

Issue 20

10.2023

INDOOR CYCLING INSIGHTS & INSPIRATION

RIDE HIGH

The Saudi game changers

Meet the pioneers of Saudi
Arabia's female fitness scene

THE 'M' WORD

How indoor cycling
can support women
through menopause

App.roved by you

We unveil your favourite
indoor cycling apps

ON THE COVER

CYCLING SOPHIE

The pro cyclist turned online indoor cycling influencer





WE DID THE MATH

“A footprint of 0.19 tonne CO₂e is remarkable. You emit that driving 554km in the average petrol car”



A SUSTAINABLE VISION

How sustainable can fitness equipment become – not just in the way it’s powered, but in its very fabric? What can we do within our manufacturing? How can we push the boundaries of the raw materials we use?

These are just some of the questions we’ve been asking ourselves at BODY BIKE for a number of years now, and many of you will be familiar with the results so far: our sustainable siblings, BODY BIKE Smart+ OceanIX and BODY BIKE Smart+ Forest Green.

Let me quickly make clear that I’m not here to push these products. I’m here to champion a cause that I passionately believe everyone in the sector must now embrace. I’m here to shine a light on what we’ve done in the hope that we can inspire wider change.

Our latest step – because you can only truly manage what you measure – has been to calculate the carbon footprint of OceanIX and Forest Green.

The result: Each bike has a carbon footprint of 0.19 tonne CO₂e.

How does this compare to gym equipment from other manufacturers? We don’t know; I’m not actually aware of anyone else who has done these calculations.

What I do know is that BODY BIKE saw it as an important step – a carefully

measured benchmark from which we can now strive to continually improve.

I also know that a footprint of 0.19 tonne CO₂e is already remarkable, given you emit that just by driving 554km in the average petrol car.

How have we achieved this? It’s a result of several factors, including the use of recycled materials and eco-friendly components in our manufacturing process: recycled ABS plastic, recycled plastic fishing nets, reclaimed iron for all cast iron parts.

Above all, however, it’s the result of dedication, passion and a fervent belief that this is something we must all do. It’s why we will keep innovating. Why we will keep going further in our search for sustainable materials that also support our quality standards; we’re currently assessing the feasibility of green steel, for example. And why it’s my personal mission to apply these new sustainable standards to all existing models of BODY BIKE over the next two years.

I urge others to follow our lead before it’s too late for our planet.

Uffe A. Olesen

CEO, Body Bike International A/S



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CONTENT & CONTRIBUTIONS

Do you have a great indoor cycling story you'd like to share? From studio successes to new innovations – and everything in between – we're keen to showcase best practice in indoor cycling from around the world. So if there are any topics you think we should cover, please let us know!

ALL IDEAS ARE WELCOME

– info@ridehighmagazine.com



Above: Rasha Bubshait (on the bike) and Fatima Batook co-founded Studio55

The Saudi GAME CHANGERS

Fatima Batook and Rasha Bubshait were instrumental in changing the laws in Saudi Arabia, empowering and enabling women to exercise, improve their health and change their lives. They share the story behind Studio55.

How did you come to work together?

RB: As a university student, I lacked a real sense of purpose in life and decided to run for student president. I never expected to win, but I did, and as part of the duties I attended a seminar where Fatima was guest speaker. Her words were captivating. There and then, I said to myself: 'One day, I'm going to work with Fatima.' From that moment on, I followed her – I pretty much stalked her! – and my determination paid off. Within a year, we were working together.

FB: She was very persistent, coming to the gym and the classes I was teaching. This was in 2012, when women weren't really allowed to go to gyms and there were no proper female gym permits. There was just an underground scene, with people running women's gyms in learning centres, computer centres and so on. They'd operate under the banner of 'beauty', which there were permits for, and I'd teach classes.

When I met Rasha, I'd just started my Tima Love Life apparel brand and Rasha was offering to help for free. She was soon helping with sales and design, then became full-time brand manager. She's now CEO of our fitness studio brand, Studio55.

Tell us more about Tima.

FB: I have to rewind to explain how it came about. I had become very vocal about the situation in Saudi Arabia. I used Twitter as my platform, talking about how important fitness was for women – how it helped them feel better about themselves and how vital it was to addressing obesity levels, which were far higher among women than men. Women simply didn't have the freedom to move outdoors in the way men did. ▶

In 2012, there was just an underground scene, with people running women's gyms in learning centres, computer centres and so on



Above: Batook says Spinning taught her so much about how to overcome personal challenges

- ▶ I knew all this from my own journey. When I first discovered Spinning™, I was obese. I went to a facility where Spinning was the only option and managed just 10 minutes. It was too hard and honestly, I found the concept of cycling a bike that went nowhere a bit crazy.

However, I soon realised it was a mental challenge I needed to overcome, and that if I overcame it, I would overcome it in all other parts of my life too. Spinning gave me that epiphany. It wasn't about weight loss any more. It was about understanding myself and how to stay consistent – pedal stroke after pedal stroke – and it taught me so much about how to overcome personal challenges. I fell in love with it and wanted everyone else to experience it too.

So, I really championed fitness for women, but what surprised me was the negative feedback I got from other women. I'm not fully Saudi – my mother is Tibetan – and I was educated overseas, and I was accused of trying

We built a case to get legislation approved for women's gyms. I expected 'we'll discuss it' but straight away it was a 'yes'

Right (all images): When Batook was given permission to go ahead and open a women's fitness studio, she came back to Bubshait and said: 'OK, I think we have to do this now.'

The result is Studio55.



to corrupt young Saudi girls with my ideas. The whole system was so deeply engrained... even my family asked me to tone it down.

I was ready to give up, so my friends came round to cheer me up. They were talking about cheering me on wearing Tima T-shirts – Tima is what my mother calls me, an abbreviation of Fatima. And at the mention of T-shirts, something clicked. If there's one thing Saudi women love, it's clothing and fashion, but at the time there was nothing in the sports apparel market that really fitted their bodies, which weren't as active then.

I realised this was my way to connect with and speak to women. I'd just done a Piloxing course and the amazing female founder introduced me to her apparel lady in Brazil, who connected me with another lady whose factory taught women from broken homes to tailor. I always find businesses run by women have more of a mission behind them! I knew I'd found my supplier, and we launched our first apparel line in 2013.

What happened next?

FB: Rasha was managing Tima and I had a full-time job, doing everything else on the side. And then suddenly all the underground gyms were closed down.

I was approached by the Young Saudi Business Women of Eastern Province Association to reach out to the Minister of Sports. We set about building a case to get legislation approved for women's gyms and fitness facilities. We presented him with the facts and the numbers and showed there was a market – and, indeed, a real need – for it, and he said 'yes, do it'.

I had expected the response to be more along the lines of 'we'll discuss it',





- ▶ but straight away it was a 'yes'. I asked him why, and why it hadn't been done sooner – why licences had been granted for men's gyms, but not women's – and he told me: 'Because nobody asked.'

So then it was over to me. He gave me a licence to make a start while government figured out the full legislation. I came back to Rasha and said: 'OK, I think we have to do this now.' So I quit my full-time job and we began to work on our studio concept.

And you launched Studio55...

FB: We launched our first studio, Studio55, in the city of Al Khobar in 2015. Although we had our licence from the Minister, the municipality

still wanted to challenge us, so we opened in a hotel that had a licence for a female gym.

RB: The space was tiny, just under 200sq m, into which we fitted two studios – one for yoga and strength and one for Spinning. It was challenging, but it was packed full of energy. Studio55 became a place to connect with other women of all ages, share ideas, learn about fitness, take part in outings and hikes, retreats and charity events. It became a safe place for women to share and bond and grow, and even become instructors themselves.

FB: We were adamant that we would have home-grown instructors, taking our team overseas and bringing in international trainers for education every year.



Studio55 is a place to connect with other women of all ages – a place to share and bond and grow

RB: Back then, it wasn't the norm to have female Saudi instructors. At the beginning, one of our instructors didn't even want anyone outside the studio to know she was doing it. She felt it was somehow shameful, a profession for expats, not Saudis. Now everyone is doing it. I feel as though we created a new movement.

