

FITNESS

MODEL TRAINERS

Meet four Philadelphia trainers who add personality to personal training. **BY JENNIFER GOLDSTEIN**

From Atkins to the Zone and jumping rope to Jiu-Jitsu, there are a million ways to get in shape this year. If you're considering working with a personal trainer to reach your fitness goals, you'll be happy to learn there's a variety in that choice as well. Whether you prefer a former bodybuilder who says he's happiest when his muscles are so sore he can barely move or a peppy Ph.D. candidate who cries with her clients, there's a trainer in Philadelphia who can help you keep your resolution to be healthy in the new year.

NO PAIN, NO GAIN

Most people who work with a trainer want to tone their bodies and slim down. Sergio Bucciarelli can certainly help with that goal, but he prefers a challenge. "I'll do whatever a client wants. But I really like taking things to the next level," says Bucciarelli, a trainer at the Sporting Club at the Bellevue. "I like working with clients who want me to push them."

David Mallin is definitely one of those people. He's been working out at the Sporting Club for two years, and after spending months perfecting his form with another trainer, he started working with Bucciarelli in August 2003. "I liked the look of his clients and I wanted to get bigger," says Mallin, who admits it's a challenge to add weight to his slim frame.

With a degree in exercise physiology from Temple University, a blue belt in Gracie Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and certification from the American Council on Exercise, Bucciarelli was ready to help. To address Mallin's goals, Bucciarelli designed a muscle-building workout that concentrates heavily on Olympic-style weight lifting, strength training and stretching. He trusts Mallin to do cardio on his own time. "I have a holistic viewpoint, but weights are very important. You need that resistance," he says.

During an hour-long workout at the Sporting Club, Mallin and Bucciarelli weave between the machines and work together in a familiar rhythm that's punctuated by Mallin's groans and Bucciarelli's commands. At one point during the workout, Bucciarelli leans over Mallin

as he's punishing his triceps with a 60-pound dumbbell. "Only two more," he says as Mallin struggles to lift the weight from behind his head. Just as he completes the last rep, Bucciarelli looks Mallin in the eyes and says, "I lied. Give me two more." Mallin squeezes out a smile and concentrates on finishing the last two reps. Even with sweat beads popping up on his forehead and his arms shaking a little, you can tell he loves this.

"David's strength has gone through the roof since he started working with me...he can do a 340-pound dead lift," Bucciarelli says.

"That's around twice my weight," Mallin adds shyly at an almost inaudible level. He's proud, but he's not the type to brag. Instead, he quickly changes the subject and talks about how helpful the staff at the Sporting Club is. "Even when I'm not working out with Sergio, there's always someone around to help. They're really nice."

Bucciarelli agrees that the Sporting Club, a Michael Graves-designed facility just over 93,000-square-feet, is a great fitness club. "At the Sporting Club, we're all about better living," he says, laughing at the cheesiness of the statement. Still, he acknowledges that really is his goal. "It feels great to know what I am doing is helping people, to know someone out there feels better about themselves because of me."

NO INTIMIDATION

"The person I buy my coffee from calls me the smiley lady," says Kimberly Garrison around 5:45 a.m. in the lobby of the 12th Street Gym. "I've been up since 4 a.m.," she adds with more energy than most Philadelphians can muster at 9 a.m. But Garrison is no regular Philadelphian, nor is she a regular trainer. As owner and founder of One on One Ultimate Fitness, Garrison works primarily with female clients at a variety of gyms across the city.

Others in the fitness community sometimes refer to Garrison as a "life coach," but client Kellyann Williams would probably call her a

miracle worker. Williams has lost 60 pounds since she started working with Garrison in August 2002. "I first heard about Kimberly from my sister," Williams says. "She kept saying, 'Kimberly says this' and 'Kimberly says that. Kimberly, Kimberly, Kimberly.' We thought she was in some damn cult!"

It's not a cult, but Garrison's approach definitely encompasses more than the typical trainer's. In addition to strength training, stretching and creating aerobic activities, Garrison provides nutri-

"KIMBERLY TAKES EVERYTHING INTO ACCOUNT, NOT JUST THE EXERCISE...WE CELEBRATE EVERYTHING WITH TEARS. KIMBERLY'S THAT KIND OF PERSON. SHE'S THERE FOR YOU."

tional counseling, develops goals and discusses obstacles.

During a recent workout, as Williams climbed the stairs to a studio on the fourth floor of 12th Street Gym she jokingly complained she was on her way to the "death chamber."

"It's the chamber of life," Garrison countered with eternal optimism. Combined with an infectious laugh and extensive knowledge, that optimism makes training with Garrison more effective and enjoyable for clients like Williams.

"The first thing I ask people is why they want to lose weight. If it's for any other reason than for themselves, I stop right there. You can't have your husband saying you need to lose weight. It has to be your decision," Garrison says. Once she has pinpointed clear goals and completed an evaluation (even going so far as to ask questions such as "How many hours of sleep do you get in a 24-hour period?" and "How would you describe your spiritual health?"), Garrison develops a plan.

