



Military operation: Public training session at Graves Park

Gunning for fitness Army-style

Training with soldiers on Civvy Street is the order of the day for getting into shape

By Richard Marsden

IT'S a different planet from the pampered world experienced by increasing numbers of people at their local gym, who enjoy marble-tiled showers, steam rooms...oh, and a spot of light exercise on the treadmill.

Enjoyable the experience may be, but it's not necessarily the best way to get into shape.

So say the current and former soldiers at British Military Fitness (BMF), which is today launching public training sessions in the great outdoors of Sheffield's Graves Park.

Being military physical training instructors, they know how to get people fit, and stay fit, better than most.

Former Royal Marine Kevin Lomas, BMF director of operations, said: "Gyms may provide the facilities but after being given instructions people are left to their own devices.

"We provide structured training to different levels of ability, which is enjoyable and challenging."

However, their approach does not just involve barking orders sergeant major-style - although everyone taking part has to do as they're told or face forfeits such as extra press-ups or sit-ups.

"We aim to make sure people have a smile on their face," Kevin said.

Sheffield is the ninth city to host BMF sessions, launching tonight at 7pm.

The sessions will take place in Graves Park on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7pm, and Saturdays at 10am, meeting in the car park off Hemsworth Road.

A free trial session was held earlier this week and 35 people of varying abilities turned up.

Those taking part ranged from teenage netball players to a former Naval environmental

health officer used to military-style exercise and a Star reporter - myself.

A reformed fatty whose staple diet used to include frequent take-aways and plenty of beer, I once

tried to get fit by going to a conventional gym but found it boring and hard to get motivated.

Circuit training in a boxing gym and outdoor exercise such as running and football have since

proved much more rewarding.

BMF caters for quite fit people, such as myself, and those who are not used to hard exercise. People of different abilities wore different-coloured bibs but took part in the same exercises, with those less fit not being pushed as hard.

People taking part in future sessions will be split into different fitness groups.

For all, myself included, it was both a challenging and enjoyable workout.

Motivation comes as standard, in the form of firm, though not unkind, guidance from the soldiers.

There's no chance of skipping the warm-up and then you are straight into running, circuit training, games and exercises.

After an hour, there were plenty of glistening faces but most of us were keen to repeat the experience.

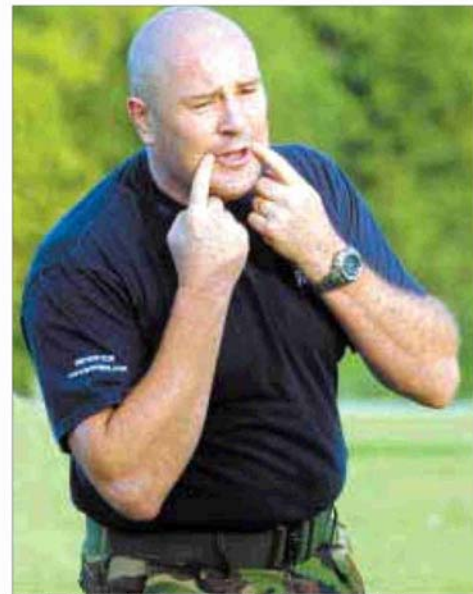
Ex Navy man Will Wernhan, aged 31, of Crookes, said: "It was quite similar to circuit sessions, although there was a bit more room than on-board ship, and that's why I wanted to do it. Everyone was enthusiastic and it was fun as well."

Jasmine Batty, 16, from Chesterfield, one of a group of netball players who used to play for Derbyshire, heard about BMF at the Cliffhanger outdoor festival at Millhouses Park.

She said: "We thought they'd be shouting at us a bit more but it was a great experience."

"I had been going to an athletics club but that was too competitive, this was more motivating."

■ For information about British Military Fitness, visit www.britmil-fit.com or call Mark Donaldson, north area manager, on 07525 764126.



Smile: BMF director of operations Kevin Lomas motivates his group



Running battle: Star Reporter Richard Marsden put through his paces