FB: Traditionally, women have followed the set path of high school, graduation, nice safe job, marriage, children. Today, that doesn't have to be the case. Women can take a stand and follow their passion. Rasha is a perfect example, as is one of our instructors who became a professional boxer – and whose father now finally supports her decision. ▶

I asked why it hadn't been done sooner – why licences had been granted for men's gyms, but not women's – and he told me: 'Because nobody asked'

► Studio55 became a hub of what indoor cycling had enabled in me: self-realisation and the chance for women to understand their own potential. In Saudi culture, women have clearly defined roles in the family: daughter, sister, mother, aunt. Taking an hour for themselves is so empowering. The whole studio... it's brought about a positive snowball effect of empowerment.

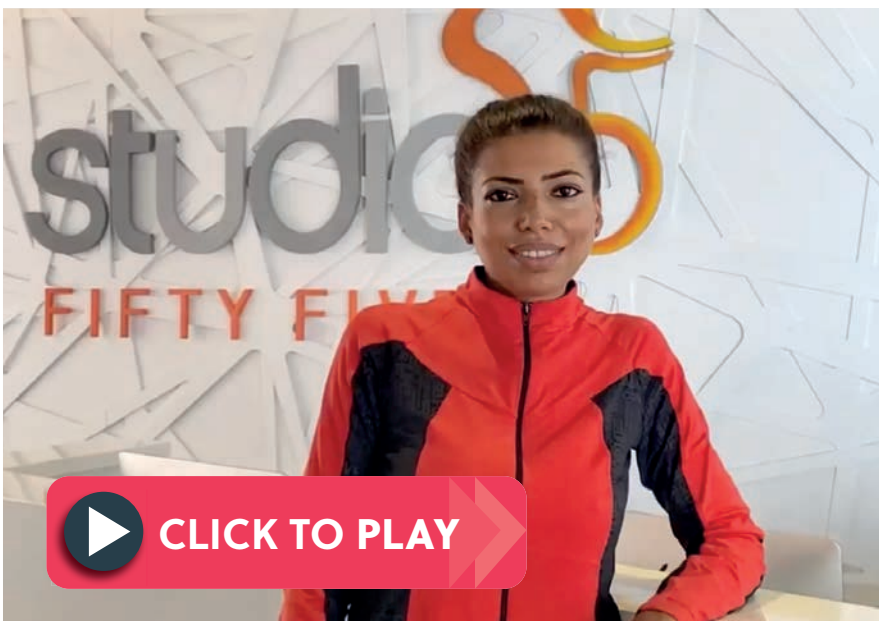
Is cycling a big part of Studio55?

FB: It's the core of what we do, what we stand for and why people come to us and are referred to us. We deliver it in a very different, very thoughtful way and people get hooked on it as an experience they can't get anywhere else.

RB: All our classes are delivered at a very emotional level. There are physical benefits, of course, but our USP is the emotional layer – the way we feed the soul. Ride55 brings the outdoors indoors, although our approach is as much meditative and mental as it is physical. Rhythm55 is faster and more choreographed, pushing your heart rate up.

We do offer other classes, as well as personal training and EMS. We have Fusion55 classes, which combine Spinning with off-the-bike exercise. We have Fitness55, under which sit classes such as functional training, strength, yoga, stretching and so on. All have our unique

Studio55 became a hub of what indoor cycling had enabled in me: self-realisation and the chance for women to understand their own potential



Above right: Studio55 has brought about a positive snowball effect of female empowerment, say its founders

Left: In 2020, Forbes Middle East showcased Batook as a leader in her market



Studio55 style, whereby a member can get the same experience in any of our studios. But indoor cycling is why people first come to us.

FB: I have to give thanks to Barbara Chancey, who I met at a conference many years ago. She helped us create an experience that's unlike anything else in Saudi, although we're happy to share what we now know. Barbara understood what would work for us and helped us formulate our customer experience from pre-entry to exit. She introduced us to suppliers, to other studio owners around the world, to a booking system so members can book a specific bike and it's set up for them before they arrive. She's our go-to.

What's happened since you launched?

FB: From 2015 to 2017 it was still a struggle, because even though we had a licence, the municipality wanted to close us down. Then in 2017, Princess Reema bint Bandar Al Saud

– now Saudi ambassador to the US – was brought in to the Ministry of Sport to set up a female division. She began scouting for other women who could help, and approached us.

It was challenging. I remember going to one meeting with the Ministry of Education about mandating PE in girls' schools, and the argument put back to us was a concern that girls would have to wear pants. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. But the Princess is an incredible woman and we learned so much about how to speak to those who really didn't understand why women should be allowed to exercise.

By 2019, our Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud had made some really big changes, including removing people from ministerial roles who weren't aligned with his Vision 2030 [a Saudi government programme that aims to create a vibrant and more diverse society economically, socially and culturally]. ▶



Left: When COVID closed the studio, bikes were sent to members' homes that same day

Right: Studio55 is located in Al Khobar, with a Riyadh studio also opening this year

- ▶ In the space of a few years, we moved from 'girls shouldn't wear pants' to 'girls should compete in the Olympics'. Women are now doing executive programmes and leading businesses. It's impressive to see how rapidly and dramatically Saudi Arabia has changed in such a short period.

RB: From a Studio55 perspective, in early 2020 we relocated to a larger site in Al Khobar, finally with a legitimate licence. We were due to have our grand opening on 8 March. Then COVID hit and we were forced to close on 1 March.

We acted quickly. Our members had already told us Studio55 was like a home for them – a place they couldn't imagine their lives without – so we went online that same day and sent bikes to our members' homes.

And of course, going online also meant we reached women across the country. We had messages from women in small villages telling us they could feel our energy through the screen and loved what we were doing.

And now?

FB: We had opened a second studio in Jeddah before COVID, but that's now closed. We had to cut our losses during the pandemic. However, we still have our studio in Al Khobar and are opening in Riyadh by the end of 2023. In this new location, we're also looking to experiment further with our fusion formats, formalising a class structure that brings together strength and CV in an interesting way.

Next, we'll look to grow into tier two cities. We're looking at the city of Qassim,

for example, which was once the most conservative in Saudi. I'm blown away by how open and innovative it is now, but women there still don't have anything like Studio55 yet.

RB: There's a huge opportunity to connect with these women, creating communities that empower them in the same way we already have elsewhere. And this is such a new thing in Saudi – it's only been possible for a few years – that there's so much room to grow.

FB: The ball really is in our court now, and we have to play it – us, and the generations that follow. Ours is the generation that took the bullets. The younger generation now need to keep showing up.

And maybe one day we'll expand beyond Saudi. Whenever international trainers experience Studio55, they tell us they'd love something like it in their countries – the UK, Australia, the US. In Saudi, our hand is forced: we have to be women-only. But it feels like other countries might also benefit from what we do: female empowerment for women everywhere. ●

**Maybe one day we'll
expand beyond Saudi.
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women everywhere**

 @fitstudio55



“Even if you’ve never done indoor cycling, don’t ever worry that you won’t be good enough to do my classes”



Above: Sophie Joline Fischer turned to indoor cycling as her go-to after a serious accident

CYCLING SOPHIE

Sophie Joline Fischer is a pro cyclist turned indoor cycling influencer whose YouTube channel is changing the face of indoor cycling in Germany – and beyond. She speaks to Kate Cracknell.

WHAT'S YOUR CYCLING BACKGROUND?

I was a professional cyclist when I was younger, in the German national youth team from the age of 16, competing on the road, in the velodrome, on mountain bikes.

I also embraced indoor cycling, starting out as a participant in 2011 before becoming an instructor in 2017. Then something happened that made indoor cycling even more important to me. In 2018, I had a serious bike accident outdoors, breaking my arms and my knee and only surviving because I was wearing a helmet. I lost the confidence to cycle outside.

Indoor cycling became my go-to workout. It's the time when I switch off and forget about the world. There's nothing I enjoy more, and it really doesn't take much effort to get on the bike once you have one at home. I aim to share that passion with everyone who cycles with me.

At the moment I'm not teaching live, in-person classes – we moved house recently and there aren't any cycling studios nearby – but I'd like to in the future. For now, alongside

my main job as a teacher, I pour my passion into Cycling Sophie – my online platform.

WHAT INSPIRED CYCLING SOPHIE?

In the pandemic, people who had previously done my live, in-club classes were writing to me and asking for help in staying active during lockdown.

