

[News](#) | [Business](#)

LA Fitness Grants National Access, Bally Members Drop Lawsuit Threat

Former lifetime Bally members who felt wronged by an LA Fitness purchase will now be granted nationwide LA Fitness access, say parties involved.

Posted by [Kyle Bagenstose](#) , December 20, 2011 at 09:15 PM



Like 0

members, who were left in the cold after their clubs were purchased by LA Fitness earlier this month, will have a place to work off the holiday pounds after all.

According to a statement posted on the LA Fitness website late last week and follow-ups from Patch to previously unhappy customers, the company has doubled down on its decision to honor lifetime agreements, now to the satisfaction of almost all those affected.

"LA Fitness has decided to simplify the access rules and give all of the acquired Bally Total Fitness ("BTF") members access to current LA Fitness clubs as described below," reads the statement, which also bullet points the following guidelines:

- BTF "Local" Members will have access to LA Fitness clubs and acquired BTF clubs in the state of enrollment*;
- BTF "National" Members will have access to those clubs in all states*;
- Acquired BTF members who only have single club access will continue to have access to that single club (or, if that club has closed, to another BTF or LAF club nearby).
- *Except for New York clubs (unless you enrolled in NY) and clubs designated now or in the future as Signature and Athletic clubs.

Late November deal leaves customers angry

Word of the acquisition originally reached Upper Dublin Patch after customers at the location on December 4. LA Fitness had purchased 171 clubs throughout the country from Bally's, including 13 in the Philadelphia region, and all customer contracts at those locations, with the exception of lifetime memberships.

This left many customers, some of whom had paid thousands of dollars for their memberships up until federal law made the creation of such contracts illegal in the mid-90's, feeling like they had been kicked to the curb.

"We've been members since 1984, ever since my husband and I got engaged," said Upper Dublin resident Joan Tait, who paid roughly \$2,000 for a lifetime membership. "There were years where we wouldn't go at all, but for the last decade or so we've been going several times a week and never had to pay anything."

Customers began to share similar stories and organize on message boards such as the Patch comment section and Ballyssuit.com, an online forum created by Michigan resident Jeff Levy with the ambitions of forming a class action law suit.

LA Fitness announces they will honor lifetime memberships

Levy began speaking with attorneys from the Philadelphia based law firm Berger and Montague, P.C., but before any litigation was filed, Paul Norris, principal for LA Fitness, contacted Patch and others to announce that the lifetime memberships. Norris told Patch this was done not because of a legal obligation, but as a service to customers.

"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."

Over the following weeks, many members began to report that their memberships were now being recognized by the LA Fitness computer systems.

Round two: customers say they should have nationwide access

Still, many Bally's lifetime members were not satisfied and worried that a clause in the new LA Fitness contract allowed the company an 'out' to begin raising renewal fees. Many members also took issue with LA Fitness allowing access to only one or several area clubs, as opposed to the nationwide access they had as members of Bally's.

Patch spoke to a Philadelphia-based attorney about the complaints, who said that the customers had little legal ground to stand on.

"They're completely wrong about LA Fitness having an obligation to give them nationwide access," said the attorney, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "That claim would be dismissed. That's not the benefit of their bargain, their bargain is access to Bally's gyms."

However, according to its most recent statement, LA Fitness has now agreed to allow nationwide access to its members. Levy says the company should be credited.

"LA Fitness has been one hundred percent [helpful], they've gone over and above what they had to legally do," said Levy. "I had an attorney say to me 'no way you are going to get access to all the LA Fitness gyms, you didn't have that access before so you were never wronged.'" We should be praising LA Fitness."

Levy says Ballyssuit.com will remain for additional issues

Some members on Ballyssuit.com continue to file complaints against the company, but other members involved in the process say that these are rare "worst case" scenarios. Many involve members whose lifetime memberships were originally purchased at a Bally's location that hadn't been purchased in the deal, but had been regularly using a different Bally's that was shutdown. Levy says he is still working with these cases on an individual basis, and has a direct contact to an LA Fitness representative who is responsive on requests.

"I get the [customer's] info, name, phone number, and can take that right to my [contact] and it goes right to corporate," said Levy. "He comes back and tells me if it's not going to get fixed and why, or he says that it is fixed and they're now in the system."

Levy originally planned to close the Ballyssuit.com site in late December, but says he now plans to leave it up through January in order to continue assisting former Bally's members. He told Patch that any readers who still have questions and complaints should post to the site's [message board](#) if they're not receiving satisfactory help from customer service representatives.

Levy says that he has administered the website out of a desire to help other customers, and despite being offered money from several grateful individuals, has refused.

"I did this out of a pure motive," said Levy. "Because of [news articles] and the Ballyssuit website, it gave the greatest gift of the season to Bally's Members."

