

booty-licious

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In my opinion, Hong Kong is not the best place to bring out your health and fitness goddess. It may have some of the best technology in the world in an “I can watch DVD’s on the treadmill” kind of way, but whatever good intentions are set at the beginning of the week are often destroyed by one too many social events throughout.

After six months of attempting to set a new week’s resolutions (no more drinking and smoking), I decided enough was enough. I would send myself on a boot camp to get my butt kicked into shape, literally. After scouring the Internet for retreats, I came across the *Rawai Muay Thai Gym*, a training facility in northern Phuket that had an open hanger style gym, nearby beach and bungalows to collapse in at night. I was sold.

DAY ONE

Training starts every morning at 7am sharp. Some eager joggers get up and go for a run beforehand, but on my first day, I’m not one of them. Every training session usually starts the same way: 10 minutes of skipping, five rounds of two-minute ‘shadow’ boxing (which basically means punching the air), five rounds of three-minute bag punching, then off to the ring for one-on-one pad work with a trainer.

The pad work is the most intense as it combines fitness and endurance with technique, which means you actually have to think and although the trainers’ English isn’t bad there are certainly “lost in translation” moments. I discover ‘yap’ and ‘pun’ are Thaenglish for ‘jab’ and ‘punch’. We spend about an hour going through really simple combinations, and then I get

set loose to join the rest of the students in the group fitness. The group fitness class consists of sets of pushups, crunches, tire jumping and pull-ups and usually ends with hundreds of knees and front kicks on the heavy bags.

There’s not that much to do around the gym in between training sessions, so I hire a bicycle and head down to the beach where my only question is to tan or not to tan. The four o’clock session is not what I would call a success story, as my mild sunburn combined with the humidity of the gym and lack of air conditioning, is less than pleasant. 40 minutes into the session I’m feeling quite lightheaded so my trainer suggests an early finish and some oxygen therapy, which is meant to be very therapeutic and great for recovery. I’m also encouraged to sit in the steam room for up to half an hour every day to build up my ability to cope with training in the tropical conditions.

DAY TWO

I’m a little stiff when I wake up, so to remedy this, and to make up for the fact that I feel guilty for not finishing the whole session yesterday, I get up half an hour early and run on the treadmill for 20 minutes. Today I don’t have the luxury of an individual trainer, so I join all the other students for

