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Camp Pendleton A Leader in Functional Fitness

As leaders in the area of physical training and mission readiness, over the past few years the Marine Corps has begun to hone in on what is the perfect fitness center to meet the needs of today's Marines.

As facilities shift to a more "functional" or "combat-specific" approach to fitness, many bases are converting underused spaces into combat training areas, such as the one that recently opened at Camp Allen and MCB Quantico, Va. Moreover, new fitness centers are incorporating functional fitness elements into the design phase with huge functional fitness rooms outfitted with equipment to help Marines train for the Combat Fitness Test (CFT). A new fitness center at Stone Bay, MCB Camp Lejeune, Va., is slated to open this summer, incorporating a human performance room that will be outfitted with high performance equipment based upon the concept of functional fitness. *(Look for more on Lejeune in the June issue.)*

"Recognizing the need to support and accommodate functional fitness, Semper Fit deployed some 65 Functional Fitness Suites to our fitness centers at a cost of nearly \$1.5 million," notes Catherine Ficadenti, Semper Fit Branch Head, Marine Corps Headquarters.

Some of the items contained in these suites were barbell and weight sets, medicine balls, power bands, plyometric boxes, kettlebells, agility ladders and rowers, just to name a few. "Since fitness centers are outfitted with this type equipment, the suites added to their inventory and were integrated rather easily," notes Ficadenti.

MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., which has 13 fitness centers in total, is a leader in the area of functional fitness design. Two good examples are the new \$6.7-million, 25,941-square-foot fitness center at Camp Margarita *(see profile here)*, which opened on July 22, 2009, and the new \$7.8-million, 25,726-square-foot fitness center at Camp Horno, which is scheduled to open in October.

Camp Margarita and Camp Horno fitness centers feature a functional fitness room and each is designing outdoor functional fitness areas to help Marines better prepare for combat. Another new Human Performance Center at Las Pulgas, which will break ground later this year, will feature a huge 14,000-square-foot functional fitness room and an outdoor functional training area with concrete, sand and decomposed granite (dirt like) surfaces, as well as a 3,000-square-foot multi-purpose



The 33 Area Fitness Center at Camp Margarita.

room with suspended Judo floor.

“We are fortunate that fitness is a priority in the Marine Corps and it has enabled us to do what we are doing here at Pendleton with all of these new facilities that are incorporating these important functional fitness equipment and spaces,” notes Clint Miller, Fitness Facilities Supervisor, MCCS Semper Fit Division. “We have noticed a tremendous improvement in support and focus over the last 10 years and have built about seven new facilities in the last 10 years, which was really needed to modernize our facilities to have them better reflect what our Marines need to train properly for the mission.”

CAMP MARGARITA FITNESS CENTER

The new 33 Area Fitness Center, located at Camp Margarita, MCB Camp Pendleton exemplifies the new direction the Marine Corps is taking when designing new facilities. The new facility features a functional fitness room as well as programming and equipment that supports the Marine Corps new functional or combat-specific approach to training.

“Camp Pendleton is such forward thinkers and we have so much experience building and renovating fitness centers, that we really have perfected the art of it,” notes 33 Area Fitness Center Manager Nina Killion-Russell. “Even though this facility was designed many years ago, we had included in our vision the functional fitness area before functional fitness



was even a trend; it was something that was important for us to incorporate into this fitness center. The functional aspects are really the highlight of this facility.”

According to Camp Pendleton Fitness Facilities Supervisor Clint Miller, the new facility is very modern and was designed to help the Marines to better prepare for combat. “It has ample equipment and a great functional fitness room, which is vitally important to help Marines and better complements the CFT and Marines abilities to fight in wars,” says Miller. “We are training Marines like tactical athletes and we are now finding ways to better incorporate that type of human performance training into our facilities.”

The functional fitness room features a reinforced rubber wall so Marines can bounce medicine balls off of it, has a big screen TV/DVD player, and a separate sound system.

“Marines like the rubber wall so much that we are in the process of reinforcing other walls with padding on it,” notes

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Killion-Russell. “This is the trend we are all heading toward – the functional fitness room that better supports the CFT and the combat readiness of Marines and sailors.”

The Functional Fitness room has a lot of equipment that can be used to train not only for specialized missions but for the CFT as well, including kettlebells, speedbags, plyometric boxes, medicine balls – all kinds of great tools to help Marines train hard. Much of the functional equipment and accessories were provided by various reliable sources such as Perform



Better, Bigger Faster Stronger, Ringside, BSN Sports, Power Systems, Brick in the Face and SPRI.

The 1st Division Reconnaissance Marines are stationed at Camp Margarita, which makes it a bit different than other areas at Pendleton.

