

healthclub management

MARCH 2011

MEL B

The former Spice Girl on inspiring the world to fitness

INTERVIEW

TONY DE LEEDE

The industry veteran on his latest venture, Fit n Fast

fitness testing

Should this be an ongoing process?



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seize the day

Political, social and economic changes are presenting the health and fitness industry with a new set of challenges – not only how to address issues such as obesity and an ageing population, but also the broader question of how to align ourselves more closely with both the medical sector and governmental agendas. But with all of these challenges comes huge opportunity.

The latest opportunity comes in the shape of the new Department of Health-led Responsibility Deal (see p18). The government is working hand-in-hand with the fitness industry on this initiative, which is designed to drive the nation towards a more active lifestyle; the fitness sector as a whole will be asked to sign up to pledges that could lead to a much more diverse membership base coming into our facilities. This will require a broadening of our skillsets to encompass more specialist knowledge, enabling us to cater for people with more medicalised needs, and fit in well with the advances already being made towards co-operation with the medical sector.

Experts have suggested that 'now is the time' for our industry. At the EHFA EU Associations Forum in November, for example, professor Alfonso Jiménez, chair of the EHFA Standards Council, stressed that,

If our sector wants to live up to its full potential, we have to act right now, before the opportunity – the door that's currently been left ajar for us by government and the medical sector – disappears

if we want to live up to our full potential – co-operating with the medical sector, acting as a government delivery partner and providing a hub for healthcare in the broader community – we have to act right now, before the opportunity disappears. If we don't take this chance, he warned, the door that's currently been left tantalisingly ajar by both government and the medical sector will be closed forever. We have to act now, and act credibly.

Staff training will be vital to this, so perhaps now is also the time to re-assess our priorities. Should we be setting aside more budget to prepare staff to deliver on these opportunities?

The recent proliferation of Level 4 courses – in mental health, for example (see p36), and cardiac rehab (see p48) – will begin to give us the tools we need to prepare our workforce. And yet training remains some way down the list of many operators' priorities. Indeed, in the *Working in Fitness 2010* survey, only a quarter of all training was reported as being fully paid-for by employers. The total amount of training undertaken in the previous 12 months had also declined to an average of five days per worker.

Reluctance to invest in training is understandable given that staff could walk out of the door at any moment, taking their skills with them; the fitness industry workforce is admittedly a transient one. However, could that vicious circle – don't invest, because it's potentially money lost – be turned into a virtuous one? It would be a particularly brave decision in these tough economic times, but there's surely a huge commercial opportunity for those operators willing to think longer term and invest in their people. By enhancing our in-house skillset, we will be able to cater effectively for the currently inactive masses who may be driven our way by today's new opportunities; new membership revenue will be there for the taking, but only if our staff are truly able to deal with the increasingly specialist needs of a diversified membership base.

Kate Cracknell, editor
katecracknell@leisuremedia.com



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welcome to HEALTH CLUB MANAGEMENT



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For suppliers of products and services in the health club and spa markets, turn to **p70**



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Dr Hugh Bethell runs the Basingstoke and Alton Cardiac Rehab Centre, which helps heart disease patients return to a full and active life

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write to reply



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



Apprentices – such as those on the TAG scheme – focus on customers' needs

it's the vocational skills that count in our sector

I was interested to read the article on 'Hiring graduates' (*HCM* Nov/Dec 10, p26). As a provider of government-funded apprenticeships, we believe members' gym floor experience can be optimised, operationally and financially, by blending graduates and non-graduates.

While sport science graduates undoubtedly arrive with a high level of technical knowledge, which will prove extremely important as we align with the health sector, apprentices bring 'soft skills' valued by many gym-goers. Graduates often enter the workplace expecting their technical skills to be in constant demand; apprentices focus on serving the customer's needs, whether or not there is a technical demand.

Eighty per cent of gym members look for motivation and reassurance as they strive to achieve fitness goals. In our

experience, those who have taken the vocational training route are typically very strong in this area. Simply having a Level 2 fitness instructor qualification, an essential pre-requisite for gym employment, will not retain or attract members, nor guarantee better customer service.

Naturally our industry will benefit from attracting high academic achievers, but we may be over-investing without optimising our return. The sector needs to attract and retain people who can integrate well with others. The government is backing vocational training and our industry should embrace apprenticeships as a feeder to building enduring gym teams, as we strive to achieve higher standards of instruction and customer service for our users.

nigel wallace
director of training, lifetime

fitness staff are key to driving revenues

Our latest research is particularly relevant to the debate on pay structures (*HCM* Jan 11, p30): we've found that fitness staff can generate up to 600 per cent more income per member than the actions of sales people alone.

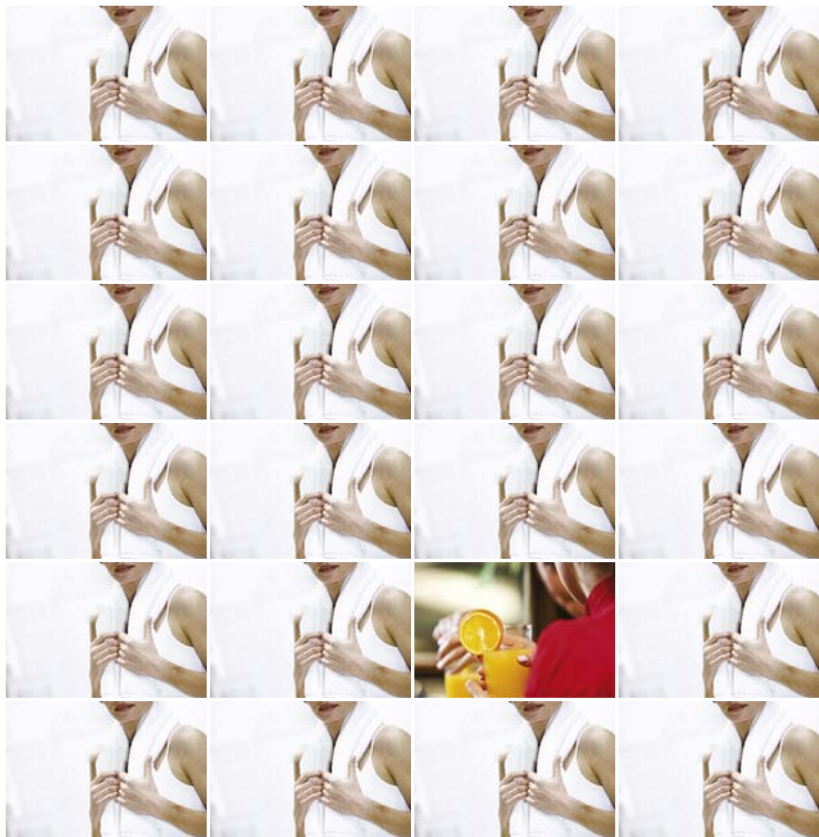
Most businesses focus on selling memberships, assuming that each sale is income-generating. However, in most cases the minimum guaranteed income is just one month (assuming no contract); a range of other factors, not involving sales people, then determine how many more months a member will pay for, their level of secondary spend and how many referrals they will make. All this increases the total yield from each member and thereby the financial success of the club.

In our study, if members received one interaction from fitness staff during their membership, their average length of stay increased to 9.9 months – this compared to four months among those receiving no interaction after the initial sale. Based on a monthly membership of £35, that's a net additional income of £206.50 that can be attributed to fitness staff. Four interactions leads to an even greater length of stay: 27.3 months and net additional income of £815.50. This figure grows exponentially when you include the impact of secondary spend and referrals.

justin mendleton
sales director, the retention people



Member interaction with fitness staff can dramatically boost revenue



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£10m cost for spalding leisure complex scheme

TOM WALKER

A South Holland District Council report has revealed the cost of plans to revamp Spalding's Castle Sports Complex.

According to the report, the estimated cost of renovating the complex will come to £7.2m, rising to £10m once "design and client supervision" costs are considered.

Councillors have now agreed to earmark £20,000 to draw up a detailed business case for the scheme, with the proposed design having been guided by a survey carried out on behalf of the council by Leisure-net.



100 miles of new walking routes will be created

national trust unveils outdoors campaign

TOM WALKER

A new campaign – focusing on walking, cycling and camping – has been launched by the National Trust (NT) in a bid to get more people outdoors.

The scheme will see the trust promote a number of activities available across its sites, with more than 1,000 summer events designed to help kids get closer to nature.

Around 100 miles (161km) of new community walking routes are to be created by the NT, which will focus on walking as its 'main' outdoors activity for 2011.

h2 club planned for london

TOM WALKER

Willmott Dixon Interiors has been appointed to create the first ever H2 Club, specially designed for the growing number of people in London who run or cycle to work.

The first H2 Club will be located in Dufours Place, Soho, and includes 230 secure bicycle parking spaces and 40 showers, allowing members to store bikes and freshen up before going to work. The club will also offer fitness classes and locker hire to offer 'H2 Commuters' the chance to get fit as they travel to work.

The £1.5m development is the brainchild of Piers Slater, the founder of property development company Reef Estates. Slater is planning to develop the concept into a chain across London and believes there is a demand for 20 clubs across the city centre.



The new club will target London commuters who cycle or run to work

Warren Troy, director of Willmott Dixon Interiors, says: "The new H2 club will be the first in the world to offer services tailored for the growing number of people who decide to ride, walk or run to work."

The inaugural H2 club is scheduled to open its doors to the public in April.

three new sites for the gym budget chain

TOM WALKER

Property agent Cushman and Wakefield (CW) has acquired three new locations on behalf of low-cost fitness chain The Gym.

In December, the health club operator confirmed plans to add up to 20 new sites to its portfolio during 2011 after securing a multi-million pound funding package.

The three latest locations that have been secured by CW on behalf of The Gym include a 1,858sq m (20,000sq ft) site in Leeds and a 1,533sq m (16,500sq ft) Bristol property. A 1,626sq m (17,500sq ft) location in Kingston-upon-Thames will also be incorporated into The Gym's expanding UK portfolio of low-cost health clubs.



The Gym: Plans to open 20 new sites during 2011

CW senior surveyor Thomas Rose says: "These sites illustrate the demand for affordable gym membership across the UK. The prime locations we have secured highlight the quality of The Gym's offer and its appeal to major landlords."

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city of london club for fitness first

TOM WALKER

Health club operator Fitness First has unveiled its new £1m club in London's Spitalfields Tower, located in the heart of the city's financial district.

The club – which opened on 3 February – offers a total of 743.2sq m (8,000sq ft) of fitness space with equipment supplied by Technogym and a large studio for group exercise classes.

It will also be one of the first clubs to house Fitness First's new freestyle area concept, allowing members to use a range of equipment – such as ViPR, kettlebells, TRX Power Bags and plyometric platforms – either on their own or with the assistance of a personal trainer.

Fitness First London head of operations Michelle Everett says: "At Spitalfields Tower,



Technogym has supplied equipment to Fitness First's new London club

we will be offering diversity and new concepts to help keep members motivated. The new club will provide an innovative place for people from all walks of life to come and work out with like minded people."

parkwood revamps exeter leisure centre

TOM WALKER

Parkwood Leisure has completed work on the new gym at the Riverside Leisure Centre in Exeter.

The facilities, which have cost around £265,000, have been developed in partnership with Exeter City Council, Jamieson Smith Associates (JSA) and Life Fitness.

The 100-station gym now occupies the area formerly taken up by a bar and function room, offering a much more spacious environment for members to work out.

Parkwood Leisure managed the scheme, delivering a design that increased the existing gym by 30 stations, along with a refurbishment including new floors, ceiling installations, new HVAC installation and a new CV theatre.



Life Fitness and Escape Fitness have provided the gym's new equipment

The construction work at Exeter Leisure Centre was carried out by JSA, with Life Fitness supplying its classic CV and Optima Series resistance equipment. Escape Fitness provided the gym's free weights.

app launched to boost disability sports participation

TOM WALKER

A new service allowing customers to search for disability sports facilities while 'on the move' has been unveiled.

The Leisure Database Company, Splashpath and DisabledGo have teamed up to deliver the

new scheme, which aims to provide more powerful consumer information through Splashpath, the newly launched iPhone app.

Information about where, when and how to take part in sport, combined with full details on access to sites, is provided by the service.

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Gideon Coe
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£5.7m community facility opens in wolverhampton

TOM WALKER

Wolverhampton City Council (WCC) has officially unveiled the new £5.7m Blakenhall Community and Healthy Living Centre.

Funded primarily by All Saints and Blakenhall Community Development, the venue was opened with the help of TV personality Satnam Rana on 17 January.

Facilities include a fitness suite, a young people's gym and a toning suite. Sunbeam Children's Centre will operate the venue's crèche, while a café is scheduled to open in due course. WCC will manage the centre.



The facility aims to provide a 'focus for education'

keiser unveils performance training centre in tetbury

TOM WALKER

The Keiser Performance Training Centre in Tetbury, Gloucestershire, has officially opened to the public.

The new facility, which has been fitted out using the full range of Keiser equipment, is the brainchild of the company's UK managing director, Tim Colston.

According to Colston, the ambition is for the Performance Training Centre to become a focus for education and testing for personal trainers, as well as strength and conditioning coaches.

lifestyle venues for cheshire

PETE HAYMAN

Cheshire East Council (CEC) has revealed that new lifestyle centres are to be built in Crewe and Wilmslow as part of efforts to roll out the concept across the region.

The local authority is looking to overhaul the way it delivers health and wellbeing services to residents, with the venues set to accommodate leisure, library and social care facilities. Under CEC's plans, each lifestyle centre will be able to provide activities such as basketball, aqua-aerobics, badminton, PC tuition and tea dances.

The initial two facilities will be followed by two further new-build centres in Congleton and Macclesfield. All are designed to reduce health inequalities in Cheshire East.

Andrew Knowles, the council's cabinet member with responsibility for health and



The lifestyle centres will include a range of services under one roof

wellbeing, says: "This is a bold, ambitious and forward-thinking plan which will bring leisure centres, libraries and some social care services under one roof. With public health responsibilities coming back to local authorities, these hubs will help to prevent long-term illnesses such as heart disease."

soll unveils abingdon club

PETE HAYMAN

SOLL Leisure Group has unveiled a new-look fitness facility as part of a £215,000 revamp of The Park Club, a private health club in Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire.

The 2,508sq m (27,000sq ft) club incorporates a 465sq m (5,000sq ft) gymnasium, which has been fitted with 120 stations supplied by Life Fitness and Matrix Fitness.

XN Leisure is supplying the leisure management system and the Harlands Group has been chosen to provide the membership and the 'join online' offer.

Other facilities include a 20 x 8m swimming pool, a sauna and steam room, a sports injury clinic and two therapy rooms. The revamp was



SOLL MD Mark Jagers with Milton Park MD James Dipple and SOLL trustee Paul Sambrook

undertaken following an agreement signed in September, which saw SOLL Vale take on a 22-year lease of the club.

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virgin brings in trixter bikes

TOM WALKER

Virgin Active has agreed a deal with Trixter to install the Xdream bike at 36 of its UK health clubs, as well as at clubs in Spain, Portugal and Australia.

The sensors in the bike allow riders to enjoy multiple courses and challenges. The handlebars act as a joystick for the interactive, virtual riding display, allowing users to negotiate corners and obstacles that appear on the screen. The laterally-moving handlebars are also designed to add an upper body and core workout to the riding experience.

Andy Birch, Virgin Active's UK head of product, says: "Xdream adds a fun factor to the gym floor and users get so involved with the virtual ride that they don't realise how hard they've been working until they finish. The interactive



Virgin boss Richard Branson tests out the interactive Trixter bike

multi-player and ghost racing modes, along with the ability for individuals to create profiles to store their rides and unlock new features, mean the Trixter Xdreams can meet expectations."

The deal means that Trixter now has installed its equipment at a total of 165 different sites across the UK.

nhs worcestershire takes on zigzag mats

TOM WALKER

NHS Worcestershire is using ZigZag dance mats as part of its new family weight management programmes.

The new programmes, known as FRESH, have been developed with the dance mats as a key component of the two-hour weekly sessions, attended by children from seven to 13-years-old, as well as their families.

Four part-time healthy weight trainers have been recruited to work with families on the weight management programmes. The trainers will also be taking the mats into schools, working alongside the school nursing teams who are undertaking the measurements of Year 6 children (aged 10-11) for the National Child Measurement Programme.



ZigZag dance mats: An "important part" of motivating youngsters

Sarah Waddington, spokesperson for NHS Worcestershire, says the dance mats have become an "important part" of motivating youngsters to take part in physical activity.

life fitness takes virtual trainer into social media

TOM WALKER

Life Fitness has announced that its Virtual Trainer product has been made Facebook-compatible, with a smartphone app also planned. When a user uploads a workout to the Life Fitness Virtual Trainer, a prompt will

appear to also post the update to that user's Facebook wall, with a link for friends to view details of the workout.

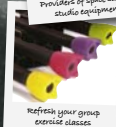
By sharing their results, exercisers can receive motivation and encouragement from friends and 'followers' on social media.

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INDEPENDENT NEWS

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eze fitness to operate eden

TOM WALKER

Health club operator Eze Fitness has acquired a lease for the independently owned and operated Eden Health & Fitness Club in Scarborough, North Yorkshire.

The two-storey, 975sq m (10,500sq ft) club was founded and developed by local entrepreneurs the Millard family, who have now let the property to Eze Fitness. Christie + Co acted on behalf of the family on the deal.

Eden Health becomes the seventh club in the Eze Fitness portfolio and the company's first in Yorkshire, joining existing operations in the north-west and Northern Ireland.

Sean Thornton, managing director of Eze Fitness, says: "We look forward to providing gym-goers in and around Scarborough with a



The family-owned club has become the seventh site in Eze's portfolio

high-quality and competitively-priced facility. Thornton adds that the company is in the process of looking for additional, similarly-sized clubs to acquire in the UK, as part of plans to expand its reach.

expanded gym for vauxhall rec in luton

TOM WALKER

The independently owned Vauxhall Recreation Club in Luton, Bedfordshire, has completed an extension of its gym facilities. The work, which took just two weeks to complete, has nearly doubled the floor space of the free weights area, while a new TRX suspension training system has also been added.

Michael Kell, gym manager, says: "Early feedback tells us that the members enjoy having a much larger space in which to resistance train, with an enhanced range of kit."

Vauxhall Recreation club was established as a private members sports and social club for the employees of Vauxhall Motors in 1931. In 2008, the club purchased its own land



The extension has nearly doubled the floorspace of the freeweights area

from Vauxhall Motors and now operates totally independently. The club's trustees and management committee oversee operations and the non-profit making organisation's revenue is re-invested back into the club.

mere golf and country club expands wellness facility

TOM WALKER

The independently-owned Mere Golf and Country Club near Knutsford in Cheshire has launched a £4m day spa as part of a £15m rebrand of its health and fitness offering. The club will be rebranded as The Mere.

The Spa at The Mere offers seven treatment rooms, a large indoor pool, hammam, Rasul, a hydrotherapy area, an aroma steamroom, a caldarium and a salt infusion room.

Facilities also include a large health and fitness club and an aerobics studio.

