

Beauty, Health, *and* Fitness

EDITED BY SARAH BROWN

BEAUTY, HEALTH, AND FITNESS Tuesday October 06, 2009 4:10PM

Fitness: All Systems Go



“You’ll injure yourself.” These cautionary words came from my unofficial marathon coach, my friend Jacob, the one who recently ran a 50-mile race over punishing hills and is familiar with every species of ache and strain, the one who sternly admonished that I was running too fast—the one I should have listened to before the intermittent twinge in my left leg blossomed into a constant shooting pain that one afternoon left me hobbled on a lonely stretch of Brooklyn asphalt, unable to continue.

Then a colleague at Vogue told me about Troy Stallman who agreed to assess my situation at his Manhattan facility, All Systems Go. Troy specializes in something called Muscle Activation Techniques (M.A.T.). The idea behind M.A.T. is that many aches and pains, including sports injuries, are the result of weakness, which causes some muscles to work too

hard as others shut down. “Your body is like a symphony orchestra,” explained Troy, who wields his metaphors with the same confidence he applies to a knotty quadricep. “Some muscles are tuned up and ready to play; others are off in the corner, smoking.” Inevitably, he said, the weak muscles stay weak, while the strong get stronger, leading to additional stress and imbalance. Troy’s mission is to wake up the sleepy ones—or, since the signals from brain to muscle are like cars on a superhighway, to make sure all lanes of traffic are open and flowing.

Troy had me lie on a table where he carefully configured my limbs to test various muscles’ range of motion and strength. Working with great focus—the phrase “muscle whisperer” kept running through my mind—he isolated my external obliques, psoas major (a groin-area muscle I wasn’t even aware I had, but which has apparently been acting like a bit of a wimp), hamstrings, glutes, and the all-important tensor fascia latae along my sore hip joint. Whenever he found what he called a “blown fuse,” he performed an intense kind of massage. (I asked how his body work compared to traditional massage, and Troy patiently explained that it’s “on the bone structure, where the bone and the muscle attach.”). This reactivated

the muscle so it could start firing again. Through some kind of wizardry, he also loosened up my feet and ankles—afterward they felt as though they’d been tossing back caipirinhas for hours at some tropical resort. Speaking of tight muscles, Troy also said that stretching, a panacea for many trainers, could actually inflict further damage. His mantra is to address weakness—the underlying cause—before tension, often just a symptom.

After he finished, he invited me to walk around his studio. Immediately, I could feel a difference—not a total cure (not in a single session, anyway), but my bum leg was noticeably less tight, my gait was lighter, and one side felt more in balance with the other. Now, after a few weeks of reduced training, I’m on the road again—mostly, but not entirely, heeding my friend’s advice to slow down. With luck, my slacker psoas major is now back with the program, pulling its weight. If not, I can always call Troy. He’ll deliver the message.

—Chris Knutsen

All Systems Go
150 West 28th Street, Suite 904
For an appointment, call
917-675-3031

Photo: Steven Klein