoor Gym Company's equipment is compliant with the same European safety standard as children's playgrounds

**P**eople throughout the UK will have pledged to get more active as part of their New Year's resolutions. However, with the recession only just beginning to lift, the cost of gym membership has the potential to put many otherwise determined folk off.

But what of the growing number of outdoor gyms that provide the public with free-to-use equipment?

Said to be as safe as the equipment in children's playgrounds, could this be the way to help people stick to their fitness goals?

The catch for many people seems to be the lack of guidance offered – so should these gyms be supervised? We ask the experts.

**Stalker: Should we encourage non-exercisers to jump on the kit on their way to the shops?**



## MATT DELANEY

managing director, the great outdoor gym company

**W**e want our gyms to increase participation in physical activity, especially among under-represented groups; we want to make our gyms free at point of use, as well as highly accessible; and we want to make our gyms as safe as possible.

In terms of non-supervision, perhaps the most important element to consider is safety. We've designed our equipment so each piece is fully compliant with the European safety standard EN1176. This is the same standard that's applied to children's playgrounds. It effectively means that all entrapment points, crush points, swinging pendulums and sharp edges have been removed. In addition to this, we have very clear instructional signage on our equipment, with easy-to-understand start and finish diagrams and instructional text.

We've also designed our equipment so that it uses resistance created by bodyweight, rather than the



traditional 'stack' weight systems you often find in indoor gyms, where users can easily lift far too much weight; on our equipment, the user cannot over-exert themselves as they're only ever pushing against a percentage of their own bodyweight.

Many of those who use our gyms want to do so in their own time, fitting a workout into their busy lifestyles. It would just not be practical to supervise the gyms 24/7, and if supervision were compulsory, it might reduce the number of people able to use them.

I think it's also fair to say that many indoor gyms are unsupervised. There may well be someone on duty at the front desk, but often inside the gym there's little to no supervision.

We do, however, encourage local authorities to use the gyms and run sessions with their own trainers. An element of encouragement in some cases could be a good motivational tool, but we think it should remain an optional extra, not a requirement.





#### PHIL RUMBELOW

ceo, jubilee hall trust

The Jubilee Hall Trust has, through the Proactive network, been involved in the Outdoor Gym project in Camden. A partnership between the London Borough of Camden and the Primary Care Trust, eight outdoor gyms were installed in public parks and open spaces in areas with the greatest health inequalities.

The gyms feature equipment that's manufactured to European safety standards and is just as safe as the kit used in children's playgrounds. However, although the gyms are designed to be used independently, there are clear benefits to be gained from running supervised sessions.

In the public consultation for the project, 38 per cent of people who said they were interested in using the outdoor gyms said they would be more likely to do so if supervision were provided. In a later street survey, carried out by Leisure-net Solutions as part of the HAFOS



survey, 21 per cent of people expressed an interest in using the gyms if supervised sessions were available, but only 9 per cent if they were not.

In addition, having a human presence at the sites can help to generally promote the gyms, improve exercise adherence and discourage anti-social behaviour. Even a low level of staffing enables some monitoring of take-up, including the collection of demographic data of the users. This is often a key requirement to gain funding for such projects, and yet is often overlooked.

To promote sustainability, the Proactive Camden network will shortly be appointing 12 volunteer 'physical activity ambassadors' from among local residents. The ambassadors will be provided with bespoke training to help them raise awareness of sport and physical activity among communities and groups in Camden, and to encourage usage of the outdoor gyms.

#### DAVE STALKER

executive director, FIA

As a passionate personal advocate of the FIA's 'more people, more active, more often' philosophy, I think the time has come to add a new caveat - 'more safely'.

If we want to encourage more novices to exercise, then we must also encourage them to do so in a supervised environment where safety is paramount and good counsel is at hand.

Despite being a senior executive of the FIA, I'm not suggesting that the current operator model is the only safe one. After all, we have many members that are not facilities-based - British Military Fitness and Fit For Sport to name just two. However, we must recognise the fact that exercising - whether it's running round the block or pushing/pulling weights - has inherent dangers for those who are new to the activity, or who are returning to a long-forgotten exercise regime. Would you encourage a non-swimmer to jump into a swimming pool just because it's available and free? No. So why is it OK to encourage an inexperienced exerciser to leap onto a piece of equipment on the way to the shops, just because it's there?

