

Reebok commissioned Cirque du Soleil
to create Jukari Fit to Fly



GETTING A KICK OUT OF CORE AND BALANCE TRAINING



SKY-HIGH Exercise

By Patricia Glynn

When it comes to training one's core, crunches still count; and, for balance, the BOSU Balance Trainer is still hard to beat. Over the years, countless exercises and a wide variety of tools have been devised to deal with *core* issues and add *balance* to club workouts, but the innovation is still going strong, and, if anything, seems to be accelerating.

Check out the studios at Equinox, the high-end, trendsetting chain that has more than 40 locations in seven major cities, and you'll find members soaring and spinning—*literally*—through the air. Take a peek inside the studios at Crunch, the quirky 20-unit club company based in New York City, and you'll catch clients experimenting with an indoor waterless version of surfing.

And that's not all: continue your tour of facilities and you'll also discover yoga classes that make use of hammocks, Pilates sessions replete with hula hoops, and, even, workouts conducted on a giant trampoline.

From a functional standpoint, these imaginative approaches are effective, but, more than that, they're also designed to make exercise fun, and, in fact, they succeed. Unique, entertaining, and uninhibited, they pique the interest of prospects and members, tempt them to participate, and, performing as promised, help drive membership sales, club utilization, and member retention.

OUTSIDE THE BOX WORKOUTS

An excellent example of the creativity that's recently been brought to bear is Equinox's new program. Jukari Fit to Fly was developed for Reebok, the international sports products and programs provider, by Cirque du Soleil, the global producer of avant-garde theatrical performances, with a little help from Sara Haley, an Equinox instructor.

"The goal," she says, "was to make fitness fun again."

The name, Jukari, was derived from a Sicilian word meaning "to play," and the program, Haley explains, is a high-flying act that sometimes has members "jumping for joy." It makes use of the Fly Set, a modified trapeze that can hold up to 2,000 pounds, on which students can swing freely. They also do floor work with foot strap attachments. The 45-minute routine engages the core as people lift themselves and also challenges their balance. →

Sky-High Exercise

Instructors undergo a rigorous training and evaluation process. “Ideally, they should have a strong dance, yoga, Pilates, or circus background,” suggests Haley, “and it helps if they’ve worked with core-stability and suspension training.”

Jukari, the first in a series of programs that Cirque du Soleil is developing for Reebok, debuted earlier this year in select clubs stretching from Los Angeles, to New York, to Seoul. “It’s worked,” reports Haley. “People are *really* have a good time—they’re smiling; they love it!”

Having fun also seems to be the *raison d’être* of Crunch’s choice, Indo Boarding, which, depending on season or preference, can offer, among other things, a surfing, skateboarding, skiing, or snowboarding experience. “A program has to produce results,” says Marc Santa Maria, the regional director of group fitness for Crunch, but it also has to be interesting and fun. That’s what sustains students through a 45-minute class.”

The Indo Boarding sessions utilize the Indo Board, an oval-shaped disk that costs approximately \$99 each, which sits atop inflatable IndoFlo cushions, providing the uneven movements associated with a variety of outdoor activities. Santa Maria was inspired to create his class by the popularity of extreme sports. “It was about bringing the ocean and the mountains to urban areas,” he explains. “We’re giving people experiences that they wouldn’t have, otherwise.”

During the summer, members *surf* to the music of the Beach Boys, and avoid “wiping out” by focusing on balance and using their core. At other times of the

year, Santa Maria employs four-pound BOSU fitness balls as beach balls or body bars as ski poles, with appropriate musical accompaniment.

“We’ve got 15 Indo Boards,” notes Santa Maria, “and they always fill up fast.”

SUPPLIER SOLUTIONS

As they design equipment and programs, companies, today, are focusing on both effectiveness and entertainment value. “BOSU training is all about results and fun because the skill progressions aren’t like traditional exercise, where you count off each and every tedious rep,” points out Douglas Brooks, a programming director for BOSU by Fitness Quest, Inc., of Canton, Ohio. “Instead, they feel more like play and skill development, which keeps the process interesting, gratifying, and fun.”

The objective, however, remains quite serious. “Ultimately, the goal of integrated core and balance training is to help a person express strength and power from a standing position, which reflects what’s required of us in real life and sports,” he says.

Ken Endelman, the founder and CEO of Balanced Body Pilates, the Sacramento, California-based provider, echoes Brooks’ observation. “Pilates,” he reminds, “is all about creating a strong core and an even, well-balanced musculature... Most of us move incorrectly, using our spine and extremities, but we should be moving from the inside out—from our core to the extremities. The stronger the core, the more flexible and balanced you become, and the more fluidly you move. This enhances all of our daily activities, which becomes particularly important as we age.”

