

## Ithaca Journal

February 21, 2013

### High intensity, high pay-off: Where to burn calories fast in Ithaca

Fitness gyms embrace different ways of keeping people in shape



High Intensity Crossfit Training: High Intensity Crossfit Training at CrossFit Pallas in Ithaca.

**ITHACA** — Tim Paulson was skeptical when he first tried out high-intensity, functional workouts — short, full-body exercises that get your heart pounding at a rapid rate.

“I thought, there’s no way I’m going to get the same results as when I bench press or do plyometrics,” Paulson said.

So for the first six months, he supplemented each new workout with his old regimen.

“Eventually I realized, ‘Wow, this is stupid,’ and I stopped,” he said.

Convinced by his own results, Paulson has literally bought in — he is co-owner of [CrossFit Pallas](#), part of a new generation of fitness gyms that have opened in the Ithaca area over the past couple of years.

At [Ultimate Athletics](#) and CrossFit Pallas, both in Ithaca, and Precision Strength and Conditioning in Dryden, trainers such as Paulson cheer their clients through ever-changing combinations of exercises with names like “burpees,” “Turkish get-ups,” “G.I. Janes” and “manmakers.”

In spaces uncluttered by machines, participants swing Russian kettlebells, climb ropes, thrust dumbbells, jump on boxes, flip tractor tires, rip barbells, move battle ropes or just heave their own body weight about in pull-ups, air squats or push-ups.

Each of these gyms offers its own brand of high-intensity, functional training that in the past decade has moved into the mainstream. High-intensity workouts take place at 80 to 85 percent of a person's maximum heart rate (MHR), calculated as 220 minus current age, according to the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM).

Compared to endurance training, at 50 to 75 percent of MHR, "high-intensity exertion is something you can sustain for just a few minutes at a time," said Frank Micale, clinical associate professor of exercise and sports sciences and director of the Wellness Program at Ithaca College.

Even a short series of such segments "elicits a more hormonal response (than slower, endurance exercise), keeps the metabolism up and helps to oxidize fat," trainer Dane Schreiner of Ultimate Athletics said.

Following high-intensity exercise, the body continues to burn calories for 1 1/2 to 24 hours, leading the ACSM to declare high-intensity exercise to be "likely necessary" for achieving significant improvements in body composition (the relative proportion of fat and lean mass), which can reduce the [risk](#) of chronic disease.

Another benefit is the functional nature of the workouts, whose compound movements are intended to prepare the body for the activities of daily life.

"Some doctors will say that people with certain conditions or the elderly shouldn't be dead-lifting," says Schreiner, "but if you're picking up stuff in your yard or your groceries, that's exactly what you're doing. Here, we're telling you how to do it properly."

[Precision Strength and Conditioning](#) co-owner Aaron Newman agrees. "It makes sense, plus it's time-efficient," he said.

The ACSM confirms high-intensity workouts provide the same benefits as endurance training, but in less time, a big draw for Jessica Verfuss of Cortland.

"I like that the workout (at Precision) is quick, maybe 30 to 45 minutes," said Verfuss, who is in the Naval Reserve and must take a fitness test every six months.

At the same time, variety prevents injuries from repetitive movements and keeps athletes interested.

"I don't think I've ever done the same workout twice," said Cornell graduate student Jen Baker, who trains at Ultimate Athletics.

"It's like a box of chocolates," CrossFit trainer Coyne said with a grin. "You never know what you're going to get when you come in here."

Workouts that are too challenging or easy can be modified. And because class sizes are typically small, trainers keep a close eye on individual techniques and needs.

## **For the pros, too**

Andrew Wall of Newfield, a minor league pitcher in the Washington Nationals organization who pitched collegiately at Ithaca College, relies on his Precision trainers' personalized attention to get him into shape for spring training.

"It's harder to find your motivation when you're at a gym on your own," he said, "whereas if you have one of these guys here pushing you through, you get those extra one or two reps on a set. It makes a huge difference over time."

But the real push often comes from friendly competition within the class.

"I had two people who were going rep for rep in a workout," trainer Coyne said. "And at the end they told each other, 'Awesome job.'"

Bonded by hard work and sweat, Lisa Giroux, a nurse's aide and mother of two, loves the support she receives at Ultimate Athletics. "It makes you feel great; you have so much more energy," she said. "It's almost like a second family."

Those who do high-intensity workouts say the results are noticeable. Amanda McLaughlin, a nursing student, has been training at Precision since Thanksgiving.

"I'm shocked by the amount of progress I've made with some of the exercises," she said. "I've lost weight and inches. I'm going to have to talk to (the trainers) about buying me a new wardrobe in a month."

For those itching to make good on a New Year's resolutions with some high-intensity exercise, professor Frank Micale recommends taking the time to evaluate their health with a doctor. While the ACSM states high-intensity training is safe for most people, it warns it may carry an increased risk of injury for some.

Even healthy athletes, Micale said, should mix vigorous exercise with aerobic activities and throw in some stretching.

"You can't handle this kind of high-intensity stuff all the time," he said. "I don't care what kind of athlete you are."

Trainers should be qualified to adjust the workouts to each individual's needs, so Micale recommends seeking out certified instructors.

"They should be knowledgeable and concerned about the clients, maybe tempering the workout or telling people not to do certain exercises," he said. "It goes back to the consumer being as educated as they can."

It may also be helpful for the individual to reflect on his or her goals, Micale said.

“Knowing where you ultimately want to go is going to help you figure out where you want to put your energy in your exercise,” he said, noting this could mean adjusting expectations. “People see these perfectly sculpted bodies, and if they start an exercise program thinking they’ll look like that, I think there are going to be some questions.”

But there is no doubt that high-intensity workouts can be effective if you put in the effort.

“You’re only going to get the results if you put in the hard work,” CrossFit trainer Tim Paulson said. “We trainers can help you, but you need to come in.”

## Where to work out

### • [CrossFit Pallas](#)

**Where:** 711-13 Court St., Ithaca

**Phone:** (484) 889-1334

**About CrossFit Pallas:** One of 5,500 world-wide affiliates of the CrossFit company; multiple trainings daily (up to 45 minutes, Monday through Saturday), capped at eight students per class.

**Trainer Eamon Coyne says:** “We attack weaknesses and make people face them head-on, not only in the gym but outside of the gym as well.”

### • [Precision Strength and Conditioning](#)

**Where:** 87 W. Main St., Dryden

**Phone:** 351-3129

**About Precision S&C:** Small group high-intensity, strength, and recovery classes (45-60 minutes, Monday through Saturday). Personal training available; initial lifestyle inventory for individualized training plan.

**Trainer Aaron Newman says:** “We want to make sure everyone has fun down here and feels comfortable.”

### • [Ultimate Athletics](#)

**Where:** 40 Catherwood Road, Ithaca

**Phone:** 319-0685

**About UA:** Home of The BombSquad, a professional mixed martial arts team; multiple Ultimate Fit high-intensity classes (45-60 minutes, Monday through Saturday) next to adult and youth martial arts training.

**Trainer Dane Schreiner says:** “We make the workouts difficult so life can be easier.”