I believe the current REPS-registered trainers programme has gone a long way to improving the professionalism and the perception of our sector, and to making it a safer place for both experienced and inexperienced exercisers. Moving towards unsupervised gyms will prove disastrous to the reputation of our industry - especially if litigious consumers start suing local authorities and/or suppliers for injuries sustained despite the disclaimers displayed.



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## Proludic's social fitness

Proludic's MUSA – or 'multi-use sports area' – outdoor concept provides a mix of physical sport and play challenges to encourage teenagers, as well as the wider community, to engage in fun activities that capture the imagination and give real health and fitness benefits.

Encompassing everything from ball sport zones to cycling ramps and fitness trails, the range also includes equipment that simulates extreme sports such as windsurfing, rock climbing and sailboarding. This can be complemented by strategically-placed social areas where older children can meet up with friends.

"The kit has been designed to create group systems that encourage the social aspect of fitness," says marketing manager Steve Bailey.

**fitness-kit.net keyword**  
**proludic**

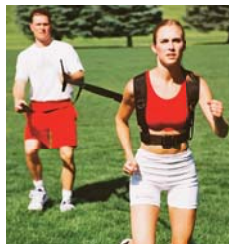
Wherever you are in the world, find the right products and services 24/7 by logging on to Health Club Management's free search engine [www.fitness-kit.net](http://www.fitness-kit.net)

For more information, or to contact any of these companies, log on to [www.fitness-kit.net](http://www.fitness-kit.net) and type the company name under 'keyword search'

## Power and speed training solutions

For personal trainers and sports coaches looking to add variety to outdoor power and speed training sessions, Proactive Health offers a wide range of equipment sets specifically compiled with outdoor one-to-one training in mind.

The equipment includes Power Breakaway Belts, with a choice of athlete- or coach-controlled releases (for coach-controlled model see photo, right), and elasticated Vario Resistance Trainers – all of which are used to provide resistance against which people run. A number of different models are available to cater for juniors and adults.



**fitness-kit.net keywords**  
**proactive health**

The sets are only available from Proactive Health, which also offers complete ranges of other health, wellness and sports accessories.



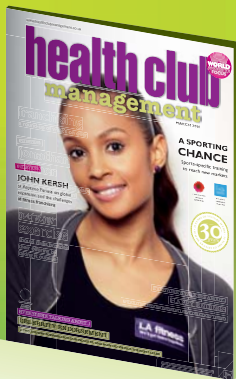
## Kettlebell training from OLF

Training and products supplier Optimal Life Fitness Group (OLFG) has unveiled a new extension to its range, with the opportunity for those purchasing any of its kettlebells to receive a free Optimal Life Fitness Extreme Training Systems Programme. The system comprises a total of five workouts all designed to optimise results, complete with reps and sets schemes

and detailed exercise descriptions. All have been designed to enhance the user's kettlebell experience and increase the efficacy of training sessions.

Kettlebells remain an ideal tool for fitness training outdoors, helping users to train for a range of different goals including improving muscular endurance, speed and strength.

**fitness-kit.net keywords**  
**optimal**



# MUSIC TO YOUR EARS

KATE CRACKNELL LOOKS AT THE IMPACT OF MUSIC ON EXERCISE, AND AT WAYS IN WHICH OPERATORS CAN CREATE THE OPTIMUM MUSICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR THEIR MEMBERS

If you want to get the best results from your workout, you need to listen to the right music.

It's a simple statement but one that's now widely accepted: based on personal experience alone, most of us recognise the power of music to boost flagging mental and even physical energy levels. For those who need more scientific evidence, there's also a wealth of research indicating benefits that range from improved control of blood pressure to better adherence to exercise programmes.

But how can we quantify the benefits? Are they purely psychological or does music somehow have a physiological effect? And how can operators ensure each of their members is exposed to the right music – music that will ensure they get the most out of every workout?

## EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Dr Costas Karageorghis is a name with which many in the fitness industry will be familiar. Based at Brunel University, Karageorghis was lead researcher on a 2005 study that established the ability of music to increase sporting performance by up to 20 per cent. The study also found that listening to songs of the right tempo and content before and during exercise could reduce tiredness by diverting the mind from sensations of fatigue, act as a stimulant prior to training, and improve people's ability to acquire motor skills.

Interestingly, unrelated studies have observed activity in brain regions that control movement, even when people are simply listening to music without moving any parts of their bodies – a

finding which, according to Harvard Medical School neuroscientist Mark Jude Tramo, shows that "music is as inherently motor as it is auditory".

Elsewhere, a study by the School of Psychology at Fairleigh Dickinson University in the US found that obese women subscribing to a cognitive-behavioural treatment programme had higher levels of adherence – as well as twice the weight loss at the end of 24 weeks – if they listened to music during the exercise-based part of the treatment, compared to those who exercised in silence.

## BPM & HEART RATES

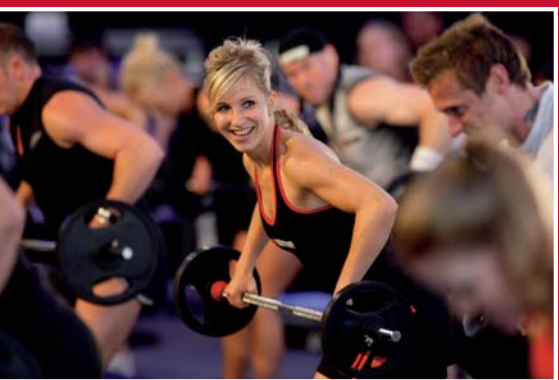
Perhaps unsurprisingly, the relationship between heart rate and tempo was found by Karageorghis' team to be key – fast tempos being best for high intensity exercise and slower music better for recovery and stretching.

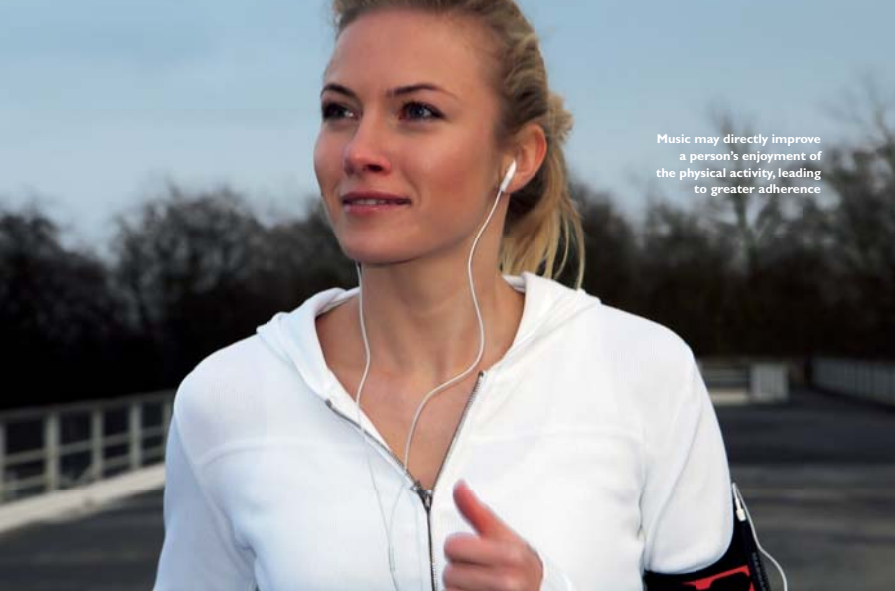
In fact, for Les Mills: "Music is so vital that it leads the class design," according to Shaun Egan, UK head trainer. "The music comes first, then we devise the choreography and the exercise programme from there."

By selecting songs based not only on their ability to entertain but also for their BPM (beats per minute) and structure, Egan says it's possible to ensure "a range not only throughout the whole class, but also varying intensities within each track, providing an interval-based workout that helps participants achieve more in the same time period compared to steady-state training. The music is key to encouraging them to work harder – its impact as a motivator is massive."