We, my business partner Jan and I, looked at the existing online cycling content and didn't find anything that inspired us. We had a vision of free-to-use indoor cycling workouts that would cater for all different levels – beginner, intermediate and advanced – with workouts ranging from 15 to 90 minutes, and where my passion would really come across.

We uploaded our first piece of content to YouTube in January 2021, with a goal of changing how people feel about indoor cycling. Certainly in Germany, it's always been seen as a tough workout where the room is full of men in lycra. I wanted to change that and spread my love of indoor cycling to new and younger audiences. ▶



Above: Production quality is a big focus in each of the new workouts uploaded

“Indoor cycling is my go-to workout. There’s nothing I enjoy more, and I aim to share that passion with everyone who cycles with me.”

Right (top two images): The free-to-use workouts span both rhythm and performance-based cycling

Right (lower two images): Sophie is a teacher, and she aims to spread the love of indoor cycling to younger audiences



► **WHAT DO YOU OFFER?**

We offer rhythm and performance-based cycling, but music is key to every class so it never feels like a chore. Once I've decided what I want to achieve with each class, who my participants will be, what they need and what techniques will support them, I move straight on to music. I always have a good mix of genres – hip hop, rock, Latin, K-Pop and so on – as well as different beats and cadences.

We also train using Myzone heart rate zones in every class, so it really is just about you and your body. Even if you've never done indoor cycling before, you don't ever need to worry that you won't be good enough to do my classes.

We upload two new workouts a month to YouTube, mostly in German. Although we started out producing English language content for a global audience, now only one class in every four is in English. That's one of our biggest USPs: our production quality stands out, as does the quality of the workouts, but it was when we started focusing on German language content that our YouTube user numbers soared. There just wasn't anyone else doing this for indoor cycling in Germany, and the demand was high.

All our content is currently free, although you can support us financially if you'd like to.

YOU'VE PARTNERED WITH WEXER...

Core Health & Fitness got in touch to say they were interested in working with me. Core owns Schwinn, but it also owns digital fitness brand Wexer, and I'm delighted to say that ►





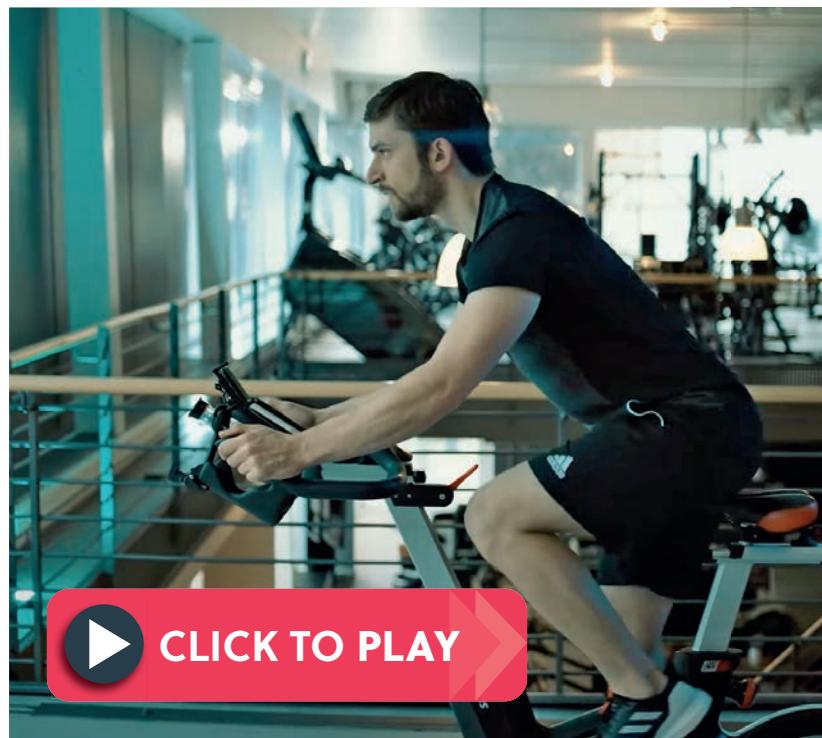
► Cycling Sophie is now live on Wexer Virtual – the in-club system – and Wexer Mobile.

It's really exciting, because it gives us a chance to reach people who cycle in clubs and who might not have come across Cycling Sophie yet. We've started with 30 workouts on the Wexer platform and will regularly add new content.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

Cycling Sophie is about to reach 1 million YouTube clicks and we have around 11,000 subscribers to our channel – men and women from Germany but also around the world, from the UK to the US, Australia to Russia to Mexico. We also have 2,300+ followers on Instagram. I'm hugely proud of how many people we've reached already.

I'm also proud of how many lives we've changed. I get messages on a daily basis –



“Focusing on German language content made our user numbers soar. There wasn’t anyone else doing this for indoor cycling.”



Above: Cycling Sophie is about to reach 1 million YouTube clicks and has 11,000 subscribers

Top left: Sophie brings great expertise as a former pro cyclist with a masters in physical education

Left: Check out Sophie’s English language trailer

ROCKSTAR INSTRUCTORS

► and I try to reply to them all – thanking me for providing such good content for free. It’s what inspires me and the team to keep going.

We’ll continue to offer free content, so everyone has a chance to access indoor cycling and feel the passion I feel for this beautiful sport.

WHAT NEXT FOR CYCLING SOPHIE?

We’ve just moved up to a new level with YouTube, so we can now also offer a paid-for membership. We’re aiming to launch this by the end of this year or early next, and it will unlock another two pieces of content each month. There may even be different levels of membership if you also want tutorials, nutritional advice and so on, and potentially resistance workouts too.

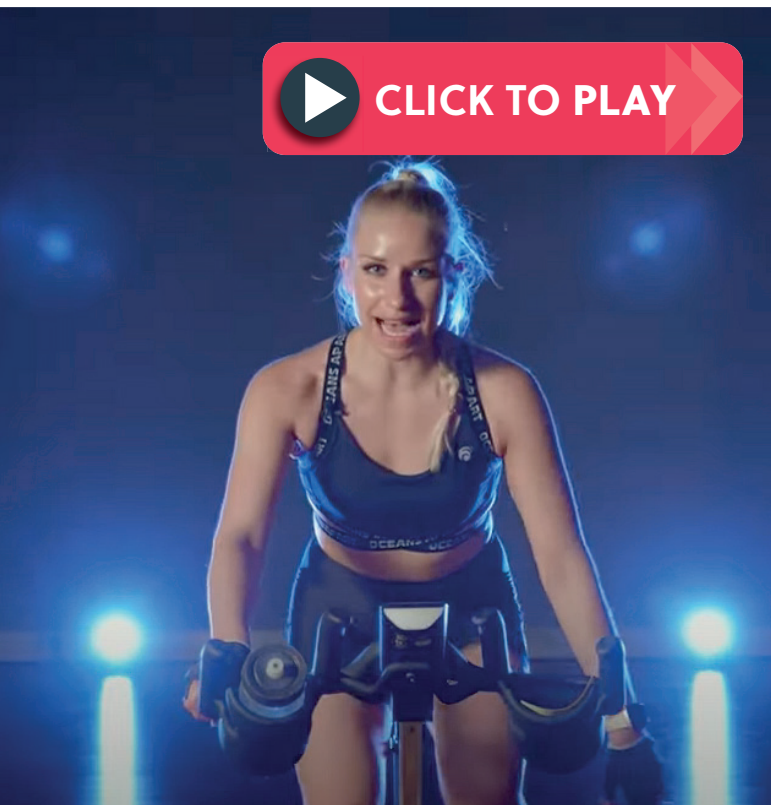
Because I believe that’s key to the future of indoor cycling: we need to focus on fusion workouts, combining indoor cycling with resistance training. You simply won’t get results through cardiovascular workouts alone.

We also need to support people in adopting a more rounded approach to health



Above: Sophie brings the positive energy of indoor cycling to those on the other side of the camera

Left: The majority of Cycling Sophie content is delivered in German – a USP that meets “high demand”





“Cycling Sophie is now live on Wexer – a chance to reach people who cycle in clubs, who might not have come across us yet”

generally. I have a Masters in PE and English philology and I want to draw on all of this, as well as my own experience as a cyclist, to communicate – in a way that’s really easy to understand – how you can combine nutrition and different exercise disciplines.