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in brief...

fitness first india plans

Fitness First has announced plans to grow its Indian portfolio to 50 clubs over the next five years.

Since arriving in India in 2008, the company has opened four clubs – in Delhi, Gurgaon, Mumbai and Bangalore. More rapid expansion is now reported to be on the radar.

MD of Fitness First India, Vikram Aditya Bhatia, explains: "Unlike the European market, the current size of the health club segment in India is small and disorganised. It therefore offers us huge growth potential."

The company is reported to be looking for "strong partners" able to support its expansion plans via real estate, local operational experience and management support.

vivafit's spanish franchise

Vivafit has opened its first franchise site in Spain, in the town of Lepe, near Huelva.

The third Vivafit location in Spain, the Lepe club is owned by franchisee and businessman Florencio André. It was already at break-even when it opened last month, with 232 memberships sold during pre-sale.

The previous two sites in Spain – located in Madrid and Badajoz – are owned by Vivafit.

dir offers yoga retreat

Barcelona-based health club operator DIR has launched a new yoga retreat off the back of the success of its yoga studio, YogaONE, which opened last year.

Open to members and non-members, the first week-long retreat will take place in the Balearic island of Formentera in May. Aiming to build on the experience of existing DIR yoga members, as well as introducing newcomers to the benefits of the discipline, guests will enjoy four hours of yoga each day, including Vinyasa, Pranayama and meditations sessions.

Provided this initial project is a success, DIR plans to roll out the concept and offer further retreats in the future.

fifth club for france's fitlane

FITLane opened its fifth club at the end of January, on the French Riviera in Cannes La Bocca.

The club offers 1,500sq m of fitness, encompassing a large cardio area, three strength lines, cable training zone, free weights and a multi-functional Personal



FITLane in Cannes La Bocca features primarily Star Trac equipment

Training Zone. There is also a large group exercise studio, a group cycling studio, sauna and changing rooms. All members are on direct debit, paying an average monthly fee of €50.

The new site is equipped primarily by Star Trac, including the HumanSport range of cable equipment, a full cardio line and Spinner bikes. Strength equipment comprises a mix of Star Trac's Impact, Inspiration and Instinct lines, as well as some specialist equipment from Leisure Lines.

This latest club, located on the main artery into Cannes, takes the FITLane group of clubs up to 8,000sq m of fitness provision in the Nice / Cannes area, with more than 14,000 members.

FITLane is now in discussions to open two more facilities in the Nice area.

anytime's australian expansion

Anytime Fitness has opened its latest club in Australia, in the town of Dubbo, New South Wales.

Owned by Mark and Jenny Jones, the 308sq m club follows Anytime's no-frills, convenience-based model, in that there are no pools, sauna or steamroom – just high-quality gym facilities open 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

The club has been equipped by Avanti Fitness, Precor's distribution partner in Australia, and offers Precor CV and resistance equipment, as well as the Cardio Theater entertainment system.

Anytime Fitness plans to open 300+ clubs in Australia and New Zealand over the next five years.



The Anytime Fitness franchise continues to roll out in Australia

talwalkars: budget roll-out across india

Mirroring the growth of the low-cost sector in the UK, Indian operator Talwalkars Better Value Fitness Limited has expanded into the affordable fitness sector with a new budget offering.

The new Talwalkars HiFi (Healthy India, Fit India) concept provides the same premium fitness equipment that members would expect from a full-size club, but within a smaller, more affordable offering.

The first Talwalkars HiFi fitness centre opened in Rajkot, Gujarat, late

last year, closely followed by a second site in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Facilities at both sites include Precor CV equipment plus personal trainers, dietitians and a nutrition centre. The sites are aimed at local people, with membership fees reflecting local living costs and salaries.

Talwalkars has aggressive expansion plans, aiming to open HiFi fitness clubs throughout the emerging cities of India.

The company currently has more than 76 gyms across 39 cities, with more than 100,000 members.



Curves now has two clubs in India and has plans for several hundred more

women-only franchises for india

The Indian market is being targeted by two international women-only fitness franchises: US-based Curves and Portuguese operation Vivafit.

Owned by Q-Mart Retail Ventures, which holds the franchise for the state of Andhra Pradesh, the Curves site opened in Hyderabad at the end of January.

The 256sq m club offers the full Curves-manufactured circuit, including stretch stations, with women aged 25 to 55 the main target market.

There are now two Curves clubs in India – one in Hyderabad and one in Mumbai. Plans are for several hundred new clubs to be rolled out over the next couple of years.

Meanwhile Vivafit last month opened a 250sq m club in the Mega Mall shopping centre in Gurgaon, 20km from Delhi.

The new club – Vivafit's first in India – offers a hydraulic circuit gym using Vivafit equipment imported from Portugal. There's also a group exercise studio for Body Vive, Body Balance and pilates classes, changing rooms and showers. Membership of the club costs 1,800 rupees a month (€26).

The Mega Mall facility is owned by master franchisee Manisha Ahlawat.

Vivafit now plans to open 100 clubs in the Delhi region, starting at the end of 2011, and then aims to expand to other regions from 2013.

equinox launches budget clubs

Top-end US operator Equinox has entered the no-frills market with the opening of its first budget clubs, under the brand name Blink Fitness.

Charging just US\$20 a month, Blink Fitness launched in January with three locations in the New York area: New Jersey, Westchester and Manhattan.

"After the recession hit, we started to look at places like Planet Fitness and saw an opportunity for us to enter this space with a creative expression of what fast, fun and affordable fitness can look like," says Dos Condon, Blink's vice president.

The new clubs offer the same top-of-the-range Precor and Life Fitness cardio and strength equipment as at Equinox. There are also stretching areas, plus functional zones featuring Pavigym flooring, including elements such as ladder drills and hopscootch. The clubs do not, however, offer group fitness classes or personal training.

Blink targets non gym-goers, who might not be willing to pay the usual high membership fees, and those wanting a convenient workout option to complement existing exercise routines.



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new distribution role for cfm's dave wright

TOM WALKER

Dave Wright, CEO of Creative Fitness Marketing, has taken on a new role as global distributor of MYZONE (see p51).

Suunto has taken the decision to focus on the diving and outdoor markets going forward; following this decision, the fitness solution software formerly distributed by Suunto will be developed and distributed exclusively by MYZONE, although it will still be supported by Suunto heart rate belts and watches. MYZONE has also taken on the support of existing clients.



Taylor previously worked at LA Fitness

tag appoints jane taylor as operations manager

TOM WALKER

TAG, the charity that focuses on training disadvantaged 18- to 24-year-old jobseekers for employment, has appointed Jane Taylor as operations manager.

Prior to joining TAG, Taylor played a key role within LA Fitness's business services team. She will be responsible for managing the delivery of the TAG programme.

Commenting on her appointment, Fred Turok, founder and president of TAG, says: "Jane's appointment is crucial to the future success of TAG."

precor adds dearling to UK sales team

TOM WALKER

Following a number of recent promotions, supplier Precor has announced that Andrew Dearling has joined the sales team as regional sales consultant for the Southern region. Prior to joining Precor, Dearling was sales manager of a sports nutrition manufacturer in South Africa and ran his own finance and insurance business.

A new recruit to the equipment supply sector of the fitness industry, Dearling has more than 15 years of sales experience.

life fitness confirms de ven role

TOM WALKER

Fitness equipment supplier Life Fitness has announced that Frank van de Ven will assume the role of vice president for the company's international business unit.

Van de Ven has overseen the company's international business in an interim capacity since April 2010.

In his 15-year career with Life Fitness, van de Ven has held positions on both the business and marketing sides of operations. Prior to his role with the international business unit, van de Ven served as vice president of the company's EMEA region, overseeing it from 2008 to 2010.

He came to Life Fitness as marketing director in 1996, where he supported the Benelux region - Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.



Frank van de Ven is vice president of the international business unit

"Frank has intimate knowledge of the Life Fitness global customer base and will be a strong international leader who will guide our company towards expanding its global footprint," says Chris Clawson, president of Life Fitness.

boa completes sport engagement team

TOM WALKER

The British Olympic Association (BOA) has announced that the line-up of its sports engagement team is now complete, following the appointment of seven new members.

Launched in October, the team is led by head of summer sport engagement Tanya Crook, who is supported by five full-time summer sport engagement managers (SEMs). The full-time SEMs will be based at the BOA, while three other part-time SEMs are based at the headquarters of their respective sports. The sport engagement team includes four Team GB Olympians.

Paul Ford, Mahdi Choudhury and Jude Ford have joined the team as full-time SEMs while



Tanya Crook (above left) and Georgina Harland are on the BOA team

Alison Wyeth, Doug Dailey and Sylvia Armiger will act as sport-specific SEMs. Amy Terriere has moved from the Olympic Operations team to become project manager of summer sports engagement. Other members already include Georgina Harland and Bernie Cotton.

leisure-net solutions strengthens team

TOM WALKER

Leisure-net Solutions has expanded its team. Helen Falco has joined the company to provide administrative support, while Carrie Stroud has joined to take on the role of Quest administrator.

Three existing staff have also new roles. Sarah Forster is now responsible for all Customer Insight elements; Alison Dack is NBS co-ordinator and continues to manage all face-to-face surveys; and Sarah Gilvey is now the main contact for all financial matters.

INDEPENDENT
OPERATOR

PEOPLE PROFILE



martin van assendelft

The founder of the successful M-Point health club in Spijkenisse, Netherlands, dedicates his time to making his one club perfect – and has no plans to expand

For how many years have you worked in the fitness industry?

Around 25 years.

What was your first job in fitness?

A military physical trainer. I joined the Dutch army on national service. During my service, my superiors identified me as an expert for training people, so I ended up staying for two years. My role included organising the winter training for soldiers, which took place in Norway.

Why did you decide to work in fitness?

In my case, it was a natural decision – I see it as my destiny. After leaving the military, I went to Spain and worked as a 'physical entertainer' at a resort. There were tourists wanting to do something active, and I would take them running, surfing – we did a lot of sports.

After returning to the Netherlands, I worked for Life Fitness for around 10 years, including training personal trainers in the use of the heart rate monitor on the CV kit. I also devised training programmes for kids.

When did you set up M-Point?

14 years ago. A friend of mine suggested that, as I worked so hard and had all these ideas, I should work for myself. Initially my reaction was that "talk is cheap", but he promised to help me and bought a large farm, where the club is now based.

What's the emphasis of the club?

We aim to improve people's quality of life, and offer a wide range of activities to achieve that. Alongside the traditional indoor facilities, we do workouts out in the park. We go skiing with members, organise 'wadlopen' (mudflat hiking, a traditional Dutch recreational activity) and even have training sessions. We also have an active social aspect. We throw big parties for up to 400 people.

So what we do is a combination of things. Of course there's a large offering of

traditional fitness, and some people do just want to lose weight and keep shape, but our emphasis is definitely on lifestyle change.

Who is your typical member?

Most members are aged 30+ and are people who have made a choice to join a club that's more than just a traditional gym.

Do you plan to open more clubs?

No. Running a club is hard work and you have to dedicate your life to it. Many of my friends have suggested that I should open a second club and maybe even create a chain, but my mission has always been to be part of the people I help. I want to know them.

For me, knowing the people – the members – is paramount. I make enough money by knowing exactly what they want and doing what I want too. Knowing the people you work with creates loyalty, which we do very well. This is reflected in our retention rate, which is around 83 per cent. This is important to me.

What do you think is the fitness sector's number one weakness?

Using the lowering of prices as a cure for all ills. That's very dangerous. I've found that, if you listen to your people and match their expectations, you will be able to raise your prices. That's what we've been able to do here.

I see my members' bodies as cars, except that your body will have to last for 80 years, so you need a good garage. I see myself as the garage for the bodies. If you install that thought in your members' heads, you won't have to lower your prices.

What are your goals and ambitions?

Caring for people and helping my members live a better life.

What's your favourite life motto?

Do what you like to do. If you're able to do what you enjoy for a living, you will be able to do it for 100 hours a week and still have a smile on your face!

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A responsible approach

Fred Turok, chair of the FIA, has been invited to co-chair the Physical Activity Network in the new Department of Health initiative: 'A Responsibility Deal for Public Health'.

The Responsibility Deal is an understanding between government and business built on shared social responsibility. Turok is co-chairing this network alongside the Minister of State for Health, Simon Burns MP, and will report into a board chaired by Andrew Lansley, the Secretary of State for Health. The FIA thereby forms half of the Secretariat team driving the network forward, working in partnership with members of the Department of Health (DH) physical activity team.

The Responsibility Deal board also includes representatives from organisations such as Unilever UK & Ireland, Diabetes UK, Tesco, Sainsbury's, ASDA, the Local Government Association and The Co-operative. This provides the industry with a powerful network of potential partners with which to develop opportunities to support its members to get 'more people, more active, more often'.

pledging action

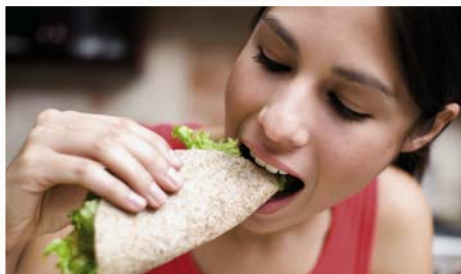
The core principles of the group include improving people's health, promoting and enabling people to adopt a healthier diet, fostering a culture of responsible drinking, encouraging and assisting people to become more physically active and actively supporting the UK workforce towards leading a healthier life.

The initial focus of the Responsibility Deal is to secure 'pledges to act' from organisations involved in its networks, which focus on five key areas: food, alcohol, behaviour change, workplace health and physical activity. While Turok and the Minister of State for Health head up the Physical Activity Network, the other networks are led by Dame Carol Black (workplace wellness), Dr Susan Jebb (food), Jeremy Beadles (alcohol) and Paul Lincoln (behaviour change).

In time, FIA members will be asked to sign up to a core set of collective pledges and make commitments of their own. These collective pledges are based on NICE guidance and have been developed



The FIA has taken on a leading role in a new government initiative. David Stalker, the FIA's executive director, reports



The Responsibility Deal: Encouraging people to get active and eat more healthily

to engage not only organisations from within the physical activity sector, but also organisations from industries such as food, retail and the third sector. Those signing up will be recognised publicly for their efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of the nation, including a presence on an official DH website.

Leverage lies at the heart of the Responsibility Deal: how can we use the vehicle it provides to unlock commitments of responsibility – from the health service, local authorities, corporate partners and major third sector bodies – for the promotion of physical activity? To credibly do this, our industry will need to back up words with action. This will mean demonstrating that we are making a positive impact, over and above our usual levels of activity, on public health.

future focus

While pledges are the initial focus of the Responsibility Deal, the FIA is keen to explore how it will develop going forward. This would involve a permanent network that seeks a sea-change in attitudes towards physical activity.

Turok's ambition over the next 18 months is to encourage 100 partnership-based projects, delivered through a network of 1,000 partners. These may be specific commitments from major national charities to raise funds for their respective causes through the promotion of physical activity, through to professional sporting bodies using match days to engage people in physical activity. These efforts would combine to form a 'big bang' – a notable, sizeable impact on the nation's activity habits.

The project is certainly one that is still in evolution, with an enormous amount of time, energy and resources going into making it a success. From this month, the wider FIA membership will be encouraged to sign a commitment to delivering on the Deal and start indicating the actions and pledges they can make in their local areas.

By elevating physical activity and our industry up the political and policy agenda, we hope to be well placed when the new Public Health Service comes into operation, seen as a valuable partner by all and recognised for the contribution we can make to public health.



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25-26 JUNE 11

alliance trust cateran yomp

This brand new hiking challenge has been launched by ABF The Soldier's Charity which helps to support serving soldiers and their families. Teams of three to six are given 24 hours to complete the 54-mile route in beautiful glens of Perthshire and Angus. The Cateran Trail was originally used by cattle rustlers up until the 17th century, but now offers an unspoilt destination for lovers of the great outdoors. Registration costs £110 and sponsorship is £400. Details: www.soldierscharity.org/yomp



Help soldiers and their families by taking part in the new hike

PHOTOS: CHARITY CHALLENGE



Adventure: Trek and kayak in Brazil

13-23 OCTOBER

brazilian trek and kayak challenge

This exciting open challenge combines trekking in the Serra da Bocaina National Park and kayaking in the Bay of Paraty. The trek through the national park will see you surrounded by lush rainforest. You'll head to the former port of Paraty, containing beautifully preserved colonial architecture. Over the next three days, you will kayak through the bay, which has more than 300 beaches and unforgettable marine sceneries. Finally, on completion of the challenge, you get to explore Rio de Janeiro. Entry costs £575 and minimum sponsorship is set at £3,650. Details: www.charitychallenge.com

30-31 JULY 11

london triathlon

This multi-discipline event, which is set in London's Docklands, is open to beginners but also draws an elite field of triathletes. The main, Olympic-length race comprises a 1.5km swim, 40km cycle and a 10km run. However, there are also shorter distances and youth races taking place throughout the weekend. The Super Sprint, for example, includes a 400m swim, a 10km cycle and a 2.5km run. Entry fees start at £71, although costs vary according to the distance. Details: www.thelondontriathlon.com

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MARCH

25-27 | International Fitness Showcase

Venue Winter Gardens, Blackpool, UK
Summary

Showcases the latest exercise classes, along with workshops and lectures, for fitness instructors and enthusiasts.

Web www.chrysalispromotions.com

30 March-2 April | Russian Fitness Festival

Venue Olympic Stadium, Moscow
Summary

This year's Russian Fitness Festival will include a business conference, fitness convention, aqua convention, trade show, kids' marathon and Russian open fitness aerobic championship.

Web www.fitness-convention.ru

APRIL

8-10 | FitPro Spring Convention

Venue Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leicestershire, UK
Summary

Convention aimed at the professional development of personal trainers, group exercise instructors and health club managers. Includes workshops, lectures and seminars from "some of the industry's biggest names".

Web www.fitpro.com/convention

12-13 | BASES Student Conference

Venue University of Chester, UK
Summary

The British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences' forum for undergraduate and postgraduate students. This year's theme is



The Yoga Show offers workshops catering for all levels of participant



The trade show floor at FIBO includes live demonstrations

'Integrations and Innovations: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Sport and Exercise Science'.

Web www.bases.org.uk

14-17 | FIBO 2011

Venue Essen, Germany
Summary

More than 560 companies – including all the key players – from more than 35 countries showcase products, concepts and solutions for the fitness, wellness and health industries at this fitness convention. The show comprises a variety of distinct areas catering for training equipment, products and services, sports nutrition, wellness and beauty, and medical fitness. The show attracts around 53,000 visitors from 60 countries.

Web www.fibo.de

15-17 | The Yoga Show

Venue Manchester Central, UK
Summary

The inaugural Manchester event for the Yoga Show. It will feature workshops for beginner, intermediate and advanced yoga students, as well as a session for yoga teachers. Lectures on the philosophy of yoga and a children's workshop will be on offer, all for free. There is another show in London in October.

Web www.theyogashow.co.uk

15-17 | Australian Fitness & Health Expo

Venue Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Sydney, Australia
Summary

Exhibition, seminars and training for the Australian fitness industry. The 2010 event attracted more than 240 exhibitors and 15,000 visitors.

