

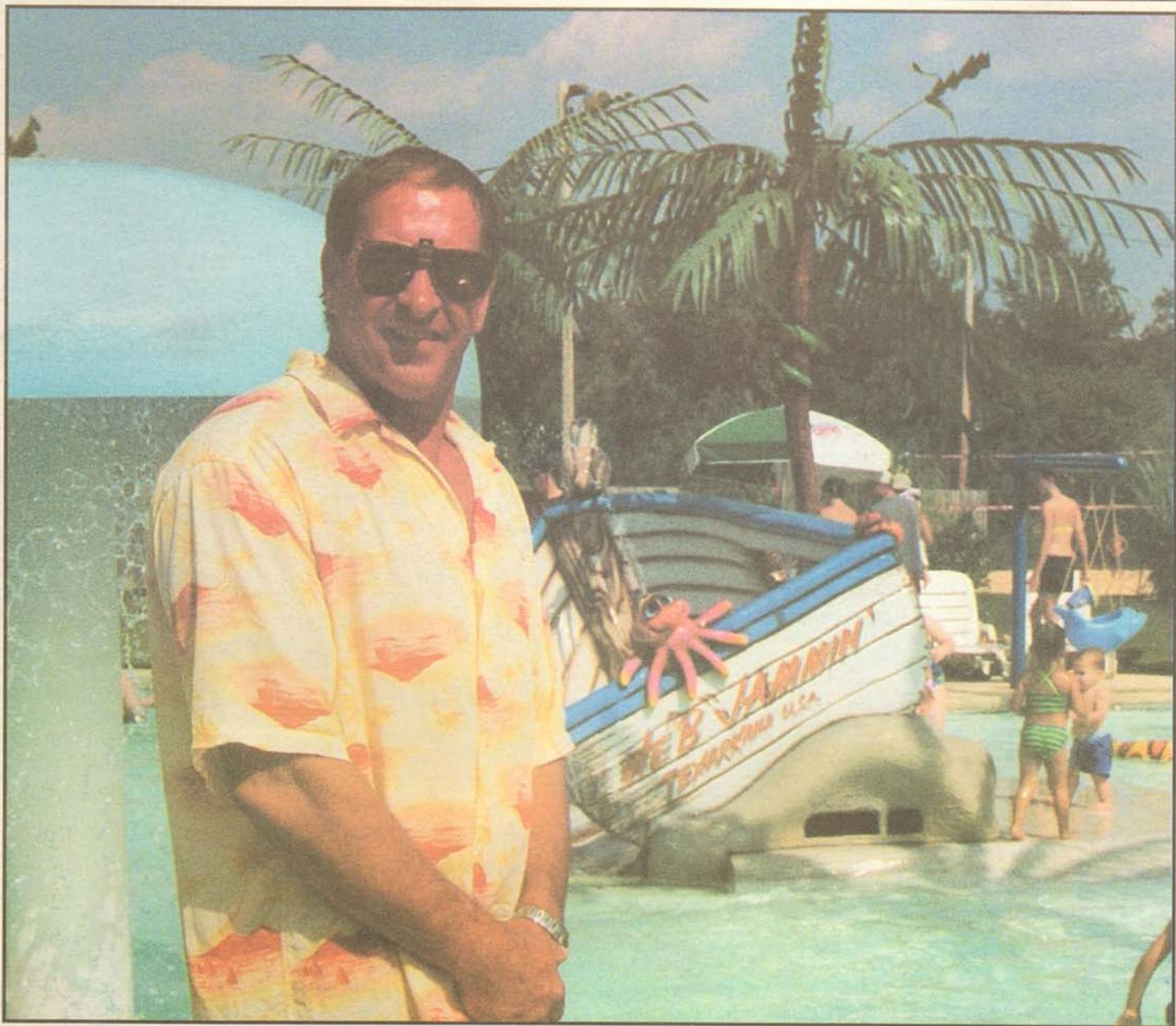
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The Pulse of the Health, Racquet & Sports Club Business Worldwide

JULY 2001
VOLUME 8 NUMBER 7



MIKE MINTON

"Thinking Outside The Box"

How Minton's SportsPlex Dominates Its Market



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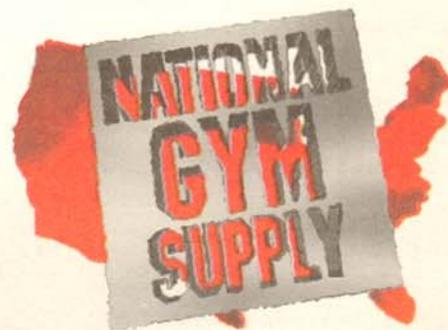
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NEWS

The Pulse of the Health, Racquet & Sports Club Business Worldwide

Mike Minton - "Thinking Outside The Box"

How Minton's SportsPlex Dominates Its Marketplace

By Norm Cates, Jr.

If you want to see a terrific club and meet a real character, travel to Texarkana, Texas and meet Mike Minton, 47, owner of Minton's Sportsplex. The next best thing to that will be to read on.

I was introduced to Mike Minton this past Spring when he called to discuss the effort that THRSA (Texas Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association) was putting forth to have the sales tax on health club memberships law in Texas repealed. Before our phone conversation had ended, I had made a commitment to Mike Minton, a very interesting fellow, that I would visit him this Summer.

I am glad I made the trip.

I am glad because I had a chance to spend some time with Minton and see what he has accomplished in this small city of Texarkana, Texas. Mike Minton, with no previous health club ex-

perience whatsoever, has taken a defunct, 3,500 square-foot shopping center gym and grown it into a 3.4 acre indoor/outdoor complex serving over 3,000 members in the city of Texarkana, Texas.

Texarkana. Hmmm. You're probably thinking, "I've heard of Texarkana, Texas." You would be right if you recall that Texarkana is the original hometown of H. Ross Perot, the little man with the charts that helped Bill Clinton win the Presidential election of 1992. The state line between Texas and Arkansas runs right down the middle of this city of 61,000, thus the name Texarkana.

But, what makes Mike Minton's SportPlex story unique and truly noteworthy for club professionals, is that over the 14 years he has been in business in Texarkana, he has seen ALL other commercial club competition disappear from the marketplace. 13 commercial health clubs have closed in Texarkana during Minton's run and now his

SportsPlex thrives. Texarkana is a good example of what can happen in a market where extensive tax-free, non-profit competition has moved in. In this case, Minton's SportsPlex is the only surviving, tax-paying competition for the two hospital tax-free health clubs and the local college health club facility.

Here is the Minton SportsPlex story.

Transplanted Pennsylvanian Goes From Real Estate To The Health Club Business

Mike Minton is originally from Erie, Pennsylvania and earned a full football scholarship to the University of Pittsburgh, where he graduated with a major in business. Minton, was a wide receiver and teammate of Tony Dorsett on the Pittsburgh National Championship Football Team. That Johnny Majors coached team was named the

National Champion after defeating the University of Georgia in the Sugar Bowl in the 'Big-Easy', New Orleans, Louisiana.

We asked Minton how he ended up in Texas, all the way from Pennsylvania, and he responded, "After graduation from Pittsburgh I went back home to Erie, PA. and worked for Mayor Lou Tullic in the Planning and Economic Development Office. At the time, Dick Thornburg was the Governor of Pennsylvania and he hired me into the Department of Community Affairs to bring new industry into the State of Pennsylvania. In the late 70s I was giving a talk in Washington, D.C. to a group of elected officials from across the country on how to stimulate economic development. There were a group of East Texans there. After that meeting they kept calling for two years suggesting that I come to Texas to work for them. To make a long story short, the economy back in the late 70s started to go bad up north and the Texans offered me the position of Executive Director of the Re-

gional Planning Agency in the Ark-La-Tex Council of Government. So, that is what got me here. Just a fluke deal. Did I intend on staying here? No. I said, hey, it's close to Dallas and I'll probably end up in Dallas. But, here I am 15 years later!"

Mike Minton and his wife Marsha, have four children: Zachary 17, Jaidr 15, Molly 8, and Melinda 5. Marsha Minton works with Mike in the club as do Zachary and Jaidr, (lifeguards) and Minton's brother-in-law and sister, Larry and Dennie Green. So, the Minton SportPlex is truly a family-owned and operated business.

Minton's employment with the Regional Planning Agency led to his development of a financial consulting firm. During that period he was also developing shopping centers in East Texas and in 1986 had leased 3,500 square feet of space in one of his centers to a health club operator. Six months after it opened, (See Minton page 21)

Red Lerille Named To Business Hall Of Fame

Red Lerille Has Helped Strengthen Acadiana's Economy As He Has Helped Build Hard Bodies

By Stella C. Theriot

Red Lerille may have

been tagged as a skinny little redheaded boy in his youth, but no one can aptly characterize him as that anymore. At 65, Lerille is a picture of fitness - and so is Red's, his ever-improving and expanding, health and racquet club. Lerille started his business at the emergence of the health-club industry and has

helped define its parameters.

From Lerille's first month in business, his main strategy has been to make one improvement every month.

The former Mr. America and Mr. Universe has been focused and goal-oriented since his childhood. Those attributes, along with his procliv-

ity for improvement, have been a winning combination for Lerille both in his personal life and professional dealings.

Lerille has a passion for flying (See Lerille page 9)



Red Lerille

Inside The Insider

- To Close Or Not To Close - That Is The Question
- Who Are The True Fitness Professionals?
- Do You Know For Sure If Your Sales People Are Asking For The Order?
- Sales - Retention - Referrals
- "Circle Of Membership Success"

Joe Cirulli Finishes Term As 20th IHRSA President

An Interview With 20th IHRSA President - Joe Cirulli

The International

Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) has just finished its 20th year. On July 1, 2001, Joe Cirulli, IHRSA's 20th President handed over the

President's gavel to fellow Floridian, Geoff Dyer. Dyer will serve as the Association's 21st President for the next year while (See Joe Cirulli page 10)

• NORM'S NOTES •

• Congratulations to my good friend, **RICK CARO** and his new wife, **SUE DENISON**, as, by the time you receive this, they will have tied the knot in New York City at a Wedding Ceremony conducted by Mayor Rudy Giuliani and attended by over 300 family and friends at the 'Tavern On The Green.' Rick, the great visionary club industry leader and the inventor of **IHRSA**, has never been married. They will reside in the fashionable Upper East Side of New York City and we wish these two newlyweds the very best of happiness and health as they embark on a new life together as husband and wife.