STOTT PILATES, based in Toronto, has taken special notice of the needs of older and other discrete populations with the recent introduction of its Injuries & Special Populations Support Material. “We created this book to help our students gain the knowledge, skill, and confidence to develop effective programs for a range of clients,” explains Lindsay G. Merrithew, the president and CEO of STOTT PILATES. “Programming for special populations, including the active-aging market, pre- and post-natal exercisers, and other physically limiting conditions (e.g., diabetes, osteoporosis, and breast cancer) is ever more in demand.”

Pilates practitioners have been joined in their pursuit of improved core and balance performance by innovative firms such as Fitness Anywhere, Inc., of San Francisco, which markets the TRX Suspension Trainer. This device consists of two nylon straps that, connected to any secure surface and employing one’s body weight as resistance, facilitate countless functional movements. “Your core is engaged the whole time, with every exercise, whether you’re doing



TRX Suspension Trainer facilitates Fitness Anywhere



Members 'surf' during Indo Boarding class at Equinox

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upper-body or lower-body exercises,” reports Allison Ross, the director of marketing for the company. “It helps with core strength, balance, and flexibility—for everyone, but, especially, older people.”

The central role that accessories play is demonstrated, too, by the creations of suppliers as far-flung as OPTP, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Alcan Airex AG, of Sins, Switzerland. OPTP offers a wide selection of inflatable items, exercise balls, foam rollers, and foam balance products. “Our newest thing is the SMARTROLLER, an innovative foam roller with two different sides,” notes Joey Hall, a spokesperson for OPTP. Alcan Airex, for its part, has recently introduced the Balance-pad Elite, an advanced version of its popular Balance Pad that not only complements its BeBalanced! Training programs, but also provides a foot massage in the process.

YET MORE PROGRAMS

Another program that, like Jukari, takes the action aloft is Unnata Aerial Yoga, a combination of yoga and acrobatics created by Michelle Dortignac, who conducts classes at studios in the Brooklyn and Manhattan sections of New York City.

Unnata makes use of a 17’ long sling, which allows students to perform yoga poses while suspended above the floor during the 90-minute sessions. “It lightens people’s mood,” she explains. “It’s playful, cool, and interesting. People get bored if they’re always doing the same thing.”

Among the many other proliferating programs that strive to enliven the serious task of improving one’s balance and increasing one’s core strength are:

- Hoopilates, one version of a program that combines the joy of hula-hooping with the benefits of Pilates movements that was concocted by Jen Bleier, a trainer from Brooklyn, New York. Other takes on the idea have been developed at clubs worldwide.
- Rebounderz Planet Jump, Inc., a unique facility in Orlando, Florida, that’s constructed around a huge 6,800-square-foot trampoline. “Mini-trampolines, limited in space, will bore you to death,” observes Mark Gurley, the business’ co-owner and CEO. “Here, you’re able to run and move. It’s way more fun.”
- Roller Dance, a disco on roller skates offered by Esporta, the U.K.-based chain. The constant rolling and stopping, combined with moves such as lunges, challenges skaters’ equilibrium and demands a strong center to prevent spinouts.
- Skinny Jeans, another imaginative exercise regimen from Equinox, tantalizes both in terms of content and title. “Skinny Jeans combines elements of yoga, Pilates, Nia, Alexander Technique, and the Feldenkrais Method,” explains Molly Fox, the company’s group fitness manager and the program’s creator. “Some say that exercise should be about health,” she continues, “but people want great butts, want to wear skinny jeans.” —

Core Creativity

At the center of every good core and balance training program is creativity. Almost every member will say they *want* a stronger core, but engaging them—via creative training tools—is the key to success. Check out the following examples from these IHRSA Associate Members:

ALCAN AIREX AG

The AIREX BeBalanced! product line maximizes efficient training for heart and circulation, body posture, equilibrium, and mind and soul. The AIREX Balance-pad Elite and the AIREX Balance-beam are foam cushions filled with millions of tiny air bubbles. The company adds that the destabilizing characteristics of its slip-proof BeBalanced products activate the brain's control functions.

"When using balance products, such as the AIREX Balance-pad Elite, therapeutic and training goals can be achieved more quickly," points out Harald Werz, sales and marketing manager at Alcan Airex AG. "This includes the improvement of inter- and intramuscular coordination ability, as well as the reduction of the risk for injuries or falls. Thanks to improved balance, users will experience stability and well-being. In addition, AIREX offers effective BeBalanced! training programs developed by specialists."

Contact: www.bebalanced.net, +41 41 789 66 00. See our ad on page 22 —



"THE STRONGER THE CORE, THE MORE FLEXIBLE AND BALANCED YOU BECOME, AND THE MORE FLUIDLY YOU MOVE."

BALANCED BODY PILATES



Balanced Body's customized Pilates solutions help fitness centers launch or expand a profitable Pilates program. Its services include equipment, training, programming, and business consulting. Economical equipment and training packages, along with onsite training, are customized to meet a facility's goals and budget. Flexible training modules include Mat, Reformer, and the EXO Chair—the latter of which is now available with a split-pedal option.