Longer term, I also dream of having my own indoor cycling studio, but for now I’ll focus on channelling my passion and expertise to the people on the other side of the camera – whether they’re at home or using my content in the gym – to bring them the positive energy of indoor cycling. ●

 youtube.com/@cyclingsophie

 [@cycling.sophie](https://www.instagram.com/cycling.sophie)



RPM100

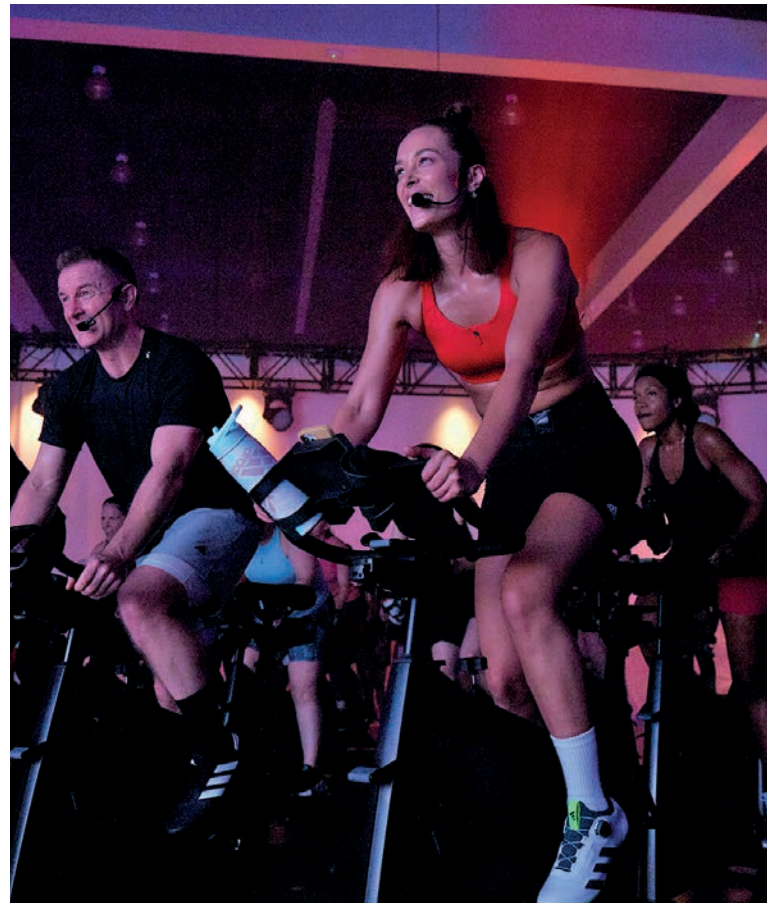
The OG of all indoor cycling programmes has turned 100 – and Les Mills marked the occasion by filming the 100th release at LES MILLS LIVE Los Angeles, powered by 175 BODY BIKES



*BODY BIKE partnered
with Les Mills to power
the cycling sessions at
LES MILLS LIVE LA*



Above: Glen Ostergaard (wearing a cap) has designed every RPM release since #26



Above left: “We celebrated RPM100 in style, with a great crew on-stage,” says Les Mills’ Glen Ostergaard

Above right: The sold-out class had an energy and enthusiasm that “encapsulated why we love what we do,” says BODY BIKE CEO Uffe A Olesen

The Los Angeles Convention Center played host to LES MILLS LIVE in July – a high-energy event where, in front of a huge audience of ticket holders and Les Mills community members, the global group exercise giant filmed its latest releases, including the 100th release of RPM.

“We celebrated RPM100 in style,” says Les Mills programme director Glen Ostergaard. “We had 175 BODY BIKES in the room, a great crew on-stage, the event was sold out, and everyone was really into it and there for the right reasons: to celebrate and have fun.

“Through the music and the language we used, the class wove a wonderful journey through the history of RPM, from its very beginnings to where it is now and where it might go in the future.

“We honoured the late Mike McSweeney, who sadly passed away last year, but who created RPM and designed the first 25 releases. We recognised some of the key presenters over the years, many of whom

“Through music and language, the class wove a wonderful journey through the history of RPM”
Glen Ostergaard –
Programme director, Les Mills



► were in the room. We acknowledged the current generation of presenters on-stage. And we spoke about the generations to come: our own children who one day will take the baton from us. There was a lot of feeling and warmth in the room.”

He adds: “Musically, the warm-up track in RPM100 is the same as in RPM1: *Raincloud* by Lighthouse Family. You then go on a musical journey, gradually moving through the eras until you get to the sounds of today. There’s a retrospective feel while still using mainstream tracks that everyone will know. And this wasn’t just for LA: this is also the RPM100

playlist for clubs, while the RPM100 class on LES MILLS+ will use footage from LA.”

CELEBRATING TOGETHER

He continues: “For me personally... Well, it wasn’t about me, but RPM was the programme I started with – I’ve designed it since release #26 – and it was great to still be there and be part of it.

“It was great to have BODY BIKE onboard too: I love the bike, and the BODY BIKE team really helped us make the event something very special. So a big thanks to them, and to all the organisers who

►



Above: The special RPM class honoured Les Mills presenters across the generations

Left: The RPM100 class on LES MILLS+ will use footage from LA

“This was a fabulous milestone for the most famous indoor cycling programme in the world”

**Uffe A Olesen – CEO,
BODY BIKE International**

MUSIC & PROGRAMMING

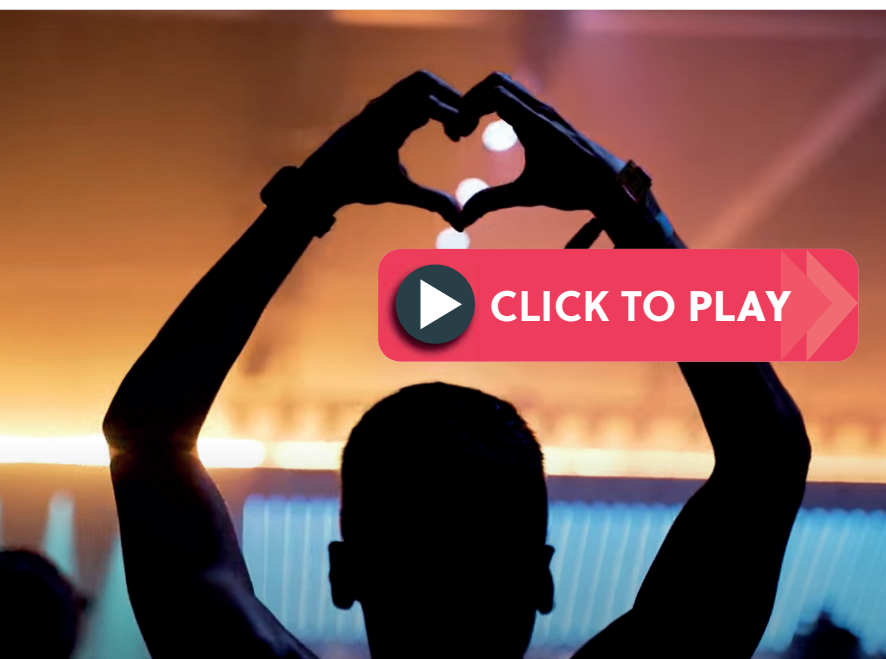
- ▶ made this a fantastic celebration and a really nice moment for the programme.”

“BODY BIKE was honoured to partner with Les Mills International to power the cycling sessions at LES MILLS LIVE LA – SPRINT, THE TRIP and RPM100 – with 175 limited edition Smart+ bikes designed exclusively for the event,” says Uffe A Olesen, CEO at BODY BIKE International.

“These were an incredible few days and I was so excited to attend in person, connecting with fellow indoor cycling enthusiasts and feeling my passion fuelled by the exceptional presenter team. The energy and enthusiasm in the room perfectly encapsulated why we love what we do.

“The filming of RPM100 was a particularly special moment, fuelled by great memories of the friendly and charismatic Mike McSweeney. This was a fabulous milestone for the most famous indoor cycling programme in the world.

