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Finish Line Fitness

DRIVER DANICA
PATRICK IS A FAN OF
FAST TRACKS AND
HEALTHY LIFESTYLES





Racecar driver Danica Patrick wins with wellness

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Danica Patrick, the first woman to lead the pack at the Indianapolis 500, understands how important health and fitness are to winning on the racetrack and in life. The most photogenic driver on the IndyCar and NASCAR circuits, she's advancing her racing career and, simultaneously, achieving success as a model, actress, television celebrity, and corporate spokesperson. Patrick is also "driving" hard to combat chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

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These trainers have some exciting new ideas

Mind/Body is on the **M**ove!

These talented trainers are taking the discipline into promising new areas

By Patricia Glynn

In his book, *Perfect Health: The Complete Mind Body Guide*, Deepak Chopra, the holistic health guru, challenges contemporary notions about fitness. “Aerobics for your heart or weight training for your muscles ... are not comprehensive enough,” he argues. “The ideal is to balance the whole system, mind and body.”

For decades, health clubs have tended to focus on cardiovascular and strength training, and, more recently, have begun to introduce programs that are, possibly, inadequately described as mind/body disciplines: yoga, tai chi, Pilates, Gyrotonic, etc. The growth in popularity of these approaches demonstrates both their appeal and the value of the benefits they provide.

According to the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA), the sports-products trade group based in Silver Springs, Maryland, participation in Pilates in the U.S. increased by 500% between 2000 and 2009. By then, there were 8.9 million Pilates enthusiasts, and, by 2010, there were more than 20 million yoga practitioners.

Chopra, a physician, author, and cofounder of the Chopra Center for Wellbeing, a mind/body retreat located at the La Costa Resort and Spa, in Carlsbad, California, would agree that that's progress. But he would also insist that it's not enough. What Chopra argues for, instead, is a paradigm shift.

It's not a matter of sports, *or* traditional exercise, *or* mind/body practices. Rather, *all* movement should be mindful. Physical activity should be thoroughly, completely, integrated—not pitting one part of the body against another, or body against mind, feelings, or spirit. →





Upending exercise notions
at the Core Concept Center

Mind/Body Is on the Move!

It sounds like a radical, perhaps unattainable goal, but, in studios, clubs, and classrooms throughout the country, the transition is already taking place. Inspired, invented, and driven by some of the industry's most talented and innovative trainers, an evolution is underway. Once more, what we think of as *exercise* is changing.

Hybrid environments

Elizabeth Larkham, the director of the Core Concept Center at the Rolling Hills Club, in Novato, California, subscribes to Chopra's position. At the center, a modest 800-square-foot space that made its debut in August, mind/body practices are being married to techniques that, historically, existed in a different world.

"Here, mind/body isn't relegated to some sequestered sanctuary," Larkham explains. "And, actually, I think the term will eventually become irrelevant. The attributes generally ascribed to these techniques are going to become ubiquitous; mindfulness will be expected in all forms of fitness. You'll find it playing a role in every area of the club, from the cardio floor to the weight room. There won't be a clear-cut definition for *mind/body* anymore."

A 26-year industry veteran trained in yoga, Pilates, Gyrotonic, Feldenkrais, and the Franklin Method, Larkham's last major assignment was the restructuring of the Mind and Body Center, an 11,000-square-foot space with six beautiful, spacious studios at The San Francisco Bay Club. Now, she's brought her experience, skills, and vision to Rolling Hills, an impressively multipurpose, family-oriented club set on a seven-acre campus.

"Instead of recapitulating the model that prevailed in the last decade, I intend to create a new model for a new decade—for 2012 and beyond," she says. "There will definitely be connections to the past, but the Rolling Hills center will be a hybrid environment that's clearly evolved."

Tour the Core Concept Center, and you'll see some of the common trappings of a mind/body studio, e.g., yoga mats and Pilates reformers, but you'll also encounter some unexpected elements—classes and equipment borrowed from the field of functional training. Among the pieces utilized: the TRX Suspension Training system, from TRX, in San Francisco; and CoreAlign and the EXO Chair, by Balanced Body, in Sacramento, California.

"I was at a conference, and the TRX team happened to be across from me," Larkham explains. "I watched them, intrigued, and began thinking about what we could do.

We began collaborating and eventually brought TRX in here. Going forward, I think we'll see functional training gain a stronger foothold. It's effective at improving balance, coordination, strength, and bone density. It's really an ideal fit for mind/body spaces." Pilates equipment manufacturers have taken note of the development, she points out, introducing products, such as CoreAlign, that stress functionality.