Dean Steer, producer and manager of FitPro's music division FP Music, adds: "A key advantage of pre-mixed music over a general iPod playlist is the phrasing: when music has been mixed into the

**Les Mills selects music first, then choreographs around it, to ensure the mix of tracks will maintain heart rates**





Music may directly improve a person's enjoyment of the physical activity, leading to greater adherence

32-beat blocks, the class is continuous, which keeps the heart rate of the class at the right level for the correct period of time – there's no gap between tunes where heart rates could drop."

However – in his article 'The Effects of Music on Exercise?' (*IDEA Today*, 1994) – Len Kravitz PhD, a researcher at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, points to some "conflicting results" in the scientific evidence regarding the effects of music on exercise performance. He states: "A review of studies indicates that heart rate tends to only moderately follow the music." Indeed, he quotes a 1991 study in which subjects walking or jogging on a treadmill had longer times to exhaustion when listening to slow, soft music than when listening to loud, fast music. "Research is unclear at this point as to the physiological effects music may have on exercise performance," Kravitz adds.

#### PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Kravitz also suggests that music of any kind can in fact lead to a moderate increase in heart rate, thanks to the emotional effect of music. However, this in itself has an application, as he explains: "One valuable way an aerobic fitness instructor can use music in the teaching arena is as a pre-class stimulus. The majority of studies suggest that music may significantly increase

respiration rate and moderately elevate heart rate, preparing the student for the anticipated workout."

Not only that, but: "Although performance may or may not be enhanced by the addition of music to the workout, subjects regularly report that they felt their performance was better with the music accompaniment. Therefore, music may directly improve a person's enjoyment of the physical activity, leading to greater exercise compliance." Indeed, in research conducted by PPL and PRS for Music, 80 per cent of all gym users questioned said workout music makes them more likely to enjoy themselves when exercising.

When it comes to resistance workouts, Kravitz refers to previous studies measuring grip strength and observes that "listening to sedative music decreased strength significantly when compared to stimulative music and silence. However, no statistical significant difference was seen between stimulative music and silence". Kravitz warns that, as "sedative music may actually decrease a person's muscular fitness potential training ability", personal trainers – indeed clubs in general – should be mindful of the types of music clients are exposed to during the resistance element of their workout programmes. It may, he adds, be worth considering ▶



Research suggests that the optimum range for burning calories is 118–122 beats per minute (BPM)



► that, at least in this area of the gym, no music at all may be the best option for many members.

Researchers will no doubt continue to debate the science – whether music has a proven physiological effect leading to better results, or whether it simply boosts enjoyment of, and therefore adherence to, exercise. Either way, getting the right music mix certainly seems to have a role to play in member retention. However, with Karageorghis' research suggesting that personal taste is a major factor, operators must try and cater for the musical preferences of, if not everyone, then as many members as possible. So how can they do this?

#### IN-CLUB MUSIC: DAYPARTS, DEMOGRAPHICS AND ZONES

"A Nielsen study commissioned by Zoom in 2009 showed that 83 per cent of gym members noticed our in-house music TV programming," says Alex Peacock, MD of Zoom Media – owner of ClubCom, the turnkey in-club entertainment and customised messaging solution. "The study also explored how people use their club, where they spend their time and how long they're in those areas, helping us meet members' entertainment needs during their (on average) 79-minute visit."

"It's impossible to provide the perfect selection for everyone, but understanding the average age and typical member demographic at any given time of day allows us to provide the most relevant mix of music, tailored by day-part and on a club-by-club basis."

"The aim is to provide a varied, carefully structured mix of music that includes songs members are happy to listen to in a health club environment,

even if it's not typical of the music they would listen to at home.

"We can provide customised 'Vote for Your Music' website portals for each of our customers: members are asked which club they use and what time of day they visit, and are then asked to score a series of music clips. This data is collated and presented to the club on a monthly basis to help ensure its music selection is relevant and popular."

"Different areas of the club also have different requirements. Tempo is key in the CV area – research by the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America suggests the optimum range for burning calories during exercise-to-music activities is 118–122 BPM. A number of genres may be appropriate, but ensuring all music in this area maintains a tempo of 110–130 BPM will improve members' ability to use the ambient music to keep pace during their workout."

