

Massive Cardio Tennis Program in Chicago Has New Players Working Out and Having Fun

With music from Beyoncé and the Black Eyed Peas blasting over the loudspeakers at Midtown Tennis Club in Chicago recently, 176 beginners, playing with demo racquets, participated in their first-ever Cardio Tennis Clinic. After 90 minutes of striking forehands and backhands on the run, jumping to hit overheads, hopping over cones and shuffling through ladders and line tapes, the players burned an average of 900 calories each. For the group, it was the equivalent of shedding about 45 pounds!

The fun but intense Cardio Tennis workout took place on 18 of Midtown's courts. "All of the courts were in unison, doing the exact same drills at the same time," says Butch Staples, head tennis professional at Midtown Tennis Club. "It looked very synchronized and orchestrated and that adds to the impact. It made people feel like they were part of a big happening."

The newbies were, understandably, a bit nervous as they put on nametags and made their way out to the courts. But soon, the instructors had put them at ease with fun partner activities and movement drills to start the clinic. Then, during the last 10 minutes, the pros did a Cardio Tennis demonstration to show the energy and excitement that Cardio Tennis can generate.

"The pros did a good job putting on a show for everybody," Staples says. "They were very entertaining and demonstrated how much fun Cardio Tennis can be for players of all levels."

Midtown Tennis Club is no stranger to Cardio Tennis. Midtown was one of the first facilities in the U.S. to offer the program when it was created by the Tennis Industry Association (TIA) in 2004. Since then, the Midtown Cardio Tennis program has grown in popularity.

"When we started the program we offered a month of free Cardio Tennis to get people hooked. We held classes nine times a week," Staples says. "Now we charge \$16 a class and offer 20 classes a week. About 200 people participate in Cardio Tennis every week."

One of the reasons Cardio Tennis has become so popular at Midtown is because most of the teaching professionals integrate Cardio Tennis aspects into nearly all of the other tennis programs run at the facility. For instance, to incorporate the health benefits of Cardio, the pros will do sideline activities and footwork drills during a lesson or clinic. Players enjoy this extra boost of cardio and crave more, so they start participating in Cardio Tennis programs.

Staples also knows that Cardio Tennis has been a success at the club because of the dedicated pros who teach it. "It really starts with the passion of the instructor," he says. "Our pros believe in the program and love it. They create a lot of energy on the court and that is a magnet for participants."

Midtown hosts several Cardio Tennis extravaganzas throughout the year. For beginning players, there are two major Cardio outings, in May and June, which are part of Midtown's "Tennis In No Time" program. The club also has extravaganzas in conjunction with all four Grand Slams. Members of the club pay

\$18 to participate in a 90-minute Cardio Tennis workout, followed by a free meal and viewing of the Grand Slam final.

Between these extravaganzas and the 20 classes offered every week, Midtown Tennis Club has made a high profit with the program. In 2007, the club made \$100,000 on Cardio Tennis and according to Staples, they're hoping that number will reach \$150,000 in 2008.

For tennis facilities, Cardio Tennis programming brings people into the game, helps them to feel healthy and is a lot of fun. And that's exactly what is helping this sport to grow.