• **The AMERICANS** cleaned up in Europe, receiving 5 out of 6 of the International Honors at **THE 2001 PREMIO FITNESS ITALIA AWARDS CEREMONY, EUROPE'S TOP FITNESS AWARDS CEREMONY** held in **TORTORETO LIDO, TERAMO, Italy** on June 23rd 2001. First, I want to thank **FAUSTO DIGULIO**, Executive Director of the **Italian Fitness Federation**, for his work in the club industry in general and this event in particular. And, special thanks to the following sponsors: **3B Fitness Systems, Life Fitness, Exere by Air Machine, FIF Italian Fitness Federation - Break Even Point, Raybest, Wampum Underwear, Patrizio Panichi Jeans Couture, Malandrino and Advcom**. One of the Industry's premier social events of Europe, the 3rd Annual Celebration, honored those who have excelled in the health and fitness industry. Host of the night were **CRISTINA PLEVANI**, winner of the Italian Big Brother, Olympic Gold Medalist for gymnastics **YURI CHECHI**, and as guest speaker, **BRIGITTE NIELSEN**, the actress and the well known commentator. Award winners and sponsors for each International category are:

• **"World Fitness Leader of Excellence"** sponsored by Malandrino, recognizes the international leader that is helping the growth of Fitness clubs all around the World. The winner was **JOHN MCCARTHY** of **IHRSA, U.S.A.**

• **"Educational Leader of the Year"** sponsored by Life Fitness. This award goes to the international manager, organization or consulting company that is doing a great job helping our market grow year on year. The winner was **HOWARD RAVIS** of **Club Industry Magazine, U.S.A.**

• **"International Fitness Journalist of the Year"** sponsored by Exere-Air Machines- For international writers and journalists specializing in reporting on fitness matters, who are authors of articles published in newspapers or cultural and information magazines about fitness, well being, and fitness marketing. The winner was yours truly, **NORM CATES**, of **The Club Insider News-U.S.A.**

• **"International Fitness Speaker"** sponsored by Exere- This award goes to an international expert in marketing, services, retention topics who teaches with enthusiasm and love, new and useful ideas for the fitness business. The winner was **SANDY COFFMAN** of **Programming for Profit - U.S.A.**

• **"**International Presenter"** sponsored by FIF- To the best International Aerobics, Funk or Step presenter. The winner was **GIL LOPEZ - Brazil**

• **"**World Fitness Club of the Year"** sponsored by 3B Fitness Systems. This award recognizes architects, consultants, facility owners and managers who have embarked on construction or renovation projects that meet the highest standards required to further the prosperity and future success of fitness clubs. The winners are evaluated according to several criteria, including functional planning, design, site and cost. The winner was **Gainesville Health and Fitness Club - JOE CIRULLI - Florida - U.S.A.**

• **RED LERILLE**, arguably the greatest single health club operator in the world, never

ceases to amaze me. (Check out article on page #3) Red has some very interesting hobbies, which include restoring vintage World War I era biplanes and flying them, collecting and riding Harley Davidson motorcycles and now this. It appears that Red is preparing to go into deep sea diving. I called today to talk to Red and darned if they didn't tell me that he was in California attending a "diving school." I asked a silly question like, what is he doing, going out for the Olympics or something and **MYRNA AYO** said, "No, he is doing the 'real' diving. The kind where you put on the big-heavy suit and are lowered down into the water with a long air hose. Oh well. I never count Red out when it comes to new ideas. I just hope he has good people working his air supply! **STAY TUNED.**

• **LARRY RAY**, owner of the **Big Vanilla Athletic Club** in **Arnold, MD.**, has been named by the **Small Business Administration (SBA)** as its **Small Business Person of the Year 2001** for the State of Maryland. The U.S. Small Business Administration selects state winners from all fifty states plus the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico. The Small Business Person of the Year Award is given to the nominee who best meets the following criteria: Staying power, growth in number of employees, increase in sales, financial reports, innovativeness of product or service, response to adversity and contributions to aid community oriented projects.

• **PROFESSIONALISM.** That is what our industry must be all about if the health, racquet and sportsclub industry is to be viewed by consumers everywhere as legit. The hard truth is, the U.S. health club population penetration is only at about 8% of the population because of the history of our business. Too

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many people have been burned or know someone that has been burned in relationships with health club operators across the land. So, what do they do? They exercise elsewhere. But, here is a story of the truly outstanding professionalism of one of America's best organizations, the **Tennis Corporation of America**. Here in my home town we have a world-class club called the **Sporting Club at Windy Hill**. In the past year, the Staff at the Sporting Club has saved the lives of two men that went down with heart attacks. The first one was last July, 2000, when a good friend of mine, **JIM WAGNER**, suffered a major heart attack while working out. **ALAN** and **STEVE SCHWARTZ's Sporting Club Staff** saved his life with fast, efficient and effective CPR until the fast paramedics from the fire department up the street arrived. General Manager, **MILT NEUMAN**, has a terrifically responsive Staff and they kept Jim alive and now, after about a year, he is doing very well. A couple of weeks ago, a gent named **MICHAEL COX, 52**, was playing basketball when he suffered a major heart attack. Acting rapidly, several Sporting Club

staff members, led by Fitness Director, **BABIDIYE ROBINSON**, went to his aid. Babidiye went for the club's AED defibrillator while **DR. KEVIN FLYTHE**, a chiropractor and personal trainer, performed CPR with the help of **DEANNA WALSH**, Fitness Specialist. They were working away on him and Ms. Robinson was almost ready to apply the shock treatment to him when the paramedics arrived and took over. Before they arrived, **J.C. MENELAUS**, a personal trainer ran to get a CPR mouth barrier for Flythe and **DUC BUI**, a housekeeper and graduate of the club's CPR class, helped both Flythe and Walsh with CPR and compressions. Seeing the reliable **Heartstream Defibrillator** at the ready, the paramedics assessed the situation and used the club's defibrillator to save time. Shocking Cox, they began to get a pulse. He was rushed to the hospital where a five-vessel open-heart bypass was done and an automatic defibrillator was inserted into Cox's body. According to Cox's wife Mary, he is back to normal already. In this second incident, five different Sporting Club staff members teamed up to save this man's life. **PROFESSIONALISM.** Thank
(See Norm's Notes page 8)

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To Close or Not to Close That is the Question

By Karen D. Woodard

The focus of this article is to discuss when it is appropriate to pursue the close and when it is not. Wait a minute, did you read that correctly? Isn't it sales sacrilege to NOT pursue the close of the sale? The reality of selling is that not every person is going to join the club on the first visit and that is OK. What is not OK is to not know precisely why they are not joining today. Therefore, a premise of this article is that it may not always be appropriate to pursue the close, but you will never know that

unless you ask for it. Confused? Let's go further.

We have all witnessed different sales styles either as a buyer or observing those Membership Representatives (MRs) with whom we work. The Hard-Closer is relentless. They push and push and push and have no sense of when to back off. They may close a large volume of sales but chances are good that they won't get a large volume of referrals. The opposite end of the spectrum is the No-Attempt-to Close MR who does not even ask for the sale. This person usually gives a guest pass in hopes that the prospect will come back and join on his own volition. This

MR, also does not sell as much as he could. Somewhere in the middle is the Only-Ask-Once-And-Don't-Handle-Concerns MR. This MR does not sell as much as he could either. The commonalities that each of these MRs share is that they all end up creating more work for themselves, making their jobs harder by having to do more follow-up, not creating depth in their sales relationships, not creating a strong referral flow and finally, none of them know intuitively what is appropriate in terms of going further or backing off from pursuit of the close.

Knowing when to back off on the close is critical to your success as an MR regarding personal character, professional integrity, club image and financial perspectives. The question is how do you know where the line exists between not going far enough and going too far with your prospective Member (PM)? The tools that I have found to be most effective in my sales skills as well as training MRs throughout the world include:

- Building rapport and trust before and all throughout the tour.

- Understanding before you go on tour precisely what the PMs needs and motivations are to join the club today so you can build desire and create differentiation on the tour.

- Understanding before you go on tour precisely what will cause the PM to hesitate about joining today so you can use the tour to build value and work through concerns. (Qualifying in the 5 major areas.)

- Asking plenty of trial close questions on the tour to monitor the PM's enthusiasm, apathy or concern levels about the club. Remember that trial closes are a perfect way for us to explore concerns and handle them on the tour rather than waiting until the end. When asking trial close questions, if the response is anything less than enthusiastic, probe it and don't dismiss it. If we dismiss it, we are ignoring valuable information.

- Handle concerns/objections while on tour and get agreement that we either can or

cannot find a solution for the PM. It is not acceptable to not know precisely why the PM is not joining.

- Exquisite and subtle skills of observation to pick up on non-verbal cues the PM may be giving you. Keep in mind that these cues may be positive or maybe negative - do not ignore them - instead, explore them. For example, if the PM was being warm and connected throughout the tour and you notice that that has changed, then you need to probe it by saying something to the effect of "Susan, hmmm, I've noticed something. Earlier in the club I felt you were very connected to what we were discussing and now I'm sensing a bit of distance. What are you feeling?" Too often we pick up on these subtle signs but we don't do anything about them. If we know what the PM is thinking/feeling, we have a better opportunity to re-direct any misperceptions they may have. If you have built rapport and trust with the PM, this will be easy. If not, this may feel awkward.

- Detailed listening throughout your time with the PM to truly understand (not just to reply) what their issues may be. Listen not just for the words but the tones as well.

- Being completely present with your PM.

- The 7-Step-Method for Handling Concerns.

