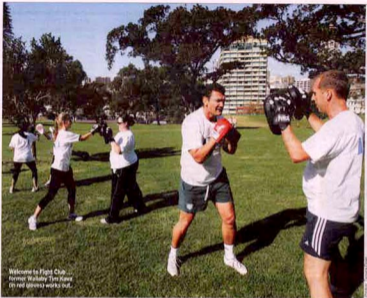


# active

Photo: © JAMES WATSON

I find myself shouting "upper cut, upper cut, upper cut" and "hook, jab, cross".



Welcome to Fight Club... former Wallaby Tim Kaine (in red gloves) works out.

## PUNCH AT LUNCH

GEMMA DEAVIN WORKS UP A SWEAT WITH THE OUTDOOR SLUGGERS DURING A BOXING FITNESS CLASS IN THE DOMAIN.

YOU are either a "let's exercise as lunchtime" type or not. If you've ever walked the streets of the CBD on a weekday between noon and 2pm, you can picture those who are. Come midday, they're the ones who trade stockings, suits and ties for lycra, shorts and the kind of bare-midriff training gear you see on "Ab Lifter" infomercials.

For inactive munchers like me, bouncing around the cry - red-faced and exhausted - always had little appeal.

Which brings me to my current assignment in the great outdoors.

It is noon in The Domain and hundreds of people are in work-out clothes. Most are divided into teams pulling out their best soccer or touch-footy moves. Some jog in groups, others slug it out alone.

I think about how nice it would be to slide

up to one of the Moreton Bay figs with a nice sandwich but there's no backing out now. I have a boxing class to go to.

Matt Anderson, part-owner of Harbourside Health and Fitness, and his assistant, Josh, are setting up on the lawn near the Art Gallery of NSW. I approach with caution. I have straddled the truth on the participant health-check form.

"Have you been exercising recently?" Yes, I stick. "At least two times a week." "Is this the boxing class?" I ask. "Yes - Gem, isn't it? It's nice to meet you," Matt says, extending his hand with a warm smile. This guy is good - the familiarity of his address immediately puts me at ease - or very friendly. Before long I realise he's both.

I pull on a Harbourside Fitness shirt and join the team, which trains on Tuesdays and

Thursdays in six-week cycles. I am not the only rookie: Rose is also new.

"Why aren't you doing push-ups?" Matt yells, interrupting the introductions. "Get down and give me 150!" My heart races but then I notice the eye-rolling and "yeah, right" of the other class members. Soon we are doing a warm-up

run and a skipping circuit. This, I think while rummaging in my bag for water, is why I have avoided lunchtime exercise.

Next, Matt tells us to "glow up". Glow up? Oh, dear. "Give me 20 jabs!" he shouts. This is the closest I have ever been to throwing a real punch.

My work-out partner, Nicole, is kind enough to take me through some of the moves. Matt is also there leading me through my first punches.

"Centre yourself and keep your arms strong," he says.

I picture myself as a video-game character in the fight position. Swaying from side to side, I let loose with a right-hand jab. It feels good. We work in sequences, taking turns to throw and receive punches.

"This is real boxing," Matt tells me. We are moving around and I am following commands to "back" and "weave".

I find myself shouting "upper cut, upper cut, upper cut" and "hook, jab, cross" while counting one, two, three in my head and surrender to the fact that this is fun. Then we switch to more repetitive card-to-boxing and my heart rate rockets.

Matt says boxing is enjoying a spurt in popularity. "Boxing has less strain on joints than other exercises and anyone can do it," he says. "Nearly all personal trainers have an aspect of boxing in their workout, regardless of age."

"Ten jabs and run, 20 crosses and run, 30 hooks and run," he shouts as I try my best. My arms feel limp but the group spirit keeps me going to the finish line.

Just as well, because "who else?" he says. Josh leads the drill. We each name an exercise and all I can think to contribute is an uncreative crush.

We finish up and Matt sends the next class on a jog around the art gallery. Tash, a regular, tells me she is heading back to the office for a shower and tucked sandwich. "I do it all in an hour and 15 minutes," she says.

"Rose, I don't feel you worked hard enough today but I'll give you one more chance," Matt says with a cheeky grin. My fellow rookie Rose is in good spirits. "I'm exhausted but I will definitely come again."

Rose is optimistic and anyone can do it. Who knew boxing, even the ducking and weaving kind, could be such fun?

you try it



Lunch Fit with Harbourside Health and Fitness is in the Domain near the white statue next to the Art Gallery of NSW. There are 45-minute classes at noon and 12.45pm every Tuesday and Thursday. A six-week package is \$200. Private group, studio and personal training sessions are available. Phone the studio (shop 2/66 Clarke Road, North Sydney) on 9954 5348 or Matt Anderson on 0410 622 207.