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UPDATED: LA Fitness: 'We're Honoring Lifetime Memberships'

Paul Norris, principal at LA Fitness, says the company has made the decision to honor Bally's lifetime memberships

Posted by [Kyle Bagenstose](#) , December 20, 2011 at 08:43 PM



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LA Fitness has now decided to honor Bally lifetime memberships in full, including nationwide access. .

[UPDATE, Wednesday, December 7, 12:57 p.m.]

Patch is now receiving reader reports that Bally lifetime membership holders are able to verify their information and contract with LA Fitness at [this site](#). Several users said that while it appears that the contract they had previously is now being accepted by LA fitness, it shows an expiration date of 12/1/2014.

This appears to be consistent with what Paul Norris, principal at LA Fitness, told Patch in a phone conversation earlier this week. Norris stated that lifetime members would initially be given a three year membership, at no cost the first year, and then \$1 for each following year.

Patch's understanding was that this would then be "re-upped" for \$1 a year in continual contracts. However, agreements could be different for each individual based on their unique contract, and whether or not they have already signed a new agreement with LA Fitness. According to Norris, the company will be putting out a press release in the near future to officially explain offerings. Patch recommends members wait until that release, and also thoroughly review any contract, before signing.

To see if your contract is being recognized by LA Fitness, follow these instructions:

- Visit lafitness.com/Pages/Announcement.aspx, and click on the box that says verify your account.
- It may be necessary to try different variations of your name, including abbreviated initials, and also entering the zip code and phone number used when first signing up for a Bally's membership. According to some users, the keytag number is the first initial of your last name, and then the numbers from your Bally's ID card, excluding the first four zeroes.

[UPDATE, Monday, December 5, 8:17 p.m.] After the publication of this report, a number of readers contacted Patch to say that LA Fitness location managers told them they would not be honoring lifetime memberships. Upon attempting to contact these locations, we were informed that managers had been instructed to direct all media inquires to the company's Irvine, California offices.

Patch reached back out to Paul Norris, principal at LA Fitness, who further clarified by stating that the decision to honor lifetime memberships had not yet been relayed to all locations, but that the lifetime memberships would be honored.

"We're going to get a statement out on our website, and condense all the information into one spot, right on the front page," said Norris, adding that the message should come within several days.

Norris also said that decisions regarding lifetime memberships were complicated by law, stating that lifetime memberships are now illegal in all but several states. However, Norris said the company viewed it as good customer service to find a way to honor the agreements.

"We don't want to disadvantage our members, especially the people who've been around for 20 years," Norris said. "We're doing it for good will. There's not many [lifetime members], but we don't want anybody to be at a disadvantage."

Although official details are pending the company's statement and may be unique to each customer, depending on the terms of their original contract, Norris said that a lifetime customer would be offered the chance to sign an LA fitness agreement that would allow them to continue to visit the location for one dollar a year, in order to keep the agreements legal.

In addition, Norris said that for those interested in being able to visit any other LA Fitness location in their respective state, LA fitness would offer a special rate of \$19.99 a month for membership.

Finally, Norris said that all LA Fitness locations formerly owned by Bally's would allow members to continue to visit throughout December without signing any new agreements.

[Original report, Monday 5:00 p.m.]

Bally Fitness members upset with the changes stemming from a purchase by LA Fitness may now find some relief, as the company has decided to honor lifetime membership agreements, according to Paul Norris, principal for LA Fitness, who called Patch.

On Sunday, Patch reported that a number of local residents were frustrated after the Bally's Total Fitness location in Willow Grove became one of 171 across the country to be purchased

by LA Fitness.

According to members, LA Fitness representatives told them last week that Bally's lifetime memberships, some of which were purchased for thousands of dollars, would not be honored in the switch. Patch follow-up calls to local LA Fitness centers confirmed this information.

However, according to Norris, who called Patch Monday afternoon, those memberships will now be honored.

"The [lifetime] memberships weren't purchased and weren't part of our responsibility, but we've made the decision to honor those lifetime memberships," said Norris. "We certainly don't want to disadvantage any members, or former members, of Bally's."

When asked when that decision was made, Norris said that the company had difficulty communicating its policies to all locations after heavy winds knocked down telephone wires at the company's Irvine, California offices.

"The acquisition was an assets sale. Lifetime memberships were not a part of the acquisition, and we're sorry it wasn't communicated to all involved," said Norris. "The day we did this acquisition we had 70 mile per hour winds in Los Angeles and the lines were knocked out," Norris said.

When asked what procedure members would now need to follow to become lifetime members of LA Fitness, Norris said it could be done in a visit to any of the newly owned locations.

