New York State of Mind

By Sandy Todd Webster

The 2004 IDEA Personal Trainer Summit

If you've ever viewed the city grid from the observation deck of the Empire State Building, you can understand how the perspective from up yonder parallels well with the landscape of the personal training industry. It's vast; it's constantly moving; there's a central core; and it appears to be easy to get lost if you don't know your way around. >>
Gathering Knowledge and Inspiration

Lisa Pretorius, director of Body Excel Personal Fitness Trainers, a business she runs with a partner in Cape Town, South Africa, logged thousands of miles to attend the event and ensure that she was keeping her education base current. As director of a large PFIT staff, she feels it's of utmost importance to return home inspired and ready to share fresh enthusiasm and innovation with her employees. "The fitness industry in South Africa often seems to be really cut off from the rest of the world," Pretorius explained. "There are very few worthwhile educational workshops, lectures or conferences that pertain to personal training. I feel it's important to keep up with new ideas, literature, equipment and other general happenings in the fitness world."

Programming Highlights

Education that made a difference for attendees included an array of preconference offerings, lectures/demonstrations and fully practical workshops. The following categories were highly popular and engendered lively participation and ongoing discussion among attendees. However, this is just a small sampling of the rich, stimulating education that was offered.

Mind-Body Training. Pilates, yoga and creative fusion concepts continue to simmer themselves gently but firmly onto the "must-have" list of the PFIT skill set. With their applications for core work, balance, flexibility, stress reduction, post-rehab, injury prevention and strength building—and as "softer" nontraditional exercise for sedentary persons—it's understandable that these modalities are on the rise.

Linda A. Coteola, M.Ed., a veteran trainer and longtime IDEA member from Granvilleville, Maryland, believes yoga and Pilates are emerging as the new mainstream. "I see the industry heading into more mind-body integration and more mind-body 'blends' and innovations, both in group fitness and personal training," she said. "I hope to see more innovative outreach to include the 'health at any size' philosophy and also more programs directed at children and teens. I loved the yoga sessions with Robert Sherman ('In Search of Yoga: How It Will Change the Way You Look at Movement') and 'The Gift of Yoga for Personal Trainers: Effortless Hip, Shoulder and Trunk Stability'). I also got great ideas for using a stability ball with Pilates and adapting it to seniors and to those new to Pilates and ball.
Big Apple Promotion Winners

Attendees who registered for the 2004 IDEA Personal Trainer Summit® by August 20, 2004, were automatically entered into the “Big Apple Promotion.” Five trainers were each awarded an IDEA gear bag filled with an Apple iPod Mini, Reebok shoes and more. Congratulations to the lucky winners:

- Kara Wesołowsky, Fallston, Maryland
- Lynne Welling, Yorktown Heights, New York
- Debra Devincenzi, Santa Rosa, California
- Joan DiMaggio, Pittsford, New York
- Daniah Cornwell, Queensbury, New York

I used it right away at my gym, and it was a big hit!”

Leigh Crews, a personal trainer and Summit presenter, agreed with Cioto's assessment of mind-body as a serious growth area for PFTs, adding that breathing techniques for stress management are central to these specialties. "Things are moving in this direction for several reasons," she said. "First, people want to see their efforts with their trainer transfer outside of the gym and into the activities they like to do for sport or recreation. Second, many people are not comfortable in yoga class due to previous injuries or muscle imbalances, which make them unsure of the correct modifications of poses or exercises. They seek a trainer to teach them how to adapt yoga or Pilates to their individual needs for maximum benefit. Third, we live in a stressful world, and people are beginning to understand the long-term value of being able to deal with stress in a way that will have a positive impact on their health. Meditation and breath work are useful but difficult to learn by yourself. A trainer can make a big difference in your success."

John Garey, MA, led two STOTT Pilates® preconference sessions that focused on reformer techniques and Matwork® for golf and racquet sports, and also taught STOTT Pilates courses on core balance and foam roller work.

Core Stability & Balance Training.

