

# TRAINING FOR THE OBSTACLES

## THE INCREASE IN OBSTACLE-STYLE GYMS AND COURSES

When it comes to training at a gym, one of the only options used to be the typical building with rooms of treadmills, weights and machines. But with the rise in popularity in obstacle course racing and functional fitness training like CrossFit, more and more gyms are providing a different kind of training that prepares you for obstacle course races and builds strength and endurance in new and innovating ways. In addition, there is a rise in “fixed obstacles courses”—where people can train for, as well as compete in, races. It’s a growing industry in the world of sports, with many insiders planning for future expansion—meaning we can expect this type of training to grow even more in the next few years.

The specialized obstacle course gyms, as well as “fixed obstacle

course” locations, are turning up everywhere. There is Epic Hybrid Training in Manhattan, which includes “Spartan-inspired” workouts, and another gym called Iron Sports in Houston is an “official Ninja warrior training facility” that helps people train for obstacle course races. But those are just a few examples. And even gyms that are not entirely dedicated to obstacle course training are beginning to offer training courses based on obstacle races. In addition, some organized obstacle courses are offering their own training—Spartan Race offers a coaching certification that allows coaches to bring Spartan training to fitness facilities and boot camps.

Here’s an in-depth look at a few places that are changing the game when it comes to obstacle course training and fitness.

### “GROWING LIKE CRAZY”

Shale Hill Adventure Farm, located in Benson, Vermont, began when Rob Butler created a personal training course for his own use. “As I was building, some guys stopped by to see what was going on and asked if they could train with me. One thing led to another and we started having Saturday morning obstacle runs, and every week or so I would add another obstacle.”

There are now more than 60 obstacles and challenges on Shale Hill’s 10K course. “We have been called the toughest obstacle course in the country by some great publications and we strive to continue to offer new challenges to people of all fitness levels,” said Rob.

At Shale Hill, there are about nine races a year, including the Benson Bear Obstacle Race Points Series, the 8-Hour

Benson Polar Bear Obstacle Challenge (first weekend in February: as many laps as possible in eight hours that also includes a full buffet and party) and a Halloween dress-up race. There is also the Tri-Obstaclon,™ which is a combination of mountain biking, swimming, more mountain biking and obstacle racing. Rob described it as “the most fun non-traditional triathlon ever!” At the time of this interview, Shale Hill was also hosting their first obstacle course wedding. “We also now offer the ‘24 Hours of Shale Hell.’ This is a 24-hour event designed to see how many laps on our 10K course you can complete in 24 hours. Super tough!” said Rob.

Having a fixed location for obstacle course events has its advantages, said Rob. “We offer a location for people to come and train so that they are ready for

their weekend warrior events. Another key feature to our course is that people can gauge improvement. Week to week, month to month, they can compare their course times, what obstacles they have been able to master, how much weight they are able to move.”

Shale Hill has become so popular that people are now making it into a destination. There’s a facility onsite that holds up to 10 people that’s available for renting, allowing people to stay right on the premises and train or race. “I have seen people lose over 70 pounds in a year and master every obstacle. I see people constantly overcome fears and actually embrace what they once feared. We see groups come in here for team building and leave here bonded. The results are just amazing,” said Rob.

In addition, Rob says that obstacle

