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IHRSA '11 product trends, Pt. 2: 'Greening' the industry, indoor cycling, vibration, big mamma weights, and more...

Posted: 04/08/2011 In Category(s): News & Features :: Fitness Headlines, Product Trends :: Trade Show Trends Reports, Trade Shows & Directories :: Trade Show News, Product Trends :: Product Trends Articles

With the economy on a roller coaster of a turnaround, we found more than a few trends and products at the IHRSA trade show in San Francisco this year, March 17-18 -- enough for two stories. Our first part ran April 4, in which we analyzed the growing suspension training category, as well as the welcome infusion of technology.



Plus we looked at what appears to be a start to a real category of “vertical climbing” on pieces that are like StairMaster’s original StepMill. Of course we dated ourselves by calling it the Gauntlet, as the ORIGINAL original was called in the mid-80s. If you didn’t know that, consider yourself an insider now!

[That April 4 story can be found by clicking here.](#)

We continue our tour of a few trends and highlights – naturally, we can’t write about everybody as much as we’d like to! Of course, we stumbled across other products and companies that will be fodder for interesting stories in the weeks to come. So, as always, stay tuned.

Despite national talk about green-this and green-that, it’s only been a ripple on the fitness waters, but a few more saw it as the next wave for equipment. Here, we take a look at a few highlights. In addition, there were not only new and tweaked indoor cycles– seemed to be some renewed interest in what you could call a been-there-done-that category – but there was also the movement toward indoor VIBRATING cycles. Yes, really.

And besides the over-riding trends we saw, we’ll call out a few individual products that caught our eyes.

Getting Greener

Although people pedaling and pushing on equipment would seem to be a natural source of

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energy, we've been told in the past it just wasn't enough to matter – and capturing it would be more costly than it was worth. But with the cost of energy going up even higher, clubs and their suppliers are beginning to see the light. It doesn't hurt that technology to capture the energy is improving too. ([Click here to see an April 20, 2010, SNEWS story](#) on testing energy efficiency in treadmills with links to other stories about “green” equipment.”)

“People don't think people exercising create that much energy, but they do,” said Bob Baumgartner, engineer for SportsArt, which debuted a new system.



SportsArt had an invite-only suite (*photo, right*) in the back of its booth showing off its new Green System, which has taken its whole Eco-Powr a step further. Three self-generating pieces – an elliptical, an upright bike and a recumbent bike – can be plugged into an inverter and pedaling them harvests energy which can feed right back into the club's grid. With eight pieces plugged in (the max for one inverter), a maximum of 2,000 watts an hour can be generated. You can calculate energy savings and read more at <http://green.sportsartamerica.com>.



Educating users on the energy they're contributing was Life Fitness' strategy (www.lifefitness.com) with its new line of Engage cross trainers and bikes as a part of its Elevation Series. A green hybrid logo appears onscreen when user is generating enough power to lower the product's touch screen energy consumption by 75 percent. At the end of the exercise, users are presented with their total energy savings in a practical way by noting how long their workout could have powered a light bulb (For example, “You've saved enough to power a light bulb for 5 minutes”). If you don't pedal hard enough to actually power the system the icon turns gray – kind of a carrot for exercisers to stop flipping the newspaper pages and focus.

To encourage equipment upgrades, but keep the weight off the environment, Iron Grip (www.irongrip.com) announced its new buyback program. Used Iron Grip urethane dumbbells and weight plates can be exchanged for a credit towards the purchase of new Iron Grip equipment. The credit is calculated based on the quality of the weights.

Cycling – indoor and vibrating

Used to be that Spinning (with the TM) was the only place to be. Although it still has the largest market share, others want in.

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FreeMotion Fitness debuted its new product as a part of its Stages Indoor Cycling program (www.stagesindoorcycling.com) that measures power ([Click here to see a March 17, 2011, SNEWS story](#) with all the details). The product is by the developers (ex-Nutilus folks) at Foundation Fitness. "People are looking for something new," said Pat Warner, senior vice president of product development.