For the best success rate, use the previous nine tools as an integrated system. The previous eight are basic fundamentals. However, before you go further in reading this article, I encourage you to have a moment of truth and check to see if you are doing them all consistently. Now let's detail the 7-Step Method for Handling Concerns. By implementing this tool with the previous eight, you will know exactly where the line is to go further or back off from pursuing the close. More than likely this process will be initiated when you ask the PM to join the club and he responds with a concern or an objection. You will employ the following seven steps:

- 1. Listen** - listen to the concern with no interruptions. Even if you have the solution on the tip of your tongue. Listen patiently. When we leap forward with solutions, it can feel a bit too pushy. Give yourself the advan-



Karen Woodard

tage of patience and quiet.

- 2. Paraphrase** - paraphrase the concern so you know you understand what was said and the PM knows you understand. The verbiage would be: "Susan, it sounds like your concern is about value." This is an acknowledgment statement as well.

- 3. Isolate** - isolating the concern means you are going to determine that what was expressed is the only concern or that there may be more. The verbiage would be: "Other than your concern about value, is there anything else that makes you hesitate?"

- 4. Question the concern** - questioning the concern simply means that you will ask if it is appropriate to find a solution. The verbiage would be: "Susan, would it be OK if we took a few minutes to find a solution for you?" By doing this step, you are getting her permission to go further. This step is key in this process.

- 5. Provide a solution** - here is where you will continue to probe, and you will ultimately come to a solution that works for both the PM and the club. The solution may be right on the tip of your tongue or you may need to be a little more creative. Take your time here - it is not a race to see who can speak first or fastest. This is a time for genuine solution finding that considers the PMs feelings and concerns.

- 6. Confirm the solution** - you will simply confirm with the PM that the solution you offered works for them. The verbiage would be: "Susan, how does that work for you?" If it works for her, then you go to Step Seven. If not, you will go through this complete process one to two more times.

- 7. Offer to join again** - once the solution has been confirmed, you ask them to join again.

In using this process, tone and delivery are critical. The delivery needs to be genuine and the tone in your voice needs to be soft. Not apologetic, but soft. I encourage you to practice this with your

(See Woodard page 8)

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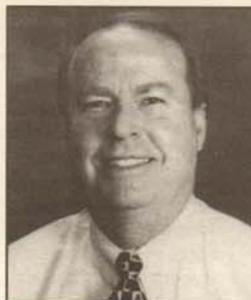
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Norm's Notes

continued from page 5

God for club operators like Alan and Steve Schwartz who made the decision over two years ago to begin equipping their clubs with the defibrillator devices. **PROFESSIONALISM ALL THE WAY!**

•Life Fitness has prevailed in its appeal of the lawsuit for Patent infringement by Precor. Precor had initially won the case, but the decision was reversed by the Federal Circuit Appeals Court. Also, Life Fitness has named **JUDY L. GUSTAFSON** as Vice President of Human Resources. Effective July 10, 2001, Judy became responsible for all aspects of human resources management, including employment, compensation, benefits, policy design, labor relations and management and or-

ganization development and training for the company's 1400 employees worldwide. Judy comes to Life Fitness after working with the **Brunswick Corporation** bowling and billiards group and prior to that, an extensive 24-year career with Montgomery Ward. **KEVIN GRODSKI**, President of Life Fitness comments, "Judy brings a tremendous amount of experience and leadership to Life Fitness. Throughout her career she has demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding about human resources management, and I am confident she will be a valuable asset to our HR department." Also, Life Fitness has announced that **CHRIS CLAWSON** has been named as Vice President of the Life Fitness Consumer Sales.

•**WALLY BOYKO'S**

20th Annual National Fitness Trade Show will be held in Las Vegas, September 6, 7 and 8th. Be sure to check out Wally's ad on pages #12 and #13 and make your reservations to attend. **JOE GOLD** will be honored with the **National Fitness Trade Journal's Lifetime Achievement Award** and many other events will take place, including the **Ms. Fitness U.S.A.** and **Ms. World Fitness** contests! Don't miss this event, it should be informative and fun!

•**MICKEY WATERS** has some serious concerns with the YMCA activities in Forest City, N.C., and he is taking proactive steps to educate his neighbors about the challenge he faces. He has arranged to appear on a local radio show to explain why the YMCA should not build a tax-free YMCA with a 35-40% advantage over his club because the Y has no requirement to pay taxes. He is also attempting to set up a "Hot Topic" Forum with the local Chamber of Commerce in his town.

•**MARGO FAIMAN** is IHRSA's fairly new Public Relations Director and she is doing a bang-up job for both IHRSA and the industry. Helping place a front page story in the Atlanta Constitution Lifestyles Section featured a major story about the mass charge the 55+ "Baby-Boomers" into health and fitness

clubs across America. IHRSA Executive Director, **JOHN McCARTHY**, was quoted several times during the course of the article and led off with a great one. He said, "This is a Monster Market!"

•Speaking of events, **DAVID PATCHEL-EVANS** of has grown the **Can-Fit-Pro Event** up in Toronto, Canada to be a **MONSTER!** Over 5,000 attendees are expected to attend the Conference and Trade Show, August 17th and 18th. 22 of the top people in the industry worldwide will speak at the Conference including: **JOE CIRULLI**, **TONY DeLEUDE**, **DENNIS KAISER**, **FRANK NAPOLITANO** and **SANDY COFFMAN**. And, **CATHY-SPENCER-BROWNING** will conduct an all-day **Program Director Specialist (PDS) Certification** in a partnership between **Body Training Systems** and **Can-Fit-Pro**. The education packed event will also feature a huge trade show with over 600 exhibit booths. To learn more and register call: (800) 667-5622 ext.222. Oh, almost forgot. Speaking of Patch, he recently announced that he has made a deal with **LOBLAW**, Canada's largest grocer, to install **7 Goodlife Clubs** within major grocery stores in Ontario and Eastern Canada. Patch now operates 55 clubs in Canada and is ahead of projections to achieve 30% growth in member-

ship for the year. He aims to have 100 clubs in Canada by the end of 2004. Not bad for a guy who got his start in the fitness business because of a bad-bad motorcycle accident! Good luck Patch!

•Also, don't forget to mark your calendar for one of the biggest club business conferences and trade shows each year. **Club Industry in Chicago** will be held November 15-17, 2001. For information call: (800)927-5007.

•Last month our Cover Story was entitled: **Ed Williams and Art Curtis Leading Wellbridge**. Well, I am writing about that report again because I have learned that my friend, **ART CURTIS**, is somewhat modest. During the course of my interview with Art, he told me had been a two-sport athlete in college. What Art did not tell me was that he was an **All-American** in Lacrosse at Bowling Green University. My pal here in Atlanta, **BILL HOUCK**, told me he learned this during a brief visit with Art while Art was in town visiting Wellbridge's world-class, Concourse Athletic Club. Thanks again Ed and Art for your time on the article!

•**DOUG LEVINE**, "Mr. Branding", the Founder and owner of **CRUNCH FITNESS**, has named **KEN CZYZYK** as the **Chief Information Officer**. Good luck Ken in your new role with "Mr. Branding!"



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...Woodard

continued from page 6

co-workers until you feel comfortable with it and can focus on the concerns of the PM rather than focusing on the mechanics of the process. That will make your delivery that much more genuine.

By using this process with a genuine and soft delivery, you will, understand exactly what the PM's concerns are and when it is time to go deeper or not. If you determine it is time to back off, the appropriate question would be "Susan, I want you to feel comfortable with this decision; where shall we go from here?" You are putting the ball in her court. If you sense you have some how offended the PM and maybe crossed the line of appropriateness - show humility and apologize. It may sound something like this "Susan, I'm sorry. I think I may have gone too far with you? I just want you to know that I am excited to have you here as a Member and if that

is what you want too, then I want to find a way to make that happen for you. Please accept my apology if I was too enthusiastic. Where shall we go from here?"

Clearly, if the PM decides not to join today after you have completely gone through this process two to three times, you will know what is causing him to hesitate. At that point, you will want to do the following:

•Schedule some time for him to come back in and enjoy the club as your guest.

•Follow up with a Great News phone call within 24 hours

•Send a thank you post card for coming in to the club (whether he joined or not).

•Continue to follow-up, unless he has asked you not to do so.

As mentioned in the beginning of this article, not everyone who comes into your club is going to join on the first visit and that is OK. It is not OK though, to not know why. While it may not always be appropriate to pursue the close, it is always appropriate to ask

someone to join and let him know that we do want them as a Member. If he declines, find out why using the 7-Step Method. By doing so, you will know when it is appropriate to go further or to back off. By professionally backing off (knowing why he is not joining), that does not mean you have lost the sale. It means you have respectfully acknowledged his position and will try again in the very near future.

(Karen D. Woodard is President of Premium Performance Training in Boulder, Colorado. She is an international author, speaker and consultant and provides successful marketing, sales, service and management training as well as consulting to the health and fitness industry. Karen works with clubs in the US, UK, Australia, Europe, South America and Canada. Karen has owned and operated six clubs since 1985 and now devotes her time entirely to consulting, developing staff training materials, research, writing, speaking and consulting. She can be contacted at 303.417.0653 or kdw500@aol.com.)

...Lerille

continued from page 3

and restores antique airplanes, collects antique bicycles and shares a love for motorcycling with his wife, Emma, but he has his priorities. "That's my hobby; this is first," Lerille says about his health club.

His weekday schedule is regimented. Lerille opens Red's at 4 a.m., works out, rides his bike around town, then attends Mass at St. Mary's Church - every day. He is logging flight hours by 7:45 a.m. and back at the club by 8:45 a.m. until 2 p.m. From 2 to 4 p.m. is his hobby time, and he returns to the health club afterward, staying until 7 p.m. The weekends are more flexible.

An uncle fueled his interest in bodybuilding when Lerille was only 10 years old. When this uncle would come in on leave from the military, he would flex his muscles for the young Lerille. "I got real excited about building my body - because I had none," Lerille says.

He started buying weights with the money he earned from his paper route and would work out in the garage. "I set a goal that one

day I wanted to be Mr. America," says Lerille, "and started putting pictures on the wall of all the Mr. Americas and vowed that one day my picture would go on that wall." He says everything he did was a calculated move toward that goal.