Among many standout presentations on these topics was an especially timely one for trainers to use with Baby Boomers and seniors' program design. Michael E. Rogers, PhD, from the Center for Physical Activity and Aging in the department of kinesiology & sport studies at Wichita State University, taught "Balance and Strength Strategies for Older Adults." Many studies have shown that strength can be improved in older adults by using different types of resistance training, he explained. "But resistance training alone has had only a modest effect on improving balance, even though strength and balance are related. This is likely because the ability to maintain balance involves a complex set of processes that require the successful integration of multiple components, including several sensory systems not typically affected by resistance training."

Referring to the principle of exercise specificity and multidimensional aspects of balance, Rogers taught that training programs should target the systems involved in balance control, particularly the muscular, visual, vestibular and somatosensory systems. He pointed out that one challenge in developing such programs is identifying safe and effective exercises that target these multiple systems. He provided many examples of exercises he has developed using these concepts.

Sports Conditioning. Along with "Functional Fitness for Golf & Racquet Sports" (the STOTT Pilates precon), highlight sessions included those by Peter Twist, MSc, coach, educator, author and president of Twist Conditioning Inc. in Vancouver, British Columbia. Twist taught a preconference session, "Sport Strength—The Linked System," as well as courses on "BRakes Training" (balance, reaction skills, agility, quickness and explosive speed); "Dynamic Warm-Up: Neuromuscular Activation" and "ROSU Halle Sports Conditioning" (with Douglas Brooks, MS).

Sports conditioning/training is another notable growth area in personal training and fitness, and it's become apparent that this realm is not just for elite athletes anymore. More intense techniques and drills from the coaching world seem to be gaining footing as standard program design that regular lines and those seek from their fitness training.

Twist attributes this change to a shift in clients' goals from merely wanting to look good to a desire to move well, participate...
mentoring programs; building a successful in-home PFIT business; compensating trainers; and forging successful relationships with the medical community.

**Training Techniques, Function & Product Knowledge.** In-home personal trainer and fitness author Janet Weller, RN, counted among her favorites two sessions taught by Annette Lang, MS: “Tools and Toys: New Ways to Use Them” and “Use Rotation to Turn Your Training Around.” Both classes had tips that I literally used with my clients Monday morning after the conference,” she said.

Weller noted that functional exercise continues to mature and unfold. “I am happy to say that presenters and attendees are truly taking these concepts away from their programs and applying them individually to their clients to make a real difference in how they live their lives.”

Ironically, perhaps pure function is the most important factor in personal training and experimentation is such essential elements of being a successful trainer. “Product knowledge is important if products allow for additional drills, help define drills, increase your toolbox of exercises, and inspire and interest clients,” says Twist, who served for 11 years as conditioning coach and exercise physiologist for the National Hockey League’s Vancouver Canucks. “Just as a health club makes purchasing decisions to stock a weight room floor, personal trainers need to make educated decisions on what inventory of products they would like at their disposal to help generate effective results for their clients. When I was a young coach early in my career, with few clients and no facility, I loved checking out trade shows, seeing what new products were available and learning what time-tested traditional equipment was still popular. I got product knowledge from vendors and made decisions on what made sense for me based on my current training philosophies.”

Twist also pointed out that the prevalence of new products may be obvious indicators of new or emerging trends. “Whether I adopt that trend or not is up to me,” he says. “However, I would want to consider it and get educated not only on the products but also on the training parameters they contend to support. Certainly, my knowledge and coaching skills are part of my expertise and define my training process; however, the products are tools that allow me to fulfill my craft. Trainers should be more on top of product knowledge. They need to mature and start to look at the whole picture, because it allows them to take control of the whole picture for their clients.”

**IDEA Health & Fitness Expo**

If sessions didn’t convince PFIs that knowledge of fitness products and services can make a big difference in giving clients variety and challenge, the displays in the convention hall helped drive that message home. Forty-eight exhibitors brought truckloads of machines, gadgets, programs and services to show delegates new concepts for running their businesses and for training clients. The expo proved to be an all-purpose fitness store for large and small equipment pieces, music, and business management ideas.

A special thanks to IDEA’s senior partners, STOTT Pilates and Nautilus Health & Fitness Group* for their support in putting on this event."

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*Sandy Todd-Welder is the editor in chief of IDEA Fitness Journal*