“Our thanks go to BODY BIKE APAC director Lee Smith for his hands-on commitment to the event’s success, and of course to Les Mills for choosing to celebrate this epic milestone with us.” ●



Left: The LA event brought together a buzzing community of ticket holders and Les Mills team



Above: BODY BIKE shipped 175 limited edition Smart+ bikes to LA for LES MILLS LIVE

 @lesmills

 @bodybikeinternational



Offering fusion classes – cycling + weights – is a great way to cater for perimenopausal women



LONG READ
WHOLE
STORY

CYCLE CHANGE

Indoor cycling has great benefits for women going through (peri)menopause, but how you approach it may need to change. Our panel of experts share their invaluable advice for exercisers, clubs and instructors.

PHOTO: ©SPORT ENGLAND



Above: Monika Björn wants to help clubs understand their perimenopausal members

“Although weight gain may push women to exercise even harder and eat less, that isn’t the answer”

Monika Björn

Author | Lecturer | Menopause activist | Fitness trainer

The first thing to understand is that perimenopausal women make up a huge group of your members, yet even they don't really understand what they're going through. Nobody talks about perimenopause! Whether you're an operator, instructor, woman – or someone who wants to support a woman – the first step is therefore to educate yourself.

For many women, the symptoms of perimenopause can be crippling: hot flashes might be the most famous symptom, but not all women will experience those. It's also suddenly feeling old, experiencing unexplained muscle and joint pain, anxiety, brain fog, loss of self-esteem, frequent UTIs, lack of sleep... When you're also trying to manage a job and maybe a family, it's the perfect storm.

In 2018, I published my first book on this topic, and in 2021 my second. As a yoga and former Spin instructor, I also created a one-day certification, Strong Throughout Menopause, to help instructors understand how to support this huge group of members.

Of course, every woman's journey is different, but for those with medium to severe symptoms, training at high intensity several times a week will likely stress their systems even more. They won't get the

same endorphin rush, either, and may feel more tired between sessions. Although weight gain may push them to exercise even harder and eat less, that isn't the answer.

My advice for women experiencing symptoms – and this is something clubs and instructors must understand – is that their bodies may now respond differently ▶

Understanding the female lifestages

PREMENOPAUSE: From a girl's first menstruation until a woman hits perimenopause.

PERIMENOPAUSE: When a woman's menstruation pattern starts to change due to ageing follicles, normally in her 40s. Symptoms – both physical and psychological – begin during perimenopause, making this time period the most stressful part of the menopausal journey for many women.

MENOPAUSE: A medical term that tells you a woman has been without her menses for 12 months in a row. The average age when this happens is 51–52 years; most women have experienced symptoms for several years when they reach menopause.

POSTMENOPAUSE: The remainder of a woman's life after menopause.

Left: A former Spin instructor, Björn changed her routine in perimenopause

Below: Strength training is critical for women at this lifestage



“My advice for women experiencing symptoms is that their bodies may now respond differently to exercise”

► to exercise. Certainly for me – someone who used to instruct several indoor cycling classes a week – my results went backwards.

I recommend taking one variable at a time, starting with frequency. Keep active, but try doing slightly fewer cycling classes each week and more strength training; this is critical at this lifestage, including for weight management. If it still doesn't feel good, experiment with intensity too, then duration. It's about establishing your own very personal thresholds until you restore balance in your body and mind. Make peace with this: something is always better than nothing.

Once you've restored your energy and found a way to navigate the perimenopause – potentially with hormone replacement therapy (HRT) – you can experiment with building back up. But keep listening to your body and be brutally honest about what works and what doesn't.

Again taking myself as an example, from previously being able to train as hard and as often as I liked, I dropped down to 20 minutes of steady-state cycling three or four times a week when my symptoms were at their worst. I never excluded indoor cycling completely. I just changed how I went about it for a while. In fact, it took me a full year to establish a new training schedule that worked for me – and even now, a few years on, I only do HIIT cycling once a week.

Alongside this, I do heavy weights training, yoga, short running sessions and a lot more recovery. And this sits at the heart of my advice to clubs and studios: get educated and create special courses for this huge group of customers – courses where strength training, recovery and education are key elements alongside something like indoor cycling, done in moderation and in a way that fully supports women at this stage of their lives.



PHOTO: © ALANA DA SILVA

Above: Björn instructs yoga and also embraces it within her own training

 @monikabjorn

 @starkgenomklimakteriet



Above: Tracy Minnoch-Nuku speaks to leading menopause experts on her podcast

“I’m a strong believer in adopting a new mindset in perimenopause, stepping back from short-term, aesthetic goals”

Tracy Minnoch-Nuku

Menopause podcast host | Fitness speaker | Author

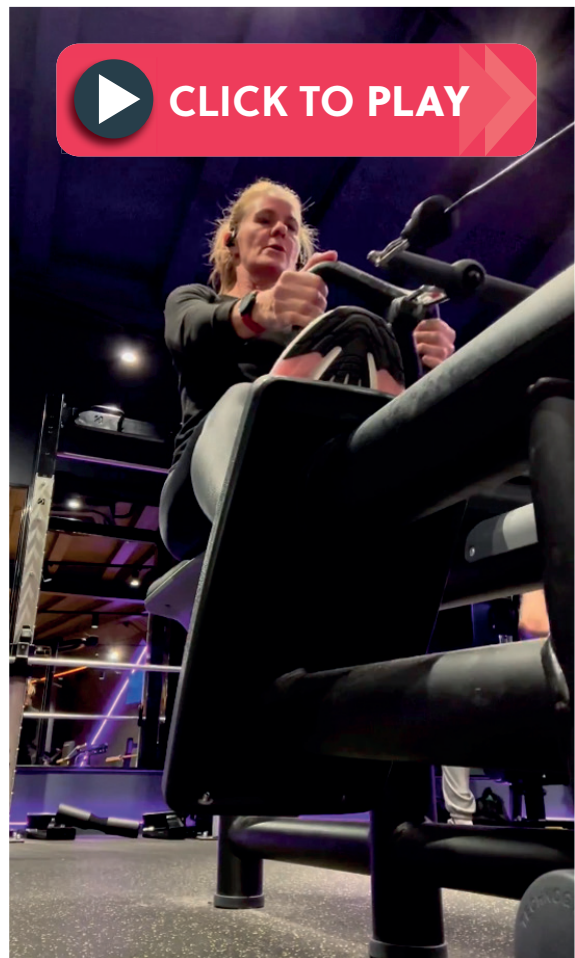
I’m a 53-year-old, perimenopausal woman who’s still teaching indoor cycling classes with waitlists, but I’m the first to recognise that 45-minute classes won’t suit every woman at this stage of her life.

And that’s OK: I’m a strong believer in adopting a new mindset in perimenopause, stepping back from the short-term, aesthetic goals most women have laboured with for decades and instead focusing on what we need to do to stay healthy in the long term, so we can continue to do all the amazing things on our bucket lists.

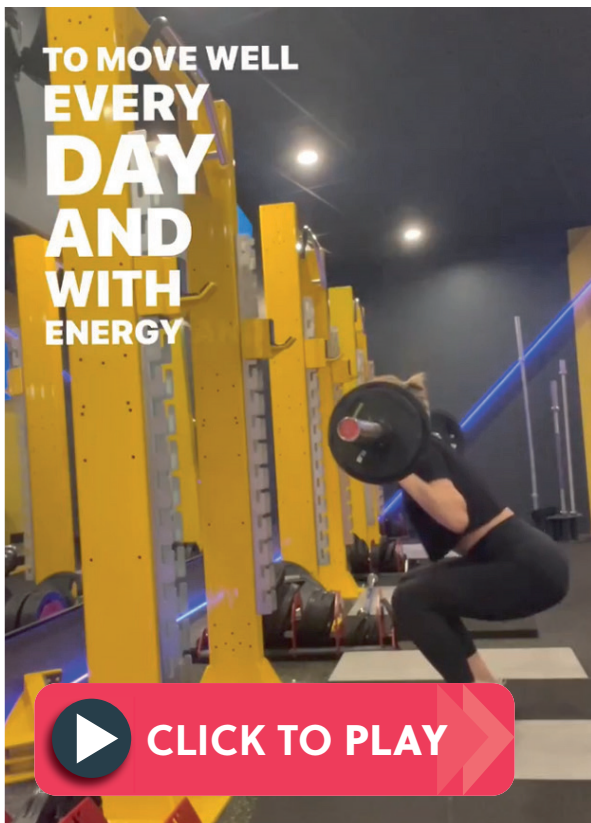
With that in mind, strength training comes first. Lean muscle mass is linked to longevity, as well as giving you the strength to do all the things you want to do. Weight training is also about bone density, joint strength, heart health, brain health, a confidence boost.

