



JON JOSEPH AT THE BOX  
Photo by Trask Bedortha

# got thighs?

## TABATA WORKOUT ATTRACTS HARDCORE FITNESS ENTHUSIASTS

by Dante Zuñiga-West

**T**he place looks like a dojo. It is clean, well lit and spartan. No frills. On the front door is a sign that warning not to enter unless they are willing to commit 100 percent to the workout. Inside are signs that say things like, “it’s suppose to be brutal,” “pain is inevitable, suffering is optional,” and, perhaps most foreboding, hanging in the bathroom: “Adapt or perish.”

Located at 40th and Donald, next to Highlands Brew Pub, The Box is a Tabata studio attracting those interested in the most fast-paced and hardcore workout they can get. Firefighters, martial artists, paramedics and workout junkies are among the ranks of each class.

Tabata is serious, and the people at The Box facility in south Eugene take it seriously. Named for Izumi Tabata, the Japanese doctor who created it with the help of a research team from The National Institute of Fitness and Sports in Tokyo and the Japanese skating team, Tabata is a furious series of squats, pushups and sit-ups. Variations of this interval training exist, but it is basically a calisthenic blast from hell.

“It reminds me of hard boxing workouts,” says Brenton Gicker, former pugilist and Tabata enthusiast. “The cardio is just as intense.”

Twenty seconds of work, ten seconds of rest, four minutes at a time. Sessions last approximately 30 minutes. Sound easy? Try transitioning between flying squats, jumping squats, body-builders, sit-ups, push-ups and sprints as hard as you can inside that kind of a time restraint.

Your legs may give up on you, but the Tabata instructors at The Box will not. There is a special brand of enthusiasm taking place during these vicious workouts applied by the two brothers who run the place.

Gene and Jon Joseph, two incredibly fit men in their senior years, are the ones responsible for bringing this four-minute workout gauntlet to Eugeneans. Both come across as part drill sergeant and part inspirational speaker, spurring on their students with tough love and encouragement.

“Man, don’t I love these squats? Yes I do, yes I do,” barks Gene, attempting to drill these sentiments into the minds of the suffering squatters in front of him. “Nice face!” he playfully chides Gicker, who has turned red while working himself into exhaustion.

Despite the sheer intensity of the workout intervals, the morale of everyone in the studio is incredibly high. The Box doesn’t advertise much; word of mouth and tales of survival continue to bring people through the doors. The first session is free. Newcomers are required to show up 15 minutes early for a 15-minute introduction, and many report a serious burning of the thigh muscles for days after the inaugural workout.

“This is something we just love to do,” says Gene. “Jon started this whole thing in his garage before we were here. It’s the best workout you can find.”

It would seem these sentiments are contagious.

EW

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FIRST CLASS: Arrive 20 minutes early - Bring a large towel & water bottle  
Wear gym shorts & a tank top - Don't eat for 2-3 hours before class  
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