

Soviet-style training

Kettlebell exercise class makes its way to Margate beach

By VINCENT JACKSON
 Staff Writer, (609) 272-7202

MARGATE — Anthony D'Agostino is bringing a little bit of Russian fitness and strength training to southern New Jersey.

D'Agostino, dressed in a black sleeveless T-shirt and olive cargo pants, acted like a nice drill sergeant to the 13 people standing in front of him on a deck at the end of Huntington Avenue near the beach here on a recent afternoon. Twenty-two mostly black kettlebells, a Russian cast-iron weight, sat behind him.

For an hour, D'Agostino trained the people, who signed up for what was believed to be the first kettlebell class in southern New Jersey.

"This is easy to learn, not easy to do," said D'Agostino, 32, the owner of Revolution Fitness Studios in Ventnor, who lucked out with perfect weather for his first outdoor class — temperatures in the 70s and sunny skies with an ocean breeze.

The kettlebell originated in Russia as the muscle-building tool of choice for Red Army athletes and soldiers. Pavel Tsatsouline, a former special-forces trainer back in the U.S.S.R., brought kettlebell training to this country. It is currently being used by some U.S. special forces, federal law-enforcement agencies and SWAT teams.

D'Agostino found out about kettlebells because he is always researching different types of fitness regimes.

See Soviet, Page D6

"It sounded very intelligent. It made a lot of sense to me," said D'Agostino, who has a martial-arts background and has done weightlifting. "I was really impressed with my flexibility and strength (afterward). It's fun and interesting, not as monotonous and boring as other form of exercises that I have tried."

D'Agostino has been using kettlebells for the past four years and trained with

Tsatsouline earlier this spring in Minnesota.

"After working with friends and several clients, I really started believing in the kettlebell system," said D'Agostino about why he decided to start the class. "I needed to go all the way with it."

Fighting gravity

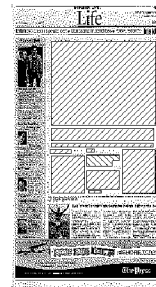
The kettlebell weight is constantly fighting gravity, so lifters must work their muscles to simply control the kettlebell as opposed to a barbell or dumbbell that can be balanced during an exercise. When swinging the kettlebell, you need coordination, speed and strength. The training is said to offer all the benefits of strength training, as well as the benefits of aerobics, Pilates and yoga.

D'Agostino started the class by saying he wanted his students to use good judgment, focus on keeping their eyes forward and bending their knees.

After doing drills to loosen muscles, D'Agostino taught how to "dead lift" the kettlebell and another exercise that involved swinging the kettlebell between their legs, past their backsides before lifting it up in front of them. The women and men mostly worked with 18- and 35-pound kettlebells, respectively.

"This is a foundation exercise. It never gets easy. ... You are doing what the secret service is doing right now," D'Agostino said.

Before the group broke up, D'Agostino talked them through a final, two-part move called "the clean." They picked up the kettlebell, and moved it



to shoulder-height in one move, followed by a lift over their head with their arms straight in the air in the second move.

D'Agostino's first class attracted both first-timers and people who had worked out with kettlebells previously.

"I feel spent. My leg muscles are like jelly. It is very cardio. Your heart rate does get up there," said Pam Sinderbrand, 51, who did kettlebells for the first time and added that she also felt really good and euphoric. "I wanted to do some strength training and build muscles."

Deana Bonafiglia, 27, who lives here, used kettlebells once but never did a full workout.

"I loved it. It was a good class for me. I could have done another hour," said Bonafiglia, who likes to cross-train with yoga, rollerblading and gym workouts. "It's a great pain, a joyful pain. You can tell you are getting stronger. It's a good hurt."

Kris Waldron, 27, a Ventnor resident, also showed up. D'Agostino introduced kettlebells to Waldron, his friend, about a year ago.

"I instantly fell in love with it. It's an instant strength gain. You have to concentrate 100 percent," said Waldron, a personal trainer. "The group energy is powerful. Anthony's instruction is powerful."

After the class, D'Agostino said his first group session went great.

