

seated row on a weight machine, where you keep your back straight all the way, it is best if you lean backwards slightly as you pull the 'oar' towards you. To return to the starting position, you simply straighten your arms and bend your legs, in that order. A simple way to remember this sequence is, 'legs-arms-arms-legs'. Once we'd all got to grips with the correct technique, we finished off the warm-up with a stretch of the legs, arms and back, to prepare the body for the main workout.

myself rowing in the Olympic finals and their encouragement made me row faster and work harder, helping me cross the line first to win Gold.

After our big sprinting effort, we were all thirsty and out of breath, so it was a relief when Peter said, "That's it for today, guys", and we were able to stop and get a drink of water. The class then ended with a five minute warm-down of slow rowing, followed by a final stretch of the arms, legs and back.

CREW

by Annie Clark

The first phase of the workout lasted around eighteen minutes, and comprised three minutes of rowing at 18 strokes per minute (spm), two minutes at 20spm, and one minute at 22spm, repeated three times. I found this a very manageable pace, and it gave me the opportunity to focus fully on my technique and keep in time with Peter, who sat facing us. Although I wasn't too pushed physically, I enjoyed the hypnotic effect of the rhythmic rowing and the relaxing sound of the water swishing around the tank at my feet.

The next phase involved a higher intensity workout, comprising three minutes at 20spm, two minutes at 22spm and one minute at 24spm. As the stroke rate increase, so did everyone's heart rates. Because rowing utilises most of your major muscle groups, it provides both an upper and lower body workout, thus increasing the challenge on your heart and lungs.

Go Annie!

Being hugely competitive by nature, the last part of the class – the 'race' – was the most enjoyable part of the morning for me. It was also the hardest. Each person, in turn, had to sprint, flat out for 30 seconds whilst the other members of the class encouraged them to go as hard as they could. This was repeated three times in a clockwise order, with the instructor going first, the person on his left going next, and so forth.

As I sprinted my hardest, the class was yelling, "Go Annie!", "You can do it!", "The finish line is just up ahead!", "You're winning, Annie!". I imagined

Conclusion

The high point for me was undoubtedly the 'race' phase, which was both fun and very motivating – that, and the ever-present, relaxing sound of the water. The only possible weakness of this class is, apart from the sprinting at the end, it is quite easy, so advanced fitness trainers may not find it challenging enough for them. I would say it would be an ideal workout for beginners, or those who want a gentler workout.

Some of you may think that 45 minutes of rowing sounds a bit boring, but the fact that the class is broken up into different phases and conducted at varying levels of intensity, combined with the rhythmic nature of the movements, ensures that time flies by.



ULTRA-FIT CLASS RATING

Cardiovascular: 8

Water Rower provides a good cardiovascular workout because it uses all the major muscle groups and, unlike other cardiovascular equipment, involves both an upper and lower body workout.

Strength: 7

WaterCrew helps to develop strength many areas of your body – primarily your legs, back and arms.

Agility: 1

You don't have to be agile to do this class, and it doesn't generally increase agility.

Co-ordination: 5

Helps if you have some indoor rowing experience, and/or a basic level of co-ordination to keep in time with the instructor and row in the correct form.

Flexibility: 1

Luckily for me, you don't have to be too flexible to do a WaterCrew class, apart from the quick stretch at the beginning and end.

Local muscular endurance: 8

As you're using all the major muscle groups for forty minutes plus, the endurance factor with WaterCrew is fairly high, particularly in the legs, back and arms.



Annie Clark is a registered fitness leader who has been involved in the fitness industry for the past ten years. She is also a psychologist, freelance journalist and model, and has won several fitness titles including Miss Fitness, Miss Fitness Model and Body Beautiful.