

# MCB Quantico:

## At the Forefront in Fitness

The MCB Quantico, Va., Semper Fit program stays at the forefront in military fitness by offering innovative programming and facilities, as well as physical and combat readiness training that is at the tip of the spear. Over the past few years, the base has completed many facility improvement projects, such as a new functional fitness room at Col. William E. Barber Physical Activity Center (PAC), and enhanced programming to address the changing needs of Marines and their families – from a two-day course to help Marines prepare for the Combat Fitness Test (CFT) to a new class called Pitaiyo that blends Pilates, Tai Chi and Yoga.

### ADDING MUSCLE

In an effort to give Marines a dedicated space for functional fitness training, MCB Quantico converted an 800-square-foot racquetball court at Barber PAC into a functional training fitness center.

“This project came about with combat readiness becoming such a core player, and with functional fitness coming to the

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forefront,” notes Michelle Vukovich, head of the Barber PAC. “And now this is one of the places they can do that type of training and have the open space and proper functional equipment to do that.”

The new functional fitness room is equipped with new Life Fitness Olympic platforms, rubberized plates, Concept2 rowing machines, freestanding racks and benches as well as kettlebells, plyometric boxes other functional fitness equipment from Power Systems and BSN.

The 9,600-square-foot fitness area on the second floor of Barber is devoted entirely to fitness and strength-training

equipment, including the latest cardio and strength equipment from Life Fitness, Hammer Strength, Precor, Nautilus, Woodway, Freemotion Fitness and Concept2. The cardio area faces a wall equipped with Broadcast Vision equipment.

In addition to the fitness center, the 57,800-square-foot Barber PAC houses Health Promotion classrooms, offices and library space; a multipurpose gym; a 3,000-square-foot group exercise room; three racquetball courts; shower and locker facilities; a childcare room; a lounge; and administration offices.

A Freedom Climber, a rotating climbing wall that is permanently attached to a wall in the gymnasium, adjacent to the bleachers, provides the thrill and challenge of a climbing wall in a much smaller footprint and cost.

Additional renovations planned for Barber include new flooring for the fitness equipment deck, as well as a new entrance area and receiving desk.

Another big project set to begin is at Butler Stadium, where the base is adding new bleachers, a press box, restrooms, a synthetic turf field, a track and a High Intensity Tactical Training (HITT) center.

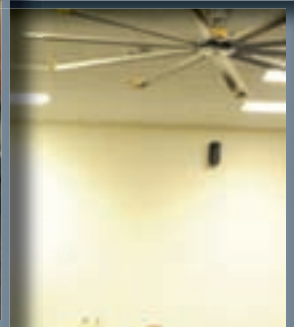
“We are very excited about this project,” says Vukovich. “It will be great for the intramural and varsity sports programs as well as the high school, which will play its home games on the field there as well.”

The HITT center will be a 1,700-square-foot open space for functional fitness training based on the Marine Corps’ new HITT program, which was launched service-wide in January.

“We are very excited about the HITT



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center coming on board, and we will provide all of the functional equipment necessary to run the HITT program,” says Vukovich. “Also, one of the things we need here is space for martial arts training. So, we are going to be able to take some of the space in the HITT center to dedicate to martial arts training.”

“Staff members are providing input to headquarters on what types of equipment will best suit the needs of Marines at the HITT center, but it will have a combination of traditional and functional fitness equipment that you see at other HITT centers in the Marine Corps,” adds Fitness Director Veronica Nelson. “Our staff will be doing the training and instructing in the HITT center, and everybody is trying to get certified at different levels through the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA). If they can, trainers will get their CSCS, or at least the Tactical Athlete training, so they can be as well rounded as possible to run the center.”

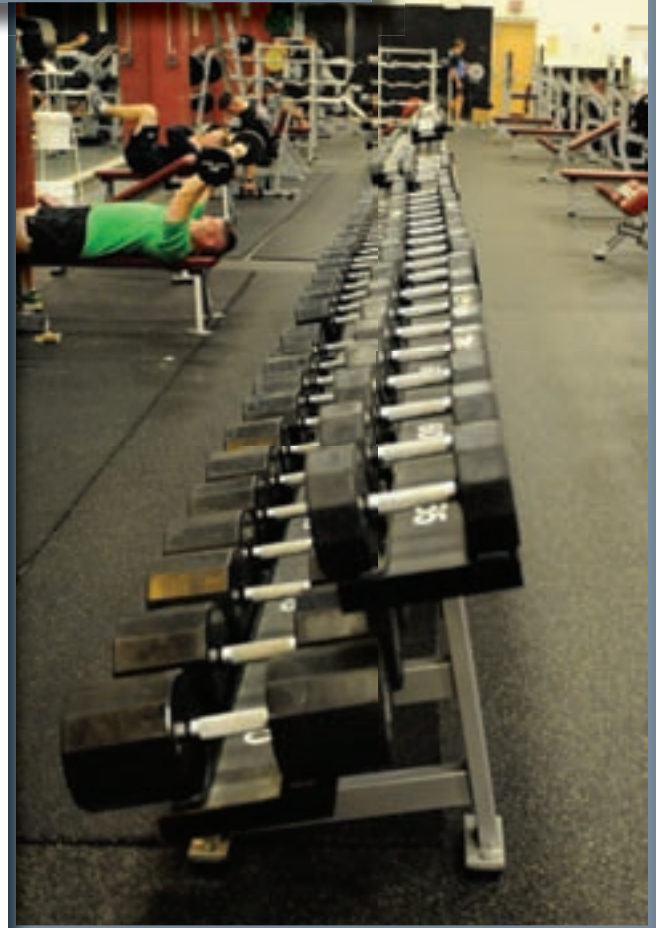
## COMBAT FITNESS TRAINING

Quantico offers many programs and classes that help Marines better prepare for the CFT and maximize the effective use of these new functional fitness facilities.

