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Mixed martial arts training enters mainstream

By Ashley Curtin Staff Writer

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UFC workouts include mixed martial arts training such as Muay Thai and Jiu Jitsu.

Running, biking and lifting weights aren't the only forms of exercise that will get the body into physical shape.

Kickboxing and mixed martial arts training are growing in popularity within the health and fitness industry and UFC-style workouts are among the hottest fitness trends.

UFC - Ultimate Fighting Championship - techniques are giving everyday people the chance to train like former champs Brock Lesnar or Randy Couture without stepping into the Octagon, the eight-sided fighting cage.

At the forefront of the trend is UFC Gym, a fitness center chain that combines traditional and modern workouts with UFC techniques to

create a unique fitness experience. In Southern California, there are gym locations in Corona and Rosemead, with a facility set to open in Torrance in January.

"This gym is for everyone," said Adam Sedlack, senior vice president of UFC Gym. "It is for the 'average Joe' looking to work out, the extreme athlete training hard or for women wanting to improve their self-esteem."

UFC Gym was founded by Mark Mastrov, former chairman and CEO of 24 Hour Fitness Worldwide Inc., who partnered with UFC president Dana White in 2008 to help expand the fighting brand.

The first UFC Gym opened January 2010 in Concord, providing the general public with a UFC training regimen .

"UFC is the fastest-growing sport in today's world," said Sedlack, who has been involved with the fitness industry since 1994.

UFC Gym falls under the umbrella of the Northern California-based New Evolution Fitness Company - a private equity firm Mastrov established with partners to promote the health and fitness industry and to provide management to emerging fitness companies worldwide including YogaWorks, USA; Crunch; and Steve

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Nash Sports Clubs.

"(UFC Gym) is not just a place where you train to fight," said Sedlack. "We have taken what is great at the average gym and offer that with UFC initiatives."



Dustin Holcomb step 2 of the "dying bug" exercise. (Brad Graverson/Staff Photographer)

Some of those UFC elements include mixed martial arts training such as Muay Thai and Jiu Jitsu, along with kickboxing and other self-defense programs.

"These can be exciting exercises and a lot of fun," said George Toney, a lecturer and chief self-defense instructor at USC since 1988.

MMA training offered at UFC Gym, certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine, focuses on an individual's skill level and helps educate people about the sport.

"MMA is skill-based training," said Toney, who trains military service groups in MMA. "If done correctly, it builds confidence because it builds skills to defend yourself."

Toney, who was the North American Grappling Association's 10th Anniversary Heavyweight Instructor's Champion in 2005 and who competed in submission wrestling for a number of years, advises participants to be in good health before performing MMA training.

Since it is a combative sport, he says, people

with pre-existing injuries - particularly neck and back issues - should avoid participating.

"It can be a tough environment, so be careful and stay healthy," said Toney. "But it is a really nice franchise and a good facility, so go in and have fun."

Aside from MMA workouts, UFC Gym offers training in plyometric exercises to improve quickness and TRX suspension training, which uses one's body weight to help build muscle.

In addition, training in explosive movement and intense



Dustin Holcomb step 1 of the "lunge/pushup" exercise. (Brad Graverson/Staff Photographer)

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conditioning, through exercises such as bench jumping and kettle bell lifting, helps burn more calories than traditional exercises while increasing cardiovascular strength, says Dustin Holcomb, fitness director and trainer at UFC Gym.

"These exercises are fun and different than all other styles of training," Holcomb said.

"UFC athletes are the best trained in the (fitness) industry," Sedlack said. "So when we get the average person into UFC condition, they are truly inspired."

While UFC Gyms have a fight cage and UFC bouts streaming on video, they are similar to other health clubs with flat-screen TVs, upbeat music, extensive cardio equipment, weight machines and a snack bar.

In addition, the fitness center offers a UFC Kid's Gym, where children can work out and learn basic MMA skills.

A basic membership to UFC Gym is about \$35 per month, while the more extensive membership, which includes MMA training, costs about \$90 per month.

"We have a very unique community that drives each other and motivates everyone," said Sedlack. "The gym gives a completely different experience and that is what is so unique about it. We are looking for people to understand the concept and join in the fun."

UFC-STYLE WORKOUTS

These plyometric exercises - which help develop speed and quickness - are used as preparation for UFC-style workouts. They are demonstrated by UFC Gym fitness director Dustin Holcomb, who is certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine.

Burpees

Step 1: Squat, with both knees close to your chest and the palms of your hands flat on the floor.

Step 2: Kick your legs back so your body is parallel to the floor and lower your body into a push-up.

Step 3: Bring your legs back to your body, returning to the original squat position, and use your legs to jump up, raising your hands above your head. Continue for two to three sets of 15.

Lunge push-ups

Step 1: Start with your feet shoulder-width apart and step forward with your left leg, making sure the knee is at a 90-degree angle.

Step 2: Put your hands on the floor at either side of your body to balance your weight. Kick the right leg back so your body is parallel to the floor and do a traditional push-up.

Step 3: Stand up and repeat the exercise using the opposite leg. Continue for two to three sets of 15, alternating legs throughout the exercise.

Dying bug

Step 1: Lie flat on your back with your feet and



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arms slightly off the floor.

Step 2: Touch your right hand to your left foot.
Then touch your left hand to your right foot.
Continue for two to three sets of 15 touches to
each foot.

Find out more

To learn more about UFC Gym, go to www.ufcgym.com.

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An advertisement for Omaha Steaks. On the right is a photograph of a cooked salmon steak on a white plate. On the left is a red and white logo for "HEARTLAND QUALITY OMAHA STEAKS SINCE 1917". Below the logo, the text reads "SAVE up to 64%", "Plus, get 3 FREE Gifts", and "Special Code: 45069ZWN". At the bottom, a red banner contains the text "To order: www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71 or call 1-877-605-0496".

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