

Gender and the Gym

Closing the Gap
Black Sheep Studios Seeks
to Reach More Dudes

Written by Sarah Hodgson

Photos by Ann Coen



Ever wonder why the ratio of women to men is slightly off-kilter in a spin class? Devon Karvan, fitness guru and owner of Black Sheep Studios in Haven Beach, has set out to balance the scales.

"While the classes have always been geared towards both men and women alike, I really wanted to reach a broader audience this year," said Karvan, who sees a higher percentage of women than men frequenting her trendy, LBI-based studio.

"After COVID, I felt the need to push men and women, young and old, beginner and advanced, to work out in a positive group setting," said Karvan.

The imbalance of men and women in studio-based classes can be partially attributed to personal preferences and goals: women typically strive for calorie-burners and muscle toners, while men aim for muscle builders and high-intensity workouts. The gender imbalance can also be attributed to misconceptions about the average studio-goer. A popular assumption is that mat-based classes are dominated by women and thus made for women.

Karvan is poised to quash this assumption.

"We have a predominantly female staff, which presents the preconceived notion that we were a women's only facility, which couldn't be farther from the truth," said Karvan.

This year, Karvan has hired more certified male trainers and added a heap of equipment to the Black Sheep armory: kettlebells, medicine balls, boxing and strength training gear. Her goal is to show men that Black Sheep Studios can offer the high-intensity, competitive workouts they seek.

The efforts are twofold: the studio owner will indulge crossfit connoisseurs and powerlifters whilst exposing them to highly-beneficial workouts like pilates, yoga, barre and TRX. These trend-forward exercises target neglected muscle groups while improving posture, core strength and flexibility. Karvan even launched the "Bring a Bro to the BARRE" promotion this summer which awarded a complementary class to anyone who, as the promo literally states, brought their "bro" to a barre session.

Beginner and intermediate boxing programs and more rigorous boot camps and HIIT classes are among the new offerings added to Black Sheep's menu. While the enhanced programming was prompted by the lack of men in the studio, Karvan wants to make it clear that anyone, male or female, can enjoy these resistance-training-focused programs.

Scientifically speaking, men and women do not have anatomical differences that require specialized training. All muscles look and function the same way, regardless of gender. The National Strength and Conditioning Association even asserts that, "There is no sensible reason why resistance training programs for women need to be different from those of men."

Karvan vehemently agrees. "There isn't any reason why men and women can't take the same class and work to the best of their ability. I didn't want to differentiate or segregate workouts in that fashion, just give a gentle push for men to feel comfortable working out in the building.

