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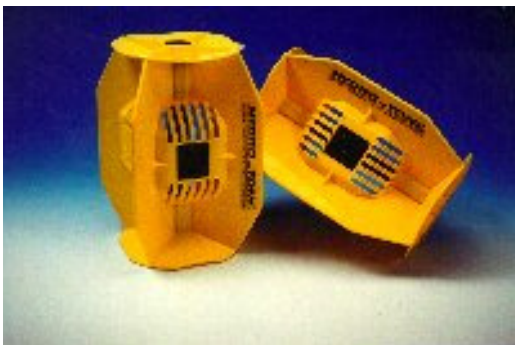
GEAR

Resistance? Futile? Not in the water

Roy M. Wallack
July 31, 2006

No one wants to exercise when it hits 100 degrees. But a refreshing way to beat the summertime heat — and get a superb upper-body workout — is aquatic resistance. Pushing and pulling a plastic or foam dumbbell through the pool water, alone or in conjunction with a flotation belt and leg resistance devices, offers smooth, joint-safe strength, toning and balance benefits. Once the province of certain athletes, injury rehab patients and older exercisers, water workouts can now work for everyone. No matter what regimen you prefer — boxing punches, tai chi, shallow-end water running, gym-style weight exercises such as curls and flies — the water density makes the movements harder as you go faster. If you give the workout your all, the results extend far beyond strengthened arms and shoulders — creating a real aerobic effect, some leg muscle toning and a pronounced blast to the midsection, which is always working to maintain balance in the unstable water.

— Roy M. Wallack



An aquatic trendsetter

Hydro-Tone Hydro-Bells: The original drag-resistance aquatic dumbbell, this plastic rectangle uses baffles and fins to increase water friction.

Likes: The large size — a foot tall — contributes to the intensity of the workout. The Hydro-Bell System 1 (\$69.95) includes a VHS workout tape and several well-done line-drawing exercise charts, conveniently inserted in seep-through waterproof sheet protectors for poolside use.

Dislikes: The large dimensions are a bit cumbersome for some movements and do not travel well.

Price: \$59.95. (800) 622-8663



Handy equipment

AquaLogix Bells: A drag-resistance device that encloses your hand in a perforated and finned cage, providing tough resistance through all angles of motion.

Likes: Compact and highly effective, it has the most natural feel of the models reviewed. The rounded shape, inspired by a whiffle ball, provides a unique "omni-directional drag resistance" — even resistance in every direction, says inventor and personal trainer Tad Stout. Small, travel-friendly size makes it a great workout tool at home and on the road. Available in three resistance levels. A training DVD (\$19.95) can be purchased separately.

Dislikes: None.

Price: \$59. (619) 988-6562



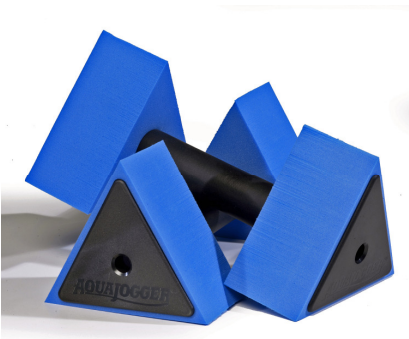
Paddle and tone

Zura Sports Aquatic Fitness Dumbbells: Paddle-like molded foam "weights" that pit the user against buoyancy, rather than drag resistance.

Likes: Compact and simple to use. To change resistance, turn the dumbbells 90 degrees.

Dislikes: A good workout, but not nearly as tough, functional or natural as the other drag-resistance devices. You expend as much effort keeping the dumbbells down as you do moving them in the desired direction of the exercises.

Price: \$23.95. (800) 890-3009



Flotation device

AquaJogger DeltaBells Pro: Foam triangles with soft padded grip.

Likes: Triangular design offers adjustable resistance: Turn it toward the flat end for hard resistance, and toward the pointed end for less. Very comfortable padded grip. Includes workout guide. Weaker exercisers can try the smaller-sized, less-resistant ActiveBells (\$23.95) and DeltaBells (\$27.95).

Dislikes: Same knock as Zura: Good workout, but the effort to control the flotation

conflicts with the exercise motion itself.

Price: \$34.95. (800) 922-9544