

Slow Burn at Serious Strength

I don't have time, or, rather, I don't want to give up what free time I have, to work out. But I want to be healthy. So when the folks at Serious Strength claim that their Slow Burn regimen can give me all the exercise I need to be fit in just 30 minutes a week, I say sign me up.

As the name implies, the Slow Burn workout is strength training done at an excruciatingly slow, controlled pace, with the goal of working a muscle group to failure within a time frame of 60 to 90 seconds. Failure comes not when you feel "the burn" (caused by a build-up of lactate and other chemicals), but when you can't move the weight another inch, even if someone were to offer you a million bucks. Because you lift as much as you can and do it so slowly (roughly one inch per second), you typically manage only three to five reps per machine. In theory, once you've hit eight or so machines, you've worked every major muscle group to failure within about 15 minutes.

Serious Strength owner Fred Hahn explains this in our initial consultation. Hahn, whose background includes fitness instruction at var-

ious health clubs and physical therapy at the Hospital for Joint Diseases and New York Methodist Hospital, also relates the proven benefits of strength training—improving bone mineral density and cardiovascular fitness, maintaining joint flexibility, increasing metabolism, reducing body fat and more.

Once I understand the program and have answered questions about my health, Hahn takes me to the weight room. The setup—roughly a dozen machines, concrete floors, bare walls—is as no-nonsense as the workout. We begin with the leg press, on which I slowly push my way through one rep, then fluidly move on to a second (even slight rest diminishes the efficacy of the program, Hahn says). The burn starts midway through my second rep, yet Hahn calmly urges me on. Despite the sensation of hot lava flowing through my veins, I get in three and a half reps in two and a half minutes—a minute beyond the target, which means the weight is too light, Hahn explains. I go through similar experiences on seven machines that day, and I'm surprised when after about 15 minutes, Hahn tells me we're finished. That was easy, I think, having already forgotten the fire in my legs.

And to a degree, it is easy. The workouts are intense, but I never experience the battle-worn feel-



NO SWEAT The Slow Burn workout is completed at an excruciatingly controlled pace.

ing you're left with after some exercise. I see results almost immediately, and after just 30 days, I noticed increased muscle definition overall, and I'm stronger, based on the additional weight I could lift during each visit. And to think, I never

even broke a sweat.—*Elizabeth Barr*
Serious Strength, 169 W 78th St between Amsterdam and Columbus Aves (212-579-9320, www.seriousstrength.com). Initial consultation \$125, \$85–\$100 per session.