

Boxing:

A Killer Calorie Burner

A petite, trim woman raises her gloves and begins pounding a heavy bag. It's almost as big as she is, and it takes a wallop to move it – but she is focused and the bag sways.

Around her are 20 others hitting heavy bags. Music thumps and a trainer instructs the group to start leg lifts and then pushups. This is Title Boxing Club, which since early 2012 has provided an aggressive exercise regimen in McKinney. A boxing workout is for fitness enthusiasts who aren't necessarily bruisers, but who want to develop every bit of stamina and physical strength the grueling sport requires.

Boxing, the sweet science of rights, lefts and uppercuts, has emerged as one of the fastest-growing exercise regimens among adults. It offers a calorie-scorching workout without requiring anyone to step into the ring.

"Title Boxing Club is for fitness only," says Manager Joe Castillo, "not for boxing with an opponent."

While there is a boxing ring on-site to teach technique, Castillo adds, "This is a non-nosebleed facility."

Title Boxing Club franchise owner Michelle Currier says the sport's superior training routine tones muscles, strengthens the body's core, improves cardio – and helps shed extra pounds.





Barney Flores of Barney and Me Gym

"It's a very different workout," she says. "With kick boxing or boxing, people can burn between 800 to 1,000 calories in one hour."

Across town at Barney and Me Gym on McKinney's east side, stay-at-home mom Felice Hays slips on pink Everlast gloves. She then begins a routine that owner/trainer Barney Flores uses on anyone who enters his gym, whether they're homemakers or professional boxers training for a bout.

Heavy bag for two minutes, up and down the stairs for two minutes, then speed bag, wind training and more, through this circuit for an hour. Then, if you've passed Flores' muster and are so inclined, into the ring you go to test your sparring skills against an opponent. But that's entirely up to you.

"I've coached boxing for 35 years," says Flores, a renowned coach who's also a community activist and mentor to young people. "People come to this sport for physical conditioning. They stay for the workout and keep coming back for more."

That's how Hays approached it. She became interested in boxing because her great-grandfather boxed. She then connected with Flores, his gym and the regimen. While she doesn't spar, she's enthusiastic about the workout.

"I'm in my 30s and wanted to do something different," she says. "Physically, boxing is a personal reward for meeting the challenge of training and accomplishing it. It's also a great stress reliever."

There's a feeling of genuineness and nostalgia at Barney and Me Gym that can be acquired only through time. A ring dominates the space; the walls feature old boxing posters. The stairs workout uses actual stairs to the second floor. The only somewhat high-tech piece of equipment is a boom box.

"This gym is old school," says Flores. "If something works, why replace it?"

A fixture in the community and in the sport, Flores is an integral part of his gym's experience. "Barney is a good mentor and friend," says Hays. "He talks me up when I'm having bad days; he's almost like a life coach."

At Title Boxing Club, sweat covers the boxers as they jab, hit and coerce into movement the 55 heavy bags hanging from the ceiling. Wade Kerzie pulls no punches with his fitness intentions. Toned and lean, Kerzie is in his early 40s, and his reasons for a boxing workout are practical.

"I've never seen a fighter in bad shape," he says. "Boxing gives me injury-free workouts and the best results I've ever had, which is important for an adult. I was getting hurt doing everything else, but not with this."

But some people need more – they need to compete. This is what Mike York, a Barney Flores protégé, is undertaking. At age 38, York planned to compete in August in the Master's Division of the Ringside World Championship, the largest amateur boxing championship in the world. But when he first came to Barney and Me Gym, York was out of shape.

"I started to box in 2012, and part of my interest came after breaking an ankle skydiving," York says. "Due to inactivity, my weight went up 85 pounds during my rehabilitation. I got into boxing for fitness and self-discipline."

Boxing can be intimidating to some women, but at Title Boxing it's about you and the heavy bag, Currier says. While Currier's trainers do not teach self-defense, club members do learn skills to take care of themselves.



TITLE BOXING

"When people come in and tell me they want to box, I send them to Barney and Me on the east side," says Currier. "I think Barney and I complement each other. ... I would recommend boxing to anyone who has fitness goals. It's safe and it's a great workout."

For more information about Title Boxing in McKinney, go to titleboxingclub.com/mckinney-tx/. For more information about Barney and Me Gym, go to barneyandmegym.com.

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