However, I’m also a firm believer in the right cardiovascular activity being hugely beneficial both physically and mentally, and indoor cycling ticks all the boxes: low impact at a time of joint pain, with the community and the music bringing an added feelgood factor.

For many women in perimenopause, a long, high-intensity workout isn’t going to work, but through my *Sexy Ageing* podcast, I’ve spoken to some of the world’s leading experts and am a big advocate of Dr Stacy Sims’ approach. One of the top physiologists



Above: Without resistance training, strength, power and speed all diminish as you age



“The right cardiovascular activity is hugely beneficial physically and mentally, and indoor cycling ticks all the boxes”

► when it comes to the menopause, Dr Sims recommends sprint training during perimenopause. This is the approach I've incorporated into the programmes in my app, alongside strength training.

It takes around 20 minutes, of which only 10 minutes are work. There's a five-minute warm-up, 10 minutes of intervals – start with 30 seconds on, 30 seconds recovery, and build up to 40/20 – then five minutes' cool-down. You could certainly do it on another piece of CV kit, but I believe it's easiest and most effective on a bike, so that's what I use in my programmes.

And the benefits are really important for women in perimenopause, 80 per cent of whom will become insulin resistant. It's this that causes weight to creep up,

because the body isn't as efficient at breaking down glucose. So, any exercise that can help with insulin resistance – without putting too much impact on the body – has to be worth considering.

Definitely do it in the morning, though, so the cortisol spike has come back down and you're able to sleep at night.

The last thing, which nobody ever wants to talk about but I'm going to: if dryness is making being on a saddle uncomfortable, there are moisturisers and oestrogen gels that can help. You don't have to let this stop you doing the workouts you enjoy.

 @sexyageing



Far left: Minnoch-Nuku wants to stay strong, so she still gets the most out of life into her 90s

Near left: Women aged 40+ will lose 3% of their muscle mass every year unless they act to prevent it

Above: Sprint training takes just 20 minutes, of which only 10 minutes are work, and “it’s easiest and most effective on a bike”

Right: Minnoch-Nuku still instructs waitlisted indoor cycling classes





Above: Dr Lou Atkinson focuses on supporting positive health behaviours

“With the menopausal body losing collagen and muscle mass, the low-impact nature of indoor cycling is beneficial”

Dr Lou Atkinson

Schwinn master trainer | Health psychologist

Menopause and perimenopause is a topic that brings together both sides of my professional expertise, and is something I often discuss with indoor cycling instructors and studio owners.

Supporting positive health behaviours is my primary focus, helping women stay active throughout this lifestage, and there are two important aspects. The first is physiological: how indoor cycling can be affected by the symptoms of perimenopause, and vice versa. The second is operational: how clubs and coaches can make indoor cycling classes accessible to this group.

On the first point, with the menopausal body losing collagen and muscle mass, the low-impact nature of indoor cycling is beneficial. Cardiovascular exercise is also a mood enhancer, and indoor cycling especially so: a social group exercise experience, often with music and a party vibe. This is significant, as many women suffer from low mood, anxiety, depression and stress during (peri)menopause.

On the flipside, there are some challenges: menopausal joint aches and pains can make indoor cycling hard for some, while genitourinary issues can make being in the saddle uncomfortable. And of course, this is an activity where your core temperature rises, which may not be comfortable there and then if you're already suffering from hot flushes. ▶



Above: Regular strength-based workouts, including bodyweight training, are key as women age





Above: Indoor cycling lets you adjust your intensity and still be part of the class experience

Left: With its music and party vibe, indoor cycling is a great mood enhancer

- ▶ There is some evidence that exercise can help manage hot flushes over time, although as usual with women's health, it's under-researched.

The key with indoor cycling is that you're in complete control of your workout. If you have joint aches, fatigue or sleep disturbance, you simply adjust your intensity while still being part of the same class experience.

Alongside this, strength training is vital for this group. I advise clubs to create fusion classes – around 25–30 minutes of cycling followed by 15–20 minutes of bodyweight or free weights training off the bike – so women get everything they need from one class.

And beyond that, simply be aware of the hot flushes, the aches and pains, the longer recovery times, the brain fog your members might be experiencing. Have empathy. Remove any stigma. Foster peer support within your community. Reassure class participants that individual wellbeing is more important than everyone doing the same thing – that it's OK to adjust their intensity. Trust each woman to make the choices that feel right for her mind and her body. Give clear instructions, repeating messages in different ways. And don't be afraid to coach individually where appropriate. ●

“There is some evidence that exercise can help manage hot flushes, but as usual with women's health, it's under-researched”

“They weren’t sure if someone in a wheelchair would be able to do it. I was up for the challenge,” says Burns



DISABILITY



Graham Burns was the first wheelchair user in the world to complete Schwinn's indoor cycling instructor training. He shares his story with RIDE HIGH.



Left: Graham Burns is a Gold level Schwinn coach and has been on-stage at some of the mass participation events

Right: Burns uses a krankcycle, so focuses predominantly on verbal cues for his participants

What led you to become an indoor cycling coach?

Initially, it was just to prove people wrong – to show it could be done. I'd always been active: I was a wheelchair racer from the age of eight to 15 years and even beat Paralympic gold medallist David Weir once, although it was a bit of a fluke!

I was working as a personal trainer at Aspire Leisure Centre in the UK when, in 2009, they introduced indoor cycling and asked who'd be interested in teaching it. They weren't sure if someone in a wheelchair would be able to do it. I was up for the challenge.

That April, I did Schwinn's Bronze level qualification. It was a two-day course and wasn't modified at all for wheelchair users, so when it came to teaching a class, a colleague had to get on the bike to demo what I was asking people to do. It worked, though, and I was the first wheelchair user in the world to complete the course.

What's your role now?

I'm now a Gold level Schwinn coach and have done a few mass participation events, up on-

stage alongside able-bodied coaches. I also still work at Aspire as a personal trainer – I've been a PT since 1996 – and an indoor cycling coach, teaching classes using a krankcycle.

Aspire is a very inclusive gym. On average across the UK, 1–2 per cent of a gym's members will be disabled. At Aspire it's 28 per cent, and that's reflected in our team too.

My wife comes to my classes – she's also in a wheelchair and uses a krankcycle – and although most of my participants are able-bodied, many have some sort of health consideration such as overweight, heart conditions, prediabetes and so on. It's a very inclusive class that attracts a broad array of people. I think they see me and think: 'If Graham can, I can!'

What's your coaching style?

I've done disability training modules through the YMCA, but above all I believe empathy is key. It's not about pushing everyone to do 160 RPM. It's about doing what you can. That's an ethos I try to bring to every class.

Obviously I can't get on a bike to demo the moves, so my focus is on verbal cues. Most of ►

“I was previously a wheelchair racer and even beat Paralympic gold medallist David Weir once!”



“I want to get as many people fit as possible, regardless of their ability. Indoor cycling is a huge part of that”



► my participants have been coming to class for years, so they know exactly what I mean!

I also do a lot of going round the room, interacting with people individually. There are only 15 bikes and four krankcycles in the Aspire studio, so there's plenty of scope to offer a personal touch and tailor the class to the needs of those in the room.

Programming-wise, it's all about fitness cycling – an authentic approach to indoor cycling where you don't do any moves you wouldn't do on an outdoor bike.

How accessible is the fitness sector?

It's better than it used to be, but there's still a long way to go. I've tried to instruct at other clubs but they simply haven't been accessible.

Krankcycles are also hard to come by in the UK nowadays, which is a great shame as it isn't only wheelchair users they're good for. They're also good for people who've had knee or hip replacements. I believe every club should have one or two in their cycling studio.

And generally, I'd like to see more of the big companies – manufacturers, training providers, operators – showing that it can be done. That accessibility can be mainstream.

What's your mission?

I want to get as many people fit as possible, regardless of their ability. Indoor cycling is a huge part of that: it's low impact, you can adjust the workout to your level and it brings a wealth of fitness benefits. It's a great workout for everyone.

What are your goals?

I'd like to open my own gym or PT studio, including indoor cycling.

I'd like to work with big companies to drive accessibility up the agenda.

