

BODY°MIND°SPIRIT

DESIGNER FITNESS OFFERS MODERN WORKOUT OPTIONS BY BETTINA MARKS

Fitness is definitely *au courant*. Today's newest programs in the hottest athletic clubs are not unlike the latest collections from the designers premiering on the runways of Bryant Park or Milan.

New fitness routines are chic and stylish, with names reflecting trends within the fitness industry—Kardio Knockout, Pilates Reformer Technique, Power Dance, Power Yoga, Yogilates, Get on the Ball, Metamorphosis, XpressLine and Spin, to name a few—but there is some substance to go along with all that style. It's knowing where to go and what to do that's half the battle.

For starters, step and cardio are out, and strength training is in. It builds muscle, which helps keep burning fat after you stop working out. Tae-Bo style kickboxing classes are still filled, but may not be for long, since Pilates and yoga, the most popular trends of the moment, threaten to supersede the ever-popular cardio workout. Inevitably, most of the local health clubs include an assortment of fitness classes that include cardio and strength training, fitness equipment and the "can't live without" concept of a personal trainer.

Equinox Fitness Clubs, famous in Manhattan for "getting high-profile clients de-stressed, centered and into amazing shape" is about to open its first Long Island gym, in Woodbury in early spring. The facility will include a spinning room, Pilates and yoga studios, cardio and strength equipment, a general fitness studio, personal training, a full-service spa, group fitness classes, massage and laundry facilities. The four fitness studios will be used for greater emphasis on independent programming designed to satisfy members' lifestyle needs.

The club's class schedules include a variety of strength training, cardio, stretching, yoga and pilates, kickboxing and classes focused on isolated muscle groups, like "abs only." Equinox clubs, according to CEO Harvey Spevak, boast cutting-edge equipment and programs, pleasant ambiance, an inspirational workout environment and unparalleled focus on the

members' experience. The training programs feature the "Three Cycle Program," an integrated mind/muscle technique combining strength, flexibility, balance and coordination. The club's on-site spa will also offer face and body treatments to detoxify and fight stress and aging, including Reiki and reflexology, provided by aestheticians and healers.

Another local favorite, New York Sports Clubs, have been in the Long Island area since 1989 and have grown over the years to a total of nine locations. At the newest club, in Woodmere, the XpressLine program was introduced, a "trainer-supervised, eight-station equipment circuit" workout, which will utilize all the major muscle groups, claiming to give you a full-body workout in only 22 minutes.

Based on the philosophies of Wayne L. Westcott, Ph.D., a renowned researcher in fitness with a focus on strength training, the XpressLine is a return to basics, using Nautilus equipment and requiring only one set of repetitions per machine. In recent years, due to the renewed popularity of strength training, it was believed many repetitions were necessary to achieve desired results. Westcott's studies show how the XpressLine workout's physical benefits are more effective than multiple set training. People are also more apt to adhere to this exercise routine because of its variety. It can be used to supplement your cardio routine twice a week for optimum results.

"We have come a long way since we used to exercise with Keds on a cement floor," says Lisa Hufcut of NYSC. "The consumer is now more educated, but still wants to maintain an element of fun and recreation in their exercise programs. NYSC has continued to address those needs in both its group fitness-class programming and personal-training programs."

