

Be careful choosing personal trainers

By Charles Clines



The other day I was watching a group of women working with a personal trainer at a park nearby my house and was shaking my head at some of the exercises the trainer had them doing.

It was a reminder that people should be careful when picking a personal trainer. Sometimes instead of a trainer improving your conditioning, he/she might be setting them up for injury.

For example, this trainer had her group using a retaining wall, about two feet high, to do step exercises. This, as most books on exercises and trainers that I've talked to, is too high. A step that high puts too much strain on the knees and can cause

injury.

Usually, 12 inches is the highest one should use for step exercises. And even this might be too high. Research has shown that the higher the step, there is an increase in knee joint angle and that increases the risk of patello- and tibio-femoral joint pain. By keeping the step, say at 6-7 inches, the same intensity as using a higher step can be reached by simply stepping farther away and, thus, reducing the chances for injury.

Then, to seemingly compound the stress on the knees that the trainer had her group doing, they would run sprints in the paved parking lot. If you're going to do sprints, a cement parking lot is not the surface you want. Just a few steps away are grassy areas that could easily be used for the sprints.

And the trainer (actually I've seen two on a few occasions) are gung-ho, which is a good trait for a personal trainer in most instances. But when the trainer is pushing a group through some, what I consider, questionable exercises, then it seems to be a rush to create injuries.

I haven't been counting the number of participants in the group, but it seems to have grown smaller. But that usually happens in exercise classes, so I don't know if the reduction is because of injuries or just people deciding to find something else to do.

Anyway, the point is: If you decide to use a personal trainer or coach, don't be afraid to question the methods or, at least, investigate to assure the exercises are being done with safety in mind. Anytime a person is participating in an athletic endeavor, it's always possible to sustain an injury. Just don't do exercises that will increase the chances.