And I'd like to become a Schwinn master trainer, so I can get more people with impairments qualified as coaches. It's a great career. My advice: don't think about it – just get out there and do it! ●



Above: Coaching is a great career for those with impairments, says Burns

Left: Burns wants to work with big companies in the sector to drive accessibility up the agenda



App.roved BY YOU

We asked you to tell us about your favourite indoor cycling apps. In no particular order, here's what you voted for...

PHOTO: © SHUTTERSTOCK/FOTO SALE



PHOTO: ©SHUTTERSTOCK/DUSAN PETKOVIC



Above: Ciclozone can gather RPM, power and heart rate data (see page 57)

“AI-based algorithms understand your power levels and adjust as you train, recommending new workouts”



Above: The Intelligent Cycling app functions as a training companion for riders

Below: Performance data gathered by the app helps users track their progress

INTELLIGENT CYCLING


This free-to-use app functions as a training companion, helping users train smarter and providing instructors with a large, high-quality workout catalogue they can help grow.

More than 50,000 workouts on the platform include Intelligent Cycling's own official rides, plus workouts by BODY BIKE, Keiser, Wattbike, Schwinn and other industry leaders, as well as users.

Track your progress in the app using your performance score and workout history, embrace the newly-added social dimension – like, follow and share your favourite creators – and use expansive new search filters to easily find your perfect workout: Spotify vs no playlist, official vs user workouts, duration, intensity and so on.

The mobile app can also be paired with a desktop app to enhance the in-studio experience.



 intelligent-cycling.com



Above: Instructors can interact with participants using polls and emojis

Below: Motosumo connects bikes and riders into shared social experiences in-studio and via livestream



MOTOSUMO

Free to use for gyms, instructors and members, Motosumo's smartphone app connects to any make or model of stationary bike to unlock an engaging, data-driven experience, however entry-level the bike.

On a smart bike, it connects via Bluetooth: the bike's sensors send data to the app. On other bikes, the phone sits on the handlebars and accurately translates vibrations from the bike into cadence, distance and calories. Additional data can be drawn in by connecting to an external heart rate monitor or power meter.

Motosumo also connects bikes and riders into shared social experiences in-studio or via livestream: create a group, invite people to join and take part in real-time rides together. Instructors can interact with participants via polls and emojis.



CICLOZONE

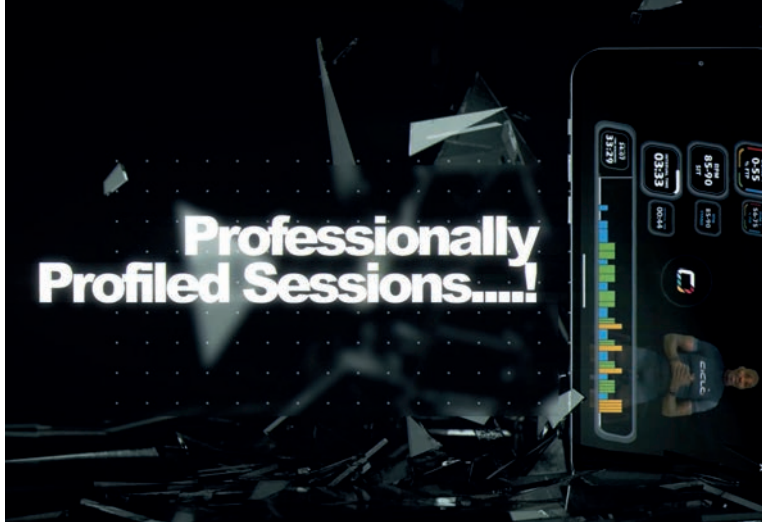
A multilingual app created by former pro cyclist Darren Teagles who – finding himself involved in fitness industry education and disillusioned by the level of indoor cycle training concepts – decided to create his own.

“Ciclozone harvests the best cycle science and professional cycle training knowledge and harnesses it within the standard indoor cycle format,” he says.

AI-based algorithms understand your power levels and constantly adjust as you train, recommending new workouts based on previous performance.

Able to connect to RPM and power sensors on bikes and cycle trainers, as well as heart rate devices, the app has a proprietary data value – Ciclozone Output Level% – that constantly guides you in every element of your ride to help you continually improve.

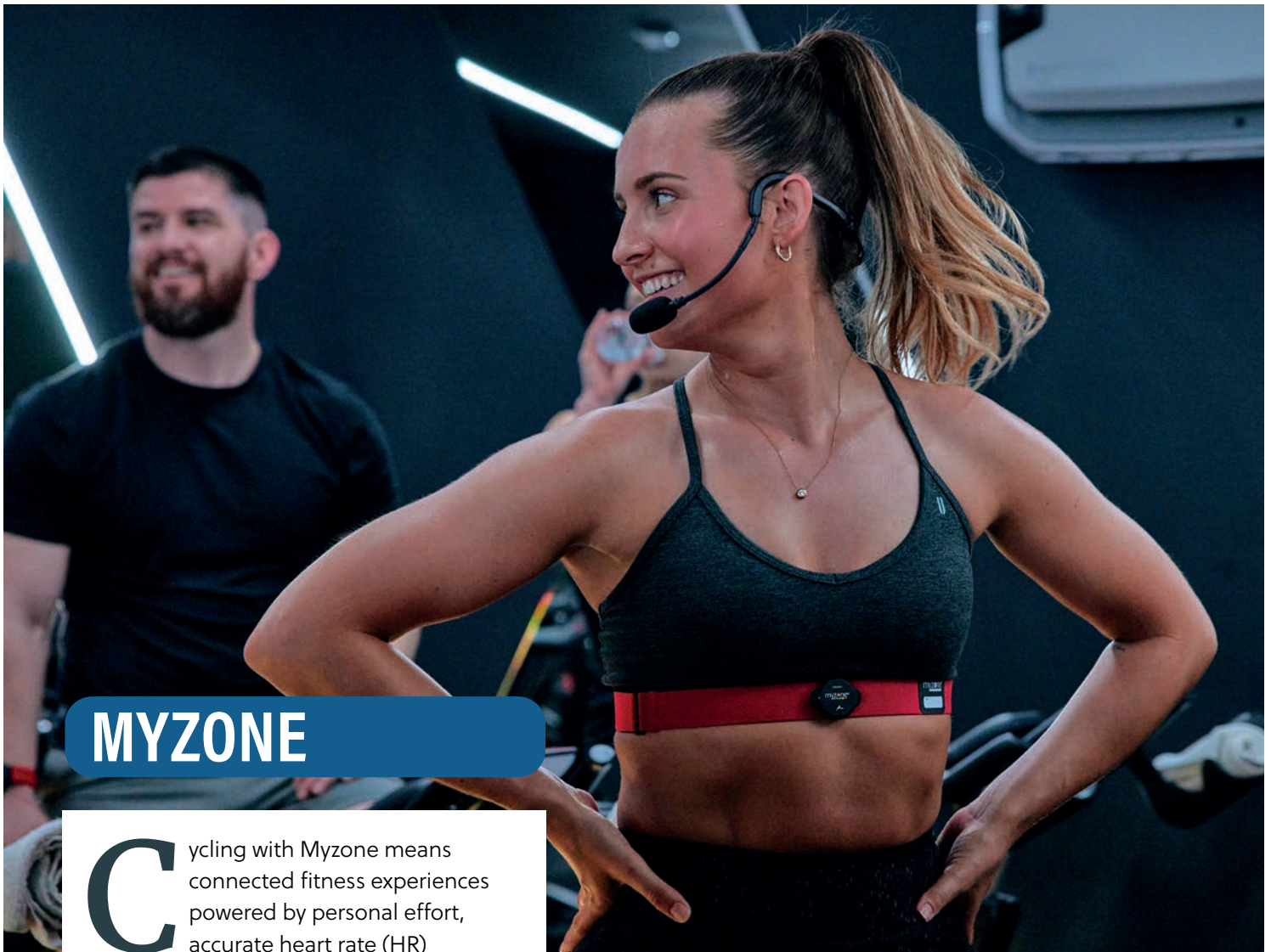
 ciclozone.com



Right (top two images): The Ciclozone app has a proprietary data value, with AI-based algorithms recommending workouts based on your previous performance

Right (lower two images): “Ciclozone harvests the best cycle science and professional training knowledge,” says its founder





MYZONE

Cycling with Myzone means connected fitness experiences powered by personal effort, accurate heart rate (HR)

tracking and real-time feedback.

