

PurchasingGuide

Power from the People

THE CONCEPT OF HARNESSING KINETIC ENERGY GENERATED BY EXERCISERS IS CATCHING ON.
BY MICHAEL POPKE



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPORTSART FITNESS

GREEN ROOM
SportsArt Fitness introduced the Green System "pod" of fitness products wired to an inverter (below) at the IHRSA Convention & Trade Show in March.



Back in 2007, members at Gainesville Health & Fitness might have noticed a young man planted behind an elliptical machine, "tinkering" (as he called it) with the unit's moving parts. That would have been Hudson Harr, then a recent University of Florida graduate invited by club owner Joe Cirulli to experiment on the equipment. Harr was convinced he could harness the kinetic energy generated by elliptical users, convert it to kilowatt-hours and load it back to the facility's power grid. The result? Free electricity.

"I went in there expecting I was going to add a turbine and other types of controls to these machines — not realizing a lot of them existed in the machines already," says Harr, now president of Clearwater, Fla.-based ReRev™, a company that retrofits cardio equipment with small resistors and control boards that feed energy to inverters the size

of a personal computer's central processing unit, which then reroute the power. "We just had to make use of it and engineer a process to pull the power out. Solar, wind, any form of renewable energy being pushed back to the grid does so in the exact same way."

ReRev and other companies have since created various means to achieve that same end. For example, while the majority of ReRev retrofits are for ellipticals — Harr says their weight, stability, design and higher usability make them the ideal green machine — The Green Revolution in Ridgefield, Conn., retrofits indoor cycling equipment. Other manufacturers, including PlugOut Fitness, a Seattle-based manufacturer formerly known as Resource Fitness, produces out-of-the-box elliptical cross-trainers and stationary cycles specifically designed to power a facility's grid.

Meanwhile, at the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association's International Convention & Trade Show in March, Woodinville, Wash.-based SportsArt Fitness launched the Green System, a "pod" of fitness products wired to an inverter about the size of a stereo receiver. Each pod, expected to be available later this year, can generate up to 2,000 watts per hour, resulting in annual electricity savings of more than \$3,000 depending on usage, according to the company.

The benefits are many. "It's not meant to make you money, but it will definitely offset electricity," says Amber Maechler, marketing and communications director for SportsArt Fitness, which also makes a treadmill that uses less energy than traditional units, as well as a line of self-generating ellipticals and