"Spa areas and treatment rooms have almost the opposite requirement, while café/bar areas will vary depending on the dwell time and audience – a cappuccino



AudioFuel provides soundtracks for use outside of the gym

bar used mainly for a quick post-workout coffee will have different needs from a licensed bar serving food, which provides a social hub for club members."

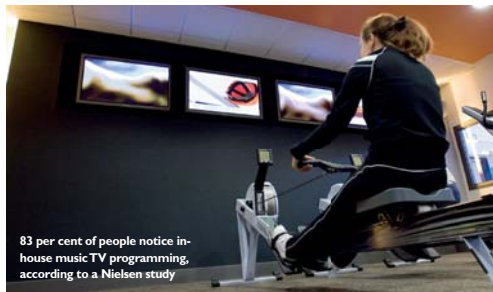
#### IPOD PLAYLISTS: BESPOKE, TARGETED PROGRAMMING

"One key way to add value to your offering is to provide services that extend beyond the four walls of the club," says Clare Crean, MD of AudioFuel.

"Our product's perfect for that. We can co-create products using a club's trainers – tailor-made walking or jogging programmes, for example, to suit their members' needs. These all come with bespoke voiceovers along the lines of: 'Hello and welcome to the [operator/club name] AudioFuelled training session for beginners. Whether you're using this to walk to work, walk the dog or as part of a lunchtime gym workout, repeating this session three or more times this week will help you burn calories, increase your fitness levels and make you feel great'."

"Similarly, if the club had specific events or challenges going on, we could provide programmes for people training towards these" – AudioFuel has recently collaborated with the Virgin London Marathon to create a new music-based training resource for marathon runners.

"This is all delivered digitally via the internet: links to these programmes could go out as part of a weekly email or be downloaded from a dedicated page on our website. Alternatively, more simply, we could create an affiliate programme with a health club: we'd give our product to the PTs to try, and they could recommend it to members who'd get a special discount code to redeem against any product in our shop."



83 per cent of people notice in-house music TV programming, according to a Nielsen study

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# DID YOU KNOW?

## OVER 80% OF GYM USERS SAY MUSIC MAKES THEM MORE MOTIVATED.\*

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For more information on how to obtain your PPL music licence<sup>†</sup> visit **ppluk.com** or call **020 7534 1070**.

To find out more on how music can work for you visit **musicworksforyou.com**.



\* MusicWorks survey of 2000 people, conducted March 2009

<sup>†</sup> If you play recorded music in public it is a legal requirement to obtain the correct PPL licence, failure to do so may result in legal action. PPL is different from PRS for Music. PPL collects and distributes money on behalf of record companies and performs whilst PRS for Music collects and distributes money on behalf of songwriters, composers and publishers. Both licenses must be obtained to ensure all copyright holders are fairly paid.



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# SECOND COMING

The second-hand fitness equipment industry appears to be booming, with Physique alone anticipating purchases of more than 5,000 CV stations from across the UK for resale this year. Abigail Harris takes a look at four health clubs that have put their faith in pre-owned fitness equipment

**Club:** Moathouse Leisure and Neighbourhood Centre, Coventry

**Supplier:** Physique (part of the PTE group)

Coventry Sports Trust chose remanufactured Life Fitness Silver Line CV equipment from Physique for this new £11m centre, funded by the New Deal for Communities and Coventry City Council, which opened in March 2009.

Hugh Davies, CEO of Coventry Sports Trust, says: "Our choice was budget-driven. The cost savings allowed us to

invest in Hoist's Roc-It, a new concept in strength training, which gives us the competitive edge over other local facilities.

"Ultimately, then, we chose the introduction of new innovations over new CV kit. We didn't view this as a compromise, because the remanufactured CV equipment looks brand new. No-one would know it's been completely remanufactured, as

every moving part has been replaced. The feedback has been excellent."