For Williams, that means cardio such as walking and water aerobics on her own and three training sessions per week with Garrison that include a variety of calisthenic drills, work with a medicine ball and weight lifting. Garrison also taught Williams how to eat better by giving her a portioned plate with a small section for starches and protein, a big section for salads and vegetables and a tiny square for condiments. "Kimberly hates white foods like starches, mayonnaise, butter and creamy salad dressings...and that condiment portion was so small it wasn't even worth it, so I learned to eat without them," Williams says of the diet.

Although Garrison even visited Williams at home to see how she and her family were eating, she explains that not all clients need or want that level of attention. But it seems those who do hold a special place in Garrison's heart. As Williams describes the first time she bought clothes that weren't from the plus-size department, Garrison looks on with pride, almost as if she's going to cry. And though she doesn't, Williams says it wouldn't be out of character: "Kimberly takes everything into account, not just the exercise...we celebrate everything with tears. She's there for you."

NO FRILLS

Most Philadelphians don't realize they have access to a world-class strength-training program right on Chestnut Street. That's probably because Maxercise, an unpretentious facility tucked above an empty storefront, isn't out to win over clients with gimmicks and gloss. Sure, Brad Pitt trained here while he was in town filming *12 Monkeys*, but the only reason you'd know is because

owner DC Maxwell has a small photo of him sitting on a crowded shelf behind her desk.

If you climbed the flight of stairs and opened the unassuming glass door to check out Maxercise, you'd probably never find out about the extensive fitness accomplishments of Maxwell and her husband and co-owner Steve. Instead, you'd find a way to strength train quickly and effectively, just as client Dr. Uri Hangorsky did when he discovered Maxercise seven years ago.

"My goal was to be fit and healthy," Hangorsky says, admitting the main reason he has a personal trainer is because he wouldn't go to the gym if he didn't have an appointment.

"Uri works out with Travis [Fraser], our head trainer who has been with us for 15 years, but no matter who you work with at

Maxercise you are getting the same benefits," Maxwell says. Unlike other gyms where trainers use their own techniques and sometimes even compete over clients, Maxercise's trainers use the same methods, and exercises and recommend the same low-carbohydrate diet.

"The most important thing about our workouts is that we fit them into a half hour so people can get in and get on with their lives," Maxwell says. "The second thing is that we fit it to you." In Hangorsky's case this means a workout based on the super slow method of training, which requires clients to lift weights very slowly without relying on momentum. "The muscles are loaded throughout the entirety of the set...there's no rest," Maxwell says. "It gives good results and there are less reps because the reps take longer."

Maxwell says clients aren't as susceptible to injury using this

"THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT OUR WORKOUTS IS THAT WE FIT THEM INTO A HALF HOUR SO PEOPLE CAN GET IN AND GET ON WITH THEIR LIVES."

method, but she's also quick to explain it's not for everyone. "We have many different protocols...when a new client comes in I always ask, 'What are you trying to do?'" For Hangorsky, in addition to staying fit so he could enjoy hiking and yoga, this also meant developing a workout that helped him maintain his strength. It's definitely working: "Uri's 57 and he can crank out chin-ups."

With bare walls, old carpeting and even some homemade exercise devices, such as ropes bolted into the ceiling, this facility isn't pretty, but it does promise results.

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

FITNESS

NO NONSENSE

Don't let the baby face fool you; Luke Shechtman may be young, but he knows what he's doing. With a degree in exercise science from the University of Delaware, this ACE-certified trainer has been working at Sweat for about a year. His following of clients probably started seeing him for his concise, easy-to-understand workouts, but stuck around because of his positive attitude and laid-back style. "He's not sadistic," says Jocelyn Jenik, a 40-year-old mother of two who has been working with Shechtman for six months.

Jenik started working with Shechtman last April after what she calls "a coconut Easter egg-eating incident." "When people started asking me if I was expecting my third child, I decided to start working out," she says. From the beginning, Jenik was pleased with Shechtman's style.

"I'm not about numbers," Shechtman says. "I'd rather hear that my clients' pants are fitting better than have them get on a scale." Though Shechtman will modify the workouts he does with each client, he says strengthening the core muscles and staying safe are two things he focuses on when training clients.

Shechtman and Jenik sometimes do half-hour appointments, but during a more leisurely hour-long workout, they are able to get in a variety of exercises. From the weight machines to a workout with the physio ball, it becomes obvious why Shechtman's simple style gets results. His clients enjoy themselves. Shechtman knows all about Jenik's kids and asks how they're doing. While she shares that she's excited about an upcoming trip, Shechtman nods his head, listening as he moves a mat into place for Jenik to do isometric exercises. "I like to think what I am doing is increasing the quality of life, not just the physical stuff," he says.

Jocelyn nods. Although she started exercising to lose weight and gain energy, she feels that during the six months she has been working out with Shechtman her attitude and her mental state have improved as well. "Those endorphins keep me going throughout the day," she says. Upon hearing this, Shechtman smiles and explains that exercise has always been a part of his life and he likes being able to share that with others. "He was a pole vaulter in college," Jenik chimes in like a proud mom.

Shechtman laughs and continues to talk about his philosophy. "For most people, I like to make life simple. [To have] too many restrictions ends up being unrealistic."

"I'm very good at avoiding working out," Jenik says. "But Luke's a real person. His style is pretty organic...it's more about personality. He's really motivating."■

© Philadelphia Style Magazine winter 2004