

# Fit2fight **back**

What would you do if you were told you had to stop doing something you loved? Would you sit back and take it or would you get Fit2Fight? **Louise Alexander-O'Loughlin** talks to one of the UK's leading personal trainers, Omar Baluch.

**O**mar Baluch, owner of Fit2Fight, is a highly respected personal and group trainer specialising in a variety of fitness techniques such as Muay Thai Boxing, TRX training, Kettlebells, Spinning and Yoga. His clients and peers acknowledge he is constantly ahead of the game in his chosen specialist areas and he is highly respected.

**Have you always been into sport and fitness?** "Yes, I was always sporty at school and took up Karate when I was a teenager. I then discovered Thai boxing and was hooked. A major setback happened when I had a terrible back injury which didn't allow me a pain free day for years. No amount of medication or physiotherapy improved my condition and doctors advised I had no option but to have surgery. They also stressed I should never train with weights or Thai box again."

**You obviously ignored the medical advice. Why?** "I was too young and I loved Thai boxing and fitness training. A life without fitness would have been no life at all. I couldn't bear the thought of giving up the two main passions in life, so I became determined to get back on track. I'm actually quite stubborn and don't like being told what to do, so the rebel in me refused to lie down without a fight."

**How did you rebuild your physical fitness to allow you to train again?** "I basically designed my own rehab programme. It was a matter of two steps forward and one back, but I had every intention of returning to Thai boxing and reaching my absolute peak of physical fitness. I was so determined to defy the doctors' prognosis, I returned to Thai boxing within a year and was fighting competitively soon after. I made the decision to qualify as a

personal trainer and launch Fit2Fight. I wanted to share my experience and knowledge to prove that mind over matter really can enable individuals to reach their goals."

**What sort of trainer are you?**

"I am results driven and set realistic goals with my clients. I am calm and have a subtle, no-nonsense approach. My aim is to enable the client obtain an inner confidence in themselves that naturally improves physical ability. I want my clients to take ownership and responsibility for their health and fitness by listening to my advice and taking appropriate action. I will be honest about the results they can expect. Some people struggle to make the changes but I encourage them to try. A lesson will repeat itself until learnt!"

**What makes you different to other trainers?** I have a very holistic approach to



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health and fitness. Posture and movement are my first priorities.

I look at improving movement patterns and mobility using various tools such as TRX, Kettlebells and Yoga whilst also building strength. I consider the client’s lifestyle and have adopted a seasonal approach to exercise and nutrition which is part of the five elements theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine. This recognises the way we eat and exercise during the dark days of winter are going to be different to the bright days of summer when we naturally feel more energised.

**What’s the most rewarding thing about being a personal trainer?**

“There is nothing better than seeing clients excited to start and to see the positivity throughout a session. I love it when clients tell me they are noticing improvements in themselves and reaching their goals.” →





Omar is often seen training with Sheree Halliday, who holds the ISKA English, WPKL British, IKF European and ISKA World title belts for Muay Thai boxing.

**How did you become involved in Muay Thai Boxing?** "I was training in Karate at the time, but thought I'd give Muay Thai Boxing a go. I was addicted from the start! No longer were we practising punches and kicks to thin air and marching up and down a hall. All techniques were thrown full power against pads. Then it came to sparring and the speed and intensity was another level compared to Karate! I've been lucky enough to train with some of the leading coaches and clubs in the UK. I've travelled to Thailand to train six times and I still train every week at Keddles Gym in Orpington. I currently train Sheree Halliday who is the ISKA world Muay Thai champion."

**What can Muay Thai Boxing do for me?** "The main benefit is that it's great fun. Any kind of training you enjoy will become a regular part of your life. It's also a skill. You are not only getting fit, but also learning how to use your body, which can help improve co-ordination whilst learning the art of self-

defence. It will improve your cardio-vascular fitness, burn lots of calories and help improve muscle tone. It will also increase flexibility and mobility."