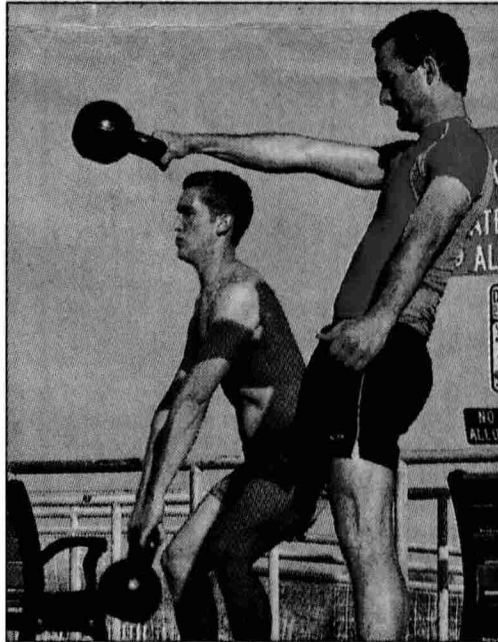
"I was very happy with it," said D'Agostino, a corrective-exercise specialist. "Outdoors, there is a great energy near the ocean. ... It's very motivating to work out outside."

To e-mail Vincent Jackson at The Press:

VJackson@pressofac.com

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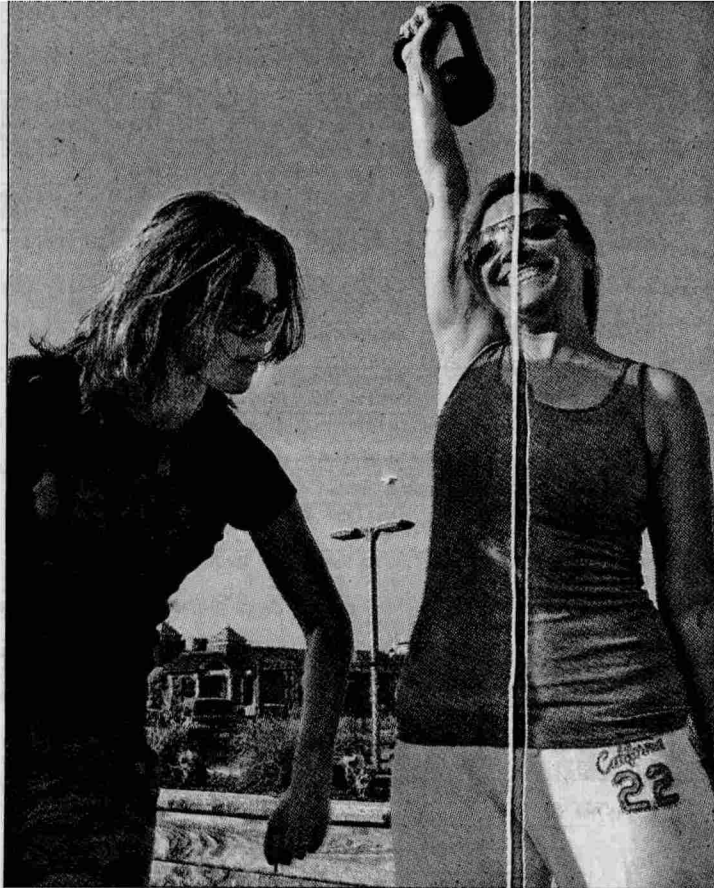
'Kettlebell Klass' 5:30 p.m. Thursdays at Huntington Avenue and the beach, Margate. Classes are \$20 per one-hour session. Bring soft shoes, a towel and water. Call (609) 271-3037 or visit the Web site www.revolution-fit.com





Staff photos by Michael Ein

Above, Rich and Cana Bobb of Ventnor left kettlebells during a strength-training class in Ventnor. Below, Brandon and Kris Waldron, also of Ventnor, display proper technique. Kettlebells were used by elite military personnel in the former U.S.S.R.



Staff photo by Michael Ein

Instructor Yulia Portman creates muscle tension in Pam Sinderbrand of Margate during a kettlebell training session.

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