

Mainstream (Globo) gym or CrossFit?

I visited a Crossfit affiliate for the first time ever this weekend. Allow me to compare and contrast a first-time Crossfit visit vs. a first-time Globo gym visit.

Globo first:

Enter gym. Notice front desk employee sitting in front of a computer. Wait about 15-20 seconds for them to stop playing solitaire or Facebook.

"Hi, I'm Brian. This is my first time here." "Oh, let me get a "trainer" to show you around."

Walk through the gym. Trainer shows you the "cardio areas", which consist of rows upon rows of treadmills, ellipticals, and stationary bikes.

Next, you are shown the "machines areas". Various contraptions with diagrams that highlight whatever muscle group the thing is supposed to isolate. If you're lucky, they'll have Hammer Strength stuff!! You may get a line like "This machine is designed to work you exactly like free weights." You think to yourself, "Hmmm, well why not just do free weights, then?" You also note that at least 2 of the four walls in every area are made up entirely of mirrors. And people are standing and looking at themselves in them.

The tour continues: "Here we have the free weight area. You can use this if you want to get hyyooge." This typically equates to the square footage of a walk-in closet. Work boots, little tank tops, and multiple shakers full of supplements abound.

Now, the all-important retreat into a tiny office where you get the used-car sale. Something like, "Well, typically our memberships are \$59/mo, plus a \$269 sign-up fee. We'll waive the fee and set you up on a tiered payment plan where every year the fee will drop 11.59043% until you reach year 4, at which point..." blah blah blah. You counter with, "Well my friend pays \$20/mo with no sign-up fee." They respond, "I'll have to get my manager." The dance continues. You threaten to walk out. At this point, you may or may not get the "super secret pricing deal". You realize you've lost a little bit of your soul. They throw in free tanning.

You are now a member. You work out for 2 years. You see the same people every day. You never talk to them. After 2 years you notice that they all look exactly the same as the first day you ever saw them, despite the fact that they spend at least an hour a day on the elliptical while reading a magazine or talking on their cell phones.

OK, the Crossfit gym first-time experience:

The first thing you notice is that there really isn't a front door - it's a garage door. Or two. Did this place used to be an auto shop?

The next thing you notice are people on the floor gasping for air. You can see this clearly as the whole place is one open room and the garage doors are open.

You walk in. At first, you're not quite sure who works there and who works out there - they all look about the same. Eventually, a trainer or owner finds you and greets you enthusiastically.

You're invited to take part in a workout. As you wait for the current group to finish up, you take notice of your surroundings.

No air conditioning. No mirrors. Not a single treadmill. Rowers - uh oh.

Ropes and gymnastics rings hanging from the ceiling. Kettlebells. Weight racks. Weird rubber weights. Lots and lots and lots of places to do pull-ups. Instead of mirrors, the walls are covered with dry-erase boards. And people's names are listed under various workouts that have girls' names as the titles. Obviously people compete over everything here. As people finish the workout and peel themselves off the floor, you notice that they all seem to be friends.

OK, time for the workout. A trainer takes you and whoever else is there for a first-time visit and you do some stretches, and then they actually teach you how to do whatever you're going to be doing that day. Real instruction (with PVC pipe), and the guy (or girl) actually sound like they know what they're talking about.

Workout time. 3-2-1-go. 1 minute into the workout you realize that you actually might die before it's done. You regret eating whatever it was you ate for breakfast, because you're pretty sure everybody is going to see it coming out of your mouth. 7 minutes later you're finished, and soaked with sweat on a pile on the floor. You think to yourself that you did more work in 7 minutes than most people at your old Globo did in a month.

After the workout, you're told you can hang around and ask questions or go home and ice yourself down. No pitch.

Now, which one sounds better? I'm pretty sure I have not exaggerated anything here – these are my actual experiences. I'm also joining the Crossfit gym. (Courtesy of CrossFit Rehoboth, www.rehobothcrossfit.com)