**What made you start Kettlebells?** "I first picked up Kettlebells around 2005 and made quite a few mistakes learning how to use them! In 2007, I found an organisation where I could learn the techniques and gain a qualification. You can use them for total body, dynamic exercises to stress the cardiovascular system and also for strength training. I was recently certified by the IKFF, one of the most prestigious organisations in the world. I have also started competing in Kettlebell competitions."

**What can Kettlebells do for fitness levels?** "Kettlebell training is a holistic form of exercise. The basic movements, such as the swing, snatch and the long cycle jerk, engage the entire body at once. By their very nature, these typical Kettlebell exercises build



strength and endurance, particularly in the lower back, legs, shoulders and grip. Unlike exercises performed with dumbbells or barbells, Kettlebells often involve large numbers of repetitions or timed sets for several minutes. This combination makes the exercises partially aerobic and similar to high-intensity interval training. This will burn a lot of calories, boost metabolism and help increase lean muscle mass."



**Why train with the TRX?** "It's a very safe and effective way to strengthen the body. The only resistance used is your own bodyweight. All the basic bodyweight strength exercises can be performed such as squats, press-ups, rows and lunges, as well as some challenging core exercises such as planks and suspended crunches. It's easy to tweak exercises to your own level of difficulty and really ramp it up where necessary. I find it great for group training as I can have beginners working out alongside really advanced individuals with everyone obtaining the right workout for their needs. You can also get a cardio connection by performing higher intensity plyometric-style exercises using the TRX to offset bodyweight. This reduces impact, but blasts the metabolism and gives a great calorie burn."

**How can group cycling, 'spinning', help?** "It has all the benefits associated with cardiovascular exercise, it's extremely safe (you're clearly not going to be hit by a car),



and can be adapted for any fitness level. But what makes a group cycling class for me is the choice of music! The beat has to be energetic and motivating, and then I create challenging drills around it. It's often quoted that you'll burn between 700-800 calories during a one-hour class, however, serious effort is needed to get that return. That means holding the pace I set!"

**You're latest passion in life is Yoga, how do you mix this into your sessions?** Obviously the benefits in flexibility and mobility that yoga offers are well known, but the breathing used within yoga practice can aid relaxation, recovery and help reduce stress levels. The focus used to maintain postures whilst breathing correctly help clear the mind, again helping to further reduce stress levels induced through intense exercise and lifestyle.

There is increasing evidence that weight loss is not just a case of calories in versus calories out. If that were true, with a great many pounding treadmills and following the latest fad diet, they would be super thin and toned! Unfortunately the human body is a little more complex than that, and it needs the right balance of exercise, rest and nutrition to create the optimal hormonal environment to develop a healthy toned body.

**Is it really possible to change your body shape?** "Yes – absolutely. I've had a couple of clients drop from well over 20 to 14-15 stones and completely change their

body shape. However, I can only show you how to train with the correct technique, give you advice on programming, nutrition and lifestyle choices. Clients of mine who have had amazing results have got there through sheer determination and wanting a lifestyle change. They have put the effort in and pushed themselves beyond their limits when they didn't think they could. They have listened to and followed nutritional advice and made the best choices to obtain results. They have had to deal with setbacks, injuries and temptations. If you really want to do something, you will find a way. If you don't, you will find an excuse. Believe you can do it, believe in yourself and the rest will fall into place." ●

### essence info

Omar is available for personal training and Kettlebell workshops. Contact Omar via email at [omar@f2fpt.co.uk](mailto:omar@f2fpt.co.uk)

**Website:** [www.f2fpt.co.uk](http://www.f2fpt.co.uk)

- Omar teaches Group Cycling and TRX classes at Ride Studio in Cobham.

A full timetable is available at: [www.ridestudiocobham.com](http://www.ridestudiocobham.com)

- Omar teaches Muay Thai classes at Locker27. (Omar continues to study Yoga at the Seasonal Yoga Teacher Training [www.seasonalyoga.co.uk](http://www.seasonalyoga.co.uk) which is a seasonal approach to yoga based on traditional Chinese medicine)

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