

Martial grace

A Cossack general shows how individual skills are used in Russian martial arts
Page B-1



Vintage Moon

41-year-old Warren Moon leads the AFC to a 29-27 Pro Bowl comeback
Page C-1



See **INSIDE** and **PLAY**...
LICENSE TO WIN 2
WIN UP TO \$500 DAILY
Enter to WIN A NEW CAR

Intelligencer



Journal

©1998 Lancaster Newspapers, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

204th year - No. 198



LANCASTER, PA., MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1998

Home Delivered

INTELLIGENCER JOURNAL

LOCAL

OBITU

LA



Intelligencer Journal photos by Barry Zocher

At left, Alexander Ivanovich Retuinskih, a general in the Cossack military, crouches behind Scott Sonnon to demonstrate the wrong way and, in the

picture on the right, the right way to take down an adversary at Lancaster Gymnastics in Lititz Sunday.

'It belongs to nature'

Russian general emphasizes spiritual side of his country's martial arts form

Michael Long
Intelligencer Journal Staff

Alexander Ivanovich Retuinskih moved like water over rocks.

Watching the stocky Russian general glide across the floor of Lanco Gymnastics in Lititz Sunday, one might have thought he was teaching dance instead of combat skills.

"Stay loose. Stay fluid. This is plasticity," he told his class of 30 with the help of an interpreter. "It has to be quick and very loose."

Although Retuinskih, a 44-year-old

general of the Cossack military, didn't speak a word of English, he captivated the audience at a six-hour seminar hosted by the American Academy of Russian Martial Arts and Combat Skills.

"Russian martial arts is an exercise in efficiency," said Scott Sonnon, executive director of the academy. "Not only do you want to use the least amount of force on your own part, you want to take advantage of the forces that are offered to you."

Sonnon played the dummy while friend and mentor Retuinskih demonstrated the combat skills of his home-

land.

A primary aspect of Russian martial arts is learning how to reroute the forces of an aggressor to one's own advantage.

According to Sonnon, Russian martial arts works to enhance biomechanics — how different parts of the body move in context with each other.

"Our movements obey our natural design. That's what biomechanics is," he said. "There's nothing to learn in Russian martial arts. It's about revealing talent, and every person has talent."

"It's neither passive nor aggressive

— it's reactive," said Ben Brackbill, whom, with Sonnon, leads academy classes at Lanco Gymnastics three nights a week.

Retuinskih moved silently among participants, molding their movements with his hands.

"I think that helped," said Lauren Bartges, a senior at Manheim Township High School. "If he had said something, it would have gotten lost. He would just show me, and I would imitate the movement. That was much more fun."

More RUSSIAN on B-2

Russian: Teaches martial arts

Continued from B-1

Those in attendance came from a wide variety of backgrounds — physicians, acrobats, historians, wrestlers, anthropologists, and even law enforcement officers.

"Russians are really group-oriented. They are a lot less individualistic than your typical American," said Carl Smith, a Manheim Township police officer. "I think that kind of atmosphere is helpful. They rely on each other. They bond closer to each other. That's the main reason why I take these classes. Of course, we bond as a group."

Retuinskih repeatedly emphasized the social aspects of Russian martial arts, calling the seminar an exercise in "health, good relations and friendship."

"It belongs to nature," Retuinskih said of his art. "It does not have borders."

In honor of Retuinskih's trip to the United States, the academy presented him with a shashka, the trademark sword of the Cossack military. He also received a tomahawk, the trademark weapon of Native Americans.

The general was moved by the gifts and warm acceptance of his students. He thanked the group for the opportunity to teach in America and invited them to visit Russia.

The next stop on Retuinskih's agenda will be to Borders Book Shop for a book signing and demonstration tonight from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. He is the author of "Russian Style Hand-to-Hand Combat," a field manual for the Russian special forces.