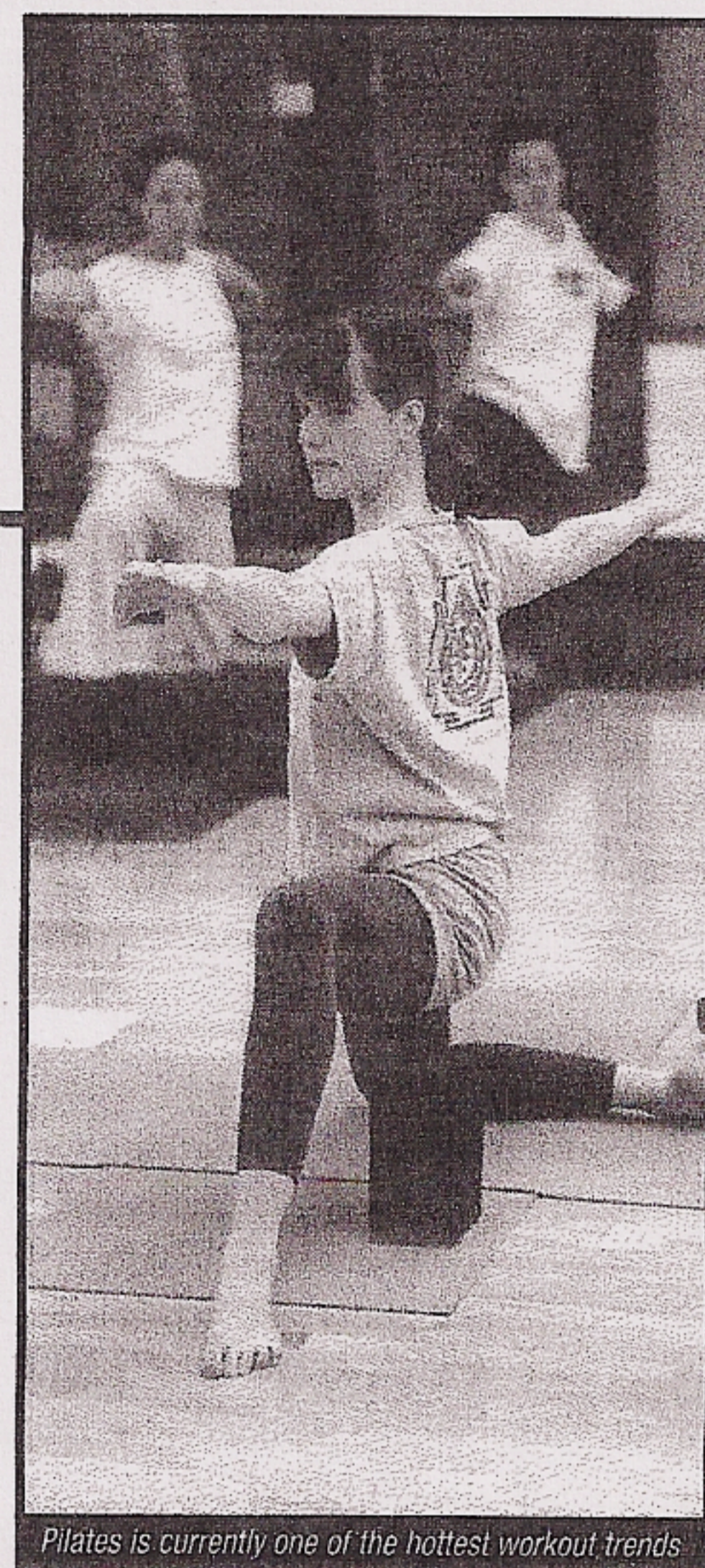
As for Pilates and yoga, popularized in the mainstream in recent years by Madonna, demand has been high, but variations are already being born. At NYSC, yoga courses have tempered the religious aspect and don't allow the use of

candles or incense, popular in many yoga centers that adhere to the "body, breath and spirit" tradition inherent in the practice.

Hufcut explains it's important to have standards, as with any class, since there have been injuries resulting from the lack of regulation. At NYSC they've attempted to integrate the mind and body with balance, variety, change and strength training. The Pilates Reformer Technique classes, with two levels of training, offer a glimpse, according to the website, into "the fitness secrets of Hollywood's hottest stars" and have become very popular with members. These techniques aim to increase muscle tone, improve flexibility, strengthen the back and improve posture, decrease stress and increase energy levels. The basis for the technique is to strengthen and lengthen muscles.

The philosophy at the Personal Training Institute, founded in 1987 by Carol Kur, a registered dietician and Evelyn Knapp, an exercise physiologist, is one-on-one personal training, along with an eight-week comprehensive weight loss nutritional program designed to lose "only fat, not muscle and water." The privately owned company began in a one-room studio in Great Neck and has grown into 12 fitness facilities in Long Island.

PTI's mission is to "educate, motivate and direct people in achieving and maintaining optimal health through a lifetime of balanced fitness and nutrition." The trainers work as a team with positive focused energy to transform visual goals into reality. Based on the studies of Dr. Ellington Darden, a research physiologist in Gainesville, FL, and Westcott, PTI's technique is "one set to momentary muscle fatigue" which seems to be today's current trend in fitness. "If you can last longer than two minutes, it's too easy," Knapp says. Strength training with 12 to 15 repetitions raises the resting metabolic rate, decreases your body fat (burning more calories), and creates variable resistance with a full range of motion resistance. "You are weakest when the weight becomes lighter and



Pilates is currently one of the hottest workout trends.

the strongest when the weight becomes heavier," Knapp adds.

With the very latest equipment, the time-efficient exercise program involves just three half-hour workouts per week. Many clients have been satisfied with the results when combining this technique with an eight-week nutritional program, color-coded for ease and "fun," that limits fats to almonds, olive oil, canola oil and avocado, recommends eating six small meals per day and drinking 16 ounces of water daily. The programs are personally customized to meet each individual's needs with a focus on helping individuals achieve and *maintain* fitness goals.

As the fitness industry continues to grow, and as we Long Islanders continue to work to become more fit, maintain our weight and live longer, the answer is still up to the individual, who must pick a plan and stick to it. Overall, fitness is returning to basics, but there's still plenty of room to create a custom routine. "If you were to put ten exercise physiologists in a room together, each would have a little different philosophy," Knapp says.

One thing most fitness experts agree upon is you must vary your workout. You'll inevitably plateau after reaching a certain level of fitness and will need to make changes to your routine. With so many options, that's not too hard to do. ●