"[Members] need to sign an agreement to allow them entry, but it would be virtually the same terms of the agreement they have now," Norris said.

According to a [ClubIndustry.com article](#), there is one of 171 Bally's facilities sold nationwide to LA Fitness for approximately \$153 million. The sale included 13 in the Philadelphia region, of which four will close and nine will continue to operate under the LA Fitness banner, including the Willow Grove location. Bally's now operates 100 locations in the U.S., while the addition boosts LA Fitness from 360 to 538 clubs.

Patch will check in with its readers this week to confirm they are able to convert their lifetime membership. Please check back for additional coverage. To see our original coverage of the story, .

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Comments

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Nici Mahlandt January 12, 2012 at 05:04 PM

I went to my local Bally's yesterday, the one I had been going to (see comment above for whole story). My home club had been sold and I've been in contact with LA Fitness (cancelled the membership renewal I paid to Bally's in October and got a full refund from Bally's on my credit card) and with Bally's offices in Chicago - Mr. John Sennett (sp) at the corporate Bryn Mawr offices in Chicago 773-380-3000. My membership to Bally's, all clubs, has been reinstated in their computers, along with the rates and offers I have always gotten (about \$108 per year which started years ago at \$99) and my "home club" has been changed to the New Jersey club I've been attending. While I can't say that this sale was well-handled, Mr. Sennett got the job done exactly as he promised he would do, and LA Fitness folks AT THE CLUB in Union, NJ were very helpful in getting that membership cancelled so I could be reinstated by Bally's. Hopefully they have learned their lesson and when the rest of Bally's are sold in 2012 to New York Sports Club or whoever locally can handle them (rumour only) they won't make the same mistakes. Seems to me they needed a good Executive Assistant on the job during the sale to think of the details!!!

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Alan Grudy January 20, 2012 at 06:18 AM

Hey Dan, same exact problem as you, live in Southern California (all Bally's were bought here, only ones that are still Bally's are in Northern Cali), but I have a lifetime membership with national access bought in Wisconsin. That Bally's in WI closed down about 10 years ago, and they tell me now I can still go to any Bally's, but there are no nearby Bally's. I've dealt with the same hold times as you, and it's even worse that they have an attitude on the phone and act like both companies did nothing wrong with these policies that screw us over (it's almost as if this is their intention to screw us over by LA Fitness not just taking over all of Bally's). Please continue to update us with any news on your membership and any advice on what we can do. Thank you.

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Alan Grudy January 20, 2012 at 09:57 AM

Hi Jackie, I'm not showing up in the system, LA Fitness did not acquire my Bally's I got my lifetime national membership at in another state, I live in Southern California for the last 10 years and all the Bally's have been changed to LA fitness except in Northern California. That site Ballyssuit is closed, does anyone know how to get a hold of Jeff Levy? Thank you for any help.

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Lillian Common February 08, 2012 at 06:40 PM

This action sucks. I'm requesting my State General Attorney to move into action this is nothing but fraud. The company has all of your contact information there was no reason for them not to one inform members of the impending sale and two the provisions of the sale in terms of honoring a "lifetime contract". This membership was a live instrument that could be sold and traded at anytime therefore it is a live negotiable instruments how could it not be part of a sale. When you purchase a business you purchase all of its obligation there is no such thing as a partial sale it's either a sale or not. This is where government agencies who mission is to protect consumers comes in. LA Fitness is ripping off millions of members and Bally is being allowed to not honor contractual obligations. There is no provision in the law that allows you to not honor a contract except bankruptcy which this was not.

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tosilog February 08, 2012 at 08:23 PM

My premier membership FINALLY transferred to LA Fitness! I paid \$126 renewal for 2 years back in 8/2010 and it is to expire in 8/2012. I was originally told that my membership did not transfer so I signed up with LA Fitness and was given a rate of \$29.99/multi club anywhere in NJ with no enrollement fee. Then a couple days after, I found out that I am able to put in a request (12/28/2011) to have my premier membership transferred to LA Fitness. Luckily, I was able to cancel within 3 days with LAF and was given my money back. I was told by Ballys that my request was processing. Meanwhile, LA Fitness was kind enough to issue me a 2 week guest pass. I waited almost 2 weeks just to be told by Ballys that since the original place of enrollment (Wayne, NJ) remained as Ballys, it was not going to transfer and LA Fitness was not longer accepting transfers. So they were going to issue a refund. So I signed up with LA Fitness again 29.99/month no enrollment fee/multiclub in NJ. Then, I received a phone call 2 weeks later from Ballys corporate asking if I would still like to transfer my account to La Fitness. I told them ABSOLUTELY! LA Fitness was able to issue me my money back again. This has been a long process but once my local LA Fitness received my information, everything went smoothly. My original contract WAS HONORED! Multi-State Access! I am paid until Sept 2012 & annual renewal fee will be \$156/year!! Thank you Ballys/LA Fitness for making right!