Web www.fitnessexpo.com.au



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personal training



In a controversial move last December, US franchise Planet Fitness announced that it was scrapping personal training, positioning this lack of PT as its USP. Is this move madness or inspired?

Personal training at Planet Fitness went out with a bang rather than a whimper in December last year, when a memo to franchisees, making scathing comments about personal training, found its way onto the internet.

In the memo, Planet Fitness CEO Mike Grondahl said that most people used the service just to "rent friends" and that "for us to be selling personal training is a fraud and downright condescending to anyone who can breathe." Although the comments were hyperbolic, and not meant for a worldwide audience, Planet Fitness has confirmed that Grondahl does stand by

the general sentiment. The company has decided that PT really does not have a place in its gyms, and has now said that not offering PT will be its USP.

Grondahl made further inflammatory remarks in the *New York Times* the following month, saying that he is not in the motivation business. "I can't keep you motivated for something you don't want to do," he told reporters.

Grondahl's opinions and actions fly in the face of what the rest of the industry is currently thinking and doing, but might his maverick approach inspire other gyms to do to the same? PT does throw up some challenges – ensuring it's sold in such a way that

members feel they're being offered good service, for example, rather than being badgered to spend more money.

However, by removing the service altogether, is Planet Fitness depriving its members of the choice? If you have a goal to work towards, have the money to spend on PT and – unless someone is watching over you – tend to stop before the final 10 minutes on the treadmill or last set of squats, then personal training can be a valuable service.

Did Planet Fitness simply fail to strike the right balance? Or is PT a flawed concept that could be replaced with something more effective? We ask our panel of experts.

IS PERSONAL TRAINING AN IMPORTANT SERVICE TO OFFER? EMAIL US: HEALTHCLUB@LEISUREMEDIA.COM

michael grondahl
planet fitness • ceo



"Scrapping one-on-one personal training is absolutely the right decision for our company and is much more consistent with who we are.

The vast majority of our customers had zero interest in paying US\$60 an hour for someone to show them how to do sit-ups. Personal training has a culture in clubs of hard sell, which we

were always uncomfortable with. We sometimes heard reports from members complaining about clubs trying to upsell them, so by eliminating PT there's one less headache.

Instead, we're strengthening the staff-led instructional programme. This has always been in place, but we had allowed it to get stale. We're offering more free small group training sessions, making them more interesting and more accessible by not requiring sign-up in advance. This has re-invigorated our staff trainers, who are now being asked for advice by members, which they like. By making some small tweaks, we've already seen a big surge in the programme's popularity, so we believe large-scale changes will triple or quadruple the number of people using these sessions. Logic says this could help with retention: we're offering fitness training for free."

nic jarvis
new wave training • founder



"I think Planet Fitness is wrong – it has responded to members' distaste of being sold to on a continual basis by dropping the service – but I can understand why PT hasn't worked for them. I've seen this 'magnet culture' before, where a distrust builds up between PTs and customers and they repel each other. The mistake comes in the way the service is sold: the PTs see themselves as the experts and think they have something the customers need.

To sell personal training successfully, there needs to be a culture of interaction. This can be built up by PTs chatting to members and giving them advice for free if it's a quick fix. By getting to know members and building trust, the members themselves start to understand personal training, and whether they need to pay for the service.

It's like a pyramid: the bottom level is general interaction, next is consultation/interaction, then comes selective programming, and PT is the top. It must be treated as a peak service, rather than a revenue stream, and sold with the right intent: many members are not achieving their goals and PT is a way of helping them do so. Taking away that service isn't being customer-centric."



PICTURE:ISTOCK.COM/SHVSHOOTR

Does personal training help members get results and boost retention, or does this sort of upselling put people off?

mike hills

the retention people • retention director



I am pleasantly surprised by the news from Planet Fitness: it's refreshing to hear the views expressed.

We've known for many years that a huge part of improving retention is personal contact with staff, but all too often this contact is undermined by the desire to sell personal training. Our consumers are not naive and will see

through us if they receive personal contact only when we want something. I would not consider PT to be a retention strategy; as a paid for service, it will only help the few members who can justify the expense – often already the most committed members.

Clubs need to realise that using staff to communicate effectively with members brings massive financial rewards in terms of improved retention, without having to muddy the waters trying to sell PT. If more clubs recognised this, they might concentrate more on getting the most from their staff teams rather than focusing so heavily on PT. If managed properly, there's room for both: PT can operate alongside this model and provide a useful income stream. However, too often it's introduced at the cost of in-club service and has a negative effect, distracting management and staff and alienating members."

david stalker

fitness industry association • executive director

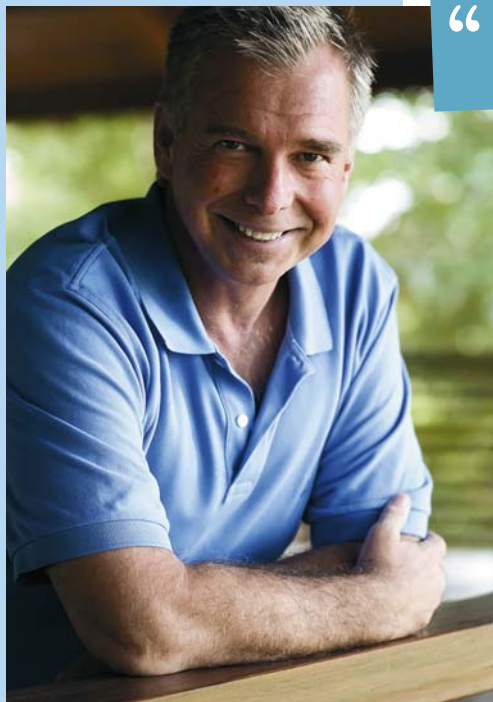


In my opinion, most people who have used personal trainers would agree that they support, or supported, them to achieve their goals through an effective workout based on sound technique and motivation.

Personal training can do two things for a club: increase revenue and, if sold properly, have a huge effect on retention,

because we know members stay if they achieve their goals. I can't think of any clubs where PT is pushed so hard that people are leaving, but I know of endless clubs that have had great success with it, turning around their members' fitness levels and, in turn, the club's bottom line. In fact, many operators in our industry have structured their operations with PT at the heart of things.

Each operator plays to its own strengths and USPs, so it's the right of Planet Fitness to make a decision that's best for its individual business. The small group training sessions sound an exciting aspect of its business model – it appears to be bridging the gap between personal training and exercise classes by making a more intimate, hands-on approach accessible to all members. It's certainly an interesting concept for our industry. We will watch this space to see how they take this forward."



TONY DE LEEDE

The serial entrepreneur and former CEO of Fitness First Australia talks to Kate Cracknell about his latest venture – 30-minute budget concept Fit n Fast

“

T

o be successful in anything – whether it's the latest phone, car or gym chain – there are three words today, and

those words are 'cheaper, better, faster,'" says fitness industry veteran Tony de Leede. "If you can be just one of those things, you will have success. If you can be two – cheaper and faster maybe, or like the iPhone faster and better – then you'll really make waves."

Talking to de Leede, you get the feeling that 'faster' perhaps stands out among those three factors. "In the world we live in today, it's all about doing things quicker. People are impatient. But the fitness industry has never addressed head-on the issue of people claiming not to have time to exercise."

Last year, de Leede therefore launched a new health club concept in Australia – Fit n Fast – which immediately brings together at least two of his three key words, namely 'cheaper' and 'faster'. Of course, there are already numerous 30-minute workout concepts in existence, and even more low-cost clubs, but as de Leede explains: "I've looked everywhere and everyone's doing cheap, but no-one's doing fast at the same time."

Fit n Fast offers membership from A\$6.95 a week and is based around the concept of 'The Quickie' workout – the notion that you don't have to exercise for hours to reap rewards. De Leede explains: "A fitness person will say you should exercise for at least an hour. And if you want to be fit and strong, if you want to be athletic, you probably do. But most people don't actually want to be really fit. They don't want to run a marathon. They just want to be healthy and live longer."

"Eighty-five per cent of people currently choose to do nothing rather than get really fit. We believe something is better than nothing, so we've created a halfway point where you come in and just do 30 minutes two or three times a week. We don't promise you'll lose weight or get very fit. We just say that, by including this in your life, you will be healthier."

"Lowering your resting heart rate can be easily achieved through moderate cardio activity, and your heart is your most important engine. If we can reduce it by 10 beats per minute, then over the next 25 years you'll save 132.4 million beats of your heart and it will probably keep beating a little longer as a result."



STARS AND SAVVIES

He continues: "Fit n Fast members who know what they're doing can still work out on their own, but for those who are new to exercise – and about 50 per cent of our members fall into that category – we deliver pre-packaged, supervised 30-minute sessions. We have the Quickie Express, the Quickie Circuit, the Quickie Cycle, and we've just introduced Quickie Boxing.

"With new exercisers, although they claim not to have time, often it's simply that they're intimidated. All members are not created equal. There are millions of people out there who've never exercised, or who maybe joined a gym 10 years ago and went three times before leaving. We're very focused on these people, and we call them our 'Star' members. We're recruiting older instructors and delivering exercise in bite-sized pieces to try and get these people comfortable. That's really the key.

"Our other members – the experienced gym-goers – we call 'Savvy' members. For them, the choice is simply 'which product do I buy?' But for a Star, the decision is: 'Do I actually buy this product or service, or do I go back to sitting in front of the TV?' When we identify that someone's a Star, they get a

whole different talk, a different tour, a different orientation."

Interestingly then, although de Leede claims that Fit n Fast is a model where service has been cut out, in fact members get a very respectable level of attention even within their budget membership fee: initial orientation where required, plus Quickie Circuits and Quickie Cycle classes (30-minute group cycling sessions) run at set times throughout the day and supervised by an instructor. Personal training and small group training sessions, such as boxing, cost extra.

However, de Leede insists: "I think the whole concept of selling high service is a bit misplaced. If people drop out, everybody says we need to service better. But I don't know what service equates to. Is it a smiling receptionist? Because one day they'll smile and the next day they won't. I think actually what people want is convenience and value.

"I use the analogy of a ski resort. You pay for access to the slopes and then you have three choices: either your friend teaches you how to ski, or you pay for a private lesson, or you pay for a group lesson. Just because you paid to get on the mountain, doesn't mean you're entitled to free instruction.

Selling the sizzle: Fit n Fast sites have "a lot of vibe and energy", while still being comfortable for new exercisers

"In our clubs, what you're paying for is right of entry. You may get an induction upfront, but don't expect to get continuous instruction included in the membership. We don't have an army of instructors on the gym floor. That's the reason why a lot of clubs fail: their staffing costs are too high. In my mind, if you want specific instruction – if you want personalised service – you pay for it. And I think that's where our industry has gone off the tracks a bit."

WORD OF MOUTH

Basic membership at Fit n Fast costs A\$6.95 a week, or A\$9.95 including extras such as reciprocal membership, food and beverage discounts, and a free guest pass for every visit. There's also a quarterly 'membership upkeep fee' of A\$9.95, which guarantees the member's dues will never increase.

Around 60 per cent of members sign up to the higher priced package, with the free guest passes the key driver. ▶

► "For most Star members, it's the most exciting thing they've done for a very long time. So what do you think they talk about to their other Star friends? Savvy people don't even mention it – joining a new club is like moving to another town and finding the next supermarket. But for Star people it's a huge deal, and being able to bring a guest for free is very appealing. They want to share it with their friends. We're getting 100, even 150 guests a day at each club. That's a challenge in itself, but it's also our new business feed – we don't have to market aggressively."

However, in spite of the low fees, the quality of the offering is high, with top-end equipment. It's also packaged in an appealing way. "I believe you have to sell the sizzle, not the steak," says de Leede.

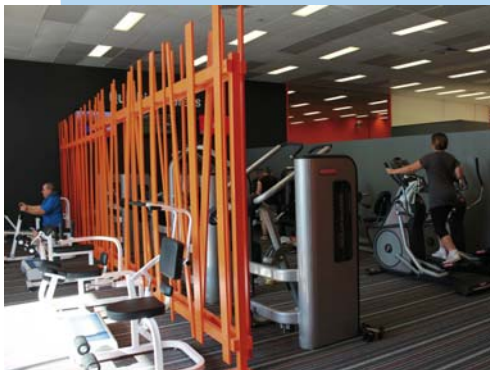
"When you go to a restaurant, you take in the sights and sounds and smells and make a decision about eating there before you actually taste the food. They have to sell the sizzle. Similarly, if you're selling a club, you should put TVs up, put lights up, make it look attractive and then sell the sizzle."

"Exercise is medicine, and you have to make the medicine taste better. If we want to get people into clubs, we have to wrap it up in something that makes it more palatable. So even in our budget clubs, although it's not over the top – it has to be comfortable for our Star members – we have a lot of sizzle, a lot of vibe and energy."

So is Fit n Fast better, as well as cheaper and faster? "When you're cheaper and faster, often by default you're better. However, although 'cheaper and faster' is pretty black and white, 'better' is a subjective term. We're not better in the traditional sense of the word, namely offering more stuff – we don't have pools or saunas, for example – but our clients would say we're better because this is the first time they're not intimidated. So yes, I feel we've addressed all three."

ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

De Leede certainly puts his money where his mouth is. "I've invested a substantial amount of money and I'm personally guaranteeing every lease. In addition to myself and five other partners who have put in about two-thirds of the money, there are another 26



High quality, low cost: In spite of being a budget operation, Fit n Fast sites are equipped with top-end equipment

people who have put in anything from A\$25,000 up to A\$200,000, because they believe in the concept. We're fully funded for the first 15 clubs."

Having opened the first site in June of last year, Fit n Fast is now up to six clubs. De Leede's objective is to grow the chain to 15 clubs by the end of 2011, and "easily 200 clubs" across Australia within 10 to 15 years. Meanwhile David Patchell-Evans – CEO of GoodLife Fitness, Canada's largest health club chain, and a strategic investor in the Fit n Fast business – is looking to introduce the 'fast' format into his own Fit for Less budget clubs.

De Leede has also been approached by a number of parties to expand into territories including Russia and the US, but as he explains: "I won't say definitely no, but at this point in my life, I don't have any desire to take on the world."

Hardly surprising, though, that people are watching his every move – de Leede's CV speaks for itself in terms of experience, entrepreneurial spirit and gut instinct proved right. Leaving school at 15, by the age of 18 he had already set up his first business with his mother – importing clothes and jewellery from Bali and the Philippines – which did "extremely well",

growing rapidly to encompass retail stores among a portfolio of properties owned by de Leede.

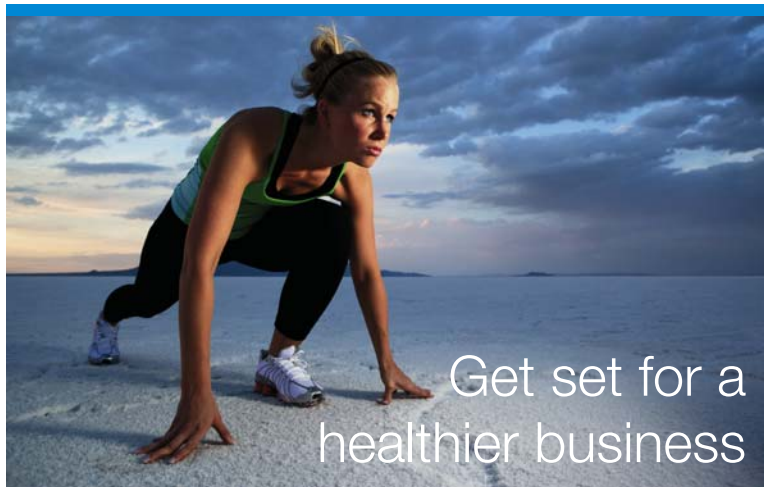
Aged 27, he decided to travel for a year, but only got as far as the US before another business idea came to him – this time in health and fitness. "My friend and I used to work out at a huge club in Sydney, with group exercise classes for maybe 100 people. We didn't think the US had anything as good as that, so we decided to open our own club. It was a huge facility in Atlanta targeting women only, which we called Australian Body Works."

"We thought, if we built a magnificent facility, they would come – but they didn't come. My partner went back to Australia and I got a hard lesson: you have to go out and market yourself. So we did a promotion to find Atlanta's 'most physical woman', with an aerobics competition in conjunction with Olivia Newton-John. It was hugely successful and I built a second, much smaller club – not as glitzy and glamorous, but it really took off. And over the next 20 years, I built the portfolio up to 23 clubs – plus three in the pipeline – which I sold to LA Fitness in the US in 2000."

Among many other entries on his CV, de Leede also owned CardioTheater and was responsible for creating the first ever Olympic Village health club, in Atlanta.

And then came the call, in 2000, from Mike Balfour, who was in Australia to acquire the bankrupt Healthland club chain for Fitness First. Having flown over to help with the acquisition, de Leede was then asked by Balfour to become CEO of Fitness First Australia. "I hadn't worked for someone for well over 30 years, and I told him the only way I'd even be remotely interested was if I

**"EXERCISE IS MEDICINE, AND YOU HAVE TO
MAKE THE MEDICINE TASTE BETTER...
WE HAVE TO MAKE IT MORE PALATABLE"**



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Wellbeing: Gwinganna is a lifestyle retreat and spa spread over 500 acres in the mountains near Australia's Gold Coast

could buy a piece of it," says de Leede. In spite of Fitness First being a public company, a deal was agreed whereby he acquired a 15 per cent stake.

De Leede remained with Fitness First until 2008, leaving just before the collapse of Lehman Brothers and the beginning of the global financial crisis. "I've been very fortunate and my timing has normally been very good with getting in and getting out of things," he observes.

"Over the last couple of years it's flattened out, but Fitness First Australia was always the part of the business that continually laid the golden egg – we had between 18 and 25 per cent year-on-year growth in both revenue and profits in the eight years that I was CEO."

CHANGING LIVES

In addition to Fit n Fast, de Leede also owns the award-winning Gwinganna, a 500-acre lifestyle retreat and spa in the mountains near the Gold Coast (see also *Spa Business* issue 3 07, p76, and the *Spa Business 2011 Handbook*, p42).

"My father died of a heart attack aged 49, and my mother subsequently



changed her life – she started eating properly and exercising. I'm not as disciplined as she was, but I did decide early on that, when I got to her age – which is about now – I wanted to live the way she was living and take care of myself. And I decided I needed to own a retreat where I could practise that.

"We've been open for five years now. There's programmed fitness – offering both the ying, which includes things like meditation and pilates, and the yang, which includes everything from boxing to Body Pump. There are hikes in the hills and lectures on things like stress management and nutrition. All the food's organic and we grow a lot of

it ourselves. And we have a 35-room spa with 60 therapists. People come for all sorts of reasons, from depression to alcohol issues, and we've had huge growth even throughout the financial crisis. It's a truly life-changing place."

So, with all his experience, does de Leede have any advice for the broader fitness industry? "I genuinely believe it's all about cheaper, better, faster – that's the way the world's moving. And I think, to grow the reach of our sector, creating a comfortable environment makes a lot of sense too. People are using lack of time as an excuse, and we have to make in-roads into that by making fitness as quick and comfortable as possible."

