

# The Dark Side of the Zune

By

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About halfway through my workout at a local health club, feeling Comfortably Numb from the giant sets and Beta Alanine, my batteries in my portable MP3 player died. I was now forced to work out outside my own little world without K Billy's super sounds of the 70's ringing through my earphones. Without the music to drown out the distractions, I began to open my ears and eyes to what was really going on around me. Perhaps a Momentary Lapse of Reason, but this experience gave me valuable insight into both personal training competition as well as what was really going on inside the walls of local health clubs. Freeing up some Time, I decided to venture outside the walls of APECS and visit a few other local health clubs to gain a sense for where the industry is and where it seemed to be heading. Here are just a couple of notable trends this author noticed while out and about at some of the local commercial health clubs.

- Crossfit style training has taken the populous by storm. I still cannot understand why athletes believe in plyometric exercises at the end of a crossfit circuit. For example, med ball burpees, to walking rotational lunges with a med ball, to single arm dumbbell rows, to ..... single leg skater plyo hops???? Isn't the point to plyometrics to build the elastic (stretch reflex) component as well as increase power? Then why do these at the end of a circuit when you are tired????
- Chest and bicep training are definitely the most popular body parts among those exhibiting higher levels of testosterone. Especially those with the rounded forward shoulder posture. Perhaps some antagonistic muscle group training (ie: external rotator, rhomboid, mid trapezius, etc...)would help to ease the pain in the shoulders.
- Spin classes, group pump, elliptical, crunches, and seated ab/adductor exercises seem to be the most popular for women. But yet, the common complaint one can overhear is, "I just can't seem

to lose the last 10lbs, or I am stuck at this weight, no matter how much cardio I do!” Perhaps a nutritional consult with a qualified Biosignature practitioner would do the trick.

You see, your hormones have a lot to do with where and why you store your fat. Understanding this, and the fact that certain exercises raise catabolic hormones (ie: long distance cardio raises cortisol), while lowering certain anabolic hormones (ie: long distance cardio lowers testosterone). This combined with the forward cyclical repetitive motion exercises such as spin, elliptical, and running, and there you have overuse injuries from what is known as pattern overload. Furthermore, combine this with the high processed carbohydrate/low fat diets which induce inflammation throughout the body and you have a recipe for chronic inflammation, joint pain, autoimmune disorders, and fat gain/weight gain. Ouch.....

- It seems Smith machine squats are the most popular form of squatting. This followed by barbell half squats (stopping at 90 degree bend at the knee), BOSU ball squats, Swiss ball against the wall squats, and lastly deep back squats and front squats. It is no wonder so many people walk around with little or no VMO (Vastus Medialis Oblique, the teardrop muscle to the inside of the knee) development as well as back pain and knee pain.

Typically much of what is taught in the personal training world comes from the physical therapy world. With that said, physical therapists are finally starting to dump the old Kenneth Klein (1961) study about deep squatting being bad for the knees, and choosing this method as the proper way of squatting in order to enhance knee health and overall lower extremity function. It should only be a matter of about 5 years or so before your major personal trainer certifications (ie: the most popular certifications in the United States, that is) follow suit.

It is for that reason that hiring a qualified strength coach (eg: Poliquin International Certification Program certified strength coach) may benefit not only your performance, but also your health. These strength coaches have been taught this method for years. Have you ever noticed that Olympic weight lifters have deep squatted during the Clean & Jerk, as well as the Snatch for over a century. So if it is good enough for them, especially with twice their bodyweight over their heads, then why wouldn't it be good for you? After all, if it ain't broke, then why fix it?

- Is everybody an expert? Just the other day I was out to dinner with my family and this large group next to us began talking about getting their college female athlete in shape for her upcoming soccer season. The most outspoken adult in the group told her exactly how to do it. The “expert” at the table told the female college athlete to go out jogging for a half hour, then increase the amount of time she jogged by 5-10 minutes per week for 2 weeks. He informed her that this would have her in the cardio shape she needs to be in for the sport. He also told her to include cross training such as spinning classes and swimming to increase her overall endurance. (I wonder if they saw the blood running down my lip from biting my tongue so hard, much to the entertainment of my wife).

The resident expert was probably a tri-athlete, teaching the team sports player to do what works for him in his sport. The problem here being the fact that his recommendation was probably the exact opposite of what the team sports athlete needed. She needs to develop speed and increase her strength and power. Interval sprint work would also be a good idea as her sport engages completely different energy systems than does a tri-athlete, and of course she needs structural balance weight training to decrease her injury risk profile. Bottom line: Just because somebody is an endurance athlete does not mean they know a lot (if anything) about how to prepare athletes for team sports. It is funny that endurance athletes are often regarded as the “epitome” of health and fitness, yet, they are the most oft injured. These athletes typically have poor cortisol to DHEA/testosterone levels, consistently overtrain, and are typically not very strong in functional strength (modified strongman) or absolute strength protocols.

- It would seem that the VMO muscle is becoming extinct in many commercial health clubs (bodybuilders and power lifters aside). Another possible addition to the endangered species list may seem to be external rotator cuff exercises.
- Is it just me or is Monday Universal chest and bicep day??
- I know commercial gyms offer a lot of machines for leg training, but does this mean unilateral leg training has to go away quietly? Single leg training can offer incredible benefits such as lower extremity structural balance, correction of faulty movement patterns, muscular activation, unloading of the spine (especially for those dealing with back problems), as well as strength, hypertrophy, and muscular endurance gains (depending on the time under tension and rep ranges).

- One of the best forms of cardiovascular exercise seems to be the machine that collects the most dust. You guessed it the rowing machine. If you “need to do cardio” the rowing machine is a great alternative to the typical treadmill, elliptical, or bike. Try putting the back end up on a low platform or step for an added kick in the arse.
- An exercise is not functional just because you are doing it on a BOSU trainer. From squats to bench press, to single leg standing overhead movements, this balance device has taken the fitness industry by storm. I have even seen people hoola hooping or jumping rope on this. Yikes.
- On any given back training day, the lat pulldown seems to outnumber the chin up 20 to 1. Not sure if this is because fitness enthusiasts think it is a better exercise, or the fact that it may just be easier??
- The power reverse curl seems to be the common substitute for the power clean. It is either this, or learning proper technique has not been a priority.
- Most of the supplement talk revolves around the newest Nitric Oxide supplement found in the pages of this month’s muscle magazine. Before jumping the gun and listening to advertisements, learning what minerals and vitamins your body may be deficient in may be a good start. I cannot remember the last time I met somebody who was deficient in citrulline malate. Zinc or magnesium deficiencies on the other hand.....
- A lot of personal trainers seem to have become ab training experts. Stabilize the core here, draw in the abdomen there. Most clients or gym goers are in it for the six pack, so why not teach them about nutrition, as it seems up to 75% or so of having a six pack comes from low body fat which is result of proper nutrition. Also, squats and deadlifts, along with modified strongman training protocols have been shown to have greater abdominal muscle recruitment than typical prone or supine abdominal exercises.
- And lastly, just because a workout program worked for the angry guy with the oversized traps, and diet consisting of Donut shop sandwiches and protein shakes, doesn’t mean it will work for you.

Perhaps next time bringing an extra set of batteries, keeping the headphones on, and going about the workout as usual will be a better idea.

Enjoy.....