



espnW.com: Workouts



Wednesday, December 22, 2010

## The Pod, the 'load' and Darth Vader

---

By Sarah Spain

*Sarah Spain is following a seven-week fitness and fuel plan program designed for her by the Gatorade Sports Science Institute (GSSI). She'll be tested and measured, pushed, poked, prodded, and put through the proverbial wringer. The goal? To get her back to feeling, thinking and looking like the former hoopster and heptathlete she is. Naturally, she'll be blogging every sweaty step of the way. Follow along, send her your comments or, better yet, jump in and go for it with her. You only think you're in shape*

...

Last week [I announced my exciting \(and slightly crazy\) plan](#) to let the folks at the Gatorade Sports Science Institute (GSSI) help me rediscover my inner athlete. I took an early morning flight from Chicago to New York City last Tuesday to meet up with trainer-to-the-pros [Todd Durkin](#) and the rest of the team at a pop-up Gatorade Performance Lab in Soho. The tests I underwent that day helped Todd and my Gatorade nutrition/fuel plan specialist, Kimberly White, create a seven-week program for me to follow until Super Bowl week in Dallas, where I'll take the tests again to see how much I've improved.

Here's a quick rundown of the tests and what they told me about my fitness, power and cognitive abilities (or, in some cases, lack thereof).

**1. The Bod Pod:** The testing begins with a base measurement of body weight and body composition (i.e. body fat percentage). Wearing a swim cap and a bathing suit, I sat in a futuristic-looking pod for three 30-second intervals. Lemme tell you: it's not so bad strutting your stuff in a few feet of lycra while vacationing on a tropical island, but waddling around under fluorescent lights in mid-December? Quite a humbling way start to the day.

**2. Resting Metabolic Rate:** The second test calculated the minimum number of calories I need to take in per day to just "be." This was an easy one -- I just had to lie on a table for a half-hour with a Darth Vader-style mask over my face and try not to fall asleep.

**3. Wingate:** Over a 30-second period I cycled with no resistance, building up to my fastest speed possible. Then the test facilitator Melissa "dropped the load," and I pedaled for another 30 seconds with resistance that made it feel like I was cycling in a vat of cement. (This test apparently caused the guy who tested before me to throw up. I'm proud to say that while my legs were rubbery as heck, I kept my breakfast in). This was a biggie -- it measured peak anaerobic power (the highest power generated in a 3-5 second interval), anaerobic fatigue (the percentage decline in power compared with the peak power output) and total anaerobic capacity (the total amount of work over the

30-second period).

**4. Dynavision Sports D2:** This was the most fun test of the day for me, because I was awesome at it (let's be honest, don't we enjoy what we're good at the most?). I stood in front of a big black board with lights all over it and had to react as quickly as possible, touching each light as it turned on in random succession, while simultaneously reading numbers that would appear on a screen in the middle of the board. The test measured eye-hand coordination, cognitive function and reaction time and I kicked some tail at it, tagging 100 lights out of 104, while the two guys before me hit just 86 and 60-something. If only ALL the tests involved absolutely zero physical exertion!

**5. Dynavision Sports ISPAN:** This test was a modified version of the D2 board one, but this time, in order to turn off the lights, I had to leap to touch them. I can guarantee beach volleyball superstar Kerri Walsh would absolutely kill at this one.

**6. Treadmill Test:** The final test of the day calculated aerobic capacity (VO2max) using a one-mile run. I had to run at a steady pace for the entire mile, never speeding up or slowing down, and the changes in my heart rate reflected my aerobic fitness.

**7.** To finish up, trainer Todd and I went through a series of basic exercises -- push-ups, sit-ups, planks, etc.

I was surprised and motivated by a lot of the test results, and the old athlete in me started to stir. When I go back to re-test I want to surprise myself again, this time with proof that I've still got it when I put my mind to it. Todd sent me my first week of workouts yesterday, which means it's time to run, jump, sweat, (moan, groan and whine) my way back to looking and feeling like the baller I once was.

---