“They have a really special community and have specialized training so we have to gear a lot of what we do not only to prepare people for the CFT but for specialized missions that these elite military personnel have to do,” notes Killion-Russell. “They do training and exercises that you would never see done in other fitness centers.”

Fitness equipment such as the Woodway Force Treadmills and a specialized FreeMotion Fitness machine, which is a treadmill that can support heavy weight and goes to a really steep slope, allows these recon Marines to practice and train with their heavy packs and push themselves hard.

The facility also has a separate group-exercise room with 17 Star Trac Spinners and Gravity Training Machines from EFI. In addition to the very popular Spin classes, Killion-Russell and other staff members are certified to run group Gravity Trainer classes, which are also very popular. A stereo is in there with microphone and flat screen TV with DVD and a sound system. The room also has a heavy bag with mirrors, a set of Olympic rings, and plenty of stretching mats. As a certified YogaFit instructor, Killion-Russell points out that the yoga class held in the room “is really popular and full of men.” Zumba has also been very popular with the spouses of those deployed.

As a fitness and wellness guru – she is a certified massage therapist and a meditation coach – Killion-Russell offers meditation classes and free couples massage classes where she teaches the skills for non-verbal communication

and wellness. “The mind-body connection is vitally important when it comes to health and wellness,” she points out.

The open and expansive weight room offers something for everyone with state-of-the-art fitness equipment from Atlantis, Concept2 (rowers), EFI (Gravity Trainers), Fitness Anywhere (TRX), Hammer Strength, Iron Grip, Kraiburg (Olympic plates), Life Fitness, Marpo Kinetics (rope climber), Nautilus, Precor, Star Trac, Technogym, True Fitness (stretch station), Woodway and York (power lifting platform).

In the weight room there are mirrors throughout plus Cardio Theater with flat screens and audio hookups on all cardio. It also has its own independent stereo.

The 33 Area fitness center also houses two racquetball courts, which are “two of our most popular features at the fitness center for our everyday people,” notes Killion-Russell. “I have been seeing a lot of new faces just coming in to use the racquetball courts, which we didn’t have in the old facility.”

Another highlight of the new facility is the gymnasium, which has six basketball goals with a divider curtain down the middle. The gym hosts large tournaments and popular competitions such as 3-on-3 basketball and 3-point shooting contests.

GOING-GREEN

The 33 Area fitness center was designed to be as environmentally friendly as possible and earned a Gold LEED Certification for using a “green” approach to construction. One of the highlights of this energy efficient fitness center is the use of solar energy, by way of solar panels on the roof.

“The solar panels on the roof actually create more energy than the fitness center uses and we sell it back to the gas and electric company, and the government gets credited with that extra money,” notes Killion-Russell.

“We actually put energy back into the grid, which really makes that project stand out,” adds Miller.

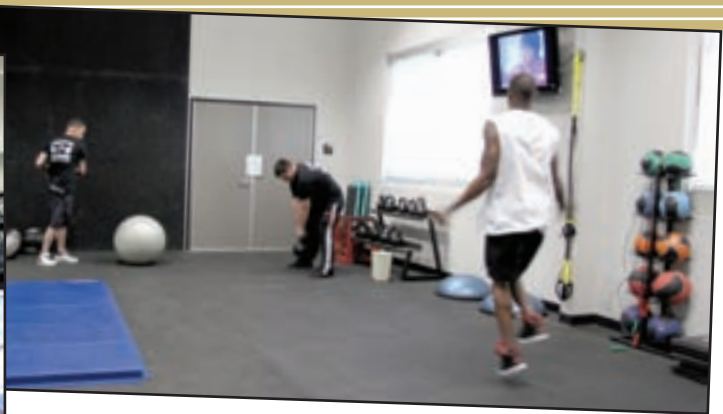
The 33 Area fitness center also has a water recycling program and its gray water is converted and used to irrigate all of the landscaping, which forces staff to use green cleaning products.

The facility is designed so many of the rooms get lots of natural light, and all lights are on sensors, which shut lights off if a facility is not in use. Walls are made of masonry and doors have a tight seal, keeping the cool air in and saving energy.

Two giant ceiling fans from Big Ass Fans in the gym help the base to save on energy costs by circulating the air effectively, notes Miller.

He points out that another energy-saving aspect of the facility is the fitness equipment, such as the Woodway Force Treadmills, which are non-motorized.

“A lot of equipment is cordless and we are trying to be conscientious in the equipment we choose,” says Miller. “And it also affords us the ability to move the equipment around more freely. So a lot of the bikes, steppers and treadmills are cordless and energy-friendly.”



“It really is just the coolest gym and we were able to put a logo for 1st Marine Division in there which is very nice. We use it for all kinds of sporting events and special functions,” says Killion-Russell.

