

# On the path of most resistance

**Abigail Butcher** tests the 'crippling' circuit-based class that is Speedflex

COMING to the end of a gruelling 45-minute exercise session, pumping my arms on a machine that simulates a kind of upright rowing action, I can barely breathe. A big screen tells me my heart rate is at 93 per cent of its maximum. I'm satisfyingly, but cripplingly, into the 'red zone'.

After 30 seconds it's time to move on to the next and last 'station', which is a bit like the clean-and-press weightlifting move. By the time the bell goes I'm gasping. I grab a huge gulp of water and wait eagerly for the analysis of my workout.

I've just completed my first Speedflex class, a kind of circuit

training with machines originally developed in the US to adapt their resistance to the amount of force you use.

The hydraulic machines require you to do movements reminiscent of more traditional weight-based exercise such as squats, clean-and-press, upright rows – all low-impact but all designed to increase your heart rate.

Between each machine, there are other 'stations' with more traditional circuit exercises such as crunches or press-ups. The idea is that you move around



Within seconds my competitive nature had got the better of me, and I was generating enough force to push the Speedflex into the 'red' zone

**High intensity:** Abigail Butcher 'enjoys' the gruelling Speedflex workout

constantly, with little to no let-up between exercises.

As part of the induction, I had a body composition analysis, which told me my fitness levels are good. This made me feel buoyed up when I clipped on the heart rate monitor given to me by our instructor, Janine, and prepared to start.

Within seconds my competitive nature had got the better of me and I was trying to generate enough force on the Speedflex machine to push it into the 'red' zone – you can also see how well you're doing compared to everyone else.

I don't usually pay much notice to calories burned, believing they're not very specific, but because my height, weight, age and fitness levels had been plugged into the system before we started I knew the reading of 521 calories burnt at the end was going to be accurate.

Because it's high intensity, I also knew that calorie burning was going to carry on for several hours. And because Speedflex is high-intensity but low-impact you don't get any minuscule muscle tears during the exercises – which is what causes next-day stiffness. All the gain and less of the pain. Try it if you dare!

Speedflex centres are launching in London, Surrey, Leeds and Newcastle, and will be rolling out in Edinburgh and York later this year. For more information, visit [speedflex.com](http://speedflex.com)

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