From across the pond, the folks at Wattbike (www.wattbike.com) brought a different take on indoor bike training to IHRSA. The British bike presents live feedback of the rider's output to the pedals (*see photo, right, and the bottom left corner of the console*), with the goal for users to adjust and then learn the most efficient pedal stroke as they train. The free-wheeling bike also measures power output, hence the name Wattbike (list \$2,995). The data – a whopping 36 parameters are captured from each pedal stroke – also can be downloaded to a computer for future review.



Spinning also introduced three new bikes in its partnership with Star Trac (www.startrac.com) – the Spinner Pro and Spinner NXT, and the brand new Spinner® Blade. The NXT is available, while the other two will be soon.

Vibrating bikes must be the next phase in vibration training. Enformax of Germany had its bike in the Woodway booth (www.enformax.eu), but it looked the part of a lab-testing piece. Remember, developed and shown by German engineers not marketers. The vibration is not felt above your hips and therefore better for you, said co-developer Dieter Quarz. We hear Power Plate will have its own vibration indoor bike later this year too.

And then there's the really super cute but also super functional X5 Kids Bike from Fitnexus (www.fitnexusonline.com) that looks just as serious as adult versions but in the I-shrunk-the-kids fashion. Oval, 14-gauge steel tubing with a weight limit of 250 pounds, designed for first- to sixth-graders (list \$799). The company sees good interest from schools, we were told.

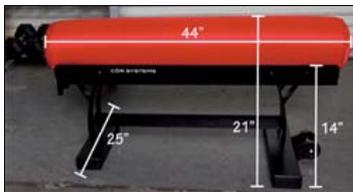
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Weight for me

StairMaster (www.stairmaster.com) launched its new Twistlock dumbbell, a set on a stand – like many that have more than one weight integrated into one larger dumbbell – but this one has one-handed action: Grab the handle, give it a twist to the weight you want, then lift it up and start your routine. Plus the selected dumbbell is smaller with lower weights – a problem with others to be sure with the “stem” or base remaining the same gargantuan size with low weights (list \$599; stand, \$199).



PowerBlock's (www.powerblock.com) all-in-one dumbbells have struck a chord with professional athletes. But their only request to improve the product -- more weight (they already went from 2.5 to 130 pounds in a single dumbbell). So the company obliged with the debut in April of a PowerBlock that can go up to 175 pounds (*photo, right*), sales manager Lance Goodemann said. What to name the behemoth Urethane coated weight is still up in the air, and PowerBlock is seeking suggestions from customers. So far -- aside from the in-office monikers we can't print – it's just U-175. It will be available through retail dealers and will list for approximately \$1,100. Added Goodemann, “Cheap considering it replaces 10,000 pounds and 55 pairs.”



What else?

Speaking of PowerBlock, Octane Fitness (www.octanefitness.com) debuted its Cross Circuit Pro that incorporates a station on the back with a set of PowerBlock weights for one-stop cross-training. The program will go into a “pause mode” for up to three minutes if you choose the cross-circuit mode to allow you to step off, lift weights and step back on without losing your workout details. The weight station will add about \$1,399 to the piece, and it will ship in April.

In a global launch, Cor Systems (www.corsystemsonline.com) had a bench (*photo, left*) with what looked like a tubular inflatable top to add instability to a workout. The top is constructed of 400-denier nylon urethane and, the company says strong and “very hard” to puncture.

Former Bally Fitness CEO Paul Toback debuted his new company called Sproing Fitness (www.sproingfitness.com) -- also first time out of the gate. How to describe it? Think of a platform with rails the size of a treadmill with a “console.” The platform however has no mechanics or motors but rather a pad of different densities to simulate varying degrees of soft surfaces. A runner or walker tethers



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himself or herself to a rear vertical platform and then runs or walks in place. The platform senses movement and displays speed and distance traveled on the console. Low-tech tethered running like track athletes always did with a high-tech touch.

--*Therese Iknoian with David Clucas*

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Thanks again for reading and for your support of SNEWS®! We look forward to hearing from you anytime.

Cheers,

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