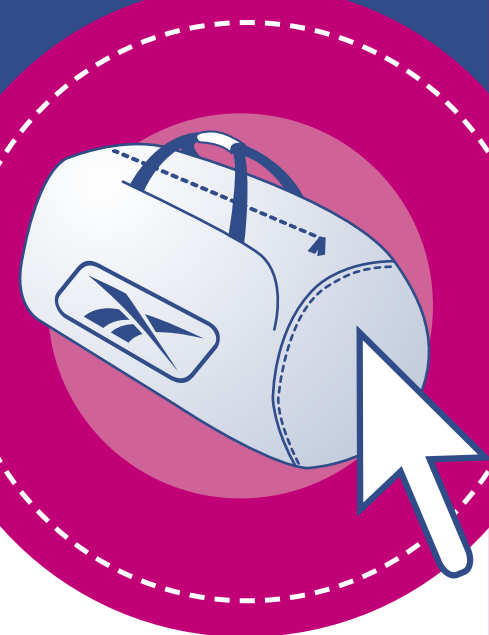




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Becoming an aqua personal trainer

1



The biggest expansion in the fitness industry, aside from new programs and equipment, seems to be the trend towards personal training. So how do we, as aqua instructors, ride this wave of popularity? Group aqua instructors have myriad skills that can be applied to the personal training setting. And, considering that personal training pays better and generally creates less wear and tear on the body, it's a wonder more aqua instructors haven't started offering one-on-one sessions in the water!

There are three major factors that need to be considered when developing an aqua personal training program. Firstly, as an aqua instructor you need to sell the concept that water-based exercise has excellent benefits. Secondly, you have to market yourself as a multi-talented fitness professional, and finally you have to expand your knowledge of how your group-based exercises can best be used in a one-on-one setting.

The benefits of water-based personal training

When selling water-based personal training, aqua instructors can explain the benefits of using drag, buoyancy and water resistance as unique overload techniques. These and other benefits that we use to sell group aqua classes can be re-worded, just slightly, to attract one-on-one clients.

Sell the benefits of the water workout by mentioning the cross training, lower impact, and greater circulation and rehab aspects. Explain why water exercise is so beneficial for cross training and everyday activities. You will then find you are being sought out by individuals seeking special attention, whether it is fitness or rehab based. Remember, too, that aqua personal training can be done on a small group basis as well as one-on-one. Specialist groups such as sporting sides, the elderly or children can provide a platform for small group personal training sessions.

Marketing yourself

As with any fitness specialist, you have to be viewed as a professional in your field, not just someone who teaches water exercise. Personal trainers frequently find that the hardest aspect of their position is marketing themselves, or being taken seriously by other medical professionals. The best way to feel confident about marketing yourself is to be confident that you know your stuff. Brush up on your physiology and anatomy, and know what specific movements are required in your client's chosen sport, so that the water training you do enhances both their physical and mental wellbeing. In doing this, you are on a level with the people you are dealing with, enabling you to target specific areas.

Adapting group exercises to the one-on-one setting

Choosing which exercises you use as an aqua personal trainer is a matter of logic. If you are training an athlete, study the movement requirements of the sport and look at how they can be adapted or modified as water exercises. You will find that you are probably doing similar moves in your classes already.

Also, when making the transition from classes to personal training, make sure the exercises are fun and layered. By simply changing the lever length or the speed of the exercise the clients are provided with options of intensity. These ranges of movement can be used in a variety of sports and everyday activities, and the resistance and buoyancy of the water then add challenge to that particular task. Once you add changes of direction and drag, your client will get a really good workout.

Variety can also be added by incorporating equipment like dumbbells, webbed gloves or tubing. Either set them out in a circuit format or add intensity changes through intervals - the possibilities are endless!

The easiest moves to use with one-on-ones or specific groups are those utilised in martial arts. They use arms and legs, the two biggest levers of our body. The punching and kicking moves have so many variations and combinations that everyone can get a great workout and challenge themselves. These moves are also easily layered, allowing progression from a basic standing kick, to a jump power kick and then a travelling power kick at pace (photo 1). Variety can be added by straightening the leg or kicking across the body to incorporate soccer and football skills. Punching variations can be added by using our long levers to utilise shoulders, or shortening them to hook and jab for speed and power. These moves can be changed to different strikes for long levers and surface areas such as a racquet or club swing forward or reverse. These are moves common to many club sports (photo 2, power strike forward and reverse power).

2



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Becoming an aqua personal trainer

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Aqua athletics can also be useful. Running technique can be varied by altering speed, lifting leg height, making stride length shorter or longer and by varying the depth of the water. Challenge and variety can be added by implementing changes of direction or by increasing resistance through the use of leg cuffs or hand weights. This format is great in intervals or short bursts in a circuit. It is also good for progression or rehabilitation when clients are recovering from injuries (photo 3, short lever inwards and outwards rotation with speed progressions).

Finally, let's look at jumping exercises. These can be vertical, side-to-side or tucks. These exercises allow participants to simulate plyometric or explosive exercises under safe conditions without risk of injury. When performed slowly, focus is placed on power progression, and the weight of the water is also added to the body when exploding upwards. These can also be very easily layered to allow progression from any level.

3



Make the transition

If you know your exercises, and how to progress them, you are in a position to add to and enhance the land-based training of your new personal training clients. Vary the challenges you set, and make them fun! Approach land loving gym members, sporting teams, and medical professionals and sell them the benefits of cross training with water activities. Explain how a true aqua professional can work with all types of people in all types of condition. You may find another income stream, another world of enjoyment and the satisfaction of converting more individuals to the joy of water fitness! ♦

Group aqua instructors wanting to work as personal trainers need to gain a Certificate IV in Fitness (SRF40204) qualification. For information contact the Australian Institute of Fitness on 1300 669 669.



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Ken is a master trainer for Schwinn Indoor cycling and BOSU. As President of the IDEA World Fitness Aquatics Board, Ken is the first non-American to be appointed and the only male on the Board. With over 20 years experience in the fitness industry, Ken now runs QPEC Fitness Solutions, a company dedicated to continuing education through the provision of products and programs.