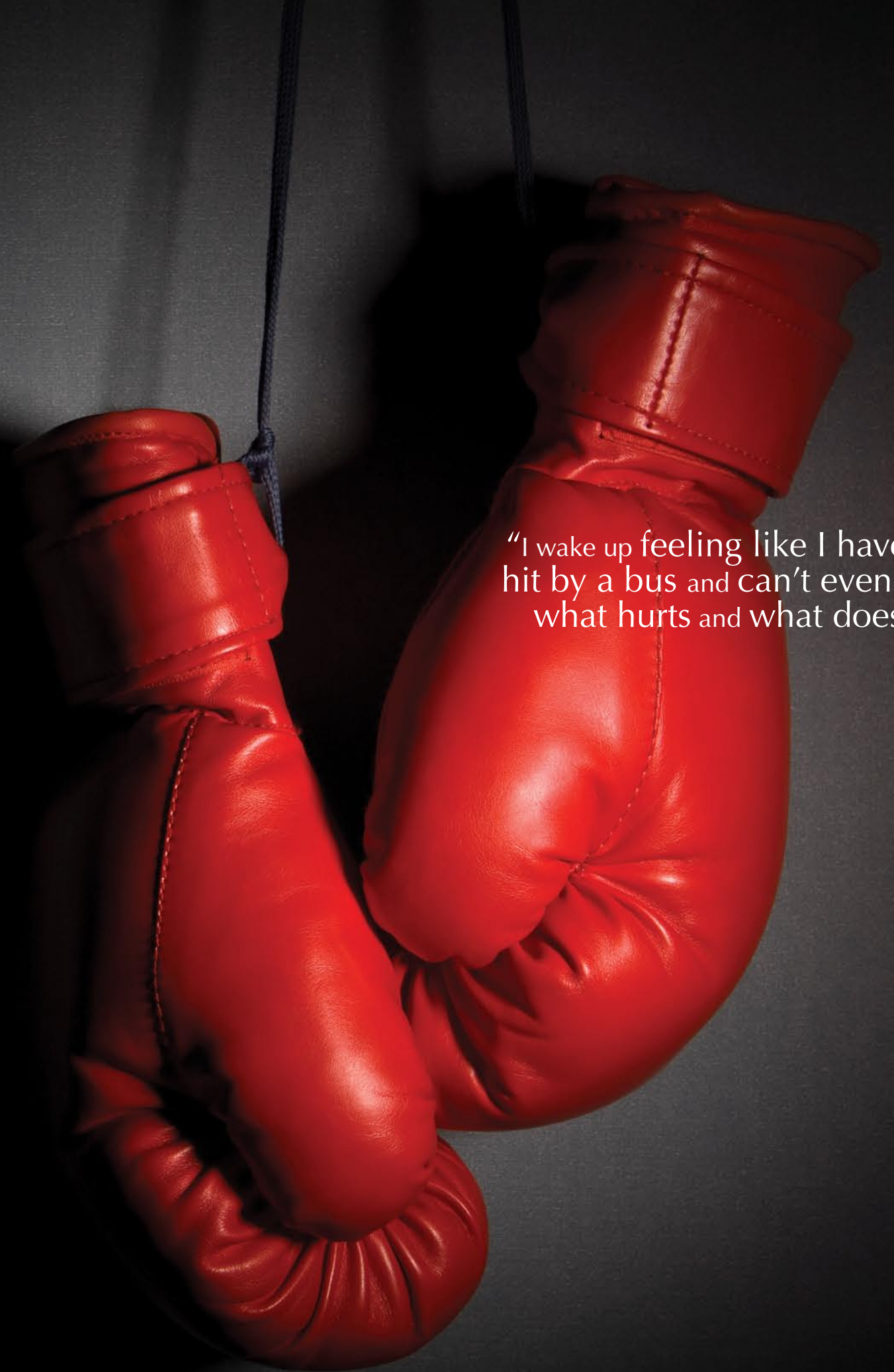
the group warm-up then it’s off to the ring for pad work, where today we have to get through five rounds of five minutes. I already have learnt to pace myself better and manage to last the duration of the session, however my decision to forego wearing the shin pads was not a good one.

After the afternoon training, I feel like I’m starting to settle into the routine, so after successfully enduring a full two days, I treat myself to a foot massage in the relaxation spa, eat some yummy pad thai and head to my bungalow for a nap.

DAY THREE

I wake up feeling like I have been hit by a bus and can’t even define what hurts and what doesn’t. I slowly get up and head over to the gym for some treadmill action. Walking across the lawn however, I’m half asleep and manage to twist my ankle. For a moment I wonder whether this is fate telling me to go back to bed but eventually decide against it, grab my ankle support from inside and soldier on. Morning training is fine until the end of the session when I am in the ring with the trainer learning some new kicking techniques. The trainer lands a soft kick on the inside of my leg and sure enough I roll my ankle again. For the remainder of the day I forego afternoon training and lie on the beach instead. Doctor’s orders.

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DAY FOUR

This morning I'm exhausted after a very interrupted sleep of bad dreams, in which I find myself waking up in the middle of the night having a kicking fit. Since my ankle is still tender, I have it strapped and I'm allowed to just do boxing today.

Today we begin to learn the art of 'grappling'. My partner and I clasp our hands round the back of each other's necks, one person having their hands outside, and one having them inside. The object of the exercise is to keep your arms on the inside grip as this makes it easier to throw your opponent off balance. The pressure on the back of the neck is intense, and I know I'll suffer for it tomorrow.

