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SPORTS

'Go hard or go home'

Boot camp busts your butt

BY MICHAEL HALL
STAFF REPORTER

It's 6 a.m., dark and grey, pouring rain.

Rush-hour traffic is backed up on Loughheed Highway past Harris Road Park, where the faint silhouettes of 14 women stretch under a canopy of tall cedar trees near the outdoor pool.

The hills of their caps drip with rain as they head out to the neighbourhood for an eight-minute jog.

Upon returning to the park and for the next 45 minutes they perform push-ups and jumping jacks, step over hurdles and through hoops, skip rope and crawl under a tree, do squats, biceps curls and deep-knee bends, as well as sit-ups and bicycle kicks.

Near the end some have rosy cheeks. Some moan. One can no longer lift her legs on her own. So Mari-Ann Drevaite helps her.

Mari-Ann is the instructor of Adventure Boot Camp—a fitness program that she claims can reduce a person's body fat by 3 to 8%, or by five to 12 pounds, in four weeks.

Body-fat measurements are taken at the beginning and end of each camp, which also includes a nutrition seminar.

It is not a military or disciplinary camp, but clients are expected to arrive on time. If not, they have to do push-ups.

Each one has paid \$400 to take part in the camp, Monday to Friday, 6 a.m. each day, in the park, rain or shine.

They joined to lose weight, get healthy and for a challenge.

Three weeks in, their muscles and joints are no longer tight and sore, or at least less so. They are beginning to feel strong.

"It's getting easier," said Linda O'Shea. "I've learned to pace myself."

She's over 40 and has high cholesterol and blood pressure. She needed to start exercising. "I was like a blob."

She had a gym membership before, but never used it much. She read about boot camp and thought that being part of a group and sharing a personal trainer would help her.

Lynda went to the doctor on Tuesday. Her blood pressure was down 13 points, she said.

Mari-Ann organizes a different workout regimen every day, one that keeps participants moving for 60 minutes straight. It is a combination of cardiovascular and strength, agility and endurance training.

Clients go at their own pace.

Cindy Lundin, 35, is the rabbit in the group. She hustles no matter what, getting her money's worth. "Go hard or go home. That's my motto," she said.

When Cindy read about the boot camp she decided it would be her next challenge. Last year she ran a 50 kilometre trail race in Belcarra. She also lifts weights, but gets bored easily.

Cindy said boot camp is easier than she thought it would be, even getting up early and exercising in the rain. She's been a mail carrier for Canada Post for the past 14 years. "I'm used to it."

Cindy said she was a boot camp instructor she'd yell more. "I'd be a bit more corporal."

Mari-Ann is not a drill sergeant. She is a certified fitness and Pilates trainer.

She was raised in Sandefjord, Norway, where as a youth she competed in archery. She was also a distance runner, downhill skier, horseback rider and aerobic instructor. At age 17, she discovered weightlifting. Mari-Ann is also a certified scuba diver and enjoys mountain biking, snowboard-



STAFF PHOTO/NEWS

(Top) Darlene Henry crawls through an opening in a tree as part of an obstacle course set up in Harris Road Park; (right) early bird boot campers run through rings, also part of the obstacle course.



ing, rollerblading, bungee jumping and skydiving.

She met her husband, a Maple Ridge man, while working on a cruise ship. He was an entertainer on the ship. She was it's recreational director. They moved to Canada in 1993. Mari-Ann worked in fitness clubs until 1996, when she sustained serious back injuries in a car accident. Five years of rehabilitation taught her a lot. During that time she also studied strength training, specifically core muscles, including a course with Alex McKechnie, now a trainer with the Los Angeles Lakers.

Mari-Ann is currently training for a natural body-building competition. One day she wants to be Ms. Olympia. She said her camp is for people who are tired of fitness clubs, who want to

push themselves harder but need a push. It is for people who want results, she said.

Darlene Henry, 44, wanted to get in shape, but said she couldn't find time to exercise. A friend told her about boot camp.

Darlene said her muscles hurt for the first two weeks, but not so much now. "My range of motion and strength have improved."

Mari-Ann ran her first camp at the park in January. She currently runs two a day, one for early birds and another at 9 a.m. The next camp begins Sept. 26.

Mari-Ann laid down an obstacle course Wednesday morning.

The women start with push-ups against picnic tables and trees, then high-step over meandering mini-hurdles. They do free squats at the next sta-



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Cindy Lundin exercises with dumbbells,

tion. At the next, they run side to side, reaching down to touch plastic domes like pickling up pennies.

Then they do jumping jacks.

"Do 60, if you can," Mari-Ann instructs.

At the next station, they bend down, touch seven more domes. They get up, then down, crawling on their hands and knees on a rubber mat through an opening at the base of a tree with a trunk split like an inverted Y. One of the women walks around the tree.

"Oh, that's scary," said Darlene as she squeezes through.

Cindy sprints to the next station, tip-toeing through the rings like a soldier through tires.

She dances through the next: front and back crossovers through a rope ladder on the ground.

The women finish with skipping and biceps curls, then get a drink of water and pull out their mats for a cool-down session.

All the while music rotates on a small CD player atop a picnic table, from Tom Jones to Dirty Vegas, Shania Twain to No Doubt.

The women lie on their sides, hips off the ground.

"Hold it for 40 seconds," said Mari-Ann, standing over the women with a stop watch.

Some of the women moan. "Oh, this is going to be the death of me," someone said.

"Alright, when is 40 seconds up?" asked Darlene.

They change positions.

"How are you feeling?" Mari-Ann asks.

"Sore," said another.

They move on to sit-ups and bicycle kicks. One lady can no longer hold up her legs to do bicycle kicks. Mari-Ann gets down on her knees and holds the women's legs up, allowing her to keep pedaling.

"My glasses are fogging up," Lynda jokes as the session finishes with a stretch.

The stereo is playing Rod Stewart now.

... if you want my body and you think I'm sexy, come on honey tell me so ...