Larkham insists that openness to new ideas, followed by intelligent innovation, is critical to ongoing improvement. "Looking outside of your area of interest and learning from experts in other fields is critical to advancement," she says. "Curiosity leads you to new ideas and tools, and, as a result, you're able to open new doors, both for yourself and your clientele."

It's clear that she practices what she preaches. "For example, for Pilates, I've created a Pilates Mat at the Wall course. It's a contemporary expression of traditional principles, but provides more accurate alignment and is particularly safe and effective for individuals with osteoporosis," she describes. "I've also devised a Gyrotonic group equipment class called Evolve Your Inner Dancer. It integrates the fundamentals of classical and contemporary dance within the Gyrotonic framework."

Controlled fusion

Lawrence Biscontini, an internationally active trainer, consultant, and program developer, once studied Pilates with Larkham and, like her, champions the notion of truly holistic exercise offerings. "More mind/body-centric programming and studios will emerge in coming years," he predicts. "This is truly the present and future of our industry. Mind/body 'feel good' options will spread like



Elizabeth Larkham



Trainer Lawrence Biscontini

wildfire, especially as the benefits become more evident and, consequently, more desired.”

“Even in killer cardio combat kickboxing,” he suggests, “mindfulness can be incredibly useful. For example, conscious muscle activation increases results, while, simultaneously, reducing the risk of injury.”

Biscontini is doing his part to share his sentiments. During the winter, he teaches at the Golden Door Spa at Las Casitas Village, in Fajardo, Puerto Rico. He’s designed mind/body, personal-training, and aquatics programs for major chains, such as Equinox Fitness, 24 Hour Fitness, and Bally Total Fitness. And he’s the founder of FG2000 (Fitness Group 2000), a group of elite trainers that provide ongoing education worldwide, often in developing countries on a nonprofit basis.

Though he acknowledges that he can be a “purist,” meaning that he’ll teach only one modality per class, he is, philosophically, a fervent disciple of fusion programming. He contends that, when you combine two or more disciplines—for instance, yoga with cycling—you expose members to exercise options that, otherwise, they might never explore. Moreover, he notes, “The more you train the body in the same way, the less it responds.”

At the same time, however, he believes that trainers should be “traditionalists.”

“Offering fusion without standards,” he warns, “is a proposition that’s likely to fail.”

His experience, skills, and theories have yielded a wealth of imaginative and engaging classes. One of his most popular creations is Yo-Chi, a fusing of T’ai-Chi Yang Short Form with adapted hatha yoga asanas. Biscontini describes it as a “moving meditation.” The reaction to it has been “overwhelming,” he says, leading to a number of spinoffs. “Now there’s Hydro Yo-Chi for the pool; Yo-Chi Ball, which employs stability balls; and Yo-Chi Glow—we finish this class in the dark, waving glow-sticks while music plays.”

Among the many other courses that carry his credits are Chi-Lates, a mixture of floor-based Pilates with standing t’ai chi movements; Shakti, a choreographed blend of yoga, t’ai chi, Pilates, Feldenkrais, and NIA; Buddha Boot Camp, an aggressive, flowing blend of yoga, t’ai chi, and Pilates; and Shake Your Buddha, a dance-centric course which melds yoga with Pilates.

“Ultimately,” Biscontini observes, “the *blend* justifies the means.”

New day dawning

Jill Miller, the founder of Tune Up Fitness Worldwide, Inc., in Studio City, California, is another mind/body innovator who’s pushing the discipline’s envelope, in this case, in the direction of injury-prevention, rehabilitation, pain-relief, and wellness.

A trainer schooled in yoga, modern dance, Pilates, bodywork, and shiatsu, Miller, after several years of

teaching, came to recognize an unattended-to problem. “I was teaching yoga in Los Angeles and began noticing how many students had horrible alignment,” she recalls. “I couldn’t, in good conscious, continue with what I was doing.”

Miller notes that everyone has so-called *blind spots*. “They’re areas of the body that have been underused, overused, misused, or terribly abused,” she explains. “And, if someone can’t move well, asking them to adopt a conventional pose may not be the best thing to do. In fact, it can lead to injury.”

Her concern is corroborated by the facts: a report commissioned by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission indicates that, in 2007, the most recent year for which figures are available, some 5,500 people were treated for yoga-related injuries.

Determined to develop an approach that would help students “work out the body’s kinks,” preparing them “to move and care for their body’s tissues,” Miller turned to medical resources, drew heavily on medical knowledge. “A great instructor learns anatomy, even going so far as to attend workshops where an actual cadaver is dissected,” she says. “They read the scientific studies regularly, practice extensively, and analyze endlessly.”

