



◀ **On your feet**  
Technogym's Kinesis (left) can be used to perform pilates-influenced moves in both the standing and prone positions



**Variable incline** The angle of the glideboard can be adjusted on the GRAVITY Training System to change resistance levels

## beyond the studio

Neena Dhillon looks at the opportunity to complement a pilates offering with pilates-influenced programming on alternative gym equipment

**H**ealth club operators seeking to stimulate interest in pilates among their membership base have a few options available to them, from offering mat-based classes as a component of their group exercise timetable to establishing a specialist studio. But can equipment that's not pilates-specific, and that health clubs may already have on their gym floor, also play a role in turning people on to this exercise method?

"Pilates equipment is defined and designed to meet specific method principles," points out Balanced Body CEO and president Ken Endelman. "There may be modern innovations made on different pieces of kit, but it's still pilates equipment."

"That being said, one of the best ways to get members to try pilates in a gym setting is to combine it with equipment they're familiar with, and then offer a free demo so they can really feel the benefits of the class before signing up."

"We believe there's a great synergy between the heart-healthy advantages

of cardiovascular exercise and a pilates regimen. Not only can this energise clients and diversify programming, but it can become a service differentiator that can help to attract new people and boost the bottom line."

For example, one of Balanced Body's personal trainer clients in Florida fused sessions of pilates with both treadmill and group cycling elements. She was able to pay off her initial investment in pilates equipment in just three months because her customers got hooked on pilates through its fitness element.

But while specialists such as Balanced Body recommend a pairing of cardio and pilates to pull in customers with a gym mindset, other pilates-influenced programmes developed in conjunction with different exercise systems are emerging in the UK. Provided members work with an instructor who has an equipment-based pilates qualification, these multi-purpose systems can be used to deliver pilates-influenced workouts, as well as being suitable for more general use both on the gym floor and in group exercise studios.

### the pull of gravity

The GTS (GRAVITY Training System) – a piece of strength training equipment that involves the use of cables, a moving glideboard and the exerciser's bodyweight against a variable incline resistance – is one such example, offering pilates-influenced programming among a range of different applications and uses. It can be adapted with special accessories for these pilates-influenced workouts.

GRAVITY UK MD Greg Sellar explains: "Our GRAVITYPilates programme comprises a series of combined Reformer and matwork (Reformat) pilates-based exercises adapted specifically for use on the GTS. The movements are not compromised, with some traditional pilates instructors commenting that they are in fact aided by being able to adjust the incline of movements for newer participants, or those who feel less comfortable in the earlier stages of pilates equipment-based work."

The GTS is positioned as a good investment for clubs looking to develop an equipment-based offering, as it can be used for a wide range of applications,

not just pilates-influenced programming. "The GTS can be used [to deliver pilates-influenced sessions] by qualified pilates instructors who have undergone our one-day GRAVITYPilates training," explains Sellar. "But it can also be used by personal trainers, gym instructors and physiotherapists across three other GRAVITY strength training programmes."

While the versatility of the GTS is a clear benefit, Sellar is quick to emphasise that it is not a Reformer and that only those with a REPs Level 3 pilates qualification from a recognised provider can be trained to use the machine to deliver pilates-influenced programming. "We're not here to compete with pilates people; we simply want to allow health clubs to get the most out of their existing equipment," he adds.

GRAVITYPilates training is REPs-certified in the UK, with the GTS itself endorsed by the American Physical Therapy Association. A club that has noted an increase in pilates interest since investing in five GTS machines is Nuffield Health Fitness & Wellbeing in central London. Group activity manager

Sarah Barnett explains: "The varying levels of the GTS unit enable beginners to adopt the correct postures at a suitable level, while advanced pilates-goers can increase the intensity of their mat-based exercises. We use the units mainly for group classes and small group personal training sessions, as well as providing individuals with corrective therapy for injuries."

### moving to vertical

Technogym's Kinesis cable equipment is another system that has caught the attention of pilates practitioners. "Kinesis is not intended to replace traditional pilates benches and accessories," says Technogym UK managing director Tony Majakas. "Instead, it can become an extension of training, which allows the method to be introduced away from a traditional studio – on a gym floor, for example."

Pilates, as originally created by Joseph Pilates, met an initial need for fitness and rehabilitation, meaning that the traditional Reformer bench was used mainly in the lying/prone position.

Kinesis has allowed trainers to progress these movements from a lying to a natural standing position; they can also create pilates-influenced movements on the floor, adding attachments to the legs and arms to generate more resistance.

