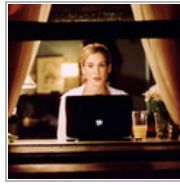




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October 12, 2011



What do you get when you take a cardio boot camp and put it in a 100-degree room? We find out, the sweaty way.

By Abby Gardner

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Special Offer

I'm sprawled out on all fours, my hands sliding off the back of a sweat-soaked exercise mat as I desperately try to shift my legs back and forth behind me in a torturous series of moves called "mountain climbers." I'm flailing, dripping, red-faced, and gasping for breath. This may very well be the least graceful or attractive I've ever looked. Questions are running through my head at a pace as rapid as my pulse: Am I having a heart attack? Have I sweat out 14 pounds yet? How did I get here?

"Here" is a studio called Pure Yoga in New York City, where I'm trying out their latest class, Bassett's Boot Camp. It's the brainchild of yoga teacher Loren Bassett and her personal trainer, Cole McDonough, of David Barton Gym. Bassett tells me that she wanted to take her practice to the next level and meld it with some cross-training. "I wanted to combine everything I love," she explains. The result is a 75-minute mix of high-intensity cardio intervals, strength training, core work, and power yoga. And it takes place in a room that's heated to between 95 and 100 degrees. (Bassett notes that doing cardio in the heat carries a risk of overheating, so you need to hydrate before, during, and after class with twice your usual water intake.) I've been practicing Bikram hot yoga for 10 years now, so I thought, How hard can hot cardio be? But as I enter the room and head over to my mat, I'm already covered in sweat. I begin to panic. I've been there less than five

minutes. I sense this might not end well.

Still, it all begins peacefully enough with some sun salutations and downward-facing dogs as we warm up — as if one needs any help in a sweltering room. I'm feeling good, if slightly awkward, when Bassett drops a word I haven't heard since high school gym class: burpees. I immediately flash back to a stinky gymnasium as a teenager during preseason conditioning. In case you didn't have the pleasure of learning this move, here's a refresher: You start standing, drop into a squat with your hands on the ground, kick your feet back while lowering yourself into a push-up, return your feet to the squatting position, and then leap back up to stand with your arms over your head. We do

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this for a minute straight. Said minute feels like a decade. Later, Bassett explains that these one-minute intervals of high-intensity drills were incorporated to challenge the cardio and muscular systems, increase the heart rate, burn calories (the entire class burns around 800), and boost metabolism. She should add "almost kill me" to the list.

Over the next 75 minutes, we also do side squats, lunge jumps, planks, tricep rows, squat presses with weights for strength building, and core exercises that include holding a yoga block between our legs. If you guessed that I almost vomited during each and every one of these cardio bursts, you'd be correct.

Another killer: There's no break during class. Various yoga poses are meant to serve as recovery moments, but I take some liberties and stop during a few (read: all) of the conditioning bursts so that I don't actually fall over. I also begin to recall a particularly whistle-happy Coach McQuiston — think a '90s Sue Sylvester — who worked us until my trembling muscles felt like they were going to give out and my face was the color of a cherry tomato.

Back in the oppressively hot studios of Pure Yoga, after more than an hour of exertion, we reach savasana, or corpse pose. I feel like an extremely sweaty corpse myself. But, hallelujah, I've made it. And though I may be suffering from heat-induced delirium, the athlete in me wants to come back for more.

Post — boot camp, as I feel soreness in muscles that I had forgot existed, I realize how important cross-training and hybrid workouts are to get into prime shape. And I have no doubt that this class is one that can do just that. Call me crazy, but I'm counting down the days to my next session.

If only Coach McQuiston could see me now, actually paying someone to yell at me to do more burpees.

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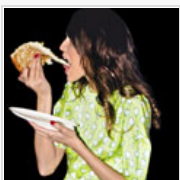
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