Eventually, her research, experimentation, and program development culminated in Yoga Tune Up (YTU), a course that combines yoga, calisthenics, body therapy, and corrective exercises that increases strength, heals damaged tissue, and enhances the immune system. The technique, Miller observes, leaves a client feeling “rewired.”

Now, 10 years after the advent of YTU, it’s proving a smash hit at leading clubs, such as Equinox, Crunch Fitness, and The Sports Club/LA. It’s also become a core component of Equinox’s Conscious Movement program, a unique group-fitness suite of classes, workshops, and special events. For its creator, YTU has served as the foundation for what’s quickly becoming a mini-business-empire. Miller conducts teacher trainings and workshops, stars in online videos, and has introduced a line of products ranging from DVDs to the specialized, signature, self-massage rubber balls utilized in her classes. She’s currently working on a cardio interpretation of YTU, which she’s dubbed Tune It Up: Conscious Conditioning.

“The time is young for mind/body fitness. The possibilities are endless,” she reflects. “I think we’re at the dawn of a new day.” —

—Patricia Glynn, p.glynn@fit-etc.com



Jill Miller

PRODUCT SHOWCASE

Five thousand years ago, the ancient yogis recognized the importance of the mind and body working together in harmony. Today, all sorts of variations on mind/body fitness and wellness can be found in clubs throughout the industry; many IHRSA associate companies, including the ones featured below, offer equipment to achieve that all-important balance.



POWER SYSTEMS, INC.

The Pilates Reformer Bar enables users to perform reformer-style movements without the need for heavy, expensive equipment. It's perfect for mind/body group fitness classes, personal training, or at-home use. This portable Pilates studio is designed with two 30" resistance tubes attached to each side of the bar, while at the other end are Velcro-adjustable cuffs, allowing for a variety of resisted or assisted movement patterns. The unit includes tubing with attached ankle cuffs, padded 39" bar, and carry bag. Plus, the bar disassembles for easy, convenient storage.

Contact: 800-321-6975, powersystems.com. Please see our ad on page 73. —

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINERS

The National Federation of Professional Trainers (NFPT) has been certifying fitness professionals since 1988, offering an industry-recognized Certified Personal Trainer (CPT) credential that will provide the foundation for helping others reach their fitness goals. NFPT's personal trainer certification will prepare trainers with specific knowledge for working with special populations. If the goal is to work in the area of mind/body fitness, an NFPT certification can serve as the foundation to launch any training program.

Contact: 800-729-6378, nfpt.com. Please see our ad on page 66. —



LES MILLS INTERNATIONAL

Les Mills BODYFLOW is the yoga, tai chi, and Pilates-based workout that builds flexibility and strength, leaving exercisers centered and calm. Controlled breathing, concentration, and moves to music create a holistic workout, while also shaping and toning. A new BODYFLOW class is released every three months with fresh music and choreography. Licensed facilities gain access to the Les Mills Group Fitness Management system, continuous training, a dedicated club coach, and online marketing materials.

Contact: lesmills.com. Please see our ad on page 16. —

SPRI PRODUCTS



SOL Salutations are the very foundation of the practice of yoga. With the new GAIAM SOL line, SPRI salutes those who make the practice of yoga a part of their daily lives,

whether personal, professional, or both. The products in this premium line were designed by yogis for yogis, with attention to responsibly sourced materials, mindful design, and professional-quality construction. Perfect for home, gym, and studio use, the new SOL line is available only through SPRI, and offers seven unique choices.

Contact: 800-222-7774, spri.com. Please see our ad on page 78. —

OPTP

Improper or insufficient stretching frequently leads to muscle soreness, stiffness, inflexibility, and unnecessary injury. Partner-assisted stretching increases the intensity of a stretch; however, a partner isn't always available. The solution? The patented Stretch Out Strap delivers all the benefits of assisted stretching, without the need for a partner. Multiple loops permit deep, gradual stretching of major muscle groups safely, effectively, and with control. Straps come complete with the newly revised *Stretching Guide*, featuring new color photos, anatomical illustrations, and over 30 stretches emphasizing contract-relax techniques.

Contact: 800-367-7393, optp.com. Please see our ad on page 77. —



BALANCED BODY

The new Allegro 2 Reformer from Balanced Body sets an unprecedented standard for ease of use, for both members and instructors. The SoftTouch Rope System allows instant, one-touch rope adjustments even while lying on the carriage. The EasySet Footbar adjusts vertically with just one hand or with feet. The Allegro 2 also features a beautiful, state-of-the-art frame and carriage, and is expandable to a Tower system. It's ideal for fitness facilities that want their Pilates program to be a true competitive differentiator.

Contact: 916-388-2838, pilates.com. Please see our ad on pages 23, 25 & 27. —