The free Myzone app offers workouts, challenge incentives and a like-minded, motivational community. Colour-coded heart rate zone tiles on your smartphone screen push you towards your goals and educate around recovery.

Recently launched are three new premium elements: MZ-Club, MZ-Together and MZ-On Demand. MZ-On Demand unlocks 1,300 pre-recorded classes – including virtual rides – while MZ-Club allows facilities to broadcast their own content to exercisers everywhere.

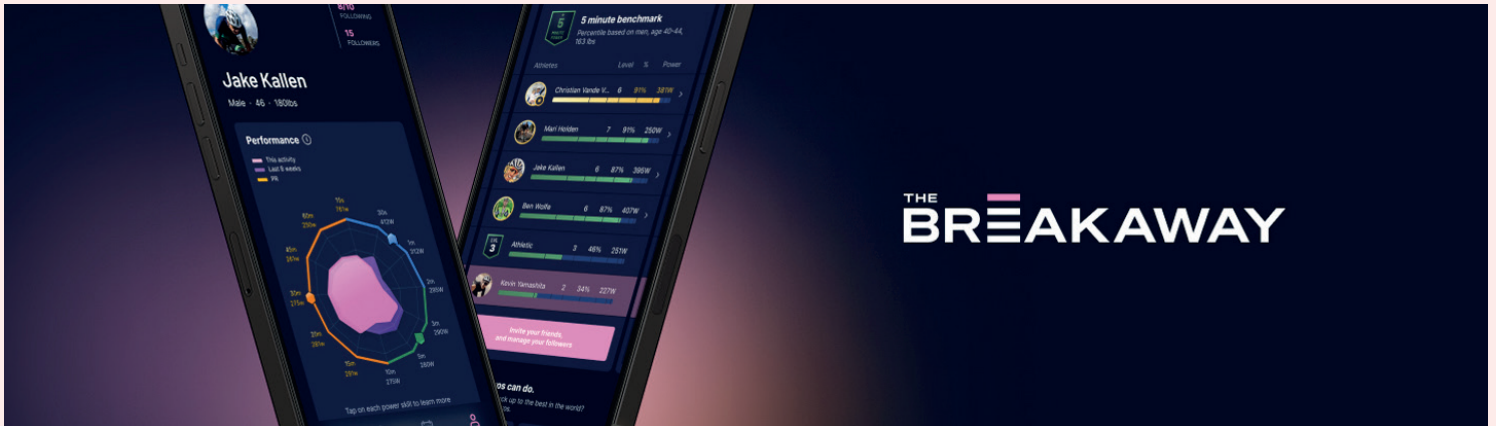
With MZ-Together, exercisers just need the Myzone app and HR monitor to take part in live classes such as Cardio Club, where – coached live by a Myzone master trainer – they participate however they choose, from jumping on an indoor bike to going outside for a run.



Above: MZ-Club is a premium element of the app that allows facilities to broadcast their own content to users

Below: The Myzone app uses colour-coded heart rate zone tiles to help people work at the right intensities





Above: The Breakaway is a connected training app for cyclists, indoors and out

Right and below: The app benchmarks your performance and offers ride and workout recommendations

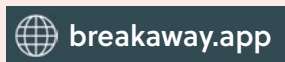
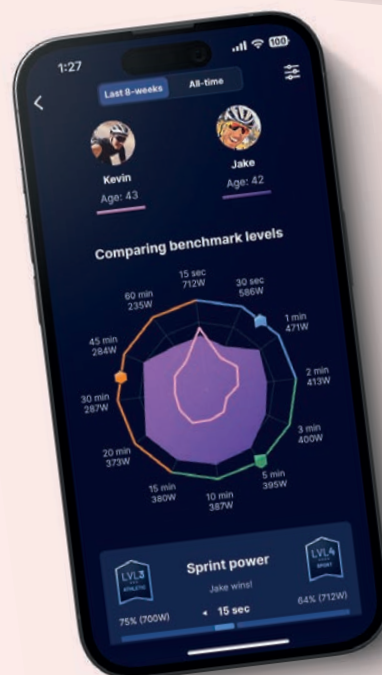
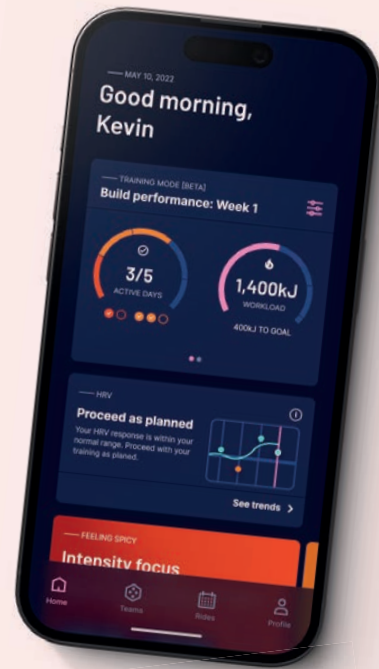
THE BREAKAWAY

Founded in 2020 by Jordan Kobert and Kyle Yugawa, both early Strava leaders, and former professional cyclist Christian Vande Velde, The Breakaway is a connected training app for cyclists – a personal coach in your pocket.

Designed to easily track progress and improvement in indoor cycling, The Breakaway now covers outdoor cycling too, but still with a strong focus on the work you can do indoors.

It makes it simple to understand where you are as an athlete – with benchmarks for age, gender and weight across 12 power skills – then offers ride and workout recommendations, and expert Q&As, to help you achieve peak performance more often.

For Peloton, it can even send recommended workouts to the bike so they're bookmarked and ready for you, and gather data from your workouts to set personalised weekly targets.



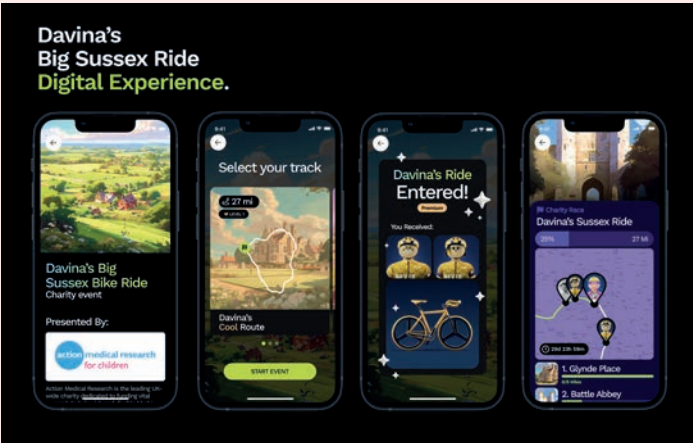


W3RIDE

W3RIDE is a new app inspired by the concept of Air Miles: a reward system for cyclists that engages and encourages people to cycle more often.

It integrates with and draws workout data from Strava, Polar, Suunto, Komoot and more, with indoor cycling integrations due to launch based on heart rate and power. The app converts this workout data into points that can be used in the app in a number of ways: to secure discounts from partner brands including Nike, Oakley and Garmin; to buy entry into in-app charity events; or simply to donate to charity, with sponsors turning the points into cash.

Points can also unlock premium upgrades in the app – for example, better virtual bikes for your avatar that earn you more points for each ride completed.



Top: You can buy your avatar a better virtual bike, which in turn will earn you more points per ride

Above: Points earned can be used in a number of ways in-app, including for entry fees to charity rides





Above: Spivi gamifies the fitness journey with avatars and animation, points and awards

SPIVI

Predominantly a studio-based solution that draws on wearables, equipment and sensors in the club to track performance data and gamify members' fitness journeys – with avatars and animation, live leaderboards, challenges, milestones, points and awards – Spivi also offers a couple of complementary apps.

Spivi.Connect can be installed on your Apple Watch or Android device, allowing you to stream your heart rate data to Spivi.

Meanwhile, the Spivi Home app allows gym members to take part in live and on-demand classes from home, staying connected with their community and training with their favourite instructors. Metrics and performance history help riders stay accountable and motivated. The app also includes Spivi Workout Creator, which allows instructors to design structured workouts. ●

 spivi.com

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