

Living



Jessica Gowen, 34, of Atlanta trains Jolayne Berg (right), 35, of Norcross, who is also an instructor, and Laura Podewils, 36, of Atlanta, on Cobra machines or pulley tower combination units in a recent Gyrotonic class at Core Westside in Atlanta. Photos by **Elissa Eubanks** eeubanks@ajc.com

Full range of movement

[editorial]



[The Reynolds Group Inc.] [www.thereynoldsgroupinc.com]

Gyrotonic system developed in '80s.

Workout 'a discipline, much like martial arts or dance.'

By **Emily L. Foley**
For the AJC

When Smyrna resident Michelle Bergeron, a senior vice president of an investment management company, dislocated her shoulder and tore some ligaments, her physician said it would never have complete range of motion again. After surgery and a lengthy recovery, her shoulder, deemed as "fully recovered," had only 92 percent motion.

"Because of the pain, my exercise options were very limited," she said. "I was trying to

do modified Pilates workouts, but I just felt like I wasn't exercising."

It was then that Bergeron's Pilates instructor, Jessica Gowen, suggested she try a different method of exercise called Gyrotonic. As the owner and director of CORE Pilates + Gyrotonic, which has locations in Buckhead and west Midtown, Gowen thought Bergeron could benefit from the method.

"Within a one-year period, I got 100 percent range of motion back in my shoulder," Bergeron said.

Now, after almost three years of Gyrotonic, Bergeron's shoulder is not the only thing that has benefited from the exercise.

"My body is more flexible than it has ever been," she said. "I am almost 48 years old, and my entire body has changed.

Exercise continued on D7



Gowen, shown training Podewils, says the concept of Gyrotonic "is that you want your spine to be strong, stable and mobile so nothing is moving more or less than it should."

Range of motion improves

Exercise

continued from D1

I'm even slightly taller than I was before Gyrotonic."

Gyrotonic is an exercise system developed in the early 1980s by Juliu Horvath, a Hungarian ballet dancer who suffered an injury that forced him to retire from dance. Through his study of yoga, Horvath developed what is now known as the Gyrotonic Expansion System.

"The concept is that you want your spine to be strong, stable and mobile so nothing is moving more or less than it should," Gowen said.

Like Pilates, Gyrotonic involves strengthening the core, and like yoga it incorporates breathing techniques. But it differs from those exercise techniques in a variety of ways.

"In yoga, postures are held for a specific amount of time," said Holle Knowles, a Gyrotonic instructor at Body Central. "In Gyrotonic, nothing is

Where to go to gyro

- Core Buckhead, 1218 W. Paces Ferry Road N.W., Suite 208, Atlanta. 404-814-2272, www.coreatl.com
- Core Westside, 1170 Howell Mill Road N.W., Suite P-15, Atlanta. 404-815-7117, www.coreatl.com
- Body Central, 49 Bennett St., Suite D, third floor, Atlanta. 404-367-8216, www.bodycentral.com
- About Movement Pilates Studio, 431 W. Ponce de Leon Ave., Atlanta. 404-373-9672, www.aboutmovement.com
- Body-n-Balance, 3005 Old Alabama Road, Suite 210, Johns Creek, 770-552-8852, www.body-n-balance.com

held because we believe that movement opens up the body. It is more rhythmic; more dancelike."

And while Pilates separates groups of muscles for targeted workouts, with Gyrotonic "you strengthen all parts of the body at the same time through a full [and constant] range of motion," Knowles said.

All this fluidity doesn't mean you can't break a sweat.

"It can easily be pushed into cardio engagement," Knowles said. "You can make it as fast and intense as you want."

It may take one or two sessions, however, before that level of aerobic intensity can be reached.

"Gyrotonic is a discipline, much like martial arts or dance," said Melissa Wirsig, owner of About

Movement in Decatur. "There is a learning curve, but you get out of it what you put in."

Gyrotonic grew out of Gyrokinesis, a mat-based method that requires the body to achieve each movement on its own.

Horvath developed Gyrokinesis first, but after finding that many individuals couldn't properly complete the movements, he developed equipment to make his method more universally attainable.

There are five pieces of Gyrotonic equipment, and at first glance, they can look intimidating. With straps, levers and even chains, they look like they belong in a medieval torture chamber more than a fitness studio. Each apparatus, however, has a specific function that aids in

a Gyrotonic workout. The set of pulleys on the pulley tower combination unit can be affixed in three positions and then fastened around the shoulders, thighs, ankles or wrists to provide resistance in an almost limitless number of movements that build strength and flexibility.

"The stretching and the movement enables me to do everything else I want to," said Kinsey Harper, a housewife from Buckhead who began Gyrotonic two years ago. "I am 57, and I like to play golf, I just ran a half-marathon. My husband and I go skiing once a year, and I honestly believe it is preventing injury. It is movement therapy, and it has also helped my body overall. I fit into my clothes better, and my abs are great."

Harper's husband, Gordon, a self-employed advertising rep, has also started taking Gyrotonic classes, and he has noticed a difference in his golf game because of his increased flexibility.

Despite a wide variation in age and fitness level, there is one unifier for those who do Gyrotonic: a deep love for the method.

"It is so vital and exciting," Wirsig said. "It is my passion, and all my clients who have tried it are as enthusiastic as I am now."