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A REFRESHING CHANGE

JO TALBOT TALKS TO THE FOUNDERS OF FRESH
FITNESS, DENMARK'S FIRST LOW-COST CHAIN



Fresh Fitness: Rasmus Ingerslev (above) and Johan Nilsson of SATS (below)



When Fresh Fitness opened its doors in October last year as the "first budget health club in Denmark", it undercut its nearest competitor's prices by almost 50 per cent.

It was a bold yet well researched move by two well-known names: Rasmus Ingerslev, former CEO of fitnessdk, and SATS, Scandinavia's leading health club chain.

"I saw an untapped opportunity in the low-cost segment of the Danish fitness market," says Ingerslev. "Having seen the development of the market in Holland, Germany and the US – a high volume of members in low-cost clubs and very high growth in this segment compared to the mid- and high-end market – it seemed obvious that low-cost clubs would be the next big thing here too."

The project has allowed Ingerslev to progress his ambition "to make more people work out on a regular basis, within a sustainable business model". He adds: "I can see that low-cost clubs attract an inactive audience – price is one of the main reasons why people who want to get fit do not join a health club – and this works well with my ambition to help improve the quality of people's lives through exercise. Having established and run the leading premium club group in Denmark, it was an exciting challenge to enter the opposite end of the market."

During a series of meetings between the SATS group, its Danish owners – TryghedsGruppen – and Ingerslev, all three parties discovered a common passion to develop this market and joined forces. They swiftly opened two Danish clubs simultaneously – both in



The model we have created is inspired by the price point and offering that has proven successful in other markets

Copenhagen – and aim to have six sites open in Denmark by the end of this year, with additional plans to franchise or partner internationally. SATS has also, separately from Ingerslev, opened three Fresh Fitness clubs in Norway.

A MEETING OF MINDS

What the two parties bring to the table are investment on SATS' part and a safe pair of hands in Ingerslev. As Johan Nilsson, strategy and concept director at SATS, explains: "SATS has the ambition to attract as many customers as possible across the market, so we need more than one concept in our portfolio. We were looking for different concepts that would bring in new population groups to SATS and were also actively looking for operators outside our own organisation that would be able to manage such a business.

"Our owners were approached by Rasmus, who was looking for investors in the online venture he had set up. That discussion ended instead with a discussion about a new budget club concept for the Danish market. As we were also working on a new budget concept for Norway at the time, we thought there was great potential to explore synergies and accelerate the pan-Nordic growth plan."

The partnership model, Nilsson says, has several benefits. "The first is that it's vital, when developing a new model, that the new business is not influenced by the existing organisation's view of the market and existing culture, preventing it from being innovative enough. It's been a deliberate strategy by SATS to find a partner outside our existing organisation to operate the new budget chain.

"The second reason is that a joint venture is a type of strategic partnership that gives both parties a clear role, on equal terms, to influence the development of the business.

"The third benefit is that we have found a perfect management team and partner in Denmark. We have contributed with financing and core competencies, while our partners have brought local market knowledge and a network, plus experience in running daily operations."

SIZING UP THE COMPETITION

"In Denmark there are three main players," says Ingerslev, "Fitness World, SATS and fitnessklud, with Fitness World by far the largest with more than 225,000 members – a 40 per cent market share.

"Fresh Fitness is still very new to the market and is the only very low-cost operator. We charge €17 a month,

Space maker: The gym has been designed specifically to create a feeling of space

while our nearest competitor, Fitness World, charges €30 a month.

"The model we've created is inspired by the price point and offering that has proven successful in other markets. I believe what we offer is comparable to those clubs, with adaptations for the Danish market." It's a long term, sustainable pricing strategy, he adds: "Starting too high and having to cut fees later just comes across as an initial rip-off."

WHAT'S ON OFFER

Both Fresh Fitness locations were chosen for high population density: one in central Copenhagen and one in the university suburb of Amager. Both clubs measure 1,300sq m (13,990sq ft) with the capacity for anywhere between 6,500 and 9,000 members – a seemingly huge number but one made possible by clever design and based on Ingerslev's theory that budget members attend the gym less frequently, allowing membership to be higher without overcrowding.

The gyms offer as many stations in their smaller floorspace as many of the higher-



Look no staff: The cycle studio is entirely virtual, using the Wexer Cycling Cinema solution

► end gyms – 100 pieces of CV and strength equipment (split 50:50) including the new NRG strength line from Inter Atletika and certified pre-owned Life Fitness cardio. Then there are two studios and a changing room – and that's it. Simple, efficient, but finished to a high standard. "What we do is really good quality and fully comparable to higher priced clubs," says Ingerslev. "It's what we leave out that makes us budget – we don't have a crèche, steam, sauna, pool, sunbeds or lounge areas."

BUDGETING

What they have also left out is staff. Not only have gym floor staff been minimised to one at any given time, nicknamed 'octopussies' for the amount of jobs they do – sales, basic instruction and cleaning – but the gym has also eliminated the need for class instructors almost completely.

Its cycle studio is entirely virtual – a 40sq m (430sq ft) room equipped with 12 Danish BodyBikes and a Wexer Cycling Cinema solution; Wexer is Ingerslev's other enterprise – an online health club and virtual group exercise provider.

In the other studio, virtual classes include yoga, pilates, dance, body toning, aerobics and stretching, complemented by a few instructor-led classes.

The concept means that 250 classes run in the two studios each week, about 240 of which are virtual. "We have no dead



space during any time of the day, which is unique," says Ingerslev. "It's a great way to offer even more than our competitors even though we are lower priced."

In terms of staff, Fresh Fitness Denmark has 30 employees: 20 gym floor staff with the remainder group exercise instructors and management. With Ingerslev as CEO, there is also a COO, a part-time exercise programme manager and a part-time development and purchasing manager. Both part-timers are investors.

STREAMLINING SERVICE

To further streamline operations, Fresh Fitness uses Gantner Technologies' access/payment control system, which eliminates the need for cash entirely. Members receive a wristband which gives them access to the club and which they also use to make any payments while on-site – there are add-on charges for all

optional extras, including vending machine purchases, live class attendance and even showers. Transactions and membership fees are then charged via direct debit.

Says Ingerslev: "It's easier and cheaper not to handle cash. More importantly, it's safer for our staff not to have cash on-site as they're often on duty alone."

Linked to the Gantner device is the ClubLead Enterprise member administration system provided by eXerp, which allows management to track member behaviour.

SALES AND MARKETING

Pre-sale for the club was advertised via a mix of traditional and new media: TV, radio, newspapers, hand-outs, bus ads, social media and various online channels. However, Fresh Fitness found it difficult to convince people that 'low-cost' did not mean 'low quality'.



Multi-tasking: Fresh Fitness clubs only ever have one staff member on duty at any one time

**It was not easy to reach our numbers.
Our very low price makes people
doubt the quality of the product**

"It was not easy to reach our numbers as the market is very competitive and our very low price makes people doubt the quality of the product," says Ingerslev. Using a well-known Danish TV fitness personality as its ambassador has made up for some of the "uneasiness", he says. But by far the best way of attracting members has been word of mouth. "There is no doubt that, regardless of the effort we put in externally, no single media can compare to word of mouth from happy members. Whatever they tell friends and family about us is far more credible than what we say we are," Ingerslev adds.

Fresh Fitness has also come up with an ingenious ongoing marketing campaign. It offers a higher-priced Black Label membership which allows members to bring friends for free whenever they want. "We consider it more or less a member referral programme. Black Label members bring leads to our clubs and, if these guests really want to work out, it's very likely that they'll join because of our very low price," says Ingerslev.

HOW'S IT GOING?

Fresh Fitness won't reveal membership numbers but Ingerslev says it's "working out fine", though he admits there is currently little to benchmark against.

"It's clear we're attracting people to our clubs who haven't belonged to a gym previously," he says.

His goal, though, is to be both market developer and market leader: "We want to make more people exercise and to be best in class in our segment."

So, assuming there will soon be some competition, how does Fresh Fitness plan to stay ahead? "I believe our strong know-how about our market and the highly experienced team we have sets us apart in both our category and in the industry. Short term we're chosen because we're the lowest priced, with an exceptionally strong value for money offering. Long term we'll be picked because we're best in class."

The team is realistic about the opportunities within Denmark, however, hence the desire for international development. "Denmark only has four cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, and real low-cost clubs will not be sustainable in smaller markets," says Ingerslev. "We believe we have a strong concept – a total package from design, equipment and virtual exercise to marketing and operating standards which would work in more or less all markets."

The story of Fresh Fitness will be a fascinating one to follow.



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BEYOND THE PHYSICAL

It has been estimated that 450 million people worldwide have a mental health problem. Mixed depression and anxiety is the most common and widespread of these conditions, with 9 per cent of people in the UK alone meeting the criteria for diagnosis. Mental health problems peak in middle age, with an estimated 20–25 per cent of 45- to 54-year-olds being affected. It's also estimated that 50 per cent of people who experience one episode of depression will have a repeat episode and that, for one in five sufferers, the condition is chronic.

One of the contributory factors to depression and anxiety is long-term stress and, with an estimated one in three employees stating that they have excessive levels of stress at work, the health and safety executive recommends that employers take a more responsible approach to risk assessment for stress in the workplace.

DEBBIE LAWRENCE AND SARAH BOLITHO
OUTLINE AN 'INCLUSIVE' MENTAL HEALTH
POLICY FOR HEALTH CLUBS IN SUPPORT
OF THE 'TIME4CHANGE' CAMPAIGN

Furthermore, with evidence of depression and suicide rising in response to the recent economic downturn, we are no longer referring to a 'minority' client group. In fact, the World Health Organisation (2001) forecasts that, by 2020, depression will be second only to coronary heart disease as a leading contributor to the global disease burden.

With this in mind, it's arguably a prime time for the active leisure sector to become more proactive and primed to support this important area of overall health and wellbeing.

the case for physical activity

It's suggested that people with mental health conditions are generally less physically active than the rest of the population, and that this in itself may contribute to their condition.

A study in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* indicated that people who "were not active in their leisure time were almost twice as likely to suffer symptoms of depression than the most active individuals. The more people engaged in physical activity in their spare time, the less chance they had of being depressed".

There is a wealth of research evidence to demonstrate the benefits of exercise and activity for those with depression and anxiety. Some of the reported benefits include: a boost to the chemical messengers that enhance emotional and mental wellbeing and contribute to pain relief; a reduction in anxiety and stress; an increase in self-efficacy and confidence; improved mood; a boost to self-esteem; the creation of social networks; and the provision of a distraction from problems.

The Chief Medical Officer's report (2004), *At Least 5 a Week*, concluded

Upskilling: Mental health problems peak in middle age, but courses are available to help staff work with this group

that exercise and physical activity can and should be considered for both its preventative and therapeutic effects for depression and anxiety. This is supported by the recent publication of the results of the Welsh National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS), where it was evidenced that scores for anxiety and depression (measured using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale) improved more than physical scores as a result of exercise (Ward et al, 2010).

Another survey conducted by the mental health charity MIND found that 83 per cent of respondents exercised to help lift mood or reduce stress, and that seven out of 10 gym users with no mental health issues thought their mental wellbeing would suffer if they did not exercise.

barriers to participation

Whether we know it or not, we all know someone who has a mental health condition. With evidence suggesting that one in four people experiences such a condition, we probably do not need to look any further than within our own family or workplace.

Unfortunately, the stigma and discrimination attached to mental health conditions prevent some people from disclosing this fact. Additionally, while



Work it out: One in three people say they suffer excessive stress at work, which can lead to depression

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/SHIRLEY LINTON



PHOTO © GETTY IMAGES/JOHN MITCHELL

“Individuals with mental health conditions still face barriers to inclusion within the leisure market. This may make them harder to reach, engage and retain”

most health clubs have a strong policy for inclusion of individuals with physical disability – thanks to the Inclusive Fitness Initiative and Disability Discrimination Act – individuals with mental health conditions may still face barriers to inclusion within the leisure market. This may make them a potentially harder population to reach, engage and retain.

Some of the potential barriers may include: the stigma and misunderstanding attached to their condition and the issue of mental health; the effects of discrimination – it's estimated that 39 per cent of people with a mental health condition are unemployed, which may mean the actual cost of joining a gym is a barrier for them; their personal fears and vulnerability; the lack of awareness of the importance of activity for mental health; and a lack of qualified and knowledgeable exercise professionals who have the experience to work with this population group.

However, in these challenging economic times, attracting and retaining members – both with and without a

mental health condition – must be a priority for all health clubs.

becoming more inclusive

People with mental health conditions, perhaps more than any other group, will benefit enormously from regular activity and from the social element that's found in health clubs, which adds a positive dimension to the exercise experience.

A key effect of mental ill health is isolation, whether self-induced or through prejudice and stigma; inclusion in a 'normal' exercise environment helps individuals to be part of a 'social' experience without having to be overly social. Health clubs could market their services to attract this client group by aligning with referral schemes and mental health charities.

Jeannie Wyatt-Williams, co-ordinator for the Welsh NERS, says: "Referral to structured exercise programmes offers the advantage of encouraging social inclusion instead of inflicting social isolation. The individual is also empowered to become an active participant in planning their personal care

pathway, which can result in improved adherence to new behaviour patterns."

While traditional classes or gym training sessions may hold less appeal initially, there are other modes of activity that will appeal to this client group. Health clubs could offer bespoke gym, studio and pool sessions – for example, shorter gym or personal training sessions or introductory classes to yoga, step, aqua or pilates that suit reduced energy levels or accommodate the effects of the condition/medication, as this is an important adaptation for this client group.

These shorter introductory sessions may also fit very well with the needs of other client groups, who may have limited time or who prefer a 'little and often', accumulative approach to exercising. It may also be a way of utilising otherwise empty studio times.

Another suggestion would be the inclusion of relaxation and mindfulness sessions. Both static and dynamic relaxation sessions of varying lengths could be included as part of the studio timetable, as could some stress management classes. These ▶

Holistic: Classes that cater for people with mental health problems are also likely to be enjoyed by other club members

- may also be of interest to health clubs' corporate members.

Operators could also offer some outdoor sessions such as walking, cycling and softer versions of the traditional 'boot camp'. Aside from the general feelgood factor of being outdoors, there is evidence to suggest that the body has an immediate positive physiological response to natural views, including reduced blood pressure, reduced muscle tension and reduced heart rate (Bird 2007 – see also *HCM* Sept 07, p30).

It would also be beneficial to offer talks and workshops. Clubs could use health specialists from other services, delivering talks on food to boost mood, for example. There's also scope for some group and talking therapies for managing stress and anxiety – effectively 'personal training for the mind'.

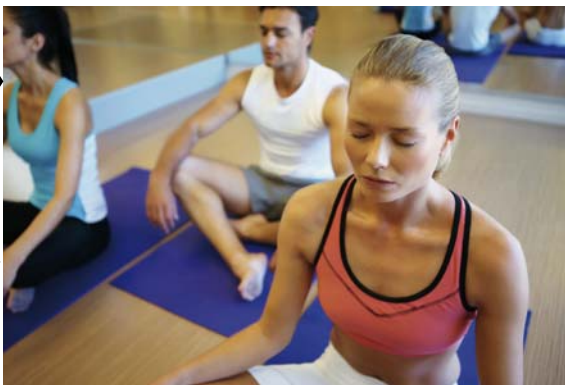
These simple adaptations and additions to the traditional programme provide health clubs with the potential to offer a more holistic service for existing members, as well as to engage with a broader, currently untapped market. It would also reflect a commitment to following national government health initiatives, including the time4change campaign to reduce the stigma of mental health.

ways of working

Working with clients with depression and anxiety may require a move to a more person-centred approach – something which existing members may also enjoy. Encouraging employees to develop and use their 'soft' skills is key, and it's important that all members of your team are trained in mental health awareness so they can provide a welcoming, understanding and inclusive environment for all.

It's also essential to make sure that instructors are qualified to plan and deliver sessions appropriate for clients with depression and anxiety,

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/JOSSUA HODGE PHOTOGRAPHY



“There's scope for group and talking therapies for managing stress – effectively personal training for the mind”

whether in the gym, studio, pool or other environment. The launch of the new Level 4 National Occupational Standards in 2009 has provided exercise professionals with an opportunity to further develop their knowledge and skills to work with clients with a range of health conditions, including mental health.

Fitness Wales is the first provider to offer a Level 4 mental health qualification, which it complements with add-on modules in mental health awareness, client-centred working, stress management, dynamic relaxation, 'mind, mood and meditation', supporting behaviour change and client retention. The course is now set to be taken up by Fitness Northern Ireland.

Other training providers offering mental health-focused qualifications include: YMCAfit, which has a one-day introductory course; Exact Training & Resources, which offers a course focused on post-natal depression;

and Late Life Training, which is developing a course focused on dementia and older adults.

“Central YMCA and YMCAfit have been pioneers in this work over the past 10 years, developing training programmes and equipping exercise instructors and mental health professionals with the skills, knowledge and confidence to work in this area,” says Robin Gargrave, director of innovation and development at Central YMCA.

Victoria Smith, development officer (fitness) at SkillsActive, says: “We're putting in place a National Occupational Standard in designing, agreeing and adapting a physical activity programme for adults with mental health problems, a REPs mental health Level 4 Specialist Exercise Instructor category and a Level 4 course approval process that enables specialist training providers, such as Fitness Wales, to gain REPs recognition for their specialist courses.”

the opportunity

In these strained economic times, offering a broader and more varied range of activity opportunities will improve inclusiveness, attract new client groups and retain existing members. It's a cost-effective and socially responsible direction for health clubs to adopt.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Debbie Lawrence and Sarah Bolitho are published authors who have developed the Level 4 programme 'Physical activity for persons with mental health conditions' for Fitness Wales. Their book, *Exercising your way to Health: Stress*, is available this month, with a second book – *The Complete Guide to Physical Activity for Persons with Mental Health Conditions* – available in August. enquiries@fitnesswales.co.uk

Healing Hands

Clinical pilates is the use of pilates by rehabilitation professionals. Jo Talbot finds out how health clubs are embracing the practice



At work: Leslie Abrahams at Bodies Under Construction at the Riverside Health & Racquets Club in Chiswick

Clinical pilates is the coming together of pilates with rehab – rehab with added ‘oomph’, you might say. It’s carried out by clinical practitioners – physiotherapists, osteopaths and chiropractors – who have a postgraduate qualification in clinical pilates, a course which teaches modified pilates exercises, both matwork and equipment-based, that are designed specifically to deal with injuries and rehabilitation. It’s come about thanks to a growing body of scientific evidence and general acceptance that pilates is a valuable tool in the rehab kit.

David Canevaro, a clinical pilates trainer, explains: “Clinical pilates allows the rehabilitation practitioner to build on their wide range of assessment and diagnostic skills, adding a new dimension by incorporating a dynamic assessment of the patient’s injuries to help diagnose and treat problems more accurately.”

Until now, clinical pilates has mainly been offered out of specialist studios, clinics and hospitals, but health clubs with a wellness focus are beginning to offer this integrated service. While the health club receives another string to its multi-practitioner bow, the pilates studios receive a captive audience, and patients are able to be treated in a positive and healthy environment.