Bill Pearl, a Mr. America who was Lerille's mentor, had been in the U.S. Navy when he won the title so naturally Lerille followed that route. He began racking up bodybuilding titles while onshore for six months in Hawaii and his Navy superiors decided to capitalize on Lerille's newfound popularity. He was still attached to a submarine, but arrangements were made for him to train. Lerille says he took advantage of the situation and made phenomenal progress.

In 1959 Lerille took two months' leave shortly before he would be discharged to go home to New Orleans and train for the Mr. America contest in York, Pa. Lerille attended a contest in Baton Rouge and met Mike Stansbury, who owned a health club located on Jefferson Boulevard across from Gerami's in Lafayette. Stansbury coached weight lifters and bodybuilders as part of the business. That chance

meeting would be fortuitous because Stansbury offered Lerille a job.

The timing was not right in attaining the long-sought-after goal of becoming Mr. America; Lerille placed seventh in the competition that year. He went back to complete his stint in the Navy and came to work in Lafayette Sept. 9, 1959. He won the title the next year and also bagged the Mr. Universe title in his class in London later the same year.

In 1963, with \$250 borrowed from his dad to pay his first month's rent, Lerille opened his first health club at the Johnston Street-Guilbeau Road intersection that Eckerd now occupies. He says his initial strategy of making a change every month has probably been fundamental to his success.

"It might be putting in racquetball courts," Lerille lightheartedly says, "and then a few years later taking racquetball courts out."

He says about 400 members shared 4,000 square feet of space at his first location. The club's 10,000 or so members now have about 170,000 square feet in which to work out.

He credits Lawrence "Lolly" Gankendorff, long-time chairman of LBA Savings Bank, with convincing him to purchase the two-acre property on Doucet Road to assure room to grow. "That's probably the best advice I ever had in my life," says Lerille.

Stansbury, who now is into property management, says he hired Lerille because his attitude about health, nutrition and bodybuilding coincided with what he and his wife were trying to promote with their small but growing business. "Red seemed to be the ideal person to come in and manage our health club and he did and was good at it," Stansbury says.

Jean T. Kreamer, Director of Media and Print Services at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, who is an avid Red's member, says Lerille proves that physical discipline works. "Red has never lost his zest for what he does. He is his best advertisement," she says.

Additionally, Lerille's economic and philanthropic contributions in the community are mind-boggling, Kreamer says. "He is a major consumer of local vendors' products, from raw food items to equipment from Body Master in Rayne to paper

cups by the thousands," she says. Kreamer says Lerille hires a great number of students and nurtures and encourages these future young health professionals, she says. Richard Zuschlag, President and CEO of Acadian Ambulance and Airmed Services Inc., agrees that Lerille is a very giving person. "I think a lot of people probably do not know that quietly, behind the scenes, he has done an awful lot to help our university - UL - and also our area school systems and churches," Zuschlag says.

Besides breeding success, Red Lerille's dedication and penchant for constant improvement has garnered Lerille various awards such as induction into Club Industry Magazine's Hall of Fame and the title of International Racquet Sports Association Person of the Year. Now, Red Lerille has been named to the Times Acadiana's Business Hall Of Fame, an honor he richly deserves.

(This article was reprinted courtesy of The Times Acadiana in Lafayette, Louisiana. Photo by Terri Fensel)

New, In-Club Weight Loss Program Projects 200+K Annual Profit With Using Just 750 Sq. Ft. of Space in Your Club

Casey Conrad, long-time industry consultant, has developed a complete turnkey weight loss business that's designed to be installed within health clubs that combines proven weight loss programming with sales, service and marketing systems. It's easy to fit into almost any layout. It can add a valuable service to your existing members and help you attract an additional target group within your local area. Most importantly, it is proving to be a huge profit center. It's called HEALTHY INSPIRATIONS and here are the results from three of the nine existing centers:

HEALTHY INSPIRATIONS at Westerly, RI (Stand-alone facility):	\$110,000 gross	43% cash
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Joe Cirulli...

continued from page 3

Joe Cirulli will serve his 4th year on the IHRSA Board of Directors in the capacity of Ex-officio President.

Joe Cirulli has, as have the nineteen IHRSA Presidents that have preceded him, served in a very important role of leadership in the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. The entire club industry, not just IHRSA member clubs, owe Joe a word of thanks and appreciation for a job very well done. That thanks should also be extended to the other 60 Board members and former Presidents that have unselfishly served IHRSA over the first 20 years.

We were in touch with both Joe Cirulli and Geoff Dyer for their comments during their transition. In this report, we will hear what Joe Cirulli has to say. Next month, we will hear from new IHRSA President, Geoff Dyer.

A Conversation With Joe Cirulli - IHRSA's 20th President

"First Joe, I've want to just say thanks to you for your terrific service to IHRSA and to the health, racquet and sportsclub industry in general. You have done an outstanding job and we all thank you."

Joe Cirulli - "You're welcome Norm. It has been my pleasure."

Q. "Joe, I would just like to share with our readers your thoughts as you depart the role of IHRSA's President."

A. Well, it has been a

great experience being the President over the last year and having the opportunity to work more closely with John McCarthy and to be able to work with the IHRSA Staff. What a great staff of very dedicated people John has up there! All my experience has been very, very positive. To be able to be involved with the 20th Year Anniversary Convention was very exciting. To be able to meet some of those top speakers there, to be able to participate and be so much involved in the conference was great. Also, what has been great too, I am very happy that Lee Hillman and the Bally Total Fitness organization has decided to become a member and become more involved with us so that we can work together better as a team to make us all individually better and the industry better. So, I think that was a very positive thing. Lee Hillman is a good person and he has some very good people that I have gotten to know on his Executive Management Team. Another great part of the experience was getting to know more people from around the world who look with such high regard toward IHRSA for leadership. When I travel to places like Italy and Russia, IHRSA is seen in such awe and it felt good for me to be in those countries representing IHRSA and our industry and it gave me the opportunity to make a lot of new friends. Because of this opportunity I have great friends in Australia, New Zealand, Russia, Italy, Germany, England and Japan. It has been a great experience.

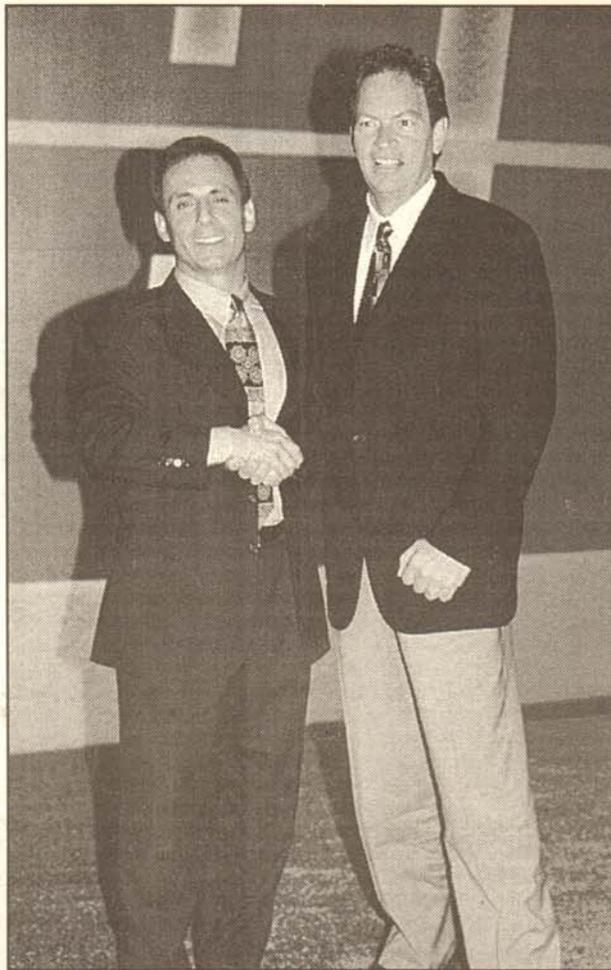
Q. Joe, what about some of the things we might call 'works-in-progress' such as the relationship with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America? That's

a great initiative.

A. Yes it is. I think it is great to have taken on a national charity and to get so many clubs involved and to make that an effort by the entire Association. There are a lot of great stories from around the country of how clubs have helped the Boys and Girls Clubs; but not only that, how they have helped school systems and a number of charities. So, that is a very positive thing.

Also, as we move forward, and I have told people around the world, that in IHRSA's Mission to "Grow, Promote and Protect" our industry, the "Protect" portion of our Mission is really an American issue. We can't be a police force around the world, trying to keep legislation in other countries in order. Now we are able to form alliances with different Associations around the world and have close contact with other conventions around the world. As they have different laws that come up that can be detrimental to their business, they can find ways to work with their legislators and their governments. The biggest portion of the worldwide effort of IHRSA is to "Grow and Promote." We have a great person in John Kersh who is on behalf of IHRSA traveling the world. I told John about the people in Russia and how they are really trying to form an industry. They have one woman over there, Olga Sloutsker, that is working like crazy to make it happen with her staff. The day I told John about it he was in touch with Slava Chichvanin, who works for Olga. I got an e-mail that day that he had talked to you and to John and how excited he is. I think what they are trying to do in Russia is bring some attention to the fact that they are a force and they want to grow and be recognized. I think the "Grow and Promote" portion of our Mission will be a worldwide effort. The effort to make the conferences better is ongoing each year. It has also been great to watch the Board and the Staff in action together. The Board helps us become better strategically and then passes it on to the IHRSA Staff who then works on those strategic issues and develops the whole operational plan around it. It is a very well run machine.

Q. Joe, could you possibly put a number on how



Joe Cirulli (left) & Geoff Dyer

many days you have traveled on behalf of IHRSA?

A. Well, look at it this way. There are three Board Meetings per year. Usually, you are away for 3 or 4 days. One of those is the Convention and you are away for a week. Then there was a Conference to facilitate Presidents and Executive Directors working together that was in Washington, D.C. where John and I attended. That lasted two days. Then there was the finance meeting for two days each year. There was the trip to Italy for a week. Then the week in Russia. There have been about five times where John came down to Gainesville to meet with me.

So, there has been a significant amount of travel time involved, but it has all been worth it.

