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Healthplex Sports Club

After quitting college swimming as a freshman, I found I was missing an aspect of recreational fitness in my life. As a year-round swimmer in high school, I had developed a love for vigorous exercise and activity that is hard to duplicate outside of an organized athletic environment. Working out on my own, it was difficult for me to stay motivated on a long run or push myself to get in a last set of lifting in the dingy Atherton fitness center. I began to lose my enjoyment for exercise, and I longed for an environment where working out would be fun again. When I moved off-campus as a Junior I decided to explore fitness opportunities in the area surrounding Butler. After a brief search I was pleased to find that the Healthplex Sports Club was exactly what I was longing for. Although it is not free, the Healthplex is a perfect fit for my athletic desires. I have now been a member for six months and have found the club to be a truly outstanding facility.

The best feature of the Healthplex is their spacious weightlifting facility. The entire upstairs level of the club is split between a free-weight section and a section full of new, well-maintained machines. Most of the weightlifting I do is with free-weights, and the Healthplex has the nicest and most extensive collection I have ever seen in a health club. The Atherton fitness center and my health club at home only offer two wobbly-plated dumbbells of each weight increment. The Healthplex is an entirely different story. They have rows and rows of good quality, easy to grip dumbbells, with multiple quantities of each weight level. The plates are

made of heavy rubber and are sturdily attached to the bars, and the grip areas are shaped like hexagons so the weights will not slip in one's hands during a set. On many occasions another member has been using a pair of weights that I want to use, but instead of pacing around impatiently waiting for him or her to finish I simply take another set off the rack. Accompanying the free-weights is a spacious lifting floor complete with six adjustable benches. These benches can be moved into a flat, incline, or decline position, which when paired with the quantity of weights available makes any free weight exercise possible. At other facilities I have often had to modify workout routines followed from magazines because I did not have access to the proper incline or decline benches, but at the Healthplex this is never a problem. The large floor for the benches lets several people use the free weight section at the same time without having to worry about intruding on someone else's space. The quality of the equipment, spacious lifting area, and variety of exercises that can be performed make the free weight section my favorite area of the Healthplex.

While I personally get more use out of the free-weight section, the machine section is equally impressive. While one should expect a health club to offer well-maintained machines, one would not expect the tremendous variety that can be found at the Healthplex. The club has an assortment of standard machines, a collection of Hammer machines that work each side of the body individually, and a long row of new, computerized machines. These computerized machines provide appropriate resistance proportionate to how hard an exerciser's muscles are working. This variety of machines appeals to members of all age groups and skill ranges. Anybody seeking a lifting-based fitness experience can benefit from the standard machines, members with advanced or specialized programs can use the Hammer machines to focus on a specific side of their body or go easy on an injured area, and elderly members often use the

specialized machines because they do not have to set them up with heavy weight plates. For the Hammer machines, which do require the user to load plates up to the desired weight, there is an ample supply of plates so members never have to search for the weight they need or wait for somebody else to finish using it. No matter what type of weight workout a member is looking for, the machine floor of the Healthplex is sure to accommodate his or her needs.

The Healthplex not only offers all these ways for members to keep their muscles healthy, but many ways to keep their hearts healthy as well. The ground level of the club has a large fitness floor with a huge variety of cardiovascular machines. This area is very popular and is usually full of people getting a cardiovascular workout. The fitness floor features treadmills, stair-climbers, exercise bikes, and the popular elliptical machines. The Healthplex has two styles of each type of equipment, and enough units that they are very rarely all in use. This variety is pleasing because I can vary my workouts so that I don't get bored using the same piece of equipment over and over again. On some weeks I might ride a bike on Monday and Friday and run on a treadmill on Wednesday, and on other weeks I might warm up on a treadmill, use a stair climber or elliptical machine for a heavy thirty minutes, and cool down on a bike three times a week. The many different ways I can structure a workout make it difficult to get bored with exercising. One bonus feature of the fitness floor is that the Healthplex provides several televisions so that a person can watch one from any piece of equipment. This helps to pass the time while working out and gives busy exercisers a chance to catch up on news or sports highlights. With the entertainment provided and the wide variety of fitness machines, getting a cardiovascular workout is easy and fun at the Healthplex.