Glenn Withers, founder of the Australian Physiotherapy and Pilates Institute (APPI) – one of the main clinical pilates training bodies, which has a base in London – says positioning clinical pilates within the health club environment is key to its goals: “Key to the success of the APPI method is that it is available to, and achievable by, ▶

HOW IT WORKS

The APPI bases its teaching on a five-stage rehabilitation model. Firstly, the client is taught to engage the ‘cylinder of stability’. This is the group of muscles that together form a natural ‘corset’ of support for the back. These muscles are the multifidus, transversus abdominus, pelvic floor and diaphragm. According to the

APPI, many studies have shown that lower back pain and its recurrence can be reduced by as much as 50 per cent with specific re-training of this area.

Says Glenn Withers, the APPI’s founder: “Once this initial contraction is achieved, the client is then taught a series of exercises that progress slowly to challenge his or her ability to maintain a neutral spine while replicating the forces on it that occur in

everyday movements. The final stage is functional re-training, to ensure carry-over into everyday activity, or specific to a sport or task.”

The complete repertoire of APPI pilates exercises has over 500 movements. They focus on improving spinal mobility, flexibility of the key trunk and lower limb muscles groups, plus body and postural awareness.

APPI: www.ausphysio.com



Gently does it: Pilates can be another tool in a rehabilitation professional's toolbox

► everyone. No longer is it just for the wealthy, dancers or elite sporting clubs. It is now delivered in all aspects of life, from the NHS to private practice, from gyms to elite sport – such as the English National Ballet, Premiership football clubs up and down the country and even Cirque De Soleil.

"The APPI method can link in with gymnasia as a great service for all."

Nuffield Health

Nuffield has 30 hospitals nationwide, as well as 50 fitness and wellbeing centres, and aims to have physiotherapists working out of all those sites.

Bethan Gwynn is a physiotherapist based in Warwick, who splits her time between the local Nuffield Fitness and Wellbeing health club and its hospital – Nuffield Health Warwickshire Hospital. She trained in clinical pilates through the APPI in London four years ago.

"Pilates ties in well with the current NICE [National Institute of Clinical Excellence] clinical guidelines for back pain," she says. "The guidelines state that both manual therapy and structured exercise programmes, along with acupuncture, are beneficial – and pilates fits in to the category of structured exercise very nicely. Using it means

Pilates ties in well with the current NICE clinical guidelines for back pain, says Bethan Gwynn, physiotherapist at Nuffield Health

that we, as physios, are able to offer a combination of both forms of treatment – I deliver pilates exercises as part of my physio or rehab; I don't separate them."

In the health club, the clinical pilates sessions are operated separately from the gym programme – the clinic sits in the centre's medical wing, rather than in the fitness centre, among professionals including nutritionists, GPs and physiologists, and clients can self-refer or be referred by a medical practitioner.

Gwynn finds a gym setting has benefits over the hospital environment for her clients: "In the gym you get the overwhelming feeling of being healthy and well, whereas in the hospital there can be a sense of being unwell. The gym is good psychologically for our patients."

A benefit to the gym of having practitioners like Gwynn on-site is free advice. "We have more understanding of the background medical issues gym members may have – back pain,

chronic conditions or post-surgery considerations," she explains. "We know how to modify exercises for them and we work closely with the gym instructors on anything they need help with."

Bodies Under Construction

Bodies Under Construction Physiotherapy and Pilates is located within The Riverside Health & Racquets Club in Chiswick, London. The Balanced Body-equipped pilates studio is upstairs, within the gym, and the physiotherapy treatment rooms are downstairs. However, the two clinics operate as one multi-disciplinary service. All the physiotherapists are clinical pilates practitioners, some trained with Polestar, the other main training body, and some with the APPI. And while the pilates studio offers standard fitness pilates classes, the physiotherapists also use it for their one-to-one and group clinical pilates sessions. ►

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- "We operate as one integrated, multi-disciplinary clinic, where clients can choose to either work with a physiotherapist who is pilates trained or work with a fitness-based pilates instructor for general exercise," says co-owner and physiotherapist Leslie Abrahams, who has been running the practice with his business partner Ellen Ernstzen for three years.

Abrahams, who is a master trainer and presenter of the APPI pilates method, continues: "We started out as two separate practices, but discovered that they work better when run together. There is a certain amount of success with manual treatments – mobilisations, massage and so on – but if you combine this with exercise-based rehab such as clinical pilates, we find it speeds up the recovery in most cases.

"We're able to get patients moving at a very low level and then build them up gradually; the pilates equipment is spring-loaded so it eases the pressure of movement and you can adjust the load according to their control, pain and ability. "Because it can be very gentle, pilates also helps with the fear of movement that many people with pain have. And using movement gives us a tool to check progress, by objectively measuring range of movement from session to session."

The best thing about working within a health club, Abraham says, is that it offers a captive audience of people who are interested in wellness. It also means they are able to work with people at a higher level of fitness, such as athletes – diagnosing movement problems and assisting with rehabilitation.

Bodies Under Construction is good for the health club, too: "People make a choice about joining a health club based on the services it provides. Having this service gives the impression that the club is concerned with overall wellness."

The Third Space

The Third Space, based in Soho in London, offers pilates as a method of

"There is a certain amount of success with manual treatments, but adding clinical pilates speeds up recovery"

TRAINING IN CLINICAL PILATES

The two main UK trainers in clinical pilates are Polestar and The Australian Physiotherapy & Pilates Institute (APPI).

The APPI method, developed 10 years ago, integrates the relevant research around pain, orthopaedics, women's health and sports injuries into a pilates-based approach.

The APPI method delivers a five-stage rehabilitation process that means it can be used with any client, from an acute back pain sufferer right through to elite sportspeople.

It teaches a full matwork and full equipment curriculum, in addition to over 10 specialist CPD courses, to physiotherapists and allied health professionals, and now offers its training to the fitness industry through its CPD programme.

The APPI says it is working hard to consolidate its links with the fitness world, to enable operators to deliver an integrated healthcare model.

Polestar Pilates UK calls its clinical training Pilates for Rehabilitation. Its teaching applies current research and practice in orthopaedics, sports

rehabilitation in combination with rehabilitation professionals. The independent health club operator offers its pilates within its medical centre, Third Space Medicine. It's a hub of wellness practitioners, attached to but separate from the gym, which offers many services including a GP, physiotherapists and an osteopath, as well as podiatry, massage, reflexology and acupuncture. Here, the physiotherapists, osteopath and pilates instructors work together to combine their skills – clients are referred between the different practices.

"The physio or osteopath will help correct an injury, but the problem will keep recurring if the client doesn't continue to strengthen and re-align their body so it starts working for them, rather than against them," says studio manager Alyssa Kyriakidis. "Pilates takes them beyond their initial treatment, and

Pilates for rehab: Fitness professionals can take CPD courses with the APPI to learn the basics

medicine and movement science to the original principles of pilates, in order to deal with injuries and rehab.

The course structure begins with the fundamentals for dealing with early stage rehab through to high-level patients. Its curriculum teaches applications for the full range of pilates kit, including the reformer, trapeze table, combo chair, ladder barrel and wall unit. It also incorporates mat exercises and small props such as wall door springs, rotating disks, balance boards, foam rollers and gym balls.

Polestar: www.polestarpilates.co.uk

educates the client in how to prevent future injury and discomfort.

"Our pilates instructors work very closely with the physios and osteopath in the medical centre and they all have plenty of experience in treating clients with injuries and issues ranging from scoliosis to shoulder and knee injuries, post-surgery and much more."

Being located within a health club setting is extremely beneficial, she says, because of cross-referral. Personal trainers recommend their clients to the pilates studio, while pilates clients, once well enough, may then choose to use the gym to continue their return to fitness, all the while having their rehabilitation practitioners on-hand for guidance should they need it. "The Third Space provides a lot of support for the client – they can receive complete, integrated care here, which is great for both the client and for us," she adds.

“STOTT PILATES® changed my life”

– Karen, fitness enthusiast

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FINGER ON THE PULSE

SHOULD FITNESS TESTING BE A MORE ONGOING PROCESS IN OUR GYMS —
AND IF SO, HOW? KATE CRACKNELL ASKS THE EXPERTS FOR THEIR THOUGHTS



Fitness testing is often used as part of a member's induction – a way to set the scene and work out what his or her fitness goals should be. But are we tracking our members' progress properly after that, adjusting their goals if need be, or are we simply setting them on a path without ever checking if they've reached their destination?

Even exercise management systems often report only the degree to which a member has completed his or her pre-set workout, rather than how well they're completing each exercise or how their physiology is changing as a result.

Given how vital actually seeing results can be to motivation levels, should we be doing more to integrate ongoing fitness testing into the gym experience? After all, although a member may well feel more energised thanks to their workout, or even know deep down that they're benefiting their long-term health by exercising, what could be more motivating than regular feedback and updates that show without question their improvements in strength, percentage body fat, VO_2 max or resting heart rate?

We ask our panel of experts for their thoughts on how to make fitness testing ongoing, interactive and motivational.

DAVID CUMMIN SALES DIRECTOR TELEHEALTH SOLUTIONS LTD



We need to use whatever tools we have at our disposal to encourage members to take control of their own fitness regime, yet the first thing we do is put up a huge barrier by telling them to make an appointment. This is vital for a first assessment; testing bloods, for example will always need to be supervised in a club environment. However, self-monitoring should subsequently be the way to go.

Technology such as the CardioPod – a self-service iPad-like device – has been developed to manage a multitude of

tests ranging from unsupervised (vital signs, BMI, pulse oximetry, Spirometry, carbon monoxide, GPPAQ, AUDIT-C, Qrisk2, Framingham) to fully supervised top-to-toe assessments.

The wide range of tests possible without supervision empowers members to monitor themselves at a time that suits them, without the need to engage an instructor, thereby impacting positively on staffing resources. The results are also presented in a dynamic and striking way, ensuring the member is not only informed but also motivated.

For many members, there's also the fear of being judged by the instructor who's testing them. This can be very demotivating and lead to a loss of self-confidence. Using self-monitoring technology, a member can view his or her own progress without this fear. It's also generally recognised that people tend to be more truthful when answering questions unsupervised on a touch-screen; they don't feel compelled to enter a value that will make the instructor think better of them, and so results will be more accurate.



The CardioPod: Allows members to self-assess

MIKE DYOS MD/CEO FITECH



A fitness assessment provides the starting point from which a member's progress can be charted and evaluated.

The assessment process itself, and the tools used, are an important feature of the membership package. Clubs that offer advanced, comprehensive assessments will stand out; if these are used as part of an ongoing programme, clubs will also see a higher percentage of members

Clubs that offer advanced, comprehensive assessments will stand out



Suunto/MYZONE feeds back results to the member after each workout, so they can keep track of their progress

achieving their goals, leading to improved member retention.

Fitness has a direct relationship with health and wellness, impacting on lifestyle-associated conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and even stress. For almost 30 years, Fitech has been developing and expanding the role of fitness assessments by offering more tests and a detailed personal report. Our work has brought the health and fitness world closer to the general health industry, which is a strong and growing market.

Today, many health clubs offer very comprehensive fitness and wellness checks using Fitech, including on-site cholesterol and diabetes tests. Primary healthcare is becoming more and more important to the health of the nation, and we believe that health clubs should play a crucial role.

Both government and corporations are investing millions of pounds every year in employee health initiatives. With 22 million working adults in the UK, the evolution of health clubs into wellness centres – which offer broader assessment services and interventions – will not only provide an invaluable public service but also a lot of new members.

We know that achieving results means happier members and increased retention

STEVE NEWELL
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
MANAGER
SUUNTO/MYZONE FITNESS



The health club market has seen some changes over the years, but there's one fundamental reason why people continue to join clubs, and that's to get results. We know that achieving this means happier members and increased retention.

Key to this process is helping members to understand where they are to start with, and this requires measurable data.

Historically, fitness tests were a time-consuming process with your instructor. Technology has changed to speed up this process, but we've seen a simultaneous shift towards low-staffed gyms where paying extra for personal training is often the only way to get this sort of monitoring – something I would consider to be an essential service. So what happens to members who can't afford PT? How often are they assessed, and what happens in between?

MYZONE Fitness – now an official partner of Suunto – offers members an easy way to benchmark where they are to begin with, and to assess themselves each time they visit the club via an online platform and heart rate-based training.

Via MYZONE checkpoints, members register their heart rate belt and key biometric data such as resting heart rate, blood pressure, body weight and fat percentage – their 'starting point'. They then wear a Suunto heart rate belt and/or M Series heart rate monitor whenever they exercise, both in and outside of the gym. This monitors their heart rate in real time, as well as allowing for measurements such as BMI and a one-mile walk test in line with ACSM guidelines, with data uploaded wirelessly and automatically to the MYZONE kiosk whenever they visit the club.

Members are then sent a summary of each workout direct to their iPhone/email account, helping them to keep track of the results they're achieving on an ongoing basis.

LIZ SHENTON
PERFORMANCE &
TRAINING MANAGER
POLAR ELECTRO UK



"If a member knows their heart rate monitor is helping them realise their goals, they are likely to keep training," says Shenton



By testing fitness regularly, using heart rate monitors to measure and track ongoing improvements, we've noticed that members see improvements and stay motivated, while personal trainers receive accurate feedback to ensure training stays on the right track.

The Polar Own Index aerobic fitness test only takes five minutes during rest, making it ideal for clubs to use with new members at induction as well as on an ongoing basis. It measures cardiovascular fitness by assessing the maximum oxygen uptake ($\text{VO}_2 \text{ max}$), using personal information stored on the heart rate monitor to determine a unique VO_2

score for each individual. A graph shows fitness level at the time of each test, allowing users to track improvements.

Meanwhile, Polar's EnergyPointer provides instant feedback to show if you're burning fat or losing weight, ultimately helping users train at the right intensity to achieve their goals. It calculates the point at which the main effect of training is moving from fat-burning towards fitness improvement, using personal information to ensure

accuracy. This can help personal trainers change the way people train, and ensures maximum benefit is achieved for users in a time-efficient manner.

In our experience, if a member knows their heart rate monitor is providing real feedback and helping them realise their goals, they are likely to keep training.

STEVE RAVEN,
CEO
FITNESSASSIST



Fitness monitoring is the measuring of key fitness parameters and subsequent monitoring of change/improvements at regular intervals, and this is what gyms wishing to offer such a service should provide.

The parameters depend largely on what the member wants to achieve, but broadly speaking, they are covered by the following:

- Cardio-pulmonary efficiency testing (aerobic endurance), which can be measured directly by the Cosmed Fitmate PRO gas analyser.
- Flexibility or mobility, measured by use of a goniometer or one of our custom-designed sit and reach box developments, especially the version which adapts to the subject's arm and leg length.
- Speed, and more importantly acceleration, which can be measured using our Brower Timing gates.
- Power generated, measured using the Just Jump system, which electronically measures the height of a standing jump and therefore the power to weight ratio.
- Strength, measured either statically – using back and leg or hand-grip dynamometers – or dynamically using FitnessASSIST's T-force system, which graphs the acceleration of full-range of weight lifting exercises.



Hi-tech: fitnessASSIST offers a range of equipment that gyms can use to run fitness assessments

research round-up

New research suggests that a financial incentive encourages weight-loss – but possibly not in the long-term. We find out more

reaping rewards?

The idea of giving members rewards to keep fit or reach weight goals is a matter of ongoing debate (see *HCM* Sept 09, p30). Now new research* suggests that people who are given financial incentives to lose weight back are more successful than those who just go on a diet with no sign of a reward – but they may not keep off the weight once the offer of money has gone.

The research was carried out at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US. It follows a previous 16-week study which looked at monetary rewards for weight-loss, in which subjects put a substantial amount of weight back on after the intervention finished. In this new study, the financial incentive was lengthened to eight months to see if a longer programme would help in losing weight and not regaining it. This study also incorporated a 'loss aversion' tactic of actually taking participants' money away if they didn't stick to the programme.

the study

The eight-month study comprised a six-month weight-loss stage where the goal was to shed 11lb a week. This was followed by a two-month maintenance stage. All 66 participants were obese, with BMIs of 30–40, and were aged between 30 and 70.

There were three randomly assigned groups. The first took part in a weight-monitoring programme, with monthly weigh-ins and advice and strategies on how to lose weight. The second (DC1) participated in the same programme, but paid US\$3 a day into a fund, which was matched by researchers. The subjects reported their weight each day by text and, if they reached their target by the end of the month, they got their money back,



Financial incentives can encourage people to lose weight – but what happens next?

plus the researchers' money. Those who didn't meet the target lost their money.

The third group (DC2) followed the same programme as those in DC1, but were notified that the two-month final stage was for weight-loss maintenance (none of the others knew this) – the aim being to see if people made less effort if they thought they'd passed the first stage.

Weight was measured at the end of the eight-month study, then nine months later.

the results

At eight months there was no difference in weight loss between the DC1 and DC2 groups, so these results were pooled together. Subjects in the DC (financial incentive) groups lost 8.7lbs on average – significantly more than the control group, where the average loss was only 1.17lbs.

However, nine months after the study had ended, nearly all subjects had regained the weight they lost, with no great difference in weight loss between groups. Those in the financial incentive groups lost an average of 1.2lbs, while the control group averaged 0.27lbs.

While the study was well conducted, the researchers recognise some limitations – notably that subjects were mostly men and that the study could not be a 'blind' one as people knew they were receiving the financial incentive. In addition, only 65 per cent of subjects returned for the nine-month follow up.

Using money to encourage weight-loss is effective, it seems, but weight maintenance once the financial incentive is taken away is more tricky; further investigation of weight maintenance strategies would be a valuable next step.

* John LK, et al. Financial Incentives for Extended Weight Loss: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. 20 Jan 2011.

Dr Hugh Bethell



Dr Hugh Bethell took cardiac rehabilitation to a new level with a groundbreaking facility, the Basingstoke and Alton Cardiac Rehab Centre, which for more than 30 years has been helping heart disease patients return to a full and active life. He talks to Kath Hudson

What is the Basingstoke and Alton Cardiac Rehab Centre?

We have two gyms, an exercise testing room and a lecture theatre and we treat over 500 heart disease patients a year, giving them a 12-week exercise programme.

Patients admitted to the Basingstoke coronary care unit are visited before discharge and invited to join the programme. Local patients who are treated by heart surgery or angioplasty are also automatically recruited. In addition, we get referrals from GPs and other hospital consultants from further afield.

At the end of the programme, they can either stay with us or move on to exercise elsewhere. We also offer education on issues such as nutrition, risk factors, stress management and relaxation – the programme has become much more comprehensive as time has gone on.

We built the current centre in 1997 after outgrowing our original sports centre facility.

What sort of fitness programme do you prescribe?

It's natural to feel wary after having a heart attack, and we want to give people back their confidence to exercise. We give customers an initial consultation, including history and examination, followed by a treadmill exercise test before prescribing a programme focused on their needs. They are asked to do three sessions a week: two in the centre under supervision and one at home. At 10 to 12 weeks, they are re-tested and, provided they have achieved a certain level of fitness, can then go on to exercise unsupervised.

What was the inspiration for the centre?

