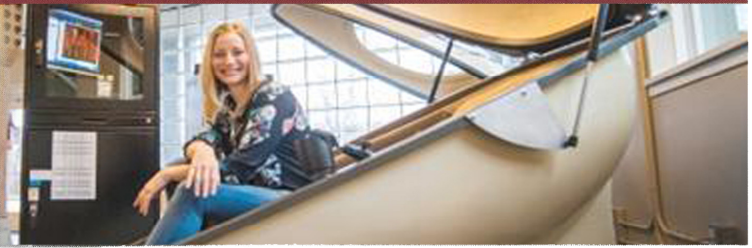


# FITNESS PODS AIM TO BOOST WELLNESS

Vancouver has first machines in Canada



## MONDAY SPORTS

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### CVAC pods: 'This isn't Superman's phone booth, but you do optimize your fitness over time'

BY GORD KURENOFF, VANCOUVER SUN

They kind of look like something you'd get if you blended a Smart Car, a jet fighter cockpit, an Egg Chair and Lady Gaga's synthetic shell from the 2011 Grammys.

But Vancouver fitness aficionados David and Melissa Jakovac, owners of the new Altitude Performance and Health, are banking on CVAC pods to become game-changers in an industry already packed with a plethora of products claiming to reinvigorate the body.

"OK, let's be clear. I'm not going to make any crazy or unproven claims," says David, a former False Creek personal trainer who tried out the Cyclic Variations in Adaptive Conditioning pod in San Diego two years ago and was "100-per-cent convinced" it worked.

"The pod isn't Superman's phone booth," he said. "You don't go in as Clark Kent and come out 20 minutes later with a red cape. But you do optimize your fitness and performance over time."

His wife Melissa, a former fitness trainer in Kelowna before a car accident on the Coquihalla Highway put a dent in her career, says after using the pods in San Diego for three straight days her chronic back pain of eight years all but vanished.

"I had way more energy and I slept better than ever," Melissa says. "Everything David and I read, everything we checked into and heard about the pods was positive."

"David read 25 user reviews that all gave the pods five out of five stars, which never happens. But we're skeptics and had to try it for ourselves. In the end we were impressed and decided to go all in and be the first business to have the pods available for public use in Canada. Up until now they have been mostly owned by individuals or sports clubs for private use in the U.S., but nothing north of the border."

Their spacious and spa-like facility on West 6th Avenue has three pods, each of which retails for US\$140,000. The pod uses precise changes in air pressure to stimulate every part of the body, from brain to toes, for better fluid flow through tissues, the lymphatic system and blood vessels.

David says this compression/dilation process improves the body's energy systems, how it utilizes oxygen and helps remove toxins and waste within the cells.

"Prior to making the decision to purchase, every person we spoke with who used the pod had a positive experience, but a different experience. Every body reacts differently. But if you have cells in your body you will benefit," says David.

Tennis ace Novak Djokovic, winner of last week's Australian Open singles title, claims that a gluten free diet and regular use of the CVAC pod to recover from exhausting sets helped him rise rapidly and stay on top in the pro ranks.

"It's like a spaceship. It's very interesting technology and it works for me," he recently told the Wall Street Journal.

(NEXT PAGE>)

“Our goal here is not to have lifelong clients,” says David, who figures most customers will notice positive changes within a month with twice-weekly sessions.

“We know it works. It’s worked on our family and we just hope it catches on. I can honestly say we’re not here to make a million dollars. We’re here to help people feel better and perform better,” says David. “It’s what we’ve done all our lives as fitness trainers.”

Some of the people who swear by the pods include Guns N’ Roses frontman Axl Rose, U.S. weightlifting star Tim Nash, U.S. national cycling champion Denise Mueller, cycling legend John Howard, motocross racer Ivan Tedesco and UFC fighter Ian McCall.

The first commercial use of the CVAC process was in the 1990s with thoroughbred racehorses and after seeing the positive results, thoughts quickly turned to a system people could use.

When the Vancouver Canucks marched to the 1994 Stanley Cup Final, a lot was made of the hyperbaric chamber and how injured players “healed” faster after treatment in the cutting-edge oxygen therapy unit.

The CVAC system, which cracked the 2012 Top 10 list in the U.S. for most innovative companies, works much differently.

“Complete opposite treatments in fact,” says David. “Where hyperbaric chambers increase and maintain a high pressure, like deep sea diving, the CVAC pods decrease the pressure, like mountain climbing, but continuously change it. The air pressure inside the pod will change 200 to 400 times in a 20-minute session. This ‘pumping’ effect is how we see results faster.”

Many leading U.S. medical centres are giving thumbs up after extensive research on the pods, but there are some doubters, too, who suggest the “improvements” are mostly psychological.

Dr. Benjamin Levine, a professor of medicine in Texas who is not convinced the pod is all that it claims to be, told ABC News: “Everyone is looking for Djokovic’s secret, but his secret is he has a stupendous backhand, great intensity on the court and is just a great tennis player in general.”

“Those differing opinions are to be expected,” says David. “The pods are still relatively new to the public and we’re learning more about their benefits all the time.

“But Melissa and I would not have spent the money or time we did on this if they didn’t work. My mother is a prime example. She had an open wound on her leg for six years that wouldn’t heal due to poor circulation. After two unsuccessful surgeries she was left with no recourse except wearing compression stockings and a nurse coming in twice a week to change the bandages.

“Once the pods were set up we had her come in and after six hours of sessions over two weeks the wound was gone. Even her doctor was surprised. So here was an objective result where her only lifestyle change was the CVAC pod.”

Using the pod is simple. Customers don’t need to change clothes (users don’t sweat) or do anything special to prepare before appointments, save for drinking water. They relax in the pods and can use their cellphones or iPads during the 20-minute sessions. The user is handed a walkie-talkie to communicate with the attendant once the lid on the pod is closed.

Altitude is offering an introductory package of five 40-minute visits. After that sessions are \$30 or customers can also purchase a 12-pack for \$300 or a 24-pack for \$480.

“The process is completely safe as there are no chemicals, nothing that would adversely affect your health or ban you from sport,” says David.

Melissa says early feedback is that the pods help cure headaches, reduce lactic acid build up, body soreness and fatigue. Users are also reporting a quicker recovery from exercise, increased stamina, reduction of inflammation or swelling and improved alertness.

“Sitting in the pod won’t give you muscles like Arnold Schwarzenegger or the endurance of a Kenyan marathoner,” laughs David. “But it will make your body feel better to pursue your goals, whatever they may be.”

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