While the fitness floor is a popular and heavily used area of the Healthplex, it is not the only way the club offers for one to get a cardiovascular workout. The cardio-workout area that I

prefer is the large upstairs track that winds around the perimeter of the building. The eighth-of-a-mile track has several layers of cushioning so that it is easy on a runner's knees and joints and is topped with a rubber surface that is easy to grip. I like running on the track because of the looping scenery and low stress on my legs. Following the track takes a runner past both sides of the weight floor, past the pool, around the basketball floor, and past the tennis courts. I like this path because I feel like I get to see what is going on in every area of the club. My shins and ankles often get sore while running too, so I appreciate the softness of the track. Finally, punching a bunch of numbers into a machine before you can start a workout is not always convenient if one just wants to do a short warm-up, so the track is useful to get blood flowing to the muscles and limber up before a workout.

Complementing the wonderful fitness facilities of the Healthplex are several useful and luxurious amenities. After spending an hour or so breaking down my body in the fitness areas of the club, the locker room has many features that are especially inviting. My favorite of these features is the steam room. The room is spacious and full of eucalyptus-scented steam to soothe and relax a tired body. I especially love to sit in the steam room if I'm not feeling well or just after a dip in the pool. The hot steam warms me up wonderfully inside and out, heating my muscles and clearing my sinuses. The Healthplex also features a sauna and a large hot tub for members to indulge in after a workout. No matter if the sweat on a body comes from the fitness floor or the steam room, the club offers a shower room with ten private stalls to get cleaned up. The water pressure is great, and the club provides free soap and shampoo, so I usually enjoy spending several minutes under the hot water before going home. Also complimentary are shaving cream, aftershave, deodorant, and towels for use at the club, which saves me money and

lightens my bag of things to take to the club. The amenities offered by the Healthplex make it convenient to feel and look my best after working out.

Of all the extras that Healthplex members are offered, the one I enjoy the most is the exceptional friendliness of the staff. From the moment I walk in the door to the moment I leave, there are smiling, available employees to answer questions and provide services. The weight floor's staff of personal trainers, called Coaches, are especially helpful and friendly. On one occasion I pulled a muscle in my wrist while lifting weights, and it was making funny cracking noises several days later. Concerned about its status, I approached a Coach and asked him for his opinion. Although I did not have an appointment with him and we had never spoken before, he took the time to feel my wrist and asked me several questions about my symptoms. Then, to my surprise, he told me about a free injury clinic on the lower level of the club and walked me down to get me set up with one of their trainers. This exemplifies the attitude of the staff at the Healthplex: always happy to help. A smiling face scanning one's membership card and a "Have a nice day" on the way out of the locker room create a friendly atmosphere that really tops off the Healthplex experience.

All of the aspects of the Healthplex I have mentioned thus far make the club very attractive, but as a college student there is a final consideration that makes the Healthplex an ideal place to work out. This consideration is the membership fee. A regular adult membership at the Healthplex costs three hundred dollars to join and one hundred dollars per month to continue. The start-up fee covers a physical from a Westview Hospital physician, a blood test, and a free session with a fitness coach. However, while I could see paying the regular membership price for everything the club offers, I simply would not be able to afford it. Fortunately, the Healthplex recognizes that students have a full time job that doesn't give paychecks, and they generously

offer reduced membership fees. For a student membership the club only requires a one hundred dollar start-up fee and then charges fifty dollars a month for continued membership. For someone who wants a place to work out on a student budget, this makes membership at the Healthplex much more feasible. The goodwill displayed towards students by charging them half price to use the club is a final feature that makes the Healthplex especially attractive.

In many different ways, the Healthplex is an outstanding facility. The weight floor is full of an amazing variety of very nice equipment, which creates the potential for countless different exercises. The club provides an equally impressive assortment of cardiovascular workout opportunities, with options for those looking for an intense workout with entertainment or a jog to clear the mind and limber the body. All of these fitness opportunities are enhanced by a luxurious atmosphere and a helpful, knowledgeable, and accessible staff. Finally, for a student on a budget, the club offers a tremendous deal for all the services it provides. The Healthplex goes beyond being just a place to work out; it is a fantastic facility that all health clubs would do well to model themselves after.