Q. Joe, what's next?

A. Well, another thing I am really happy about is that I will have another year with the Board as the Ex-officio President. It will be a great experience. If Geoff or John need help, I will be there. For example, I

know we are going to be setting up a meeting with the people from the YMCA. I will be with Geoff and John for that meeting. It will be good to be part of these things and hopefully be part of the structure that can influence some of these things.

Hopefully, I will be able to continue to be a factor in IHRSA for years to come. I'll do that by trying to become a better club operator."

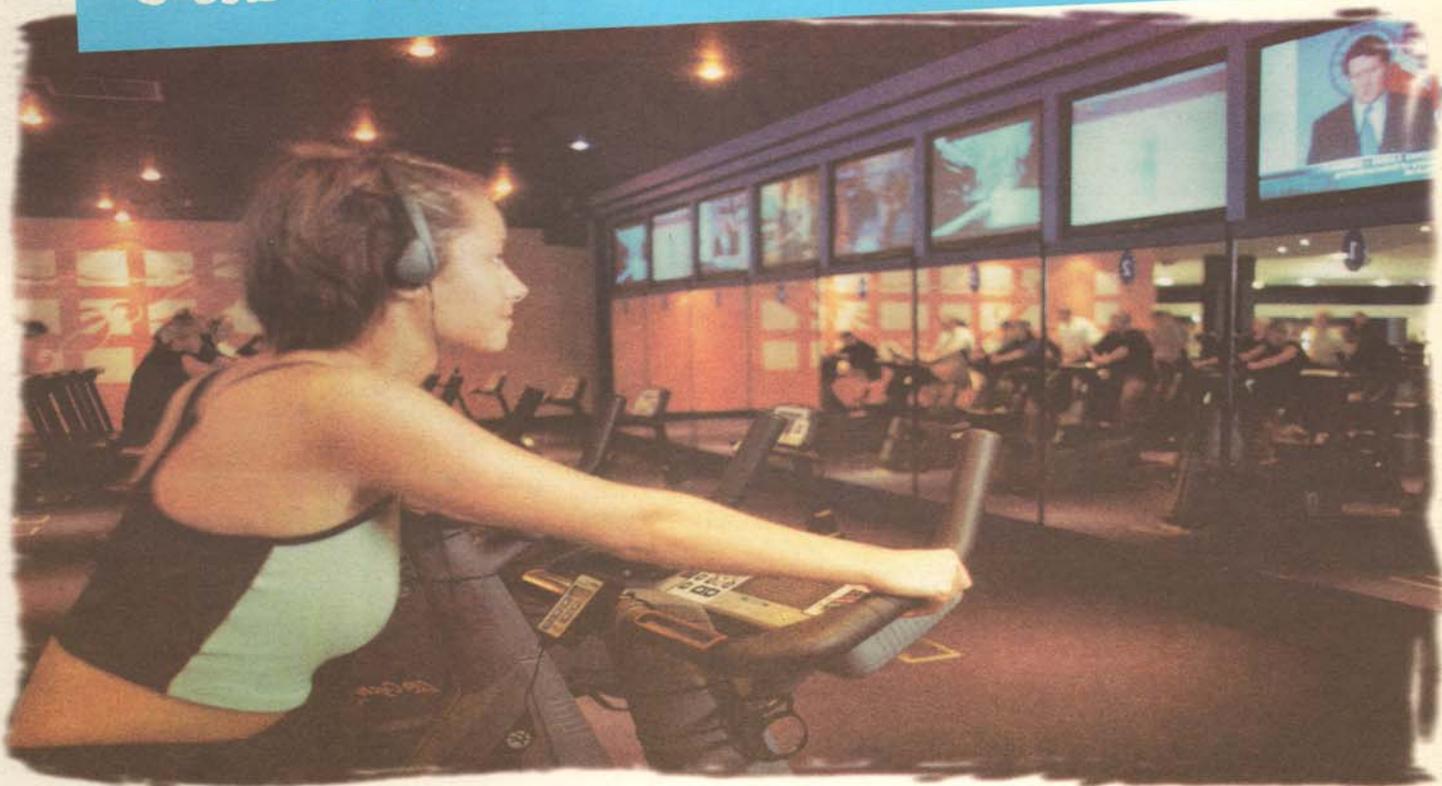
That single statement by Joe Cirulli about becoming a better operator is the key to why he is RIGHT NOW one of the top club operators in the world and will continue that role. That said, I closed my interview with Joe Cirulli about his IHRSA Presidency and rolled into part II of the interview, questions for Joe about his one week visit in Russia with the people from the World Class Fitness organization. We will cover that experience with Joe at a later date. STAY TUNED for our interview with new IHRSA President, Geoff Dyer, next month.

Norm Cates' **THE Club Insider**
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20th ANNUAL NATIONAL FITNESS TRADE SHOW NEWS

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The Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino was named "Best Hotel Value in the World" by Travel and Leisure Magazine and "Best Overall Hotel in Las Vegas" by Zagat Survey of Resorts, Hotels and Spas since 1995.

It will never be said that Las Vegas lacks for luxury, but even in this city the Rio All-Suite Casino Resort is a standout example of sheer grandeur. With a casino of 120,000 square feet, an exciting nightclub, 4 pools, workout facilities, a recently remodeled spa with steam rooms, whirlpools, massage, and a beach and lagoon all to itself, the Rio doesn't lack for amenities.

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WORLD GYM WESTERN UNIVERSITY



World Gym Western University has named the National Fitness Trade Show as the site of this year's classes. For more information on the World Gym Western University contact: CIENEGA ASSOCIATES, LLC, P.O. Box 1260, El Prado, NM 87529, Phone: 1.505.751.4236, Fax: 1.505.751.4248, E-mail: fitfocus@aol.com

APHELION UNIVERSITY User's Seminar Track

Aphelion, the leading Health & Fitness Club Management software will host an Aphelion User's seminar. The User's seminar will provide Aphelion customers with advance news of their latest products, and opportunity to provide feedback to the developers. Management will be available to address group issues and provide information on future directions and technology.

Aphelion's founding partners, Reg Berka and Bill Nichtberger, will be on hand to welcome all Aphelion users. Their experience and expertise is the driving force behind Aphelion's technology to create the very best management software for the Health and Fitness Industry. Always on the cutting edge of technology, these two have something special planned for all attending the first Aphelion University - User's Seminar.

To register for the Aphelion University user's Seminar contact: rivey@aphelion.net or call 1.800.324.9800.



Set among the rolling foothills of the Black Mountain Range in Las Vegas, the new Rio Secco Golf Club provides a world-class golf experience unlike any other. The 18-hole championship golf course was designed by Rees Jones, Golf World Magazine's 1995 "Golf Architect of the Year" and mastermind behind over 100 of the world's most fabulous courses. The Rio Secco provides both stunning scenery and challenging play. With breathtaking surroundings and natural beauty all about, this course provides a golf experience that is simply nonpareil. Tee times are limited so secure your partner today and call Wally at 1.541.830.0400 to reserve your spot! Awards to include closest to the pin, longest drive, and best ball combined twosome score.

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first commercial gym — Gold's Gym in Venice Beach. It became the Mecca of bodybuilding legends such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Frank Zane, Lou Ferrigno... Then, 30 years ago, fed up with the day in, day out grind, he sold the gym and headed out on the first ship to South America. When he hit solid ground again about five years later the urge to get back into the gym business led him to create World Gym. Now 78 years old, Joe is still going strong and leading the 250-plus World Gyms with his iron hand tempered by his always-present sense of humor, and just completed construction on the new World Gym International Headquarters.

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TO REGISTER BY FAX, complete the registration form below and fax to 1.541.830.0410.

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TO RESERVE YOUR SUITE(S) at The Rio All-Suite Resort call (1.888.746.6955). Discounted suite rates are \$119.00 per night for a single or double occupancy if you call before August 15. Tell the reservation clerk group code GMSFIT to receive this discounted rate. If you stay at The Rio you'll also receive FREE of charge two \$100.00 tickets to the

Ms. Fitness USA Finals (September 7) AND two \$100.00 tickets to the Ms. Fitness World (September 8) being taped for television at The Rio's brand new Samba Theater (\$400.00 value).

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES is offering a 10% discount on most of its already low fares for air travel to and from the event. You or your travel agent may call Southwest Airlines Group and Meetings Reservations at 1.800.433.5368 and reference ID Code R5946. Reservations Sales Agents are available 8:00am-5:00pm Monday-Friday, or 9:30am-3:30pm Saturday and Sunday. You must make reservations five or more days prior to travel to take advantage of this offer.

AVIS RENT A CAR is offering discounted rates for our attendees. Reservations can be made by calling 1.800.331.1600 or online at www.avis.com. Use Avis Worldwide Discount number D130522 to take advantage of these low rates.