“We here at Quantico, along with headquarters and some other Marine Corps base fitness directors, got together and designed a two-day program focused on functional fitness, combat readiness and CFT preparation,” notes Vukovich. “This particular piece has grown tremendously over the last four years.”

The in-classroom portion of the course has sections on the CFT; training for performance; injury prevention; functional fitness modalities; tactical nutrition; and how to design a workout for yourself and your unit.

“We focus on the dynamic warm-up, speed and agility drills, plyometrics, cone and ladder drills, tempo runs, TRX training and exercises that are able to be performed without the use of equipment,” says Vukovich. “The two-day instructional program gives Marines what they need to effectively train for not only the CFT but also for any other training they may have along with the safe guidelines, an injury prevention piece and a series of training modalities to enhance their train-



ing programs.”

“We have ongoing CFT classes scheduled for units to come in and take the two-day CFT course,” adds Nelson, who oversees all of the CFT training at Quantico. “Outside of here, we have an individual who works at the staff NCO academy who instructs all of the students and trains the trainers there so they get that education at the academy. The goal is to ultimately have one of those individuals at all of the training

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academies in the Marine Corps.”

Nelson and other staff members offer different types of programming that supports CFT preparation, including running unit PTs that focus on functional and combat fitness training.

She points out that over the past few years there has been a shift in the mindset of Marines toward functional fitness.

“Overall, for the most part, most have seen the benefit and the reasoning for changing from mostly weight training to adding more functional training,” says Nelson. “A lot of them are incorporating functional training and things that you wouldn’t have seen them doing a few years ago, and are asking for this type of training as opposed to being forced to do it.”

She points out that functional training has been around for centuries, and is just now coming back into popularity.

“If you look at gyms from the 1920s, it was gymnastic rings, kettlebells, Olympic lifting stuff, for example – everything that is now called ‘functional’ and new. So, what is old is new again. If you look at military in the age of Sparta, they did athletic and functional training and we probably shouldn’t have gotten away from that.”

## PUMPING PROGRAMS

Group exercise programs at Quantico provide something for everyone, from dance-inspired fitness classes such as Zumba and Hip Hop Hustle to hardcore fitness classes such as Rep Reebok and Maximum.

“Zumba packs in 30-50 people per class, depending on the time of the day,” says Vukovich. “Our newest class called Hip Hop Hustle is catching on as well, and Yoga is always widely attended and helps to reduce stress.”

Another new program called Pitaiyo, which stands for “Put It Together All In Your Orbit,” is also catching on at Quantico.

“Developed by Alex Kelly-Maartens, Pitaiyo is a unique new program that fuses Pilates, Tai Chi and Yoga into one class. It is a widely attended class that really focuses on improving flexibility, strength and balance,” says Vukovich.

Spin classes, which are held in a dedicated spin room with 30 Star Trac bikes, continue to be well attended, averaging 15-18 classes per week.

“What is nice about the group exercise program is when a unit or group wants a specific training program just for their unit, we can do that for them,” notes Vukovich. “So if they want to do a unit Spin PT class, we have the ability to accommodate that. And we can do that for them with any class, by either having them come here or by taking it to them if necessary.”

Another popular activity for Marines is the Tactical Athlete Series, which provides monthly fitness challenges.

“They love to be challenged with different types of competitions,” says Vukovich. “It is functional fitness-based challenges, such as with kettlebells, which helps them prepare for the CFT as well.”

For those looking to take it to the next level, the MicroFit fitness assessment system is available, providing a baseline fitness level to build and improve on. In addition, the base has a New Leaf metabolic testing machine, which does VO2 testing while exercising or resting, and provides helpful info that trainers and Marines can use to improve and fine-tune performance.

In the area of family support, all of the classes and anything offered in the gym is open to spouses, and anyone 12 years and older can use the programs.

“We sometimes do a yoga class that is geared to the youth or teen, or we will do a cooking class for our children and youth,” says Vukovich. “And we partner with the youth center and child and youth services and the Department of Defense (DoD) schools as well to have our instructors and dieticians go to them and teach different elements, whether it is a nutrition element or physical piece. So we do some outreach in the area of family support.”

As the Marine Corps embraces DoD’s new Total Force Fitness concept (*see page 14 for more*), the idea of mission readiness is expanding to include the family.

“The big buzz word right now is resiliency,” notes Vukovich. “And although we are already doing it here, it is a way of packaging it differently so we reach and touch more people because we are really bringing in the family now more than ever, and that is where we are going with this Total Force concept. It is not only the service member but also ensuring that the family is encompassed in the overall total program.”

—GRF