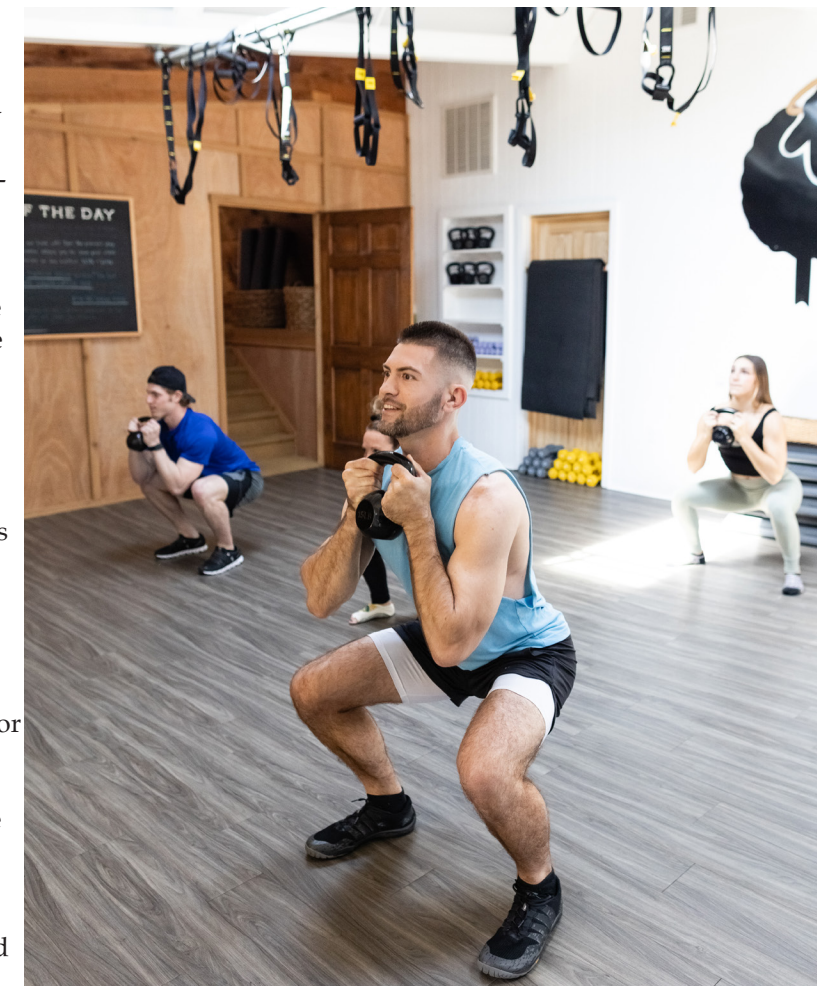
The strength-focused programming will allow everyone the chance to push their workouts a bit harder than usual in a positive, goal-oriented fitness environment.

"Some people want to simply get better at boxing, weight lifting, and spinning. Some are training for events. We have teenagers that are training for high school and college athletics. Our goal is to give all of those opportunities to everyone and have all resources available," said Karvan.

With a staff of conscientious, passionate fitness experts, Karvan is confident her team is more than capable of assisting clientele with their diverse wellness endeavors.

"All of my trainers are truly incredibly smart and talented and devise their own programs for each of their classes following guidelines specific to each. They are responsible for cueing, correcting and making modifications for those who need them," said Karvan.

So guys... get in on the action! Black Sheep Studios' enhanced programming is well-suited for any and all genders.



Meet the Trainers



Name: Hector Reyes
Age: 28
What you teach: I teach boxing/kickboxing/muaythai.
How long you have been training: I've been training since I was 19 years-old. I've been teaching for 5 years.



Name: Brody Selman
Age: 21
What you teach: HIIT, strength and core training.
How long you have been training: I've been teaching for 4 years.



Name: Frank Kellogg
Age: 33
What you teach: Kid's fitness, beach bootcamp, kettlebells, personal training, cardio weights, HIIT, core and strength, kickboxing.
How long you have been training: 20 years of personal fitness experience. I first seriously got involved in fitness in 9th grade in high school when I began playing football and doing martial arts. Been certified to coach fitness since 2016. 5 years professionally coaching.



Name: John Moore
Age: 66
Favorite class at Black Sheep: "The Go-Ryde Spin Classes are incredibly energized. All of the instructors are well-versed in the unique qualities of the Go-Ryde cycles which helps optimize the workout. This is time well spent!"



Name: Dave Ridley
Age: 43
Favorite class at Black Sheep: "I do private training and boxing with Hector 2 times a week. I love it because Black Sheep is convenient, not pretentious and Hector is great. He's got good energy, and is knowledgeable. I used to box but hadn't in a few years because life got in the way, so while this isn't Boxing

Customer Testimonials

in the traditional sense of hitting people, it's the motions and cardio exercise which not only allows you to release energy, but also makes the hour go by quickly."

Name: Al Salamone
Age: 56
Favorite class at Black Sheep: "I do private one-on-one boxing with Hector Reyes. I like that it's real boxing from a real former boxer and not just a person who teaches boxing that they were taught in some weekend fitness seminar and received a certificate for attending. He helps you accomplish whatever mental or physical goals you want to achieve while maintaining a place that's professional with a personal bond touch."