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HEADLINE: Build core strength with kettlebells

By Valerie Vinyard, The Arizona Daily Star, Tucson McClatchy-Tribune Regional News

Feb. 19—Working out isn't new to Cynthia Fox. Working out using nothing but kettlebells, or iron weights with handles, is. The researcher in speech science has trained on and off over the years, but she just started a new regimen at SWAT Personal Training about six weeks ago.

The 37-year-old trains with David Cohn about three times a week with kettlebells. Cohn says he is the only Russian Kettlebell Challenge-certified, or RKC, instructor in Tucson. "I have over many years worked out with personal trainers," Fox said. "Over the past year or so, I've fallen out of good training habits."

After she "wandered in" to SWAT Personal Training on East Tanque Verde Road, she decided to sign up for one-on-one kettlebell sessions. Kettlebells are made out of iron and look like cannonballs with handles. SWAT offers 4- to 56-kilogram sizes (roughly 9 to 123 pounds).

"I absolutely love it," she said. "You feel really sore. It combines the strength training, but it's dynamic. It's definitely a different way to train — your core is working all the time." "It's going to make you feel better," Cohn said. "It's going to give you more functional motion, it's going to fix your posture, it's going to make you breathe more effectively, and it will tighten up the rotator cuff so you can do anything you want "

At first, Fox said, getting the rhythm and learning the basics took some time, but "once you get the hang of it, it's pretty easy." "I love the muscle buzz," she added. "I feel the core strength kicking back in."

"It targets your whole body; it doesn't target any particular muscle group," said Ron Holland, master trainer and owner of SWAT. An hour-long class burns between 300 and 500 calories.

"You're using fast-twitch and slow-twitch muscle fibers," Cohn said. "It combines resistance with fast twitch. (Participants are) going to feel tightness and stiffness and perhaps a little soreness, and they're going to see definition. It kind of freaks you out."

Cohn trained for five months to prepare for a three-day certification course in October with Russian creator **Pavel Tsatsouline**. Cohn said that Tsatsouline, a former Soviet special ops guy, brought kettlebell training to the States in the late '90s. Like Fox, Cohn sort of fell into kettlebell training.

"I was very desperate to avoid having major reconstructive surgery on my left shoulder," said Cohn, 43. The former Marine and Air Force helicopter pilot tried physical therapy and training with weights, but he didn't get the results he wanted.

"I never really got the strength I was looking for," he said. "I went on the Internet and found this. The initial exercises did the trick." Cohn started working for Holland in January.

Holland said it's easy to learn to use kettlebells. "They're very safe to use, but you have to learn to lift them first," Holland said. "You just can't come in off the street and learn how to lift it."

For that, there's a mandatory two-hour initiation class that costs \$85. SWAT holds an initiation at each club the first Saturday of the month. Class size is limited to eight. People who get kettlebell crazy can even buy their own in town or online. Of course, shipping costs essentially would double the actual cost of the weight, so SWAT sells kettlebells in its studios. Prices range from \$40 for a 4-kg kettlebell to \$500 for a 92-kg, or 203-pound, one.

"If you want to do something different, kettlebell provides one of the most versatile training programs

available," Holland said. "It's functional, it's fun, it's different, and it improves your core strength." Kettlebell classes

Classes are ongoing and cost \$225 for 12 sessions over four weeks. One-on-one training costs \$85 a session. All participants must take a two-hour \$85 initiation class before working with kettlebells.

Introductory classes take place from noon to 2 p.m. on the East Side and 9 to 11 a.m. on the Northwest Side the first Saturday of each month. People who can't make the Saturday session can take a one-on-one introductory session for the same price.

East --When: Women meet at 5 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Men meet at 7 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays.

--Where: SWAT Personal Training, 7000 E. Tanque Verde Road. --Information: 886-SWAT; www.swatfitness.com.

Northwest --When: Women meet at 5 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays and at 8 a.m. Saturdays. Men meet at 7 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

--Where: SWAT Personal Training, 6127 N. La Cholla Blvd. --Information: 579-6791; www.swatfitness.com.

--Contact reporter Valerie Vinyard at 573-4136 or at vvinyard@azstarnet.com. -----

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Highlights: Pavel Tsatsouline