

TAKE FIVE

John Graham

Sixteen years after first visiting southern China, John Graham's name has become synonymous with fitness in Shenzhen. Having founded a string of fitness related businesses – and later transferred them – Graham's newest enterprises include a specialized gym called Project 0/1 and the twice yearly White Collar Fight Night, which sees everyday employees trade cubicles for the boxing ring.

You're a pretty buff guy, what kind of reactions do you get in the street?

Lots of touching and poking and bicep squeezes. Because I'm larger than average, I try to compensate with a good smile and welcoming personality. If you are large and just try to intimidate everyone, you miss out on learning from people.

Over your years in China, what change in attitudes towards working out have you seen?

I've seen people become more interested in exercise and joining the 'gym culture.' It's great and certainly has made things work for my busi-

nesses. I remember first coming here and it was all about badminton, tai chi and bar workouts with the seniors.

It seems like gyms are opening on every corner now. Where do you see the fitness market going?

The industry is growing towards specialized spaces. Two big elements that are important in a gym now are community and challenge. If your gym is too large, you can't integrate these two concepts and if a gym brand doesn't have these in the next five years, they will find it very difficult to keep business.

Why start White Collar Fight Night in Shenzhen?

After boxing in Shanghai, I remember thinking that if I fight again, it needs to be in my own event. If I train this hard and fight this hard, I want the full benefit going back to my business and my brand.

Would you rather fight 100 duck-sized horses or one horse-sized duck?

For sure one horse-sized duck. No gloves, no rules. Give me five minutes to work out a strategy and 10 minutes to nail that ducky. Then it's kao ya time! I love me some kao ya.



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