Physique offered an extended warranty on the remanufactured kit to ensure there was no compromise on service and support. However, a year on, there have been no service issues with the equipment. "It still looks immaculate," says Graham Bertrand, MD of the PTE group. "And because the colour of the Roc-It circuit matches the silver of the Life Fitness equipment, visually it fits together really well too." ▶



The silver colour scheme of both new and remanufactured kit at the Moathouse centre ensures it all fits together visually



Studio2: The dumbbells are the only pieces of kit that aren't refurbished



Marlow: Only one machine was out of service at a time during the refurb

## Club: Studio2, Pollenca, Majorca

Supplier: Amazon Leisure

**A**mazon Leisure installed 27 refurbished stations at independent gym Studio2 at the end of last year, including Life Fitness CV Silver Line treadmills, cross-trainers, recumbent bikes, upright cycles and Concept2 rowers, as well as Life Fitness Pro Series and Hammer Strength resistance equipment.

"The amount of kit against investment was a key persuader, along with the choice of colours available on the strength equipment," says Neil Whatling, operations manager for Amazon Leisure. "We weren't the cheapest supplier, but the quality we were able to deliver for the investment led Studio2 to choose us as the best option."

Every piece of kit, from the treadmills right down to the Concept2 rowers, are fully refurbished units – all supplied,

delivered and installed by Amazon to ensure a complete solution that met the customer's specific requirements.

The only new pieces of equipment onsite are the dumbbells, as according to Whatling: "It's a devil gluing the rubber surround back on!"

Whatling says strength machines are more straightforward when it comes to the remanufacturing process. "They're far more mechanical than CV kit," he says. "When you take away the electrical side of things, you can make very old equipment look as good as new."

Across the board, Studio2 saved around 65 per cent of the cost of new equipment. Says Sarah Bernard, owner of Studio2: "Our refurbished equipment is better than that of most gyms in Majorca and the team at Amazon were extremely patient with me."

**"STRENGTH KIT IS EASIER TO REMANUFACTURE THAN CV: WITH NO ELECTRICAL ELEMENT, YOU CAN MAKE VERY OLD KIT LOOK LIKE NEW"**

## Club: The Marlow Club, Buckinghamshire

Supplier: ServiceSport

**T**he Marlow Club called in ServiceSport to re-upholster its Technogym strength equipment on-site in November 2009.

Kevin Dobson, senior gym instructor at the club, says: "There was nothing wrong with our actual kit, but the padding was dented and the leather had started to split. The ServiceSport engineer arrived with his iron and his sewing machine and, by the time he left, the equipment looked brand new!"

ServiceSport supplies second-hand Life Fitness CV equipment but, rather than stocking strength equipment for resale, it offers an 'onsite' refurbishment

service. "Resistance kit takes up a lot of floor space in our warehouse," says managing director Rick Fowler.

"Instead, we refurbish existing equipment onsite. We can change the colour of the upholstery and replace the cables so that members think the club has completely replaced the resistance circuit with new machines."

Dobson continues: "We can't put a price on what the service saved us – if members think machines are tatty, they're more likely to go elsewhere."

"Each piece took less than an hour to re-upholster and there was only ever one machine out of service at a time."

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Sport Life chose second-hand equipment in order to make a 40 per cent saving

#### Club: Sport Life Premium Club, Kiev, Ukraine

Supplier: Fit4Sale

US-based Fit4Sale installed a range of remanufactured kit into Sport Life's first Premium Club in 2007. Now the independent group has chosen Fit4Sale to supply a further three clubs opening this year.

Sport Life chose second-hand equipment based on price – a 40 per cent saving on new – and the convenience of getting everything from one supplier.

"The remanufactured equipment has been extremely successful," says Nick Pugh, president of Fit4Sale. "Sport Life is a massive, 15,000-member club and they were concerned the equipment wouldn't last. But, three years on, it's still in great working condition and looks as good as the day it arrived."

Fit4Sale fitted the entire 5,000sq m (53,820sq ft) club with everything from Life Fitness, Stairmaster and Schwinn CV equipment to Precor, Hammer Strength and Cybex resistance kit, plus free weights and flooring.

"Around 60 per cent is remanufactured, 30 per cent are demo units and the rest new stations," says Dima Ekimov, owner of the club. "Consistency was one of our main concerns, but you can't see any difference in the age of the machines."

