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The Super Circuit

by Scott Reames

"Weightlifting"—to most of us this word brings to mind Arnold Schwarzenegger, the human muscle, just as "aerobics" conjures up images of Richard Simmons and a roomful of sweaty people pounding a dance floor to the frenetic strains of "Flashdance."

Traditionally, a common daily fitness routine has included both forms of workout but usually one followed by the other, like a swimmer who lifts weights at noon and then swims 50 laps after work. The weight component of the regimen ordinarily consists of a circuit that utilizes several machines, each geared to develop specific muscles. This workout is then supplemented by aerobic activity (e.g., cycling, running, swimming, dance) to stimulate and strengthen the heart and lungs. If each of these fitness programs is good for the body, imagine what blending them together could do. Dr. Kenneth Cooper did.

Working for Universal, Dr. Cooper (the man who began the aerobic exercise movement) developed the Super Circuit Conditioning Program, a total body workout that combines high intensity aerobic conditioning with increased muscular endurance, strength, and flexibility.

Unlike non-aerobic circuit training, the Super Circuit alternates its stations between weight machines and aerobic activities, such as jumping rope, mini trampolines, and exercise bikes.

Participants are given signals, usually at 30 second intervals, during which they work on one machine focusing on a specific set of muscles. The next 30 second

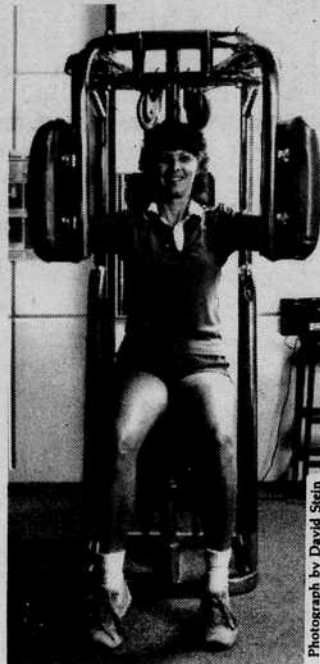
period is for aerobic activity, then on to the next machine for another half minute. Depending upon the number of machines available, the entire circuit can be completed in less than 30 minutes and can be repeated if so desired.

How effective is this fitness combination? The Institute for

... men improved leg strength by 21%, and women by 25% ... men and women improved upper body strength by 21%. Body fat percentages were reduced by 17% among men and 11% among women." These results were achieved in the comfort of a temperature-regulated fitness center, eliminating the need for long runs in the elements or excessive stress on the skeletal frame.

For the athlete, the Aerobic Super Circuit may be the only supplemental conditioning that is necessary, which then allows more time to work on skill development in a specific sport. For someone just interested in improving physical health and appearance, the Super Circuit offers the added bonus of time efficiency. Not only is the entire body getting a workout, but it takes just 30 minutes ... less time than a 10 kilometer run or a 15 mile bike ride. A circuit workout can be squeezed into a lunch hour three times a week and such conditioning minimizes the soreness sometimes associated with lifting weights.

The Universal Super Circuit and similar aerobic conditioning circuits are beginning to appear at various fitness facilities in the Eugene-Springfield area. If you're interested in finding one that meets your needs—convenience, instructors available, aerobic stations—it pays to make telephone inquiries or visit a few facilities. The Eugene Family YMCA, Oregon West Fitness, Pacific Nautilus, Court Sports and the Eugene Parks and Recreation community centers are some of the places offering circuit equipment.



Photograph by David Stein

Aerobics Research in Dallas tested mature males and females in average physical condition for 12 weeks with each participant completing three circuits, three times per week. Their findings: "17% improvement in aerobic endurance among both men and women

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