

SUNDAY, JUNE 08, 2008 | LIFE, HEALTH + FITNESS

SP Are you tough enough?



SOPHIE LOUISE ASSELIN

CrossFit Atlanta gets people ripped with seemingly simple exercise moves, like the classic push-up.

WHAT: CrossFit Atlanta

WHERE: 964 Watkins St.

HOW MUCH? 1st session free; \$20 daily drop-in rate; visit Web site for monthly rates.

CONTACT INFO: 404-862-6580.

www.crossfitatlanta.com.

FITNESS FACTOR: 5 stars

FUN FACTOR: 4 stars

that routine three times as fast as I could without compromising form, and he was going to time me. The first round was tough, the second was brutal, and the third was near impossible. I was sweating profusely and everything burned, but by the time it was over, I also knew that it was one of the best workouts I'd ever had.

I felt great, not only because Dan told me a lot of first-timers can't make it through the whole routine, but also because I could tell that even in the short time that I was pushing my body (10 minutes and 20 seconds), I had really worked out my entire body, particularly the core.

I stayed and chatted with Dan about the philosophy behind CrossFit; why machines and isolation movements (like bicep curls) don't give the same results as the time-tested moves like squats and dead-lifts, and the best nutrition for athletes (he's partial to the Zone diet). After talking to him for 30 minutes, it's clear that he's passionate about CrossFit and believes in the results (it's easy to see why, what with all the hard bodies walking around the gym, mine not included). His passion is contagious, and I found myself eager to try it again. "Come back anytime," he said. "Just not tomorrow—you're going to be kind of sore." That was kind of an understatement. **SP**

Colleen Oakley is a freelance writer in Atlanta and the former editor of Women's Health & Fitness magazine. Got a fitness challenge for her? E-mail her at colleen@sundaypaper.com.

You may think you're in shape—until you work out at CrossFit Atlanta

By Colleen Oakley

I was googling "fitness Atlanta" the other day, looking for gyms or workouts that I'd never heard of before, and I stumbled upon www.crossfit.com. Two things surprised me: 1.) It's a Web site that posts daily workouts for free. 2.) It has a large following (2 million users per month, I found out later), meaning lots of people actually do these workouts and then post feedback about how it went.

After a little more research, I found out that it's not just an Internet craze, but a chain of gyms, and Atlanta has one (incidentally, named the best gym in Atlanta by Fox 5). I called the owner Dan McDougal and asked him to show me what CrossFit is all about.

I went on a Wednesday morning, not sure what to expect. The gym itself is a small, open, industrial-looking space; you feel like you're in someone's garage—someone who's really into fitness. Dan explained to me that CrossFit is a workout designed to create the best well-rounded athlete using very basic workout methods. I realize the gym is teeming with cut-up rugby, soccer and lacrosse players, not to mention Olympic athletes, for a reason: This fitness routine works. But it's also great for your average fitness-minded individual—someone who likes to be in shape and be challenged.

I start with the basic warm-up: 500 meters on the rowing machine, a few stretches, 20 squats, 20 push-ups, 20 pull-ups (I didn't quite make it to 20 of these, but I tried my hardest), 20 sit-ups, and some glut and leg work. Then Dan coached me through the workout. Fifteen dead lifts, 25 squats, and 15 push-presses. I was to go through