I qualified as a doctor in 1966 and worked in hospitals for eight years. During that time, I worked as a cardiac registrar at Charing Cross hospital in London with Peter Nixon, the first British cardiologist to seriously take on-board the idea

that exercise could aid the recovery from heart disease. Until then, people considered their active life over after a heart attack.

In 1974, I moved into general practice, which was when I approached a local sports centre about integrating the treatment of heart disease patients into the exercising population. In 1976, we opened the first cardiac rehab centre in a community sports centre. In the first couple of years, we only had 20 or 30 patients, but then in 1978 I approached the Basingstoke District Hospital and it quickly gathered momentum.

What challenges did you face in setting the centre up?

Remarkably few to be honest. Both the sports centre and the cardiologist at the hospital were very open-minded and supportive of the idea, so there was no resistance. The main problem over the years has been to get adequate funding.

So how is it funded?

Initially we ran our services voluntarily, and the sports centre charged a small fee, but as time went on we applied to the hospital for payment for staff costs. I think the average cost to the hospital for each person is now around £300.

Much of the running costs are paid by the Basingstoke & Alton Cardiac Rehabilitation Charity, which was set up in 1992 – users are only charged a minimal cost of around £1.50 per session. We raise £200,000 a year to run the centre and get half of this back from graduates of the programme, who stay and exercise with us after they have finished the supervised sessions.

What's your day-to-day role at the centre?

I'm now retired, so I don't have a paid role, but I run the research programme and am the overall lead for the Staywell Programme. I'm also secretary to the trustees who oversee the charity.

What is the Staywell Programme?

This is designed to catch people who are at risk before they have a heart attack – for example, those with diabetes or high

In 2000, no more than 30 per cent of eligible patients in the UK had access to cardiac rehabilitation programmes



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/©ZENON

Plugging a gap: Gyms could cater for those graduating from cardiac rehab schemes

blood pressure. Despite the fact that we are getting more unhealthy as a nation, people are now suffering fewer heart attacks thanks to medication. However, physical fitness is still the best way to reduce heart disease.

Staywell candidates are patients referred by their GPs, and are deemed to be at high risk of developing coronary disease. After a full assessment, including exercise testing, they go through a 10-week programme of graduated exercise and education, very similar to that used for cardiac patients. At the end of the course, the assessment is repeated to measure effectiveness.

What qualifications do staff need?

Our instructors need to be qualified according to the standards set out by the British Association for Cardiac Rehabilitation. We also have nurses and physios on-site.

How do you involve spouses and families?

We used to encourage spouses to join in the programme, but the scheme is too overloaded now so we've had to stop that. We do encourage them to join us for the lectures we run in nutrition, stress management and relaxation, though, and also encourage them to join the post-graduate exercise.

Would you like to see more facilities like this?

When we started there were very few, but now every hospital with cardiac patients runs a cardiac rehabilitation programme. However, they are mostly inadequate, as they can only deal

with a small percentage of eligible patients. We used to run the national audit and, in 2000, no more than 30 per cent of eligible patients in the UK had access to cardiac rehab programmes.

The ideal place to run a cardiac rehab programme is not in the hospital – as is often done – but in a sports centre. There are relatively few free-standing cardiac rehab facilities and I like the idea of having them in community exercise facilities. That's what I would like to see more of.

How can the fitness industry get involved?

The fitness industry has a big role to play. There's currently not good follow-up for people who have been through cardiac rehab programmes and the fitness industry could plug that gap. The instructors will need to be trained though, and local cardiac rehab co-ordinators should be informed so that they can refer graduates on once they've finished their supervised programmes.

What are the risks in running cardiac rehab programmes?

There is the risk of cardiac arrest, but I can only think of about six people who had cardiac arrests during 30 years and there weren't any deaths. However, you do have to make sure you have qualified staff and defibrillators on-site.

What has been the high point of your career?

I chaired the committee that set up the British Association of Cardiac Rehabilitation. It's now a very good organisation indeed and does a lot of very good work.

REALITY CHECK

The reality of being a personal trainer often fails to live up to the dreams. Kath Hudson looks at why so many drop out, and how to stem the tide

Top personal trainers can earn £40,000 or £50,000 a year, with hourly sessions commanding a high price tag. It's no wonder that many hopefuls sign up for courses excited about their future earning potential.

Almost half of the 28,500 industry professionals registered with REPs are personal trainers (PTs), with growing numbers achieving Level 3. But unfortunately the drop-out rate following qualification is high, with many personal trainers leaving after just a few months. Wages for in-house PTs aren't always high enough for those with financial commitments like a mortgage or children – which many PTs do, as it often appeals to older candidates and those who've decided on career changes – while those who take the self-employed route can find they don't have enough clients to make a viable living.

Nic Jarvis, founder of New Wave Training, says many candidates aren't sufficiently rounded when they enter the industry. "Many small businesses fail because they are run by a technician," he explains. "Someone who likes dressmaking opens a boutique, for example, or someone who likes fitness becomes a personal trainer. But being a technician isn't enough. To be in business, you need that entrepreneurial element which gives you the flair, vision and energy to promote yourself. You also

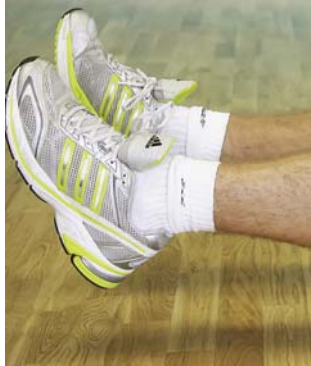
need the management expertise to make sure everything is structured properly."

business savvy

Many training providers we spoke to agree that PTs often fail to understand that they are setting themselves up in business; some even report inadequate understanding of the PT product to be able to sell it effectively. "Many PTs think they're just selling an hour of their time, when actually what they're trying to sell is a different way of life," says Vicky Mahony, a manager at FitPro and herself an experienced personal trainer.

FitPro runs an online course, Steps to Success, aimed at helping personal trainers survive the first 90 days, covering aspects such as understanding the role of a personal trainer in the gym environment, communication skills, interacting with members, business planning and personal goal setting. Future Fit has also introduced a marketing course as part of its Personal Training diploma, which covers skills such as targeting and retaining clients.

And in response to employer feedback, many courses – including those run by Lifetime and Premier Training International – are now putting more emphasis on the softer skills: teaching PTs how to develop a rapport with clients, communication skills and ways of affecting behaviour change. Lifetime's course includes role-play



and getting candidates to script how to approach potential clients.

Nigel Wallace, director of training at Lifetime, says: "The technical side is essential, but this only gets you through the gate. We build PTs' confidence in their product, so they see their service as positive and desirable. We teach them who to approach, how to approach them and how to guide the conversation in a positive way so they're confident they are doing the right thing."

Jarvis agrees that approaching clients in the correct way, and developing confidence in doing so, is crucial to the success of a PT: "If PTs are taught to have a conversation that helps people understand how they can achieve their goals, then they'll be able to sell personal training, because the majority of gym members are not achieving their goals.

"The personal trainer should be seen as the solution to customers' issues, but many aren't able to have the conversation that communicates their understanding of those issues. This is, however, an easy conversational model to teach."

"To be in business, you need that entrepreneurial element which gives you the flair, vision and energy to promote yourself"



Personal development: PTs should embrace CPD, both in soft skills such as communication and to diversify their knowledge

a broader offering

There's also a widespread call for PTs to understand that investing in CPD is essential to keeping knowledge up-to-date and being able to react to trends.

Denise Page, director of YMCAfit, recommends training in areas such as NLP to improve people skills, while the CEO of Premier Training, Debra Stuart, suggests: "There's no escaping the fact that trainers do need to be more business savvy. They need to invest in upskilling through CPD and look for opportunities. We have an ageing population and face an obesity epidemic, so why not study for a more specialist qualification in exercise referral or training for special populations? Or look at trends and react – for example, set up a walking group or a Zumba class."

Michael Steel, international business development at Total Gym, agrees that PTs need to sell broader packages – weight-loss programmes and 'back to wellness' programmes, for example, teaming up with other

trainers or experts if necessary. And Jan Middelkamp – CEO of the HDD Group in the Netherlands, which owns the PT brand LAPT – also believes it's important to see the bigger picture: "Don't focus on your personal profile but work with other professionals, such as nutritionists, and sell a package. Keep a database of your clients and their progress, so other trainers can easily cover for you," he says, adding that PTs should think of their business as an asset to sell on one day.

making more money

Middelkamp – whose new book, *Personal Training in Europe*, will be available in the UK later this year – advises against going straight in to being an independent personal trainer. "There are three models to personal training and I recommend PTs work their way through them," he says. "They should start off as an employee on the payroll in a club, where they can learn to grow their own business. After this, they can graduate to a licence or franchise system, where

they will still be supported as part of an overall brand. Only when they are very experienced should they attempt the most difficult model of renting space and doing the rest by themselves."

For those who do make a success of personal training, there are still challenges ahead. According to Jarvis, the whole personal training business model in clubs is flawed: since there are only a finite number of hours PTs can work, they need to find other ways to grow their hourly rate.

One of the easiest ways of doing this is to offer group personal training as opposed to one-to-one sessions: small group workshops is a big trend driven by the US and works especially well during peak hours. A short circuit training course can provide the necessary skills and experience needed to work in the field of group exercise.

Another approach to boosting income is to improve secondary revenue streams by selling related products. For example, if the PT is able to convey ▶



As a personal trainer's hours are finite, offering group personal training can boost their hourly income

► to the customer that their workout will become more effective if they stay within a particular heart rate zone, then the customer will see it as an advantage if they are able to buy a heart rate monitor from their personal trainer.

Another trend yet to make real in-roads in the UK is online personal training, where the PT doesn't even have to see the customer face-to-face to provide the service. This needs experience and a strong customer base to work, but using social media from the outset can keep trainers engaged with their clients, and potential clients, between sessions.

"Premier has evolved its service with the launch of a new online training community platform," says Stuart. "Personal training graduates can create individual client profiles and communicate with them via this portal. They can monitor clients' nutritional and workout diaries, recommend other training programmes, and there's even a shop with equipment and supplements. This will be a great tool to motivate and inspire between sessions."

But ultimately, suggests Steel, PTs need to think longer term when selling sessions, by trying to sign people up for three-, six- and 12-month blocks. Tony Lyons, who runs Soho Gyms Academy, agrees: "PTs are often bashful when

"Clubs need to support their personal trainers so that together they can maximise the revenue stream"

talking about money, but they needn't be. Clients expect it; they're often successful business people themselves and don't have trouble discussing money or paying for good service."

the club's role

Middelkamp says it's not all down to the PTs – he argues that clubs employing PTs should have a PT manager who can motivate and mentor them on a daily basis in skills such as building the business and invoicing.

FitPro's Mahony agrees: "The fitness manager needs to be able to provide support and mentoring, as well as setting targets for interactions, and goals for translating those interactions into clients. Meanwhile, managers need to recruit the right sort of personal trainers in the first place."

To this end, FitPro runs a Certificate in Health and Fitness Management, an online qualification aimed at the first and second tiers of management and designed to help them recruit the

right people, build effective teams and manage and motivate personal trainers.

Steel also feels the business model of clubs needs to change to allow PTs to act as a business within a business and be more entrepreneurial: "Clubs should reward good personal trainers rather than risk losing them. They should task and incentivise them, give them a mentoring programme and advertise their programmes in-club."

To conclude, while training providers are trying to create PT courses designed to turn out more rounded trainers, with the skillsets and expectations to survive the realities of the job, clubs that see personal training as an important part of their business model also need to support their PTs, so that together they can maximise the revenue stream.

Meanwhile, anyone looking to personal training as a career must ask themselves if they are creative and tenacious enough to set up in business and continue with the ongoing CPD required to stay at the top of their game.



OLD FOR NEW

ARE MORE PEOPLE TURNING TO REFURBISHED AND REMANUFACTURED EQUIPMENT? ABIGAIL HARRIS INVESTIGATES

With economic uncertainty continuing to cast its shadow, many operators are looking at inventive ways to keep their costs down. Not surprisingly, suppliers offering refurbished and remanufactured equipment, often at a fraction of the cost of new equipment, are seeing a shift both in the types of companies buying their goods and in the size of the contracts they're winning.



(both images) Physique encourages prospective clients to visit its factory

**Graham Bertrand,
MD, PTE group**

One of Physique's recent installations was the new Xercise4Less club in Wakefield – a 2,500sq m (27,000sq ft), 8,000-member budget health club – where we fitted more than £230,000 of remanufactured equipment.

The equipment contract for this, the group's second site, came off the back of our successful installation at the company's Castleford site in the



Xscape Centre in 2006. The contract included more than 200 fitness stations – remanufactured Cybex resistance equipment and Life Fitness cardiovascular machines, as well as new Stirling free weights – and

demonstrates our ability to deliver high quality remanufactured equipment that competes with new equipment, even in high football budget clubs.

I believe operators' perceptions of remanufactured equipment have changed. Recent contracts such as the 80-station installation at Folkestone Sports Centre, the 70-station set-up at Hartdown Leisure Centre in Thanet and the 65 stations supplied to The Pyramids in Southsea – plus Wakefield – all demonstrate the quality of the equipment we deliver. We encourage prospective clients to visit our factory and see the remanufacturing process that ensures our equipment is 'as good as new'.

"I've worked with Physique for a long time and wouldn't go anywhere else for my kit. They offer the best value for money and the service is excellent. The equipment at Castleford is now five years old but still looks brand new. Using remanufactured equipment significantly reduces our capital costs, meaning we can afford to operate at low prices. I don't know why anyone would put new equipment into a gym now."

Jon Wright, MD, Xercise4Less

Nicholas Pugh,
president/CEO,
Fit4sale.com



Our largest customer at the moment is Sport Life in Kiev, Ukraine, which has seven clubs due to open this year – ranging from 4,200sq m (45,200sq ft) to 5,200sq m (56,000sq ft) – taking the chain to 12 sites. Sport Life has designated Fit4sale as the exclusive supplier of all fitness equipment for

all of its facilities, including spa and pool equipment, flooring, lockers, accessories and more. Each new club will spend around US\$350,000 on equipment and receive more than 180 pieces including strength, CV and free weights.

We believe that Sport Life's methodology – keeping your overheads low, your customers happy and maintaining great management, staff and equipment – can be applied to pretty much any business, and that we

can make a significant contribution in many of those areas. Fit4sale is able to supply any size of facility, small or large, with high quality commercial products at huge savings.

Our knowledge and networks in the health club world, and our own experience as club owners in the US and Mexico, are vastly valuable to our customers. We can offer sound knowledge and advice in everything from equipment, flooring, facility design and layout to lockers, dumbbells and plates, and can pretty much do it all when it comes to opening a facility anywhere in the world. As a result, we do very well in the international markets.

This year we will open a full remanufacturing facility in Kiev, to enable Fit4sale to directly support the massive growth of Sport Life facilities and allow immediate distribution of our products to other surrounding countries. The equipment for remanufacturing at the Kiev site will come from the existing Sport Life clubs, as well as from the US.

"The key ingredient to our growth is sustaining continual cost controls, including purchasing quality remanufactured fitness equipment. Fit4Sale has made this possible, saving us between 30 and 60 per cent on the retail cost of new equipment but still offering quality as good and dependable as any new equipment. The remanufactured CV stations in our first facility, which opened five years ago, are due for replacement simply due to the fact that they're older models – they still run very well."

Dimitri Ekimov, president and CEO, Sport Life Investments Group

Jackie Walker,
project manager,
Staffs Fitness



At Staffs Fitness, we've worked hard to build a reputation based on quality and personal service, and many of our customers come back time and again. As the recession hit businesses badly, we've found that buyers are increasingly spreading the cost of their replacement programme over longer periods of time, often updating small areas as finances

allow, instead of going all-out on a full refurbishment.

Birchwood Leisure Centre in Hertfordshire had previously updated its CV section with refurbished Precor stations from Staffs Fitness, and approached us again in mid-

2010 to carry out a similar project on the strength section. The site falls under the banner of Hatfield Town Council, so everything had to get council approval: the equipment – £5,000 of refurbished Life Fitness resistance machines – was finally delivered at the end of October.

"Council budgets are being stretched and value for money is all-important. We always get a deal from Staffs Fitness that satisfies the monetary limitations that the council puts on us, as well as the high expectations that our customers place on us for good quality equipment."

Mike Speddy, leisure services manager, Hatfield Town Council



Operators' perceptions of remanufactured kit have changed. Our remanufacturing process ensures the equipment is 'as good as new'
Graham Bertrand, MD, PTE Group



Convenience: Amazon Leisure can work on-site at a club, so only one piece of kit is out of action at a time

"Having dealt with Amazon Leisure for the past 10 years, I can say that the equipment is always first class and installation very professional, causing very little disruption to the running of the club. But most important of all, the after-sales service is second to none."

Terry Moore, owner, The Rochester Health Club

**Steve Slater,
logistics manager,
Amazon Leisure**



Our new year installation at the Rochester

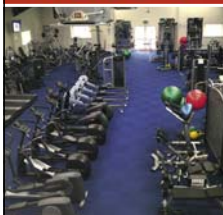
Health Club in Kent consisted of 34 refurbished Technogym machines, both cardiovascular and resistance. This is typical of the spend we see, with orders averaging between 25 and 35 units.

We devised an installation plan alongside a full risk assessment and pre-site survey to ensure minimal disruption to the health club on the day. We also removed the old equipment under our trade-in process, through which we buy back used kit and refurbish it, ready for sale on to another customer.

Since Amazon's formation in 1998, we have successfully supplied and installed over 30,000 pieces of equipment in the UK, Europe, Africa and southern hemisphere. Even in the current climate, we're seeing a

large number of orders and we're winning more contracts thanks to our cost-effectiveness versus buying new – particularly after customers have seen our facility and the refurbishment process the equipment goes through.

We also enjoy high levels of repeat business thanks to our 'collect, refurb and return' option – whereby clubs have their own equipment refurbished – and our on-site upholstery service, where we work within the club so only one machine is out of action at any one time.



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**The Fitness Centre,
Hargham Road,
Shropham, Norfolk
NR17 1DS
Tel: 01953 498098**





it needn't be SCARY

Former Spice Girl Mel B – aka Scary Spice – is the face of this month's International Fitness Week for global health club chain Fitness First. She tells Kate Cracknell why she wanted to be involved with the initiative

Have you always been fit?

Not at all. When I had my baby, Angel, I gained 75lbs and she only weighed 5lbs! But I didn't want a crash diet or a quick fix. I wanted to be fit and healthy, with working out part of my lifestyle.

A lot happens to women in their early 30s – you have to be active, because your metabolism slows down. So I really wanted to get into the fitness world, but I was really intimidated by the idea of going to a gym – you walk in and there's all this equipment that you don't know how to use. So I started working out at home using exercise DVDs.

I began to drop the baby weight and felt really good – much more awake, more focused, more in tune with my body. So I ventured out, doing a few classes in different places, and eventually decided to give the gym a go. I ended up going to a Fitness First club with a friend and it was great – I saw how much fun you could have working out in a club environment.

What's your fitness routine?

