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Exergaming: the Answer to Childhood Obesity?

New research lab launched to test the efficacy of interactive fitness

> Is it entertainment? Or is it exercise? Or is it both?

Those are the questions that researchers are addressing as they study how effective exergaming, or "interactive fitness," is at combating obesity and increasing fitness levels among children. In January, the University of South Florida and iTECH Fitness, an IHRSA associate member company based in Denver, christened the XRKade, a youth-oriented research lab designed to study the effectiveness of interactive, technology-based fitness games.

The XRKade, given to the school by iTECH and its corporate partners, makes use of exergaming systems produced by several other

IHRSA associate members. Among them are: Konami's Dance Dance Revolution; Cateye GameBikes; the CYBEX Trazer; SportKat's Korebalance balance trainer; Fit Interactive's 3-Kick training station; Panasonic's Core Trainer, and the HOGGAN Sprint Airbouncer.

"The exergaming movement suggests that children can become more physically active and reduce obesity levels," observes Stephen Sanders, the director of the USF School of Physical Education, Wellness, and Sports Studies. "The games *require* that children must be physically active. For example, the faster a child pedals the game bike, the faster the car will go on the video screen... The



XRKade research center will document effects of exergaming

physical activity possibilities are endless."

"We're extremely excited to be working with USF on this project," reports Michael G. Hansen, the president and CEO of

iTECH, "and we believe that this research will only help to solidify the positive effects of exergaming, which we've seen in fitness clubs throughout the country." ■

The Biggest Loser... or Winner?

Physician defends TV show's aggressive weight-loss program



Proud pleaser Matt Hoover, top 'loser' in show's second season

> The debate about the best way to lose weight continues. While most fitness professionals would argue that slow, steady weight loss, involving sensible eating and regular exercise, is the right way to shed pounds and keep them off, others promote a more extreme approach.

Dr. Robert Huizenga, the physician who works with the reality TV show *The Biggest Loser*, defends the hit

series' aggressive take on diet and exercise.

Critics of the intense *Biggest Loser* regimen contend that it's unsafe and unproven, but Huizenga, an internist and sports physician in Beverly Hills, California, reports that, thus far, it seems to be working pretty well. Tracking outcomes, Huizenga found that the show's first contestants lost an average of 25% of their body weight over ►