Majakas acknowledges that traditional pilates instructors will tend to stick to familiar kit such as Reformers, but adds: "It's at the forefront, where trainers are mixing styles, that pilates and Kinesis can work together. Additional training is minimal, because a pilates trainer who has completed a five-year course will be able to translate movements from a lying to a standing position by following our DVDs."

At Stephen Price's exclusive studio in London, pilates trainers are now incorporating Kinesis into their personal training programmes, says Majakas.

### amplified effect

Pineapple vibration platforms employ bio-oscillation technology to activate and amplify every muscle in the body during a workout (see HCM Feb 09, p36). The practicality of the full-length platform, in combination with a comfortable

► frequency and movement in the vertical plane, means the machine is positioned as being suited to all forms of exercise.

“We work with the philosophies that Joseph Pilates introduced when he took a series of physical exercises and techniques and systemised them,” says Pineapple director David Seymour. “What we’re doing is applying additional stimulus to optimise muscle action when doing these exercises.”

Seymour goes on to explain that pilates exercises carried out on the Pineapple are more efficient and, importantly, improve postural muscles more than a standard mat class. The Pineapple can also be used as a warm-up tool, a post-workout treatment, or a special ‘conditioning’ tool for transition between a Reformer workout and a trapeze table.

“Pineapple is certainly not just a pilates platform, but the experience has been that pilates instructors are using their techniques on the machine and gaining accelerated results, as are sports-specific trainers and general conditioning trainers,” Seymour continues.

PineappleLATES classes – pilates classes of less than 30 minutes, carried out on a Pineapple – is a new offering for health clubs that’s been introduced in Los Angeles.

A comprehensive PineappleLATES certification is currently being developed, which will



**Power Plate pilates** Many moves can be translated without much adaptation



**Fast-forward** Accelerated results can be achieved by doing pilates on a Pineapple

allow pilates instructors to undertake a series of online training workshops.

“An instructor applies the pilates principles of a mat class, but instructs less repetition of each movement and more focus on breath control. The practice is harmonised with bio-oscillation in the Pineapple platform to relax the body and allow it to go deeper into the muscles located next to the spine,” Seymour explains. “Since deep core muscles can be a challenge to engage if clients aren’t fully relaxed, PineappleLATES is helping to open up new customer channels, particularly among men.”

Clint Bigham of 2020 Fitness in Los Angeles specialises in personal training. He has been employing the Pineapple to warm up and cool down clients, and during pilates classes for mat-based work in between traditional pilates machines.

“We make more income because clients pay extra to use the Pineapple, with sessions lasting 30 to 40 minutes rather than one hour,” Bigham says. “This means more clients coming in daily.” He emphasises that it is specifically this reduction in required workout time that has allowed him to see more clients and increase his revenue.

Another practitioner who has harnessed vibration training as part of his pilates offering is Chris StJohn-Smith, of Pilates Revolution in London, who sometimes integrates Power Plate® into his practice. “In principle it’s a floating, vibrating mat, so many pilates moves can be translated onto the machine without the need for much adaptation,” he comments. “With the use of the machine’s arm straps and some pilates boxes or a stability ball, the working area of the machine can be easily extended to suit parts of the pilates repertoire.”

Having the Power Plate at his disposal for one-to-one sessions allows StJohn-Smith to work into areas that can be difficult to access. He cites an example: “I have a client recovering from a near

fatal skiing accident. Using the massage techniques of the machine early in the session allows me to accelerate the work I’m doing with my pilates repertoire. Clients who often suffer from involuntary tension during training appear to achieve better results when incorporating the Power Plate.”


### experts only

While StJohn-Smith is happy to recommend the machine for certain applications, he also argues that only fully-qualified instructors should deliver this type of training, because the key to uncompromised pilates on the Power Plate lies in understanding the ethos and principles of pilates, not the machine itself. He is currently helping to develop a training module that will introduce Power Plate machine pilates to the UK.

For other pilates specialists, such as Balanced Body, the concern remains that anyone involved in pilates programming must be certified, or at least underway in their certification, to avoid diminished results and possible injury to clients.

Balanced Body’s Endelman offers an additional observation on the use of machines that aren’t pilates-specific to deliver pilates-influenced workouts: “Sessions on such equipment are usually fee-based, which may not make them a good ‘feeder’ into another fee-based programme [ie pilates]. In terms of pilates feeder programmes, it may prove more effective for gyms to offer free mat classes to encourage members to gravitate towards fee-based equipment sessions.”

Despite these reservations, some pilates instructors are indeed benefiting from incorporating ‘complementary’ equipment into their offering. Only time will tell, however, whether these technologies enjoy acceptance among the wider pilates community.

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