

VOGUE

Inside the Sleek New Home of New York's Toughest Cult Workout

“Leave your ego at the door, it’s game time,” reads a sign on the door into the vast workout studio at Tone House’s gleaming new location. This motto—among the other Tone House trademarks that have turned the high-intensity sports-conditioning workout into a cult favorite—has been transferred from the original Union Square walk-up to a 7,800-square-foot NoMad space, which opens this week.

Tone House is for neither the faint of heart nor hamstring, but for those game enough to withstand the harrowing intensity of bear crawl repeats and burpee-bookended sprints, the institution just got quite an upgrade. Surely there will be loyalists waxing nostalgic for the scrappy charm of the original shoebox location on 17th Street, much like those who pine for pre-Giuliani Tribeca, but for the rest of us, the glimmering new studio is incomparable in space and amenities. For one thing, there is a luxe locker room (conspicuously absent at the old site), as well as a recovery ice bath, retractable bleachers for stair sprints, and a DJ “sky box.”

However, the core program is the same—as are the men in tights showing off their model torsos. The class begins with a warm-up

of hopping and skipping over foam wedges, and then transitions into a sequence of moving burpees. A series of sprints and bear crawls ensues, followed by velocity battle ropes and resistance harnesses. This is a workout for athletes or those serious about wanting to become one, and there is no sneaky way to slack off: Each exercise set takes place in groups of three to four, during which the rest of the 12- to 15-person class watches and cheers. At first I thought these moments of respite between sets were a luxury; after 10 minutes of watching my fellow athletes use that time to massage their legs with stick tools or knead their muscles over knobby foam rollers, I realized they were necessary for self-preservation.

The whole experience is a bit like *Cheers*; everybody either knows your name or promptly finds out so they can encourage you when you are about to collapse during your fourth lap of bear crawling across the Astroturf floor. The clientele—or “team”—is made up of a medley of never-tough-enough New Yorkers and former and aspiring athletes. On a recent visit, one man with a military crop and zero body fat explained that he comes at least five days a week, primarily so the grueling suite of exercises becomes bearable upon repetition. A model wore Nike’s new soccer shoes to better adapt to the Astroturf, while a brunette in a coordinated Under Armour outfit, with *Fuerza* tattooed across the back of her neck, lunged straight into active stretching after dropping her gym bag by the door. Though no one was looking

very *fuerza* after pushing a 135-pound football sled across the studio and back again.

Afterward, founder (and former lineman and Wilhelmina fitness model) Alonzo Wilson watched his charges hobble out of the classroom. He later explained, “You’ll feel sore the day after, but it’s usually two days later when you find out the truth.” It didn’t take me that long: As I left the studio freshly showered with the Sachajuan products in the locker room, I had to wait before responding to text messages because my hands were shaking too much to type. For those slightly less masochistic—or maybe just more sane—there is a newly introduced Tone House 101 class to ease you in. Whichever your preference, sign up fast: The wait lists are as brutal as the workout itself.