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 1. _____ 2. _____
 3. _____ 4. _____
 Are you staying at The Rio Other (please specify) _____ To Register Fax This Form To: 1.541.830.0410 or Call 1.541.830.0400

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

MS. FITNESS USA
 4:00 PM Prejudging - Physical Beauty & Muscle Tone Round

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

MS. FITNESS USA
 4:00 PM Prejudging - Beauty, Poise & Projection Round

NATIONAL FITNESS TRADE SHOW
 4:00 PM Welcoming Reception presented by Clubcom and Aphelion in the exhibit hall, featuring international cuisine prepared by The Rio's renowned chefs

4:00 PM-7:00 PM Exhibits Open

7:00 PM Joe Gold Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony & Distinguished Service Awards presented by Life Fitness

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

WORLD GYM WESTERN UNIVERSITY
 9:00 AM Welcome by Mike Uretz, CEO, World Gym International

9:15 AM "Troubles in The Economy: Real Bummer or Classic Opportunity? — Part 1" by Michael Scott Scudder

10:30 AM break

11:00 AM "Community Service: How It Builds Your Membership" by Nancy Kouris, World Gym, Hampton Bays, New York

NOON "The Benefits of Co-op Advertising" by Paul Bosley, CMMA and Denise Twomey, Davis Elen Advertising

9:00 AM Welcome to Las Vegas & Aphelion University — Something Special

9:45 AM You, Us, and Our Future — Where We Can Go (AIMS Higher, Be the Boss, ASP, & Aphelion's Fitness Universe Buyers Guide and Star Alliance)

10:45 AM break

11:00 AM Keep Your Customers for Life

12:00 AM break for lunch

1:30 PM Fire in the Belly

APHELION UNIVERSITY
 2:30 PM 2001 Aphelion University User's Seminar
 4:00 PM Afternoon Seminar concluded

NATIONAL FITNESS TRADE SHOW
 9:00 AM "How to Produce a Magazine or Newsletter For Profit" by Brett Fitzgerald, LVAC Lifestyle Magazine, Publisher/Editor/Co-owner and Director of Corporate Communications, Las Vegas Athletic Clubs

10:00 AM "How to Develop Your Annual Marketing Plan & Measure Results" by Paul Bosley, CMMA

11:00 AM "Offer Your Members Reciprocity & Reduce Cancellations by Joining the IPFA" by Jerry Kahn, President, IPFA

11:30 AM The NEW Member Marketing Techniques Which Produce Twice The Results at Half The Costs by Michael Scott Scudder

1:00 PM-5:00 PM Exhibits Open

MS. FITNESS USA
 9:00 AM Prejudging - Strength, Flexibility & Endurance Round

7:00 PM Ms. Fitness USA finals - doors open to seat audience at 6:00. This event is being taped for television

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

WORLD GYM WESTERN UNIVERSITY
 9:00 AM Announcements, World Gym Business Meeting by Mike Uretz, CEO, World Gym International

9:30 AM "How to Break Down The Doors to Insurance Companies in Relation to Personal Training" by Robert Bovee, World Gym, Rochester, New York

10:30 AM break

11:00 AM "Troubles in The Economy: Real Bummer or Classic Opportunity - Part 2" by Michael Scott Scudder

12:45 PM Final Announcements

APHELION UNIVERSITY
 9:00 AM 2001 Aphelion University User's Seminar Nominate and elect Chair & Co-Chairperson for User's Group

10:00 AM What's your Assessment?

10:45 AM break

11:00 AM Just Do It.

12:00 AM Seminar Conclusion — closing statements by Reg Berka and Bill Nichtberger, Founding Partners, Aphelion, Inc.

NATIONAL FITNESS TRADE SHOW
 9:00 AM "Making the Most of Your Media Opportunity" by Tom Lapcevic, CEO, ClubCom, Inc.

10:00 AM "Increase Your Bottom Line with Smart Access to Your Club" by Lee Guthrie, Executive Vice President, RapidTron, Inc.

11:00 AM "Profiling For Profits" by Rob Rideout, Microfit

NOON "How to Make \$ on the Internet" by Donald Hoskyns

1:00 PM-5:00 PM Exhibits Open

MS. FITNESS WORLD*
 10:00 AM Prejudging

7:00 PM Ms. Fitness World finals - doors open to seat audience at 6:00. This event is being taped for television

TRADE SHOW EXHIBITORS (AS OF JULY 1ST)

ABC Financial
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 Akeys Body Workout System
 Aphelion
 Body Masters
 Boffex Flooring
 Broadcast Vision
 Camstar
 Carbolizer
 Cardio Theater
 Centaur Floor Systems
 Club Insider

Club Internet Cafe
 ClubCom
 CMMA
 Extreme Blenz
 F.L.I.T.E.
 Fitness For Life
 Fitness Management
 Fitness Outlet
 Fitness Plus
 Food Sciences
 Fortress Locker
 Hammer Strength
 Hampton Fitness Products

Health & Nutrition Systems
 Heart Rate
 Heavy Metal
 Hex Tanning
 Hoggan Health Industries
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 Integra
 International Fitness Alliance
 International Fitness Club Network
 International Tanning
 Iron Grip Barbell
 Ivanko Barbell

JADE
 Life Fitness
 Magnum Fitness Systems
 Medical Health & Fitness
 Microfit
 Ms. Fitness Magazine
 National Fitness Trade Journal
 Nautilus
 Personal Trainer Manager
 Power Strength
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 RapidTron

Sprint
 Star Trac
 Thruster
 Time Trade Systems
 Trackmaster
 Unisen
 Versa Pulley
 VersaClimber
 World Gym

Who Are The True Fitness "Professionals"?

By Carrie Morrow, MBA, J.D.
National Fitness Therapy
Association (NFTA)

PROFESSIONALISM DEFINED

What are the basic attributes that constitute a "professional"? Webster's Dictionary lists the definition of a professional as "one engaged in a vocation or occupation requiring advanced education or training, and involving intellectual skills, as medicine, law, theology, engineering, teaching, etc." What types of credentials or expertise must one exhibit or possess in order to become a doctor or a lawyer or a fire fighter or police officer or any other kind of professional? According to Webster's, in order to become a professional, one needs some level of education and training. Perhaps a testing and certification, regular review of required training, and some type of standard accreditation would lend itself to professionalism. In order to become a professional fire fighter, in addition to the education and training, it is important to know the dangers attached to the job. The professional must also be aware of the risks and liabilities associated and to acquire the very best training one can have, because lives are at stake, and one wrong move can be disastrous. In order to become a police officer, one must go through extensive training and review in order to maintain professional status due to the associated dangers and risks. We all know that education and experience are required to become a professional, doctor or lawyer or accountant. This is necessary because serious financial and medical consequences can arise if proper training is not administered and demanded from these professions. With all of these requirements in every other profession, why is it that a professional fitness trainer is not required to maintain the same level of standardization? Are there no dangers or threats of injury? Is there no risk or liability associated with this job? Well, let's take a look:

RISKS OF LIABILITY

Recently, personal trainers and/or fitness centers and equipment manufacturers have

been involved in much legal questioning if not actual lawsuits claiming negligence, wrongful death and thousands (sometimes hundreds of thousands) of dollars in resultant damages. Some of the most recent claims of negligence against personal trainers involve the following: prescription of dietary supplements involving death of the client (June 1999, State Supreme Court, Manhattan, N.Y.), failing to provide proper instruction on exercise equipment (Thomas vs. Sport-City Inc., 738 So.2d 1153, La. App. 2Cir., 1999), poorly qualified instruction by a trainer (Mathias vs. New York Health Club Inc., 1999.NY.48859, Supreme Court of New York, Appellate Division, First Department 1999); (Feeney vs. Manhattan Sports Club Inc., 642 N.Y.S.2d 674, Supreme Court of New York, Appellate Division, First Department, 1996), poorly administering or failing to administer CPR, (Skotak vs. Vic Tanny International, 513 N.W.2d 428 1994), (Chai v. Sports & Fitness Clubs of America, Circuit Court, 17th Judicial Circuit, Broward County, Fla., Case No. 98-16053 CA (05)), and questionable signings of release from liability and waivers (Rickey vs. Houston Health Club Inc., 1993 Tex. 1466, 863 S.W.2d 148), (Seigneur v. National Fitness Institute, Inc.) and (Universal Gym Equipment v. Vic Tanny International, 526 N.W.2d 5, 207,1994). As much as we might like to think we are immune from litigation, professional fitness trainers are an open target in the new frenzy of litigation over fitness center liability.

RAISING THE BAR

As the fitness industry enjoys its continued growth and expansion, we must be aware of the standards of professionalism that the public must expect and demand from personal fitness trainers. We must live up to the corresponding standards that other business professionals have established as a minimum for recognition in the industry. If we do not, litigation will gain power and strength and the fitness trainer profession will be regulated by settlements and court decisions. So, how do we meet this level of professionalism? First, we must position ourselves with the knowledge and information so as to provide quality and professional care and uphold the highest professional standards and

duty of care to our clients who entrust their health and wellness to us as professionals. This first step begins with education. Personal Fitness Professionals are in a delicate situation with clients whether they are medical-fitness, post-rehabilitation referrals* or more mainstream fitness center members. We are involved in an intimate relationship with people who may be recovering from injuries, surgery, chronic disease or involved in medical rehabilitation. We assess current fitness levels and prescribe exercise plans. We touch, turn and manipulate, add weights, encourage movement and purposely increase heart rates, blood pressure, breathing rates, and create muscle tension and soreness. We provide more hands-on services than most other professions, and until now, have no standard to differentiate experienced and qualified trainers from a non-experienced or qualified trainer. Name one other professional organization that has absolutely no standards of professionalism and more risk of liability than this! We learn to prescribe the most effective and safe exercise program that will benefit each individual client. Where do we get this information? How do we stay current in the fitness industry in order to provide these safe and effective programs? This must be done through proper education, experience and continued training in the fitness industry. We must standardize and maintain our own level of professionalism in order to provide a basic standard of care as professionals.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARD OF CARE

So, you ask yourselves, what is our basic standard of care as fitness professionals? Each fitness trainer certifying organization has its own definition of that standard. The current law in all states provides that we owe to our clients the duty of standard professional behavior. This means that we must not perform any act that is negligent (i.e. a failure to act or the substandard performance of an act when performance was due) or cause intentional harm or injury to a client. That's it, a very broad standard and one that is difficult to prove during litigation. How do we know what is "substandard" when we have no definition of

"standard"? As we know, personal trainers have no regulated certification at this time. Why not? We are educated, experienced, trained and intelligent people working towards improving the overall health and wellness of the general population, 80% of which does not regularly exercise! There are several avenues in which to advance the administration of standards and guidelines in the industry. One excellent process is through the National Fitness Therapy Association (NFTA). This organization is responsible for accrediting fitness facilities for medical-fitness referral programs, as well as accrediting personal fitness trainers. The NFTA has formulated these standards to be utilized across the country in order to measure the level and qualifications for personal trainers providing services to post-rehabilitative clients, as well as to the general population. These standards address the different levels of accreditation and the associated risks of liability for each. The standards provide that an Accredited Fitness Professional possess and maintain a certain level of education, experience and training in the industry as well as professional liability coverage as a standard of professionalism. This set of standards corresponds to the professional standards that must be met and maintained in other professions and meets the Webster's definition as well!