I usually work out every day – it's about taking that time out for yourself. I run,

do Kinesis, a few abs, some weights. But I mix it up so it doesn't get boring, and I usually work out with friends so it's a social thing too.

In terms of diet, I eat super-clean, lean and healthy throughout the week, then eat whatever I want at weekends.

Does your family exercise?

My husband Stephen doesn't exercise at all. Not yet anyway – I will break him in one day! Angel likes to dance, as does my stepdaughter Giselle, and my elder daughter Phoenix likes to play basketball. But my gym is my space, fully kitted out by Technogym. I have Kinesis which I love, two running machines with TVs, a full weight system and a stretching machine.

Tell us about your new fitness game

It's called *Get Fit with Mel B* and it came out in November. It's incredible – we filmed it two years ago and it's taken that long to build the technology behind it. It scans your body and then puts you – a virtual 'you' – on-screen beside me, in real time, so I can comment on your technique: "You're

not breathing right" or "Make sure you tense your stomach".

You select your goal – maybe you want a 'bikini-ready body' – and you type in how long you have to achieve that goal. It then sets a workout for you using a combination of the 250 different exercises we filmed, plus a full nutritional plan, day-by-day and for each meal.

It's for home fitness, to use with the family, and that's great. I think everything starts at home. Obesity's such a problem and, although I'm not saying it's parents' fault, if people just took time out to be educated on what they put in their fridges and what their kids see, I think we could make a big difference.

And what about your new group exercise concept?

The *Get Fit with Mel B* game was a project with Black Bean and Fitness First, and now we've launched a class at Fitness First clubs – also called *Get Fit with Mel B* – which uses some of the exercises from the game. It's the workout I do myself, but the exercises can be tweaked so it's suitable for all levels.

So are you qualified to comment on technique or design programmes?

Not yet, but I'm working towards a Level 3 qualification at the moment. It's fascinating. When I've qualified, I'm going to kick my husband into action!

Until I've qualified – although I've drawn on my own experience and used my ideas as the basis for the workout – I've worked very closely with the experts at Fitness First. They made sure my technique was right, so I'm not sending out the wrong signals to people who are following me, and they helped to put all the exercises in the correct order to properly work all the different muscle groups.

INTERNATIONAL FITNESS WEEK

Taking place at Fitness First clubs in 15 countries around the world is the second annual International Fitness Week (IFW) on 14–20 March.

Originally launched in 2009 as National Fitness Week, it's since developed into a global campaign designed to get more people exercising and doing something they enjoy. All clubs will be open to both members and non-members throughout the week, with personal

training taster sessions, free classes – including *Get Fit with Mel B* – and free health checks.

There's a different focus for each day of the week, with clubs offering a range of free activities to fit the day's theme. Monday is strength day, Tuesday is a Spinathon, Wednesday looks at workouts for different body shapes, Thursday is health checks, Friday is sport, Saturday is posture check and Sunday focuses on health.



Leading by example: Mel B led some group exercise classes during last year's International Fitness Week and hopes to do the same this year

What are the plans for this year's International Fitness Week?

It'll be along the same lines as before – free day passes to go into any Fitness First club in the world, with introductions to the gym plus tips, advice and free sessions on topics such as nutrition. It's very informative and makes you feel very comfortable, and it's free for the whole week (see information box, p54).

I also led some group exercise sessions last year, in the UK and abroad, which I hope we'll do again this year.

What can health clubs do generally to get more people involved?

Once you get into exercise, you want to do more and more. But you have to help people get over the initial barrier. You can't just dip people's toe in the water – you have to help them dive in.

That's exactly what happened to me. I'd put on lots of weight and I was

You can't just dip people's toe in the water – you have to help them dive in

intimidated – especially in LA, where everyone's so body-conscious. Luckily I found a gym where people weren't too shy to talk to you, and where they took the time to take me round and explain everything. That's important because people need a bit of encouragement, someone to say: "Go on – you can feel good about yourself."

What would you say to people who are unsure about going to a gym?

Go in and find a friendly face. The biggest hurdle is just getting there. Once you've taken that first step, even if you're just walking on the treadmill watching TV, you're doing something and, bit by bit, your body starts to feel better.

It has to be something you can sustain rather than making yourself hurt once and never going again. And you have to make it do-able within your working schedule rather than setting unrealistic targets of going every day.

What drives you?

I like to do a bit of everything: fashion, fitness, music... My passions are what drive me. I don't do anything that I'm not 100 per cent into myself. I wouldn't do a fitness video game if I didn't genuinely like to work out. The whole relationship with Fitness First has stemmed from that – it's grown organically as they've realised it really is something I enjoy.

up to scratch

Wendy Golledge investigates how management models and standards can help sports and leisure centres drive efficiency savings, earn improved perception in the eyes of customers and ultimately improve their business

In an economic climate where every customer through the door matters even more than usual, where efficiency drives are the order of the day, and where facilities face ever more demanding financial challenges, can investing valuable funding in management models and standards really help take the pressure off?

"Effective and therefore profitable centre management depends on efficient and constructive use of management time. Achieving that requires all the staff to work together and follow standard procedures, as well as implementing tried and tested systems to ensure the basics are in place. A quality management award such as Quest will assess these important criteria and provide recommendations to ensure the centre is working to its full potential," explains David Monkhouse, regional manager of Quest, the UK quality scheme for sport and leisure. "Only

in place. All this, in turn, leads to improved customer satisfaction."

Monkhouse agrees, adding: "Good standards will reduce complaints and increase compliments, so less staff time needs to be dedicated to dealing with customer dissatisfaction."

THE GOLD STANDARD

Management models also allow sites to benchmark themselves, both internally to recognise good practice and externally to learn from organisations that are doing things better. "In any sector, it's important to gain an external view of how robust your internal management processes are, and it's increasingly important to be able to demonstrate this to your customers, partners and other stakeholders," says Pierre Cachet, chief executive officer at EFQM. "Assessments and awards generate confidence and prove that the services offered have been recognised by an independent third party as exceptional, helping businesses differentiate themselves."

At the end of day, a centre is only ever as good as its worst lifeguard or duty manager

then can the management team truly concentrate on generating income."

External validation and adhering to approved management models can also have a dramatic impact on customer approval, says Clare MacLeod, national manager for Clubmark, Sport England's accreditation scheme for junior sports clubs. "Management models mean sites can be confident that they've reached minimum standards across a range of criteria and that they have, for example, appropriate insurance, coaching qualifications and risk assessments

Ultimately, investing in a management standard will improve the quality of service a health club or leisure centre delivers. "At the end of day, a centre is only ever as good as its worst lifeguard or duty manager," says Monkhouse. "That's the point of quality awards – even if a centre gains nothing else from the process, they will at least get their staff to the basic standard, which can only lead to increased customer satisfaction, more referrals, improved processes, more people participating and a better bottom line."

THE MAJOR MODELS

QUEST

Quest has defined good practice and ongoing development within a customer-focused management framework for more than 12 years. A tool for continuous improvement, it's delivered by leisure professionals and involves mystery visits and an assessment every two years, after which centres get an overall banded score.

The award was taken over by Right Directions – in partnership with Leisure-net Solutions – at the end of 2010 and a new, enhanced Quest has already been launched. Quest 2011 differs from the old model in that it offers two levels – an entry level (one-day assessment) which takes in the core fundamentals of running a leisure facility, and a more advanced level for centres wishing to push themselves beyond the basic badge (a two-day assessment). At the advanced level, facilities now also have the freedom to choose specific modules for assessment, alongside the core areas.

Unlike other quality marks, Quest is the only award that solely assesses leisure facilities and sports development teams. "That's the thing that makes Quest 2011 stand out – it has been written by the sector, for the sector, and assessments are carried out by informed peers who are sourced from within the sector," says Monkhouse. "The self-selection element of the advanced two-day award also means it can be made specifically relevant to each and every centre."

For more information, visit www.questnbs.org



Show you care: The FIA Code of Practice communicates a commitment to standards and customer welfare

FIA CODE OF PRACTICE

The FIA's Code is specifically designed for health clubs and gyms. "The Code is designed to ensure health and fitness operators maintain a basic level of practice to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their customers," explains David Stalker, executive director of the FIA. "Compliance with the Code communicates a commitment to standards and customer welfare. It's an important statement to government that the health and fitness sector is a professional industry that takes its operation and duty of care seriously."

The Code of Practice is externally audited by Active IQ, with government approval via the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). "Achieving compliance nationwide will enhance the reputation of the fitness industry and give government increased confidence in the sector to deliver its public health agenda," adds Stalker.

To comply with the Code, facilities must meet the minimum legal requirements for health and safety, fitness instructors must hold a nationally-recognised qualification and they must operate to a set standard of customer care.

For more information, visit www.fia.org.uk

QUEST CASE STUDY:

Banbridge District Council

Following the appointment of a new senior management team and a period of significant transformation, Banbridge District Council felt it was time to establish a national benchmark in two of its centres: Banbridge Leisure Centre and Dromore Community Centre.

"The council's leisure service had already undertaken considerable work to address a number of operational areas and felt ready to address the

challenges of the current climate," says Ben Corr, head of leisure at Banbridge District Council. "Quest offered a means of motivating and raising the self-esteem of the staff, who'd experienced considerable change, as well as informing and influencing future thinking and planning using a proactive approach. This was an excellent experience that stretched our services, challenged our processes and transformed our offering."

"We're now working to prepare a third centre – in Rathfriland – for a new community-based Quest programme that was launched in March."

EFQM

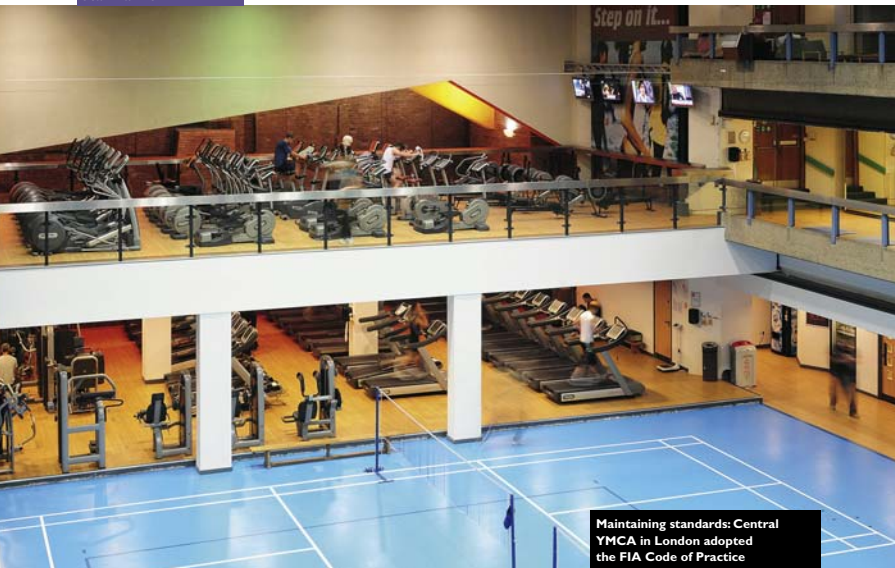
The aim of the EFQM Excellence Model, put simply, is to help any organisation achieve 'sustainable excellence'. The assessment framework aims to help leaders deliver strategy and managers to drive improvements while also engaging employees in the change and helping them understand how they can contribute to it.

"The EFQM Model helps identify areas where the efficiency of internal processes can be improved and focuses on areas that are critical for success – in short, you can deliver increased value

with reduced effort. The schemes are designed to help organisations achieve this while providing external proof of their ability to deliver excellent services to their customers," says Cachet.

The model is based around a series of fundamental concepts for excellence, from achieving balanced results and adding value for customers through to nurturing creativity and building partnerships. Although not leisure-specific, it sets out to give a holistic overview of any organisation, irrespective of size, sector or maturity.

For more information, visit www.efqm.org



Maintaining standards: Central YMCA in London adopted the FIA Code of Practice

► THE BALANCED SCORECARD

A strategic planning and management system open to all businesses in all sectors, The Balanced Scorecard measures traditional financial metrics alongside non-financial performance measures – the aim being to give managers a more ‘balanced’ view of their organisation’s performance.

The Scorecard aims to help any business – from private companies to not-for-profit organisations – clarify their vision and strategy, improve performance and translate all these things into ‘marching orders’ for the staff on a day-to-day basis, with a view to continuously improving strategic performance and results.

By aligning a business to four perspectives – learning and growth, business processes, customer, and financial – then measuring performance and evaluating results, it also creates a framework for improved internal and external communications, smoother day-to-day operation and the achievement of strategic goals.

For full details, visit
www.balancedscorecard.org

FIA CODE OF PRACTICE CASE STUDY:

Central YMCA, London

“As a club, we strive to provide consistently excellent facilities and service to our members.

“The sector’s recognition of the FIA’s Code as a benchmark for professionalism, customer service and commitment to duty of care made it the most relevant scheme for us,” explains Central YMCA facilities manager Alun Wood.

“Reaching the high standards of the Code’s assessment required

a commitment across all of our departments and focused our staff on providing excellent customer care, equipment and facilities.

“Complying with the Code has also had a positive impact on our retention, and it provides a key point of difference against other clubs in area.

“Successfully completing the assessment for a second time demonstrates to our members and our staff that we’re committed to maintaining the high standards of our facilities, service provision and customer contact.”

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE SCHEME

The Customer Service Excellence Scheme (formerly the government’s Charter Mark) is designed to offer all public services a practical tool for driving customer-focused change.

“We aim to make a tangible difference to public service users by encouraging provider organisations to focus on their individual needs and

preferences,” explains Samuel Heath, chief press officer at the Cabinet Office. “The scheme tests areas that research has shown to be a priority for customers, such as delivery, information, professionalism and staff attitude. Emphasis is also placed on developing customer insight, understanding the user’s experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction.”

Further information can be found at www.cse.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

On-screen training: Star Trac Coach offers personalised treadmill workouts featuring US running coach Kimberley Shah



Are you doing enough to maximise the income potential of running in your club? Kath Hudson looks at some of the options open to operators

SPORTS
conditioning
SERIES

on your marks

For someone who could never be described as a gifted runner, I've always been of the belief that the world is made up of heavy-footed plodders or light-footed bambis. Not so, according to the running experts. Running is a skill, like any other sports skill, and working on the technique can improve speed, ability, enjoyment, stamina and also reduce the risk of injury.

Working on running technique is still a fairly niche concept, but there are a growing number of opportunities to make this a lucrative income stream. Many of the solutions have thus far been London-centric, but they are now starting to reach out, both geographically and in terms of target audience; everyone – children, older people, elite athletes, recreational runners, post-rehab clients and the deconditioned market – can benefit from improving their running technique. Even seasoned runners will find it interesting to know what they could change to avoid injury.

FRANCHISE ROUTE

The Running School, which started in London 10 years ago, launched a franchise business at the end of last year. Those buying into the franchise are trained to use the protocols developed by company founder Mike Antoniadis, which were tested on elite athletes, recreational runners and children for eight years prior to the launch of his business. Franchisees are also taught how to approach clients, and how to help them change and achieve their running objectives.

"Most people think they naturally know how to run, but they don't. Also, sitting down for 10 hours a day turns a lot of muscles off. We re-teach movement and have developed accelerated learning techniques," says Antoniadis. "The common problems we find are that people don't know how to use their arms, they land badly and shuffle rather than use rear muscles."

One of the techniques used by The Running School is biomechanical analysis.

It's the same technology that some sports shops offer when fitting trainers. But, explains Antoniadis, The Running School assesses the whole body rather than just looking at people from the knee down.

To buy into The Running School franchise costs £17,000, plus royalties after six months, but Antoniadis quotes impressive figures from centres in London and Cardiff that suggest a possible turnover of £250,000–£300,000 by year three with £120,000 annual profit.

"Health clubs can implement the programmes easily, because they tend to have the right equipment – high quality treadmills – in place," says Antoniadis. "Our programme has widespread appeal too. This morning, for example, I've worked with the country's top sprinter and a 70-year-old woman who only started running 10 years ago."

ON-SCREEN COACH

Star Trac has responded to the need for running technique training with the Star Trac Coach, available on all of its ►

► embedded-screen treadmills. With more than one million workout possibilities, this programme offers a personalised workout tailored to the needs of each user, with an on-screen coach – US running coach Kimberley Shah – taking the exerciser through their whole workout.

Shah designed and recorded 100 five-minute clips, which cover all levels, abilities and types of workouts. “I give pointers for people to think about while they’re running,” she says. “For example, if they’re on a hill, I tell them to think about where their weight is and suggest some adjustments they could make.”

The programmes are designed to help people progress with their running: users can pick the intensity and Shah appears on the screen, running with them and offering further motivation.

“I absolutely believe you can make a runner out of anyone,” says Shah. “Our bodies were designed to run. I do tell

beginners that the first six weeks aren’t fun, but that if they stick with it, even though it might not feel good at first, they will soon see a huge difference in how they feel and look.

“If you look at kids, the way they run is so beautiful. In comparison, adults can be a mechanical mess. The combination of stress and sedentary jobs limits our ability to move freely, so I try to get them to re-live how it feels to move like they once did. A common problem is weak glutes, which means people don’t follow through on the stride fully. Hill workouts are fantastic for helping with this.”

BESPOKE PROGRAMMES

AudioFuel, which creates running programmes for use on an MP3 player – with the beat of the music dictating the running pace and a voiceover from a specialist coach offering motivation throughout – has some suggestions on how its product could be customised to provide further help with running training and technique in clubs.

The company is currently in talks with a number of suppliers about incorporating the programmes into

MP3 programmes: Audiofuel can create bespoke audio running training programmes, as it did for the Triumph campaign

their equipment, but is also open to the opportunity of working with clubs to create bespoke product ranges. For example, AudioFuel worked with personal trainers at No 1 Boot Camp to create ‘Boobcamp’, a 40-minute upper body workout to support the launch of a new range of Triumph sports underwear.

“We could collaborate with a club’s best personal trainers to design programmes and script the coaching,” says AudioFuel CEO Clare Crean. “The health club could either provide this as a member benefit, or could charge its members and so create a revenue stream. We suggest giving the programmes to members as a club benefit and then retailing them to the general public via iTunes, as this has several benefits: it reinforces the value to the members, puts the club brand into a new environment and creates a new revenue stream.”

As the programmes are delivered via the internet, they are simple to make and distribute: they could be downloaded via the club website, or

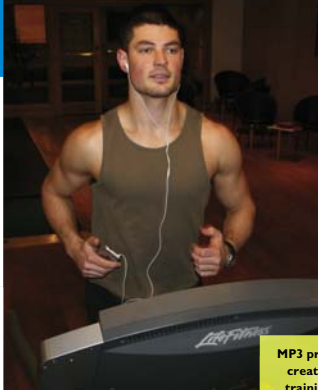


PHOTO: © JACKIE ADKINS 2005



Feldenkraus: The practice of assessing how a human skeleton functions in the field of gravity can help with running training

FIRST PERSON

EXPERIENCING THE RUNNING SCHOOL

Emma Matthews, associate publisher, Spa Opportunities

Having enrolled for the Paris marathon in April, I started to get the jitters about getting an injury, so was keen to get my running technique checked out.