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Francis February 24, 2012 at 09:42 PM

My name is Francis Mand; I joined Bally's Total Fitness in 1979 in Colorado and am a life-time

member. My wife joined in 1989 in Indiana. I moved to Indiana in 2005. I have been going to a Bally's in Indpls, IN. My wife was able to transfer her membership without problems. My problem was said to be related to originally joining Bally's in Colorado. Feeling left with no options, last night I reluctantly decided to sign a 3 year contract with LA Finess for \$705.00. The manager at Carmel West assured me this was the cheapest alternative to being able to continue going and utilizing the LA Fitness facility. Bally's is resolute that my Bally's membership was transferred to LA Fitness but LA denies. LA Fitness exhaustedly reports my membership from Bally's has not been transferred. The Bally's supervisor said there "is nothing Bally's can do...and that it's all up to La Fitness." I am left being told I no longer am a member of Bally's and told by LA Fitness that the Bally membership was not transferred. If I wanted to continue to going to LA Fitness, I was left with no alternative than to purchase a new contract. I'm a senior citizen on a fixed income and signing a new contract is a significant expense. I am approaching 80 years old and feel my age in this case has contributed to discrimination. Is this how Bally's treats a retired US Airforce senior citizen who's been a Bally's member for over 30 years? It's unjust and just not right.

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Francis February 28, 2012 at 01:25 AM

I couldn't get confirmation until Monday 2/27/12, but officially on 2/24/12 my membership was transfered. Tonight my wife and I noticed that my new home location was listed as Michigan Street, Florida. (We live in Indiana.) We don't know why or who chose to move us to Florida...but the help line helped us (949-2557200) change the home spa as being Carmel West, Indianapolis, Indiana. I'm grateful that this situation is resolved. The Bally hotline supervisor Mario was not helpful but the LA Fitness Help LIne helped us resolve this issue. I'm grateful for the assistance they provided to correct this situation (it took about a dozen calls), and they are to be commended.

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Gloira Chavez May 18, 2012 at 01:31 AM

I bought a life membership 1993. La Fitness signed me in back in December. Informed me that they were opening a new Gym in a few months. They just opened it on May 16, 2012. On the second day of my visit they told me a could no longer visit this location because of their signature club policy. I paid my years fee but now they are sending me to a location about 9 miles away from my home. they want me to upgrade and pay over \$400.00 year. Need advise what do I do? This gym just opened in Woodland Hills, CA.

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Gloira Chavez May 18, 2012 at 05:18 AM

It has been a long time since I signed as a memeber how do I go about getting my original contract. Also, what do I do if they refused entery to the location of my choice, that would be the closest to my house.

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Gloira Chavez May 18, 2012 at 05:22 AM

They are refusing entry to the gym because they said that the LA fitness has switched to "LAFITNESS SIGNATURE"

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KwadGuy May 18, 2012 at 04:53 PM

Gloria: I was in the old (decrepit, hideous) Woodland Hills LA Fitness club a few weeks ago. I'm a former Bally's member with a lifetime membership to use any club. When I visited the old WH club, I asked and the girl at the front desk said that I'd be able to use the new club when it opened. I haven't been back to test that yet, though. Did you have a lifetime/any-club membership with Bally's?

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KwadGuy May 18, 2012 at 04:58 PM

As to the clubs they tried to send you to, I'm aware of two club in the "general vicinity": The one in Chatsworth, and the one in Encino. The Chatsworth club is a dump, the one in Encino isn't bad. Both are better than that monstrosity that carried the LA Fitness name in Woodland Hills before they moved into the new digs.

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KwadGuy May 18, 2012 at 05:10 PM

Anyone here in this situation: Bally member whose club has been bought by Blast Fitness? Apparently, Blast Fitness is only going to honor the Bally memberships until the end of 2012, then they become worthless. (You need to buy new Blast membership and Bally will no longer honor them, even if they are "lifetime" and "any club").

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Brian none May 24, 2012 at 06:47 AM

My situation is that I purchase a one time transferable Bally's Fitness membership from someone from the east coast 5 years ago, The home club was bought out by LA Fitness so no i am a LA Fitness member but the thing is i live in st. louis and my currently club is bought out by blast fitness and bally refuse to transfer back into their system. (LA fitness currently has all my info). Not sure how long Blast fitness will continue to honor former bally's member. does anyone know? any idea how i should deal with this? let me know. thanks

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