ACQUIRE THE KNOWLEDGE

It is imperative that today's professionals be aware of these standards and enforce them. Any accredited fitness professional and/or facility can risk being held negligent for failing to adhere to these guidelines when administering care for post-rehabilitative clients referred from a medical facility or physician. In consideration of this accreditation, Accredited Fitness Professionals (AFPs) and their accredited facilities, meeting the standards will receive special rates on liability insurance, business marketing through the NFTA and recognition in all NFTA associated materials, higher levels of credibility, and medical referrals.

IN CONCLUSION

The time is long overdue for the fitness industry to start



Carrie Morrow, MBA, J.D.

to regulate its professionals. Signed releases and waivers will not protect the fitness industry forever and insurance only goes so far. If we fail to recognize the need for standardization, lawsuits, settlements and litigation will continue to mount causing government regulation over the fitness industry. Short of licensing, accreditation will act to protect fitness professionals and raise the level of minimum standards in the fitness industry. Although personal trainers and fitness centers may be financially viable at present, the potential financial damage of one lawsuit can be disastrous to an otherwise successful organization. So, who are the true fitness professionals? Those who continue to educate themselves and others, and maintain the highest standards in this ever expanding industry.

*A "professional" standard assumes a higher standard of care. Therefore it is extremely important that trainers are aware that liability issues increase for post-rehabilitative continued exercise programs. These programs are more extensive than that of the general fitness center member exhibiting minimal symptoms of disease or injury. An Accredited Fitness Professional must be closely involved in the client's physical therapy treatment and have a continuing relationship with the client's physician in order to monitor treatment and progress. Continuous feedback and an ongoing relationship must be maintained among these professionals in order to provide the highest level of care and treatment in addition to minimal risk of injury and potential liability.

(Carrie Morrow is the Director of Fitness Programs at the YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh. She is currently the Chair of the Standards Committee for the National Fitness Therapy Association (NFTA) and serves on the National Advisory Committee. Carrie is currently involved in legal research studies for risk management and liability issues in fitness facilities.)

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Do You Know For Sure If Your Salespeople Are Asking For The Order?

By John M. Brown
 President - Professional Club
 Management, Inc.

After traveling the country working at and visiting hundreds of clubs over the last 22 years, I've come to one clear conclusion. 90% of the clubs I visit do not directly ask or do not know how to ask me to join their club! Anyone who doesn't believe me is welcome to go on one of my two weeks trips and walk in to the clubs with me.

My Methodology

As a club owner, operator, manager and consultant to over 80 clubs consistently across the country, I'm always interested in how the competition is doing and what I can learn from them. As a result, I always shop most, if not all, of the facilities we are involved

with initially and on a twice-a-year basis after that. I always approach the shopping experience the same way. I am professionally dressed, suit, tie, etc. I always pretend to be in town closing on a new home in the area and have been sent on a mission at the explicit instructions of my wife to find a good club for us. Because I travel so much, I have always carried this big wallet. Not because I have a lot of money, but because it keeps all my tickets, receipts, credit cards, identification in one place. I guess some people would call it a man's purse but I call it my wallet. My point is that when I walk in to these clubs, I am trying to send multiple buying signals to the person who is supposed to be selling me my new membership. Just to give them the benefit of the doubt, I always make sure I explain to them very clearly why I am there. Oddly enough, even after all of that, most salespeople

still launch into their standard tour and qualifying lecture asking me questions that really have no relevance to my situation, which confirms my opinion that most salespeople don't listen very well or at all. But, listening is a subject that should be covered in another article. After the standard tour, which I always match my wants, needs, desires with what the club offers, we usually sit down to talk about becoming a member. I say usually because many times, maybe as much as 30% of the time, the salesperson doesn't sit down with me but ends the tour with something like "Are there any more questions I can answer for you?" And when I say no, there is usually a long silence, (about 15-20 seconds) followed by my saying "Thank You" and walking out! The other 60% of the time here's what happens. We sit down and chit chat a little and the salesperson stumbles into their price orientated presentation. I always set my big wallet on their

desk directly in front of them. Sometimes I will even go further and open it acting like I'm looking for something and then leave it open, revealing about 100 credit cards in plain view. After their price presentation, they almost always say one of the following things: "Well, that's what you are looking at to get started." or "How's that sound?" or "The infamous push the price sheet and they say "Okay"? I've never understood that one at all.

At which point I pick up my wallet, thank them and walk out. Usually, as I'm leaving, they say: "Call me if you have any more questions." or "Let me know what you decide". They say the truth is stranger than fiction. I'm sure there are those of you out there saying, "That doesn't happen at my club". Yeah that's what I thought, too. Until I started checking my own operations a little closer and found out it was happening to me, too! Without naming names, this has happened to me in big clubs, small clubs, clubs in metro areas, clubs in rural areas, big chain clubs, and some of the finest clubs in the world! No one seems to be immune. I read with great interest an article a few months ago by another club consultant, who in this article stated that high pressure, prehistoric selling techniques are outdated and continue to hurt this industry. I totally agree. But, in my opinion a bigger problem is more people are NOT being asked to join than are EVER high-pressured. It makes me sad to think of all the people out there who have summoned up the courage to finally come in a club, and then we don't even ask them to become a member! Just as bad and closely linked, is that many salespeople are woefully undertrained and under skilled to even know how to ask! So what are we to do about this silent epidemic? Here are a few suggestions that we have implemented in our operations.

and not Price, Price, Price, then they have the ability to be very persuasive and are able to ask the prospect several different times in several different ways to join the club without any hint of pressure at all!

2. HIRE COMPASSIONATE, BUT BOLD PEOPLE. There is one major reason salespeople don't ask for the order. FEAR. Fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of repercussions from their manager, fear that the prospect will say no. You want to know something? In all my years, after personally selling tens of thousands of memberships and being responsible for selling millions of memberships over the years, I've never had a prospect say "No! I'm not joining this club". We try to instill into all our salespeople that it is their "duty" to ask that prospect to start a regular exercise program today. We believe that if a person doesn't ask or know how to ask, then we are failing the customer, not to mention losing the sale.

3. TRAIN, PRACTICE, TRAIN, PRACTICE, TRAIN. Compare it to any highly skilled athlete. They have practiced and practiced and continue to practice the fundamentals day in and day out. If they don't, their skills begin to erode. Why should we be any different? In my experience, most staffs are undertrained and horribly underpracticed. Stop for one minute and think. How much more could you be accomplishing if you were sure your salespeople were fully trained and highly skilled? Would you realize a 20% income increase? In many cases, probably so. So many owners, managers don't train and practice with their staff, because they don't think they have sufficient knowledge or don't know how to. There are many materials available to assist you, but some training is better than none. If necessary, hire someone to do provide training on a regular basis. It will be well worth the money. Training/Practice should be done for your experienced people as well as new hires. I hear all the time from experienced salespeople "I already know all that". My experience has been that they may know it but usually are not practicing it every day in

(See Brown page 20)

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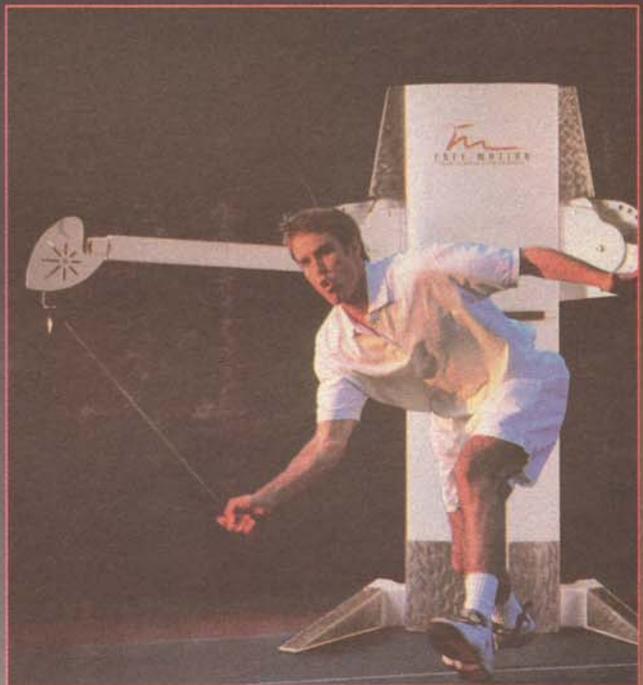
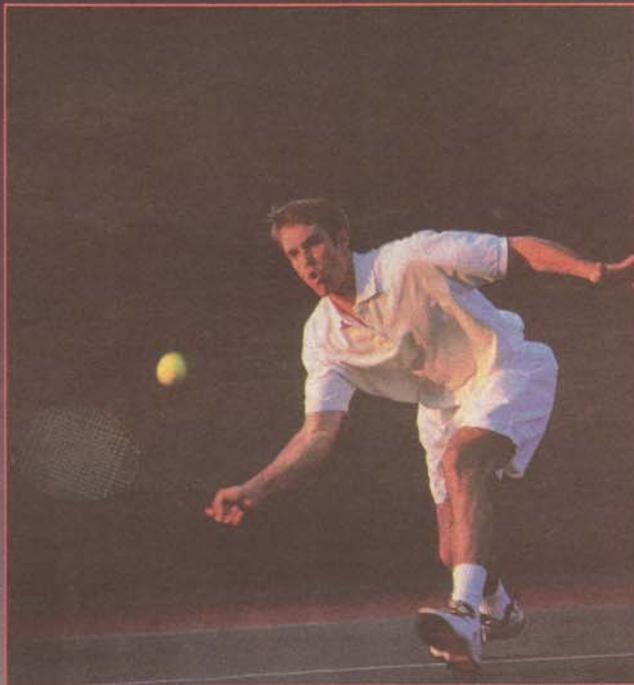
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1. INSPECT, DON'T EXPECT. Send your friends to shop your facility on a regular basis. Ask them for their honest evaluation. Most importantly, see if they were specifically asked to join the club today at least once! When your salespeople are well trained and compassionate and selling from the platform of conviction in the prod-

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IHRSA's Capitol Report

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STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

For more information on these and other bills, visit <http://www.ihrsa.org/publicpolicy/state/index.html>.