According to Pugh, club solutions lie at the heart of the Fit4Sale offer. "We help our customers ask the right questions – questions that help us decide what they should invest in. This includes: who are our members, who are our competitors, what equipment do they offer, what's our budget and how much traffic will the gym have?"

"The bottom line is that purchasing demo or slightly used equipment saves you the depreciation. In that respect it's like buying a car – its value depreciates dramatically just by driving off the lot."



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## show preview

## ihrsa 2010

Whether you want to try out new products, learn from the experts or network with industry peers, this show has everything you need

**T**he 29th Annual IHRSA International Convention & Trade Show will take place on 10–13 March 2010 in San Diego, California, US.

IHRSA 2010 is the premier health club industry event of the year, connecting fitness manufacturers and suppliers with club operators, fitness enthusiasts and speakers from across the globe. It's the ideal opportunity to experience the most innovative equipment, products and exercise trends first-hand.

Many exhibitors will provide hands-on opportunities to try their products – in group classes and one-on-one sessions, as well as during the event's popular Early Morning Workouts – while others will put on demonstrations as you make your way across the show floor. Many exhibiting companies are prepared to offer 'show-only specials' on the latest equipment, supplies and services, helping you and your business to successfully compete in today's market.

### keynotes and seminars

IHRSA 2010 has an impressive line-up of keynote speakers including Malcolm Gladwell, the best-selling author and staff writer for *The New Yorker Magazine*, who will present his Precon-sponsored session – "Outliers: Why are people successful?" – on Thursday 11 March. Meanwhile Chip Heath, best-selling author and professor of organisational behaviour at Stanford University's graduate school of business, will present "Switch: How to change things when change is hard" on Friday 12 March, sponsored by Technogym.

Also, IHRSA recently released the results of its first ever Green/Sustainability Survey. The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into the opinions and practices of health, racquet and sportsclub operators regarding environmental sustainability, as well as its associated business implications. More than 130 participants provided data for the survey. Full results, with extended analysis, will be officially



**IHRSA 2010:** A chance to experience equipment, products and trends first-hand

released at IHRSA 2010 in a panel presentation on Saturday 13 March entitled "Green practices and the fitness business – a natural partnership", sponsored by The Green Revolution.

This year's programming includes a superb array of topic areas to help clubs achieve their business goals, including: Fitness & Personal Training, Health Promotion & Wellness, Human Resources, Innovations & Opportunities, Legal & Legislative, Management & Operations, Marketing, Membership Growth & Retention, Programming, and Supplier Seminars.

### augie's quest

An exciting new event this year will be Join the Party™ – a Zumbathon® event for MDA's Augie's Quest. Beto Perez, co-founder of the Zumba® programme, together with the Zumba Fitness Family of Instructors, have teamed up with

'Augie's Army' and the Muscular Dystrophy Association and joined MDA's Augie's Quest to fight A.L.S. by hosting a 'Zumbathon' at IHRSA 2010. The event will take place on 11 March from 6.30pm–8.00pm. Donations are requested for participation – either early-bird registration for US\$25 or onsite registration for US\$35.

For veterans and newcomers alike, IHRSA 2010 promises to be a one-stop-shop to learn, network and participate in the biggest fitness event of the year.

### DETAILS

**Dates:** 10–13 March 2010  
**Location:** San Diego, California, US  
**Venue:** San Diego Convention Center  
**Contact:** [www.ihrsa.org/convention](http://www.ihrsa.org/convention)



## DED's bamboo lanyards

Point-of-sale equipment specialist DED Limited has unveiled a new range of eco-conscious lanyards made from bamboo.

Said to be ideal for operators with an eco-friendly brand strategy or message, the lanyards are produced from a highly renewable source. All dyes used in their production are plant-based, ensuring the product is truly bio-degradable.

The range can be personalised using water-based inks to suit any operator and have been designed to perform exactly as a standard card would. However, they will break down in a fertile environment in as little as one year. The lanyards are three-eighths of an inch thick and come in a range of colours including black, green, natural, blue and red.

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## Signscape introduces solar-powered signs

The UK-based sign manufacturing company Signscape has been busy developing its EcoVision range, which offers a number of signage solutions powered by solar energy.