I went to the original Running School in west London. To start with I was observed, and videoed, running on a treadmill. Watching it back was truly cringeworthy! My assessor, Michael Nicholls, the operations director, paused the video at several points to make comments on my style.



There was a wallchart with about 15 different running styles on it and I recognised myself as a shuffler: I don’t lift my feet up far enough, or push off from my toes to power myself forward. On a long distance run this would result in my legs getting fatigued, as I’m relying on the front muscles. Also, I moved my arms from side to side, rather than forward to help power the body. My core isn’t strong either, which resulted in my left hip dropping, so I’ve been doing some work on my abs in the gym to strengthen this area.

I felt inspired after the session. I have been experiencing moments of doubt about the marathon, but this has given me confidence. I now know that, if I’m going to complete the challenge, I have to take this new way of running on board. I now concentrate on my technique during my practice runs rather than just trying to get from A to B.



Franchise opportunity: The Running School's approach to teaching running technique could easily be brought in to gyms

alternatively they could be sent out to members as links from the health club's newsletters.

ONE-OFF EVENTS

Physiotherapist, author and eight-time marathon runner Paula Coates works at London's Balance Performance Physiotherapy, which offers expert advice to everyone from novices through to Olympic athletes. She says it's difficult for health clubs to offer specialised running programmes unless they have an experienced physiotherapist or podiatrist on board who can assess the biomechanics of the lower limb and spine.

Teaming up with local clinics or freelance physiotherapists and podiatrists could be an option, perhaps setting up occasional in-club clinics where members can have an assessment and learn about technique. Coates is available for clubs to hire, either to deliver lectures on running or give individual assessments and design goal-orientated programmes (paulacoates1@gmail.com).

Another option for an in-club clinic would be to host a visiting Feldenkrais teacher. The UK is some way behind the US and Europe in embracing Feldenkrais – a mind-body approach to movement developed by an Israeli doctor of physics and structural engineer, Moshé Feldenkrais, in the 1940s – but it offers an interesting opportunity for health club operators.

According to long-established practitioner, Vreni Booth, Feldenkrais looks at how the human skeleton functions in the field of gravity. "To cope with an injury, Feldenkrais sought a different way of moving, so he studied how the bones are linked and how the skeleton works as a self-balancing structure. It also teaches moving with awareness," she says.

For example, back and knee pain when running can be alleviated by bringing the hip joint into awareness and engaging it. "Pain means over-burdening one area because somewhere else isn't doing anything," says Booth. "It's like drawing on a bank account and pushing

it into the red, when there is another account with a lot of money in it. My job as a Feldenkrais practitioner is to look at the discrepancies of over-charging one area and under-using another."

The goal of Feldenkrais is to make the body move well, as it functioned as a child. Booth says she can work with any body, but not any mind, and it does require an open-minded person to make changes. However, those changes can then be profound.

The Feldenkrais Guild UK has a list of registered practitioners who could be approached about developing a programme or clinics.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Running technique is rarely taught in PE lessons at schools, and even running clubs tend to focus on conditioning rather than technique, so there's definitely a niche here for health clubs. Being helped to run well is an attractive proposition to put to members. After all, what members wouldn't love to be able to run faster?

Protein Drinks



Metapure RTD by QNT

Made of pure whey protein isolate, QNT's new water-based Metapure drink contains 32g of protein per bottle. Metapure is fat- and sugar-free and is recommended for those looking to get high quality protein in their diet without any fat or carbohydrate to promote lean, toned muscle. Metapure is lactose-free, which QNT says allows quicker and more effective digestion than traditional milk-based alternatives.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
metapure

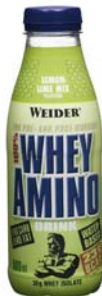
Weider introduces first ready-to-drink

Weider has introduced a new ready-to-drink product to its whey amino powder range.

Weider 100% Whey Amino Drink comes in a 500ml bottle in lemon-lime or orange splash flavours.

Suitable as a pre- and post-workout drink, it is said to protect the muscles from deterioration during training and support regeneration processes and muscle development after a workout. It is water based and contains no carbohydrates, sugar or fat.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
weider



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Ultralife launches new recovery drink

Ultralife Healthcare launches a new recovery drink on 19 March.

Ultralife Recovery contains 25g of protein to help repair muscles and 62g of carbohydrates to replenish glycogen stores. Other ingredients include L-glutamine to protect and repair post-exercise, creatine for strength and stamina, beta-alanine to delay muscle fatigue, and taurine to aid athletic performance and reduce cramping.

Samples of the drink are available by calling Ultralife Healthcare on 0800 862 0082 (UK freephone).



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
ultralife

Maximuscle's male- and female-targeted rtds

Maximuscle – recently bought by GlaxoSmithKline – has launched two new ready-to-drink products.

Definity Go is a pre-mixed whey protein drink in the Maxitone range, which is targeted at female exercisers.

Billed as "the perfect gym bag companion", it comes in a resealable 330ml bottle and is available in chocolate and strawberry flavours, to be drunk after resistance training.

Maxi-Milk is the equivalent product in the male-targeted Maximuscle range. A high protein nutrition shake designed to support lean muscle growth, performance and recovery, it also comes in a 330ml resealable bottle.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
maximuscle

Inkospor's plastic bottle for new low-fat drink

German drinks manufacturer Nutrichem, owners of Inkospor (Inko), has unveiled its first low-fat ready-to-drink protein shake, which is also the first of its product range to come in a plastic bottle.

The company has, until now, only had the capacity to produce glass bottles.

The new drink, X-treme Protein, is marketed as a 'six-pack' – not only does it come in a pack of six 500ml bottles, but the plastic bottle itself is moulded to look like a man's six-pack.

The drink's original formula provided a high protein drink with high fat and calories for muscle-builders with high calorie turnover, whereas this new drink – reformulated to be low-fat and low-carb – is for



people who want protein without the calories. It contains 50g protein, 35g carbohydrate and around 2.5g fat.

It comes in three flavours: chocolate, vanilla and strawberry.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
nutrichem

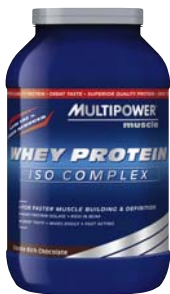
Multipower launches "best ever" protein powder

Multipower has launched what it calls its "best ever" protein powder.

Whey Protein Iso Complex is claimed to offer the best combination of taste, effect, solubility and value for money to date.

The new formulation adds to Multipower's range of drinks and bars – a range that includes Red Kick and its Protein and Energy Bar.

At the heart of the new formulation is a very high concentration of whey, which is said to aid solubility and absorption. This, combined with glutamine, is designed to help regulate protein synthesis and support the immune system. Multipower says this formulation has "unprecedented



benefits" in terms of repair and growth of muscle tissue. The powder is available in a 2.25kg tub costing £40 and comes in four flavours.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
multipower

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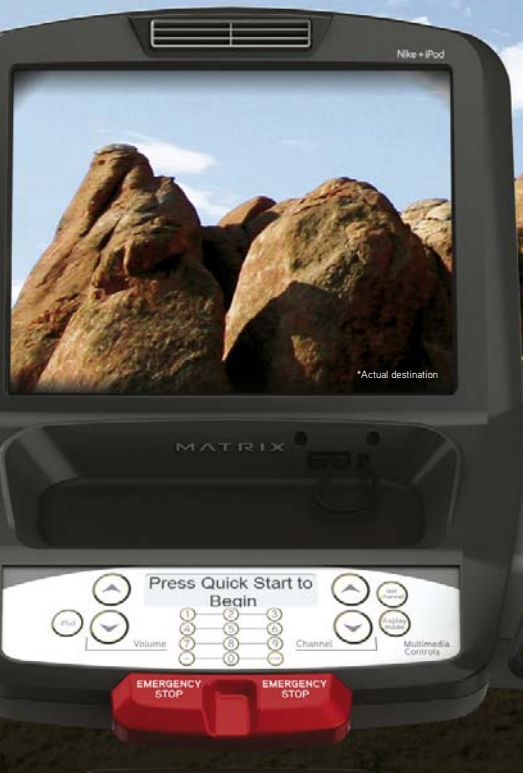
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London luxury: The new fit-out, including Matrix's 7xe cardio and G7 strength ranges, has taken the club from 'premium economy' to 'business class'

CITYPOINT & MATRIX: MEETING MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

CLIENT: The CityPoint Club
SUPPLIER: Matrix Fitness

The CityPoint Club, in the heart of London's City, has long been recognised as one of the capital's leading independent spa and health clubs. Ever since it opened, it has attracted professionals working across the banking and legal sectors, who were drawn to the Club's 'quiet enjoyment' philosophy.

Today, the club is owned and operated by The Playgate Group, which acquired it at the beginning of 2006 and which currently owns and manages three other clubs in London: Market Sports in Shoreditch, Slim Jim's Health Club in Broadgate and The Banksia Health Club in the iconic Blue Fin Building on Southwark Street.

At the time of purchasing The CityPoint Club, the membership had dropped to 1,200 and the quality of the facilities no longer reflected the club's original understated luxury. However, as Jeremy Taylor from The Playgate Group explains: "Five years after taking over The CityPoint Club, and thanks to a great deal of hard graft, the club is now thriving once again." Membership is now up to 2,200 – the ideal capacity for the club, which prides itself on providing an oasis of calm in one of London's busiest areas.

A refurbishment of the club was completed in mid-December 2010 and a full range of Matrix Fitness equipment was installed in the gym – taking the facilities

from 'premium economy' to 'business class', according to Taylor – ensuring the offering is now of the quality and standard the club's members expect and appreciate.

The gym features around 50 pieces of Matrix Fitness equipment, including the 7xe cardio range with Virtual Active – which allows users to work out to footage of iconic scenery and landscapes from around the world – the G7 strength range and three Functional Trainers.

"We feel that the new equipment fits in very well with the club – it has gone down a storm with our members," continues Taylor. "We're committed to continually introducing the latest and most effective innovations in fitness to our members, and are pleased to be one of the first clubs in London to feature the Virtual Active programme, which has proven to be a particularly popular addition to the gym. Our members are seasoned travellers and many of them have visited the locations featured in the programme, which adds a level of interest and enjoyment to their workouts."

Taylor adds: "The 7xe range and G7 series have also been very popular among our personal trainers."

"The CityPoint Club is one of a number of high profile and strategic installations in capital cities around the world for Matrix Fitness, with other cities including Paris and Tokyo," comments Daniel Clayton, VP of Johnson Health Tech Group, Matrix's parent group.

The CityPoint Club also features a luxurious spa with seven treatment rooms, a 20m ozone-treated swimming pool, plunge pools, two squash courts, sauna and steam room, two studios and a group cycling studio.

For more information, visit www.thecitypointclub.co.uk or www.matrixfitness.co.uk

Varying load
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without injury



London Rowing Club (LRC) was founded in 1856 and is one of the oldest rowing clubs in Britain. It's a high performance centre where many successful rowers are based and have come through the ranks to go on to represent Great Britain; at present, it has six GB athletes and 12 currently trialling.

Gen3 Kinematics was brought in to install its MyoQuip strength training systems, the MyoTruk and MyoThrusta, in July 2010. The training programmes through which LRC head coach Phil Bourguignon puts his athletes during each session on the MyoTruk and MyoThrusta consist of roughly 780 reps of 180–250kg.

Bourguignon explains that, for any weight training system, reliability is key to providing functionality and increased athlete performance: "With MyoTruk and MyoThrusta forming a key part of our training programmes, the overall squad standard in the testing protocols – strength test and ergo scores – is well in advance of this time last year. Athletes are already seeing as much as 20 per cent increase in all of their testing scores in the gym, as well as out on the water. This is a remarkable achievement in such a short time frame." Race results have also been impressive: the LRC A-team has beaten Cambridge University's Goldie boat (second team to the Blue boat), and only narrowly lost to the Cambridge blue boat itself.

Injury prevention is one of the key aspects to Gen3 Kinematics' MyoQuip training systems, which aim to provide a safer, more efficient strength training environment for athletes in any sport. With their patented Broad Biomechanical Correspondence Technology, the systems are able to deliver effective muscle fibre

GEN3 REVOLUTION FOR LONDON ROWING CLUB

CLIENT: London Rowing Club

SUPPLIER: Gen3 Kinematics

recruitment through a full range of movement, from extreme flexion to full extension, with a greatly reduced risk of injury during training. This is due to equipment design being focused on delivering training movements that have no adverse loading in the spine, hips or knees.

Since the installation of the equipment at LRC, there has been no gym-based injury. Not only that but, as Bourguignon explains: "One of our athletes trialling for GB suffered a bike accident on Christmas Eve, when he broke four ribs. A normal time frame for recovery back to full training is recognised as eight to 10 weeks, but we had him back in full training in the last week of January, just five weeks after the accident. We primarily used the MyoThrusta in his rehab, as it's the only machine where he could do weight training with no pressure on his ribs. He recently just beat the cut-off time required for the latest GB trial.

Andy Naisbitt, business development manager, Gen3 Kinematics, says: "We're delighted with the results that have been achieved so far by the athletes at LRC. Their extensive use of our training equipment has, in a short time, resulted in high levels of performance without injury. This reinforces our ambition to help develop a new method of strength training for athletes across the board."

For more information, email info@gen3kinematics.com or visit www.gen3kinematics.com

We've worked with Keiser for over a decade and know that it offers products and training that are wholly appropriate for the classes



David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) selected Keiser equipment for its new £11m Exeter club, the first opening for the David Lloyd Leisure Group since the merger of luxury chains David Lloyd Leisure and Next Generation.

The state of the art 5,760sq m (62,000sq ft) club, which is located at Sandy Park next to the Exeter Chiefs rugby ground, offers extensive indoor and outdoor tennis facilities, indoor and outdoor heated swimming pools and a dedicated area for children's activities. The club also includes a 1,200sq m (12,900sq ft) gym, which is complemented by a comprehensive programme of classes available in three dedicated studios. Other facilities include the Celsius Spa with salt steam room, aromatherapy room, sauna, ice machine, heated beds and a large spa pool.

The club, which opened in December 2010, received 26 M3 Indoor Cycles and six M5 Ellipticals from Keiser. Commenting on DLL's decision to install Keiser equipment, Rob Beale, group health and fitness manager, says: "Keiser offers us great support in terms of delivery, installation and training. We have worked with Keiser for over a decade and know that it offers products and training that are wholly appropriate for the classes for which they've been designed – classes that are some of the most popular within our clubs."

A variety of classes are run in the bespoke indoor cycling studio, but DLL has also chosen to blend Keiser M3 bikes and M5 ellipticals into the gym floor. Beale

DLL: GYM FLOOR INNOVATION WITH KEISER

CLIENT: David Lloyd Leisure Exeter

SUPPLIER: Keiser UK

**Creating a
buzz: Keiser kit
includes 26 M3
Indoor Cycles**

explains: "We were keen to do more gym-based activities to create a buzz on the gym floor. The M5 ellipticals look very different – they're aesthetically impressive – and so attract attention."

He continues: "We're always keen to offer our members the latest equipment and innovations, and the Keiser M3 and M5 are both high quality and cleverly designed. They also give excellent performance and require less maintenance than other equipment."

Indeed, the M3 – the result of over a decade of research and development – is virtually maintenance-free thanks to an innovative non-wear magnetic resistance system and an anti-slip belt that requires no adjustment. It also offers superior functionality courtesy of an optional onboard computer that provides feedback such as heart rate monitoring and resistance level awareness, as well as complete consistency across all bikes. Meanwhile, the M5 is small and portable, the size of a studio cycle, and is designed to offer an effective group training option. It's also versatile, ideal for studio-based classes and the gym floor.

Exeter currently has around 2,100 members, with a goal of 5,500. Memberships range from £50 to £96 a month.

For further information, call Keiser UK on 0845 612 1102 or visit www.keiseruk.com / www.davidlloyd.co.uk

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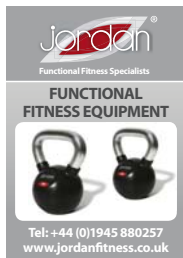
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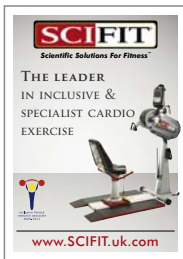
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MARATHON DRINKING SESSION IN FRANCE

Six hours, 42km, 23 glasses of wine and a fancy dress costume. Not your typical marathon, but one that's perfectly suited to the Médoc wine region, north of Bordeaux.

Entries have just opened for the 27th Marathon du Médoc on 10 September, and this year's obligatory fancy dress code is 'animals'. It's held alongside Médoc's festival of wine and the route is set in a beautiful circuit of 50 châteaux – with wine tasting at every food and drink station and some 100,000 cheering spectators.

While this is a real race – it is officially timed and measured and attracts up to 8,500 runners – entrants obsessed with speed are discouraged and winners are not rewarded with medals but with their bodyweight in Médoc wine.

On the following day, there's also a recovery walk – a nine to 10km route through the Moulis wine region that's open to 4,000 walkers, runners, companions and volunteers. Details: www.marathondumedoc.com



Not your usual marathon: Fancy dress and wine in the Marathon du Médoc

PHOTOS: ANCHOR-DE TIENDA, DUBROCA



FAVOURITE (AND SECRET) SWIM SPOTS REVEALED



Pond's Forge: Most popular pool

A survey of 36,000 swimmers has shown that Ponds Forge in Sheffield is the UK's most popular place to swim.

Sixty-two per cent of people preferred swimming indoors, yet alfresco favourites included the London Fields Lido, as well as Windsor's Dorney Lake as the top open water (non-pool) venue. Respondents also revealed their 'once in a lifetime' swim spots, from Ystradfellte Waterfalls in Powys to the sea around Torness Nuclear Power Station in East Lothian.

The poll was commissioned by Swimathon, the US fundraising event (see HCM Feb 11, p26). Details: www.swimathon.org



Time for a snack: Just thinking about exercise can make us eat more

PEOPLE EAT MORE WHEN THINKING OF EXERCISE

Researchers at Cornell University in the US have found that just thinking about working out can make people eat up to 50 per cent more.

Two groups of people read a description about a 30-minute walk. One group simultaneously listened to music while the other concentrated on the written scenario about exercising. A control group did neither. After the test, the groups were offered bowls of snacks. Those who read about exercise ate 58.9 per cent more sweet snacks and 51.9 per cent more salty foods compared to the control group. The worst group was the one that focused just on reading with no music – its subjects consumed 701 calories more than the control group. Those who listened to music ate 616 more calories.

one more reason to love marmite

Most people are said to either love or hate Marmite, but the extract looks set to win over more followers if new research is to be believed.

It's been discovered that a form of vitamin B1 known as benfotiamine, found in yeast-based foods, could help protect heart cells from damage. While the study, by scientists at Bristol University, has only been carried out on mice, it's hoped that similar effects will be seen in humans.

Diabetes UK, the charity that funded the research, says it could help the UK's three million diabetes sufferers whose delicate heart cells are believed to be weakened by the high levels of glucose found in their blood.

However, the charity warns that it is still too early to draw firm conclusions and says that regular physical activity, medication and a healthy diet are still key to good diabetes management.

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