

He's still kicking - after all these years

By SARAH HITE
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Sensei James Ambrose is still kicking at 68 years old - literally.

The Franklin Township resident holds an eighth degree black belt and is the founder of the Wyoming Valley Karate Club, currently located at Danko's All American Fitness Center in Plains Township where he teaches classes to adults and children.

Ambrose is more than qualified - he's been practicing Shotokan karate for over 50 years.

"I like the discipline and hard training," he said. "UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) isn't new to me."

Ambrose got involved in the sport when he served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1962 to 1968. According to the nonprofit group, Shotokan Karate of America, the style Ambrose practices combines mental and physical development. Ambrose says this style was the only kind allowed to be taught on U.S. Marine Corps bases after World War II.

"It's saved by butt," he said.

And challengers should be weary to pick a fight with Ambrose. He was an Olympic hopeful, chosen by the Japan Karate Association to be a member of the U.S. karate team for the 1964 summer games in Tokyo, Japan. The team's coaches chose a few Japanese students to compete for the gold, but that didn't stop Ambrose from pursuing more honors in the sport.

Training for his first degree black belt was "brutal."

"We use to have to put guys on our shoulders and kick up and down the floor about a thousand times," he said.

During the actual test for the belt, Ambrose had to fight 25 other participants and win 98 percent of his matches, in addition to knowing all the basics, including 27 different katas, or forms.

After he earned his third degree black belt, Ambrose formed the Wyoming Valley Karate Club. He also taught the discipline at various universities in the area, including King's College. He has operated and taught in 10 karate

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Sensei Jim Ambrose
Eighth degree black belt

clubs within two states and says teaching is just part of the practice.

"You help instructors out and you help spread (the sport)," he said.

Ambrose's students aren't stopping anytime soon, either. He has trained several students who have gone on to work for the U.S. government, including secret service employees and FBI agents. One of his current students hopes to become a Navy SEAL.

"I like the discipline and the cool-headedness," said Gary Gall, 23, of Pittston Township, who plans to enlist as a SEAL in October. "You're learning how to kill someone, but you also learn how to keep cool in stressful moments."

The slender, but muscular Gall thought he was already physically fit before he took Ambrose's class.

"It taught me so much," he said. "It's a different kind of being in shape."

Ambrose's former students are even giving karate another try. Forty-seven-year-old Scott Spare, of Sweet Valley, took 30 years off from the sport before returning two years ago.

"I trained with him until I was 13," he said of Ambrose. "At my age now, it's become a part of me."

Spare tore his ACL tendon during his test for a brown belt, which is one rank below black, in April but continues to attend classes during the week and does as much as he can with a brace on his right leg.

Ambrose isn't too tough on his students, although he will push them to their limits. All ages and fitness levels are encouraged to practice the sport.

"Students work until they feel



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK PHOTOS/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Jim Ambrose is still teaching karate at 68 years of age.

conditioned," he said. "They're brought in slowly."

Ambrose's proudest accomplishment is winning gold at the First International Hard Contact Karate and Point Tournament in Kyoto, Japan in 1991. He coached and participated in the 40-team competition, helping the U.S. team win the top spot, despite suffering three slipped discs prior to the event.

The discipline Ambrose has learned from karate has helped him push through many obstacles and, even after four bypass surgeries, a shoulder operation, a bad back and injured knees, he just won't quit.

"(I'll) teach 'til I drop," he said.



Jim Ambrose warms up with his karate class at Danko's All American Fitness Center in Plains township.

POCONO TEAM WINS KEYSTONE GAMES FIELD HOCKEY GOLD



The 29th Annual Keystone State Summer Games were held July 20-25 in York County. Shown here are the 2010 Youth Gold Medal Champions who represented Pocono at the games. The Pocono team, undefeated in its division, beat a formidable Blue Mountain team to win the gold. From left, first row, are Hannah Ackers, Rebecca Weinstock, Greta Ell, Brigid Wood, Grace Angelella, Hunter Pitman and Isabella DelPriore. Second row, Holly Slowik, Brea Seabrook, Casey Cole, Marina Barnak, Ashlee Olenginski, M'Kensie Lee, Selena Garzio, Samantha Geroski, Elizabeth Dessoye and Coach Juliann DeFalco.

BMT NATIONAL WINS TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONSHIP



Back Mountain National came back from a 7-1 deficit to defeat West Pittston, 11-10, on Aug. 6 in the finals of the Tommy's Pizza Corner 9-10 Year Old Tournament. It was the second win in as many days for Back Mountain over West Pittston to claim the title. Alex Kapral drove in Ben O'Connell with the winning run to secure the championship, but all members of the team played important roles in the win. Members of the team are, from left, first row, Christo Huntington, Adam Borton, Justin Marshall, Henry Selingo. Second row, Ben O'Connell, Drew Patton, Nick Kocher, Alex Kapral, Jay Bittner. Third row, Coaches Mike Borton, Ted Kocher, Scott Marshall. Absent at the time of the photo were Chris Murray, Ian Evans, Michael James and Adam Sutton.

Wildcats NEPA softball teams schedule tryouts for today

Wildcats NEPA/Abington Wildcats 16 & Under and 18 & Under Fastpitch Travel Softball Teams will hold tryouts for their fall 2010/Summer 2011 team today, Aug. 15.

Candidates for the 16 & Under team will meet from noon to 2 p.m. at Abington Heights High School. Candidates for the 18 & Under team will meet from 2 to 4 p.m. at Tunkhannock High

School. For more information, contact Vic Thomas at 351-5187 or Mike Thomas at 241-7030 or by e-mail at AbingtonWildcats@yahoo.com