Having previously used fluorescent lighting, Signscape claims that, by using solar power, energy costs for clients will drop, while operators can also lower both maintenance and running costs.

The company is able to offer illuminated signs and notice boards in a variety of sizes.

Speaking about the new range, Hamish Paterson, Signscape's managing director, says: "The



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development team here has been working on solar-powered signage for a while now. We're pleased to be able to offer this as an alternative to electric-powered signs."



## Harnessing energy with Precor

Courtesy of technology created by ReRev™, fitness equipment supplier Precor's elliptical machines can now deliver human-generated energy back to the electrical grid.

The kinetic motion of aerobic exercise is efficiently captured in a cost-effective way to convert otherwise wasted energy into renewable energy that feeds back into a building's electrical

system. Working exclusively with Precor's retrofitted machines, the amount of energy typically captured during a 30-minute workout will produce 50 watt hours of clean, carbon-free electricity. Over the course of 10 hours in the average gym, 15 ellipticals can generate energy equivalent to 16 central air conditioners running for one hour.

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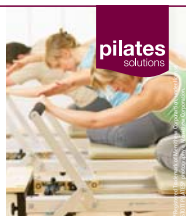
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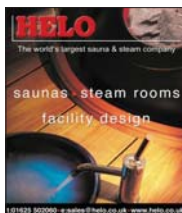


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# lightweights

## CIRCLE THE DATE FOR HULA HOOP CHALLENGE

The date is the 21 March. The challenge is the Hula Hoop Hoopathon. The aim is raise money for this year's Sport Relief, while getting people across the nation to break the world record for the number of people hula hooping at the same time – the only snag is that they need to keep the hoop in action for two minutes.

Hoopathon has been launched by food manufacturer Hula Hoops, in celebration of its official partnership with Sport Relief 2010.

There will be 16 Hoopathons taking place at the flagship Sainsbury's Sport Relief Mile events. The goal is to get 200 participants hula hooping at each event, as 3,200 people are needed to break the world record – so why not encourage your members to go along?

If that's not enough of a workout for them, they can also take part in the Sports Relief Mile, which will be held afterwards.

Details: [www.hulahoops.com/](http://www.hulahoops.com/)  
[www.sportrelief.com](http://www.sportrelief.com)



Hula Hoops is encouraging celebrities to show their faces at the Hoopathons. Ben Fogel was present for the launch.

## DO THE DISKI DANCE WORLD CUP WORKOUT

With the 2010 FIFA World Cup only just around the corner, get into the spirit by incorporating some of South Africa's disk dance moves in your exercise classes.

The disk dance – a series of choreographed football moves to African rhythms – is the definitive boogie of the World Cup and takes its inspiration from the country's flamboyant football style: disk.

The dance appears in a TV advert from South African Tourism, which will be aired on global channels including CNN, BBC, Eurosport and Sky Sports in the run-up to the World Cup kick-off in June 2010.



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## 2009'S BEST AND WORST SPORTS PERSONALITIES

Celebrities are often used in fitness campaigns (see page 30) – but who are our favourites?

According to SkillsActive, people voted for David Beckham, followed by Chris Hoy and Lewis Hamilton, as the best sporting role models in 2009.

Unsurprisingly, Tiger Woods topped the 'naughty list', with runner-up bad role models including Ashley Cole and Cristiano Ronaldo.

Fair play was considered the most important factor by 58 per cent of respondents, followed by winning (19.2 per cent) and charitable work.

This year, SkillsActive will launch a Diploma in Sport and Active Leisure, which includes a module on teaching young people how to be good sporting role models.

## live in the mountains to keep slim

Aside from the steep hills they have to climb, there's another reason why people who live in the mountains have fine figures: the air.

According to research by the University of Munich, published in the journal *Obesity*, fat is much easier to burn off when the air is thin.

A study of 20 men, who had an average body mass index of 34, showed that weight dropped dramatically just by

living near the top of Germany's highest mountain, Zugspitze, for a week. The men made no change to their exercise or eating patterns. What's more, it was found that the weight loss was maintained for four weeks afterwards.

It's thought that this discovery could now lead to new obesity treatments which use tents that mimic the atmosphere of high altitude countries such as Tibet.

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