"The EXO Chair's resistance band attachments allow users to do many Pilates exercises that could previously be done only on a Reformer, within a fraction of the space," says Ken Endelman, Balanced Body's CEO and founder. "It improves core strength, balance, and flexibility, and the new split pedal offers even more programming options with both reciprocal and rotational exercises. Plus, it's easy to stack and store."

Contact: www.pilates.com, 800-745-2837
See our ad on page 73 —

BOSU BY FITNESS QUEST

With BOSU balance and conditioning products, core strength is enhanced by involving all the muscles of the midsection, rather than targeting them in isolation. The BOSU Ballast Ball, a weighted stability ball that stays put, offers a variety of exercise options for all skill levels. The half-dome shape of the BOSU Balance Trainer uniquely challenges the core, whether the platform side is facing up or down.



"Simultaneously training stabilizing capability in the core region and motion in other joints sets the stage for a smooth transition of power between the upper and lower body, which equates to functional power development," states Douglas Brooks, M.S., exercise physiologist. "This powerful link cannot be developed by training the trunk musculature in isolation, so products such as the BOSU Balance Trainer and BOSU Ballast Ball help improve key elements of integrated core training, which include stabilization, bracing, and rotation."

Contact: www.bosu.com, 800-497-8281
See our ad on page 47 —

GRAVITY BY EFI SPORTS MEDICINE

The GRAVITYSystem, by efi Sports Medicine, is anchored in core training based on balance and control. GRAVITY workouts on the Total Gym GTS encourage functional movement by using body weight as resistance. The inclined rolling glideboard and cable pulley system ensure high-level performance of multi-planar movements to enhance functional strength, endurance, and flexibility, while engaging core stabilizers in nearly every exercise. GRAVITYSystem programs include personal training, Pilates, group strength training, and post-rehab.



"GRAVITY Training on Total Gym engages the core and provides an effective total-body workout," asserts Tom Campanaro, CEO. "Users of all ages, sizes, and fitness levels get a dynamic workout that chisels and strengthens the abdominals, obliques, and back muscles."

Contact: www.efisportsmedicine.com/commercial, 800-541-4900. See our ad on page 85 —

FITNESS ANYWHERE, INC.

The TRX Suspension Trainer from Fitness Anywhere is designed to build strength, balance, flexibility, and core stability simultaneously. This portable performance training tool leverages gravity and the user's body weight to facilitate hundreds of exercises for every fitness goal. The TRX builds core strength with each exercise by creating an element of instability that engages the core; having a strong core helps performance, coordination, and posture, while preventing injuries.



"Suspension-training exercise manipulates the user's center of gravity and base of support to integrate core stability and multiplanar movements for enhanced physical performance and durability," says Chris Frankel, head of programming at Fitness Anywhere. "Every exercise becomes an integrated, full-body movement, leading to higher caloric expenditure. Users can load and unload exercises to improve posture, movement, strength, power, flexibility, endurance, and balance."

Contact: www.fitnessanywhere.com, 888-878-5348. See our ad on page 76 —

OPTP



The OPTP Pro Rotating Discs provide a smooth, gliding, nonskid surface for developing balance

and core strength. They can be used for stabilization, Pilates, range-of-motion exercises, or push-ups.

"The OPTP Pro Rotating Discs are great for core and balance exercises," says Kelly May, OPTP spokesperson. "They can be used while the user is sitting, standing, kneeling, or lying down, which allows for variety in exercise programs. The discs can be easily incorporated into group-exercise classes and Pilates."

Contact: www.optp.com, 800-367-7393
See our ad on page 65 —

STOTT PILATES

Ideal for exercisers and rehab clients alike, the Stability Chair helps to rebalance muscles, enhance stability, and improve body control. This sturdy, compact, multifunctional Pilates machine can be adjusted to train nearly all muscle groups, yet requires a minimal amount of space with its approximately 20" x 20" footprint.



"The Stability Chair is a great option for clubs that want to offer their members fresh programming while working within space constraints," says Lindsay G. Merrithew, president and CEO of STOTT PILATES.

Contact: www.stottpilates.com, 800-910-0001
See our ad on page 40 —

POWER PLATE NORTH AMERICA, INC.

Power Plate machines were designed to provide an efficient, total-body workout in just 30 minutes. They utilize Advanced Vibration Technology to naturally increase muscle reactions multiple times per second during exercise. The resulting benefits include increased core strength, balance, fitness, strength, muscle tone, flexibility, and bone density, among others.

"Power Plate machines provide facilities with a unique and effective way for users to increase balance and coordination by utilizing Acceleration Training to strengthen and stabilize the core," says Tony Swain, training manager at Power Plate North America.



Contact: www.powerplate.com, 877-877-5283. See our ad on page 35 —