In addition to offering recreational play time, the men’s varsity basketball team practices and plays games at the gym and Killion-Russell hopes that in the near future the women’s varsity team will be able to call the 33 Area gym its home as well. Intramural sports leagues use the gym as well from youth to adult.

Another cool feature in the gymnasium are two large ceiling fans from Big Ass Fans. “They are a very nice feature that not only helps us keep the gym cool and save on energy but they

add a little spark to the gym,” notes Killion-Russell.

Bleachers were specially designed to be mobile, so they have railings all around the sides and brakes, which allows the base to transform the gym and use it for many different uses, from huge family gatherings around deployment times to retirement ceremonies, for example. Men’s and women’s locker rooms feature full-size lockers and have their own showers and dry saunas.

The fitness center also supports the Return to Readiness program. “The program is for those who have been injured or hurt, after they finish their medical treatment and rehab, we train them to be ready to meet the physical demands needed to go back to their jobs and units,” notes Killion-Russell.

With the weather so nice in California, Pendleton is gearing a lot of our fitness centers to be able to accommodate outdoor functional fitness training. Many instructors, including Killion-Russell, are certified to teach TRX suspension training

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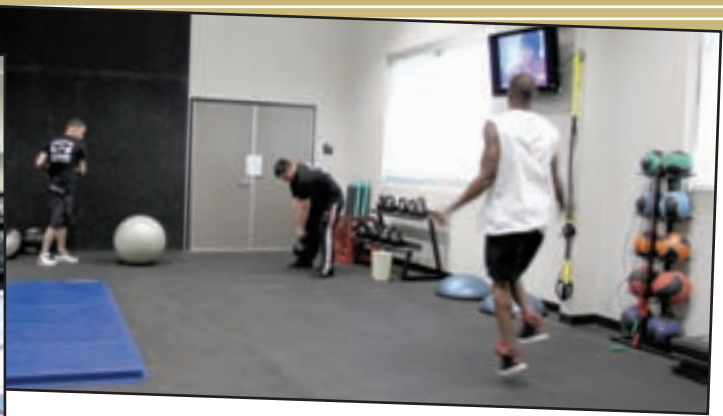
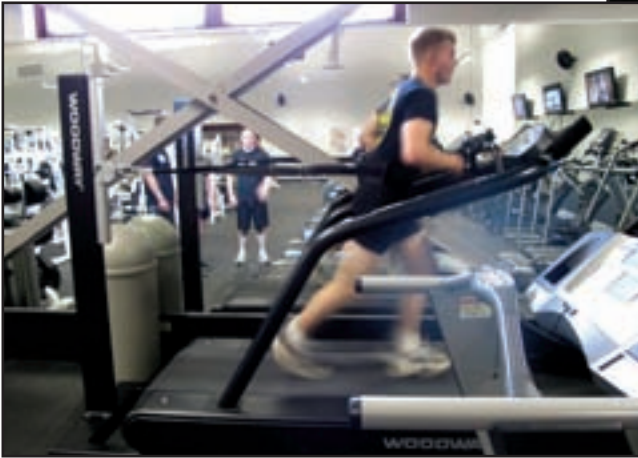



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and many of these outside functional fitness areas feature group TRX training capabilities.

“We have TRX straps in our Functional Fitness room, and we hand those out to people who are deploying for free,” says Killion-Russell, who points out that plans are in the works to add an outdoor area to the fitness center. “Marines can do more intense workouts that you can’t do in a gym, like tire flips as well as big groups using TRX and working in the dirt.”

Combat Training classes are also available, which teach Marines to get a perfect score of their CFT and PFT. Wounded warrior support is another big initiative at Pendleton, and Killion-Russell and Miller recently attended a DoD funded four-day inclusive recreation training course at Penn State.

“We are putting a lot of time and effort and consideration into inclusive recreation and fitness for Wounded Warriors,” notes Killion-Russell. “One of my goals is to make this fitness center the go-to place where people can feel included, not only for recreation but fitness.”

To help spouses of those deployed get a workout in, Pendleton has an hourly childcare drop-in center right across the street from Area 33 and down the road from one of the bigger fitness centers.

Fitness center staff also help organize and run the Hard Corps Marathon and Race Series. Duathlon and the famous Pendleton Mud Runs.

Health promotion is a big component of Semper Fit, from health and wellness screenings and assessments to classes, resources and info on a number of important topics including nutrition, prevention, smoking cessation, stress management, and suicide prevention, to name a few.

“We have a health promotion department but it is very important to me and I promote it here as well,” notes Killion-Russell. “I offer daily body-composition testing using bioimpedance equipment and give them a printout to compare to Marine Corps standards. I do blood pressure testing and we also have people come from health promotion to do cholesterol testing here for free.

“Part of our mission statement is to work synergistically with other department that encircle what we do. We have such a good team that people take it to heart,” she points out.

—GRF

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