Four o'clock rolls around with more skipping and boxing and I actually feel like I'm getting some quite good hits in. My trainer starts getting me to defend myself, but instead I spend a lot of my time stuck in the corner with my hands up. I'm not sure how to protect my head, my ears and my kidneys at the same time, but figure if I close my eyes I can pull off the old, "If I can't see you, you can't see me" trick.

DAY FIVE

This morning I feel like I have pulled a back

muscle and turning to the right hand side is quite painful. I make it through all the warm-up rounds and the sparring, but by the end of training I'm in serious pain. My neck is also feeling the strain and I struggle to hold my head up during breakfast so book in for a Thai massage to stretch it all out and allocate the rest of the day to tan time.

DAY SIX

On Saturdays training is held on the beach. However since it has been raining all night and the sun is still hiding we head to the gym for a light training session. After the usual half hour of warm up drills, I run the 2.5 km to the beach and catch a lift back on a scooter. The afternoon session focuses on grappling again but this time advancing to the 'throw' phase. Our trainer teaches us how to throw a partner using the grappling technique. We break into pairs and practice and anyone who can't throw the trainer by the end has to do pushups. Needless to say we all try our best.

DAY SEVEN

There is no training on Sunday's, so a whole gang of guests (or fellow boot-camper's as I like to call them) from New Zealand, Australia, Holland and the UK take off for a

day of sightseeing and shopping.

DAY EIGHT

I am a bundle of energy this morning and have a great training session. Bring on those extra knees, kicks and crunches – it's 200 today! I even do some light weights training when we are finished. The afternoon session sees me having my first spar. We are aiming for five rounds of three minutes and although I know the trainer won't hurt me, I am pretty nervous. I start off in a flurry of activity, throwing punches left, right and centre, and dancing all over the ring, but I manage to calm myself. In the last round I tire during a lapse in concentration, endure a strike that results in a slightly chipped front tooth.

DAY NINE

Today is my last day and I am leaving after morning training. I warm-up then head back into the ring for a one-on-one session where my trainer and I practice kicking techniques, attacking, and counter attacking. I'm getting better but my hips are tighter than I thought and I haven't quite gained the flexibility I had hoped for; nevertheless I end the session tired and satisfied.



OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

I travelled to Thailand and the camp by myself however there were so many friendly people around that I was never lonely and thanks to the training schedule was certainly never bored. I came home a dress size smaller (without even watching my food intake), with a fantastic tan. Overall I would definitely recommend this experience especially if you want to kick-start your fitness regime, fit back into your 'skinny jeans' or detoxify your system. The camp is as serious or chilled out as you want it to be and although one-on-one sessions are available outside of normal training hours, and a 24-hour gym, you really don't need to be super strong, skinny or skillful to have a great time. 🌿

The Rawai Muay Thai Gym is located at 43/42 M.7 Soi Sai Yuan 1 Road, Rawai, Phuket 83100, Thailand, www.rawaimuaythai.com

daily training routine: monday to saturday

MORNING TRAINING FROM 7AM (2-3 HOURS)

Run: 5 to 10 km (Voluntary)

Warm-up

10 minutes of stretching
10 minutes of skipping.
15 minutes of shadow boxing

Bag Work:

4 x 3 minute rounds of punching and kicking heavy boxing bags

In The Ring:

4 x 3 minute rounds of learning new technique with a personal trainer
4 x 3 minute rounds of kicking and punching on the pads with a personal trainer
4 x 3 minute rounds of sparring with your personal trainer

Endurance:

30 to 40 minutes of strength building exercises, sit-ups, pull ups and light weight training

Warm-down:

20 to 30 minutes of stretching

AFTERNOON TRAINING FROM 4PM (2-3 HOURS)

Warm-up

20 minutes of stretching and shadow boxing

Bag Work:

5 x 3 minute rounds of punching and kicking with a heavy bag

In The Ring:

5 x 3 minute rounds of technique (pad work with a personal trainer)
5 x 3 minute rounds of sparring with personal trainer

Endurance (bag work):

200 front kicks
200 knee kicks
20 minutes of sit ups

Warm-down:

20 to 30 minutes stretching and 30 minutes in the steam room

