

Personal approach to fitness

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As summer beckons Jacky Byrne leaves behind sluggish winter and is put through her paces at Guildford's Field of Fitness.

IT'S nearly 48 hours after my 'initiation' at Guildford's Field of Fitness personal training studio and injury clinic – and my puny muscles know it.

They're not aching too badly – because my trainer Daniel Oliver wasn't too hard on me as a beginner – but I'm definitely aware of them and I like the sensation. It means I've jumped out of winter hibernation mode and that a whole new world of fitness could be stretching out in front of me this summer.

Time, and the mirror, will tell if my visit to Field of Fitness has really kick-started a fitness routine, but I can now see how it would all seem so much easier if you had a personal trainer spurring you on and designing a varied exercise programme especially for you. Buoyed up with resolve after leaving the Chapel Street fitness studio, I was even able to resist the dozens of food emporia in that part of town and go home to an apple and a glass of water.

A finalist in last year's *Surrey Advertiser* Toast of Surrey Business Awards, Field of Fitness is owned by Daniel Oliver and Jon Field, who share many years of experience in the fitness industry. It has two floors of light, modern and well equipped gym space with a view over Guildford. Group classes in the top floor studio include pilates, fit ball, circuit training, X biking, boxercise and yoga, while the personal training takes place on the other floor. The changing rooms and showers, with their minimalist, Japanese-influenced design and Molton Brown toiletries, would not look out of place in a boutique hotel, and sports massage and rehabilitation after injury is also offered.

The super-fit professional dancers Flavia Cacace and Vincent Simone from *Strictly Come Dancing* are among those who have trained here, but what can you expect if you sign up for personal training with Field of Fitness as a beginner? First, every client has a foundation fitness assessment before starting. The assessment is used as a baseline to refer back to when measuring progress and the client is given a comprehensive report on all tests completed, with goals and suggestions for a healthier lifestyle and nutritional advice.

It measures height and weight, blood pressure, resting heart rate, body mass index, body fat, metabolism, lean



With their 'zen' ambience, the changing rooms and showers at Field of Fitness are worthy of a boutique hotel.

tissue, hydration, lung function and flexibility.

I'll draw a veil over the precise results. Let's say there is room for improvement, but vital stuff such as my blood pressure was OK. Though I am not fit, I'm not completely idle. I do enjoy regular pilates classes and the odd swim and walk, but I have never done a proper 'workout'. So, it was with some trepidation that I approached my warm-up on the cross trainer, a machine I've avoided in my previous brief flirtations with gyms, believing it might prove a bridge too far for my already challenged co-ordination. I discovered that co-ordination was less of a problem than stamina – it was exhausting and I'm not sure I could ever grow to like it, but then I'm no fan of the treadmill or exercise bike either.

Neither is balance my best asset. So a stint on the bosu ball – a wobbly, dome-shaped device which is a struggle to stand on, never mind perform squats on – wouldn't be my choice, even with Daniel poised to catch me if I fell. But I can see how it could strengthen your 'core' muscles and help your proprioception (also known as balance). You really need to engage your abdominals – and other muscles you didn't even know existed – to keep stable.

With my legs wobbling horribly, I realised at this stage I had never before pushed myself out of my comfort zone,

exercise-wise. That's why people have personal trainers.

Next round was boxing. Boxing! So not me, I thought. But amazingly boxing was fun and just as stress-relieving as you might imagine. It taxes the brain a little too, remembering combinations of punches in different sequences. Poor Daniel, I reckon I took out years of tension on him.

We also did some stretching exercises, in which I proudly revealed my reasonable flexibility, and Daniel tested the strength of my transverse abdominus muscle, the one that heroically holds in your stomach fat. Thanks to years of pilates, my transverse abdominus is not too bad, but once again, there's scope for improvement. After investigating the possible reasons for an annoying spinal click I have noticed whenever I perform a certain manoeuvre, Daniel had me balancing a curtain pole on my back in a final exercise before a cooling down routine.

And was I feeling cool? Not really. I left the studio wondering if I still had the strength to trawl Guildford High Street for a little something to add to my spring wardrobe. A surprising energy rush saw me visiting almost every shop but all the changing room mirrors suggested one path only – the one leading straight back to Field of Fitness.

For more information, visit www.fieldoffitness.com.

HEALTH