



TREADING WATTERS

MOTOR CITY BOOTCAMP GETS THE EAGER OUT OF BED

At 5:30 a.m. on any given weekday, Jeff Watters is at the Chester Street parking deck in Birmingham, surrounded by his devotees who run, climb and squat at his command. Even on the bleakest winter days, Watters and his Motor City Bootcamp students push ahead on a mission to build powerful bodies.

The no-frills trainer with sculpted abs and a laid-back attitude says he gets his point across to his class without having to scream them into shape. “They know what’s expected of them,” says Watters, 34. “If they can only do two pushups when they start, that’s fine, but I expect three the next week and four the following week.”

The idea for the class came while training a small group of women at a local gym. At the time, Watters was conditioning for a boxing match. When the women heard him go on about being sore but feeling so good, they asked him for a similar routine. He says by using his own outdoor method, the women got better results in six weeks than after training in the gym for a year.

“I was even surprised by it,” he says. “I knew it was the way to go for people to get the best bang for the buck. After six weeks, people should be conditioned enough to play any sport, even if they haven’t done it before.”

Mike Rosenau, president of Clear!Blue Communications in Birmingham, has taken the Bootcamp class for a year and a half and says Jeff instilled a sense of discipline in him. “I’m in better shape and I’m more interested in working out than ever before,” Rosenau says. “Last year I competed in 5K and 10K races. It’s so much easier to do when you’re trained for it.”

Watters, who also conducts evening Bootcamp classes Mondays-Thursdays at 6:30 p.m., says being outside with a group is what helps most students get through the workout and come back the next day. “If you’re with a group of people who are suffering as much as you are, it’s easier to suck it up and do it,” he says. “With that type of training and that type of

intensity, you need people around you.”

Named “One of America’s Top Trainers” by *Vogue*, Watters had a passion for physical activity all his life, leaving his marketing and accounting studies at Michigan State University for a career in boxing. Though that dream didn’t pan out, it was his physical preparation for fights that got the notice of other boxers. Once they came to him for help with their own programs, a personal training career was born.

Today, the Ferndale resident’s professional life is a mix of personal training, corporate training and Bootcamp. But it’s his weekends – spent adventure racing with his wife Dori – that really gets his adrenaline pumping. “It’s fantastic. The most fun thing I’ve ever done,” he says.

Put on by Infiterra Sports out of Flint, adventure racing is a timed event, often lasting 8-12 hours, that includes mountain biking, canoeing and orienteering with a compass and a map. The team that hits the most check points in the least amount of time wins.

“It’s about keeping your head together and working as a team,” says Watters, who averages three races per month from May through September. Though he mostly competes in Michigan, this year he is planning a 30-hour adventure race in West Virginia.

He’s giving his Bootcamp students a taste of adventure racing during the off-season with Adventure Saturday, a modified Bootcamp at Bloomer Park in Rochester Hills. He invites some of his adventure racing buddies to mix with his students in the woods for a different workout experience.

Watters says that in the last two years, 25 of his students – who had never competed in any kind of race – have finished competitions, including marathons and triathlons. This May, Rosenau is stepping up to a new challenge as well, competing with Watters in the 50-mile Dances with Dirt in Indiana.

“Because of Jeff, I’m doing something on a competitive basis that I never would have considered in the past,” Rosenau says. “He has a rare ability to get you to do something that you don’t necessarily want to do and make you enjoy it.” As Watters says, “I try to keep people moving. My goal is to burn as many calories as I can while I have them there.” jeffwatters.com 🏆 - Karen Buscemi