

Translated by Alexandra Gouirand

■ "Phew! I'm exhausted! I just got out of my Tae Bo class - 90 intensive minutes - and tonight I have a Power Plate session. Tomorrow I'm going to try Budokon. It's go, go, go!" Exotic fruits or futuristic machines: we're always looking for something that will allow us to stay in shape effortlessly. Sometimes we don't mind exercise, but sweating to a crazy beat is a lot more effective when we know that Hollywood celebrities do it too (it must work, just look at the pictures!).



Le Power Plate

The Power Plate arrived on the global scene very recently, but it was quick to invade gyms, physical therapists' offices and spas.

So, is it a miracle or not? Does it work? Your coach loves the Power Plate! Of course, you have to use it in addition to cardiovascular and stretching exercises. It's still a little expensive, and can be replaced with weightlifting and jumping sessions (for bone density).

That said, there are many advantages to the Power Plate. It allows work on all muscles without putting pressure on joints. It improves bone density by short, repetitive shocks. It appears that regular use of the Power Plate speeds up the metabolism and reduces cellulite. The Power Plate can also improve blood circulation and stimulate nerve endings. Each session is supposed to increase muscular tension, which helps reduce residual tension and thus provides pain relief.

No outside study has proven the last two points. It doesn't mean that they're not true, but I had to let you know.

I suggest to keep your workout at three 10-minute sessions a week.

P.S.: Power Plate machines are very expensive - almost \$3,000 - and sessions are costly too. So, if you're a fan, do your math to see if it's worth the money to you.

Tae Bo © was invented by Billy Blanks, a retired boxer with a learning disability who was born in the ghetto of Erie, Pennsylvania. Destined to a miserable life, this man nevertheless followed a successful path, and reinvented his career by creating the famous Tae Bo © system.

So what is it? It's a sport that combines boxing moves (a great opportunity to work on your right hooks and left upper cuts), aerobics (as in Jane Fonda) and quick stretches (a far cry from the ones involved in yoga).

The training is so intense that you'll burn up to 800 calories in one hour! Not bad, huh? Expect to sweat and struggle a little. No big deal if you only last 20 minutes. You can start with that, and then add five minutes to each session. Billy Blanks' belief is that everyone can do Tae Bo ©, and he's careful to cast people of all colors, ages and physical shape in his videos. I personally think that you need a good physical condition to begin. If you can run for 20 minutes, then you can do Tae Bo ©. If you can't, get yourself in shape a little bit, or otherwise you'll suffer; and you know your coach doesn't like to see you struggle!

You can do Tae Bo© in your living room while watching a DVD, even if this sport is becoming more and more popular in gyms across the nation.

All right, hit it with a right hook, go!

Budokon? What could that be? This is one of the latest trends in Hollywood. Many stars, such as Courteney Cox, Amber Valletta and Rene Russo, to name just a few, are now following the teachings of Cameron Shayne who invented this new concept.

Budokon, just like your coach, tends to be all over the place: it deals with nutrition, meditation and sports. Budokon mixes yoga

Le Budokon



with moves imported from different martial arts. It doesn't involve heavy sweating or

wild increases in heartbeat but relies on soft exercises.

The goal is to enhance vitality, balance, muscles, spiritual strength, agility and self-control.

This very spiritual concept is based on 21 philosophical principles: love one another - an all-time favorite in Hollywood - do one thing at a time and do it well, remove the obstacles you find in your own way before trying to remove the ones blocking other people, etc. Budokon seems to have found some of its inspiration in Buddhism.

The nutritional angle comes close to veganism. Meat is barely allowed and 90% of the diet is supposed to rely on plants.

To sum it all up, Budokon offers a healthy alternative for the body and the mind. It might seem a bit extreme if you live in a remote village and you don't want to have anything to do with Buddhism or martial arts. On the other hand, if you're looking for a new way to get back into a decent mental and physical shape, you might want to follow Courteney's example.

Budokon is slowly making its way into gyms. It first became successful in big cities, but the release of a DVD should make it able to conquer the rest of the world.