

PE's Boot Camp for Athletes is a Challenging and Rewarding Experience

Posted on October 27, 2015, by Sarah Goodman

For the last four years, MIT Physical Education has been offering the Boot Camp for Athletes course in response to student requests for a more physically challenging offering.

"I wanted the most physically demanding PE class I could find," recalled Wickham Egan '17. The structure of the course develops high levels of fitness among the students with metrics of strength, flexibility, endurance, agility, and acceleration through exercise regimes like interval training and circuits.

Instructor Matt Breen teaches many courses at MIT and has been leading Boot Camp for Athletes for three years. "From my experience, most of the students in this class are self-motivated to improve their level of fitness and learn new training techniques."

"Everyday of class we worked harder than the previous day, and despite upping the intensity level, every workout became easier than the last," said James Gordon '17. "Because we worked so hard, we were able to see and feel the results of the class very quickly."

By virtue of its intensity, not only did the class develop physical fitness, but also camaraderie among the students as they struggled and pushed themselves alongside one another. "This class typically displays the most camaraderie and high fives of all the classes I instruct," said Breen. "They motivate and push one another to get the most out of each workout."

"My classmates motivated me a lot," said Gordon. "When doing partner exercises we would push each other to our limits, cheering each other on. We tackled the workouts together, and encouraged others to succeed."

"I only knew a couple students in the class before it started, but we quickly bonded through enduring the workouts together," continued Gordon. "Everyone in the class supported and motivated each other throughout the exercises. We pushed each other everyday to truly make the most of every workout."

The peer support emulated the tone set by Breen. "Everyday of class he showed up excited to get us working," said Gordon. "He showed true joy and passion for leading us in our exercise routines. His words of encouragement constantly pushed me to run a faster mile, do another pushup, and to simply make the most of every workout."

Egan echoed this sentiment. "Matt was killer! He had a really positive attitude but wasn't afraid to push kids...I think people tried to emulate Matt...I've definitely tried to incorporate Matt's positive attitude into my daily live," Egan added.

Just as MIT students embrace challenges in other arenas, students often repeat the course despite the "no pain no gain" atmosphere. "The most challenging course was also the most rewarding," said Gordon. Both Egan and Gordon now incorporate many elements from Boot Camp for Athletes consistently into their workouts throughout the week.

The benefits of the course are clear and lasting. “Many [students] will tell me that they can’t believe how much better their fitness level is at the end of the class,” said Breen. With Boot Camp for Athletes, students strengthen their muscles, attitudes, and friendships.