

Week Two: Starting to see (and feel) some results

Joe Ferry

I slipped off my shoes, stepped onto the scale, closed my eyes and hoped for the best.

My second full week of trying to get in shape had been a tough one. After a rigorous workout with personal trainer Fernando Paredes of Fusion Fitness Studio in Doylestown, I left on a four-day vacation with my family to sunny Florida to see the Phillies get ready for the 2007 season.

You know, hot dogs, beer, and Cracker Jack, the whole bit.

Except I hate Cracker Jack.

I was more than a little worried when I stopped by Fernando's studio on the way home from work Monday night. After seeing three games in four days, eating hot dogs and drinking sodas, Belgian waffles and a western omelet at Lenny's (don't miss this classic Clearwater eatery, even if you are trying to lose weight), I was afraid I had undone all the hard work I had put in under Fernando's tutelage.

I did manage to squeeze in a 35-minute walk on the treadmill before leaving for Florida and we did spend a whole 85-degree day walking around Sea World.

But I doubted that would be enough to compensate for the bad eating. Just stay even, I told myself, and you'll get back into the routine ASAP.

As I slowly opened my eyes, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. Despite my less-than-restrictive eating habits and relative lack of exercise, the scale said I had lost three pounds, dropping me to 241 pounds, a total loss of four pounds in two weeks of my program.

Disbelieving, we checked the scale a few times. Even Fernando got weighed to make sure it wasn't giving us bad information. Each time, it came back with the



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same number.

I was ecstatic. So was Fernando. The program he designed just for me is working. After years of humming along at a slow, easy pace -- typical for an inactive middle-aged man, my metabolism is suddenly revved up, burning calories when I don't even know it.

I approached Fernando about helping me get in shape because I had heard so many good things about his philosophy. Fernando's approach to fitness is much different from other personal trainers. He stresses functional exercise, working the body from the inside out, training the upper body to work with the lower body, with the core as the go-between.

His approach emphasizes training movements versus individual muscle groups, training the body according to what it understands and how it functions. The results are more complete and come more quickly.

So far, my experience seems to bear this out.

In our most recent workout session, I was disappointed that I didn't seem to have the same level of endurance I had

during our first full-scale workouts. Fernando explained that was a natural reaction.

In my first few workouts, the strongest muscles in my body were compensating for the weakest ones. Now that I've begun to awaken connections that have lain dormant for years, my body is starting to take notice.

If he's said it once, he's said it about a thousand times in the couple weeks we've gotten together: fitness is about making lifestyle changes. It's not enough to go on a crash diet, he says. Sure, you can lose 30 pounds in 30 days, he says.

But most people who lose weight that way gain it back, and then some. Even with my modest success to date, I don't want that to happen.

Looking back on my Florida trip, maybe I wasn't so bad in the eating department after all. I actually left a half-dozen French fries on my plate one time, a conscious decision to not overeat. And we had a Lean Cuisine dinner one night, microwaved in our hotel room.

Fernando was delighted to hear I had taken those baby steps. Now, he says, we can work on some nutritional strategies that will help the weight come off more quickly.

First, he says, I need to get the good habits down better. The first step, which I've taken, is to eat less of the bad foods. The most important step, however, is to get the good habits down pat. I'm working on that.

Do you have an inspirational fitness story to tell? Tips to share?

I would love to hear from you.

Drop me an email at
joeferry@buckscountyherald.com.