From the Web

Sponsored Content by Taboola



The #1 Exercise that Accelerates AGING (Stop Doing It!)
Old School New Body



The Secret To Making Him Fall Deeply In Love
HaveTheRelationshipYou



18 Hilarious Red-Carpet Bloopers Sure To Brighten Your Day
Refinery29

More from Patch

- Winter Adventure Day Trips in the Philly Area
- Molestation Allegations Against Former Maple Glen Priest
- Best Maps of 2013: Where Are the Richest Parts of Town?
- After Christmas Sales and 6 Things to Buy Now

More from the Web

- Homeowners Get a Bailout This Year (Lifestyle Journal)
- The Top Credit Card Deals of 2013 (Next Advisor)
- 24 Famous Couples Time Forgot (But We Never Will) (Refinery29)
- 2014 Economic Outlook from BlackRock Experts (Blackrock)

Promoted Content by Taboola

Comments

[+ Leave a Comment](#)



Cher December 21, 2011 at 04:26 PM

I hope this is a happy ending to a frustrating and confusing saga. Great coverage on this episodic news story, Kyle!

Recommend

[Flag as Inappropriate](#)



Carolyn Wixson December 21, 2011 at 09:57 PM

So what's the deal with the one-time transfer allowed in the original lifetime membership contract? My local LA Fitness tells me they're not honoring it. Has LA Fitness made a statement about this?

Recommend

[Flag as Inappropriate](#)



Michael Moncrieffe January 04, 2012 at 02:28 PM

Recently I visited a Bally Total Fitness center in located on LaVista Road in Tucker, GA only to be inform that there was a buyout and closing of the club. I was directed to the LA Fitness Club in the area as directed by the front desk personal at Bally's (Tucker, GA). After arriving there I was told that LA Fitness didn't agree to honor the Platinum Lifetime national plan members. I have been living primarily in the Atlanta, GA area and have been using the clubs here with no problem until now. After calling and speaking to the customer service supervisor at the call center that wasn't able to do anything for me, I asked for a refund of the lifetime fee since there aren't any Bally clubs in my area in fact there are no clubs remaining in the state of GA. He told me he could transfer my membership information to LA Fitness, however I was told by Aylin Medina that they aren't accepting any transfer members at this time.

Recommend

[Flag as Inappropriate](#)



BJ Trask January 10, 2012 at 01:41 AM

is there any one out there who is a member of Bally and cant be found by LA Fitness i am having a hard time going to the new La fit here in Los Angeles i have been a member sense 1985 i just want to go to the gym how do i start a forming a class action law suit. for those who can not be found by La Fitness and were members of Bally i see they are pushing those who were or are members of ballys to now have to join LA Fitness any one out there who can help please contact me at ev700bj@yahoo.com thanks for any help

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate



Dave OC February 28, 2012 at 12:19 AM

They won't honor my lifetime Bally's membership either and they have bought ALL of the Bally clubs near Tampa. I think a small claims court suit is a better move. A Class action suit will probably net each person about \$10. I doubt they'll even send an attorney to defend a \$3,000 suit in small claims court.. They definitely wouldn't want to see a slew of small claims court suits. Their costs would go thru the roof. <http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1390&context=ulj> "The rate of victory for plaintiffs who file claims and appear in court is eighty-five percent" Then when you need to collect http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/04/homeowner-beats-bank-of-a_n_804171.html

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate



george prussack March 01, 2012 at 02:34 PM

Since LA took over the maintenance at my club has been zero and the steam room has not worked in three months. it is much worst then with Bally. George Prussack

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate



Martin Saposnekoo June 19, 2012 at 12:58 PM

I am a lifetime member from 1983 with Holliday Racquet and Fitness club with international member with Japan and allowed to sale membership 2x's. Bally's bought Holliday out and now LAFitness bought Balls' out--will LAFitness honor my Membership ????

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate



Su4 July 23, 2012 at 10:24 PM

LAFit did not honor my lifetime membership... I thought this article meant it was a national decision. Well, here in little old Maryland, we, the citizens, are screwed again.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate



CHARLES W. WALTER October 08, 2012 at 12:51 PM

MYWIFE AND I WERE BALLY MEMBERS FOR A TOTAL OF 57 YEARS. WE WERE TOLD OUR MEMBERSHIPS WOULD NOT BE HONORED.THE GYM I USED IN WESTBURY,N.Y. WAS CLOSED.WE WERE LED TO BELIEVE BALLY'S WAS OUT OF BUSINESS AND GYMS WERE SOLD TO L.A. FITNESS.WE DID NOT RECIEVE A BILL IN FEBRARY FOR MY WIFE,OLYMPIC MEMBER SINCE 1989 NEVER MISSED A PAYMENT. THE SAME FOR ME VIP MEMBER SINCE 1978.THEREFORE WE BELIEVED WHAT WE WERE TOLD AND HEARD. NEVER RECIEVED A LATE NOTICE OR ANY TYPE OF COMMUNICATION FROM BALLY'S.WE ARE NOW WAY PASSED GRACE PERIOD.CAN ANYTHING BE DONE FOR US? CONYACT US PLEASE ATCW SAILOR@GMAIL.COM THANK YOU.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate



chris January 06, 2013 at 05:02 PM

has any one had their life time membership at bally's in buffalo NY honored by LA Fitness. would love to know if i should pursuit it.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate



Su4 January 07, 2013 at 01:28 AM

I called LA Fitness in my area of Maryland and they just approved my lapsed membership at Bally's. Keep on calling them to find out if they will approve yours since LA Fitness is taking it one state at a time...

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Leave a comment

Post comment