NEVADA: Assembly Bill 627 was signed into law. The measure increases from \$50,000 to \$250,000 the bond required by clubs with more than 25,000 members. It also eliminates the bond exemption for clubs that have been under the same ownership for 4 years. However, those clubs who were already exempt from the bond (or who would have been by 10/1/01) are still exempt. **SOUTH CAROLINA:** Senate Bill 349 was signed into law. Private health clubs in the state are exempt from the admissions tax. This measure extends that exemption to publicly-owned fitness centers. **WASHINGTON:** According to WHFCA, House Bill 1575, the sales tax repeal, will be voted on by the House after it votes on the State budget package that has already passed the Senate. WHFCA received nearly 3,000 member signatures in favor of the repeal from Washington clubs last week. These have been forwarded to the appropriate State Senators. If you have not already done so, Washington club operators should contact their State Senators today and urge them to vote in favor of HB 1575 when it comes to them from the House.

CONSUMER REPORTS ADVISES AGAINST POPULAR SUPPLEMENTS

The June issue of Consumer Reports urges readers to stay away from three of the most popular dietary supplements: androstenedione, creatine and ephedra. The magazine concludes that there's too little scientific evidence to certify their efficacy and too much concern about their side effects. The article points out that under current federal law, any dietary supplement can be marketed without advance testing. "The only restriction: The label can't claim the product will treat, prevent or cure a disease. But the label can traffic in vague claims like 'enhances energy' or 'supports testosterone production.'" If serious problems are reported, it's up to the Food and Drug Administration to prove they're real before it can order a supplement off the market or impose other restrictions. So far, that has not happened." Visit <http://www.ihrsa.org> for a link to the full

article.

COLLEGE SETTLES DISCRIMINATION CASE WITH ANOREXIC STUDENT

An anorexic student who sued Stonehill College after the school refused to let her live on campus because of her eating disorder has settled out of court with the College. Keri Krissik will remain at another school to finish college. Neither Stonehill's nor Krissik's attorney would comment on the terms of the settlement. Krissik, 20, has suffered from anorexia nervosa since she was 8. She is 5-foot-6 and weighs less than 100 pounds. She was accepted to Stonehill as a transfer student in January, 1999, but was hospitalized last year with heart failure caused by anorexia. After being discharged, she caught up on her coursework and prepared to return to school in September. However, she said the school sent her a letter saying she could return only if she lived off-campus. The College President said in January that the school could not "support her in the way she needs to be supported." Krissik sued Stonehill, a Catholic college in Massachusetts, citing the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A trial date had been set for May 29. Since anorexia is considered a disability under the ADA, health club operators risk a discrimination lawsuit if they restrict or prohibit someone with the disorder from using the club. For a free copy of IHRSA's "Eating Disorders" legal briefing paper, e-mail gr@ihrsa.org.

OHIO LAWMAKER WANTS STATE AND CONGRESS TO ENCOURAGE FITNESS

Ohio State Representative William Seitz is looking to the State to push the fitness crusade forward. Seitz says the legislature's 1999 measure to repeal the sales tax on health club memberships made sense. "Notably, we as a State should be encouraging health club memberships, not penalizing them through taxing our citizens." Unfortunately, House Bill 45 died on the House floor after being voted out of committee. The Republican pointed out the irony of the current sales tax:

"Today, I can go into a store, buy 50 Three Musketeers bars, and not be levied one penny of State sales tax. However, if I join a health club and pay dues, I am hit with State sales tax." The freshman representative, however, emphasized that he is not a proponent of introducing legislation for the sake of saying he did it, knowing it will never pass. Given the current economic downturn, that, according to Seitz, would most likely be the case right now if he introduced a bill to repeal the sales tax on fitness. Seitz anticipates a slightly different approach. He wants the State to allow workers to use Medical Savings Accounts to pay for health club memberships on a pre-tax basis. According to Seitz, while he would introduce legislation to address the Medical Savings Account issue on the "State side of things," he believes the General Assembly could also help influence Congress by introducing and passing a joint concurrent resolution to encourage Congress to do the same by amending the Internal Revenue Code as it relates to Medical Savings Accounts. "Today, an Ohioan can go to the emergency room complaining of angina or other heart complications and use his or her Medical Savings Account to pay for the emergency room deductible and co-payment amounts; however, that same person is not permitted to use one penny of his or her Medical Savings Account monies to pay for health and fitness club membership activities—activities that could have prevented those heart complications in the first place," Seitz said. Finally, Seitz will be looking at the economic and other viability of allowing health club memberships to be tax-deductible on residents' income tax forms, as well as keeping his eye on the right time to introduce legislation to repeal the sales tax on memberships.

FORMER PRESIDENT JOINS HARLEM YMCA

Bill Clinton has accepted a free, "honorary" membership at the Harlem YMCA, which is 10 blocks from his new office building. The former President accepted the family membership for himself and his daughter, Chelsea. A regular family membership at the club costs \$800 per year. The Harlem Y recently upgraded its equipment, adding new weights to its free weights room. The center also includes a gym, indoor pool, steam room and sauna.

STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

For more information on this bill, visit <http://www.ihrsa.org/publicpolicy/state/nj.html>. **NEW JERSEY:** AB 3719 has been referred to the Committee on Health. The measure would require that all health clubs have an AED on site and train employees in its use.

WORLD GYM INT'L MUST PAY REFUNDS TO MEMBERS OF FAILED FACILITY

A Riverside Superior Court judge has ruled that World Gym International is responsible for paying refunds and damages of up to \$1 million to patrons of a failed World Gym in Murrieta, California, the Press-Enterprise reports. Judge Erik Michael Kaiser said there was ample evidence to uphold a jury verdict against the Santa Monica-based health club licensor. The judge also upheld triple damages in the case. World Gym International said it will appeal the verdict and has posted an appeal bond of more than \$ 1.5 million that will cover judgment and refunds if the appeal is unsuccessful. Promoters of World Gym originally planned to open a 27,500 square-foot health club in Murrieta by January 1999.

SEVEN STATES PROPOSE AN INCREASE IN MINIMUM WAGE

While the U.S. Congress is set to act on the federal minimum wage later this summer, many states are already addressing the issue. Three states have enacted minimum wage legislation this year. Georgia & Wyoming raised theirs to meet the federal minimum wage of \$5.15. A new Maine law raises the minimum wage to \$6.65 beginning 1/1/02 and to \$6.15 on 1/1/03. Other states that are considering increases are: * Rhode Island: If enacted, SB 40 will raise the minimum wage from \$6.15 to \$6.65 effective 9/1/01; * Illinois: SB 1118 would raise the minimum wage to \$6.50 on 1/1/02 and adjust it annually according to the consumer price index; * Vermont: SB 103 would have increased the state minimum wage to \$6.75 beginning 1/1/02. SB 103 passed the Senate but failed to pass the House before the legislature adjourned last month; * California:

In the most sweeping of proposed minimum wage laws, HB 181 would increase the minimum wage to \$7.25 on 1/1/03, to \$7.75 on 1/1/04, to \$8.25 on 1/1/05, to \$8.75 on 1/1/06, and then adjust it annually to maintain employee purchasing power. On May 22, the Santa Monica, California City Council approved the nation's highest minimum wage rate, and the nation's first living wage ordinance to cover private sector businesses with no ties to the city. Supported by numerous members of the clergy, lawyers, low-income workers, unions, and local grassroots organizations, the ordinance passed easily by a 5-1 vote. The ordinance targets certain businesses whose annual gross receipts exceed \$5 million that are located either in the city's downtown area or its tourism "Coastal Zone" area. The ordinance mandates a new wage floor of \$10.50 per hour if health benefits are provided by the employer, and \$12.25 to \$13 per hour if no benefits are given. California's state minimum wage is \$6.25 per hour. The ordinance will become effective 7/1/02, and will increase every year thereafter to keep pace with inflation, corresponding to the Consumer Price Index. The City Council has pursued enactment of a living wage ordinance since 1999, despite divided public opinion.

THREE JURIES FIND FOR DEFENDANT HEALTH CLUBS

Juries in three separate cases have found in favor of the defendant health clubs when members sued the facilities for negligence. In a Florida case, a 66-year-old woman alleged that a club employee was negligent in failing to properly instruct her in how to perform a lunge exercise, causing her to fall and fracture her wrist. She demanded \$85,000. The jury found that there was no negligence on the part of the club. In a Maryland case, a radio personality in her 50's had finished a series of bench presses when the club's owner/fitness instructor pulled off a clamp holding the weight bar in place and the bar fell and struck the plaintiff in the head. The woman sued for \$300,000 over a head injury which she claimed resulted in headaches and required surgery. The jury found no negligence on the part of the club. In a Texas case, a 2 year-old girl was injured and sustained broken bones in her arm while in the club's day care. The girl's mother alleged negligence and sued for \$8,826 to cover past medical bills. The jury found that the club was not negligent, despite the mother's claim that there was no adult present to supervise the child when the accident occurred. For a free copy of IHRSA's "Injury Liability" legal briefing paper, e-mail gr@ihrsa.org.

"CASH COPY SELLS MEMBERSHIPS! IS YOUR WEB SITE CLIENT CENTERED OR "ME" CENTERED? TAKE THIS TEST TO FIND OUT."

By Pat Necerado

"Me, me, me, look at me, see what we have, look at what we can do, look at our services, sign our guest book, meet our staff, look at our pictures, see our club, here's our philosophy, this is how we do it, blah, blah, blah..." Don't make this very common web site mistake with the copy and content of your web site.

Avoid having a web site with a main selection of pages that tells your visitors all about you, your staff, or your unique style of business. This is web site suicide.

When someone enters your web site, their life (surf) expectancy is about 20-30 seconds. During this twenty or thirty seconds, they're glancing over your site seeking information that talks directly to them. To their problem, their need, or their want instantaneously.

Links that say, "See why our club is this" or "See why our

club is that" or "Here's why we're so great" (or something with similar meaning) will turn your prospects' thoughts away from their needs and feelings and toward logic and canalization. This takes them away from "emotional mode" and into "thinking mode."

Thinking mode is not where you want prospects. You want them visualizing, imagining, and dreaming about the BENEFITS of your offering, the instant they enter your site.

This is "emotional mode" and causes action. Links that are brief, direct, and to the point will accomplish this. For instance: "Lose 1-2 pounds of fat every week. Do it here." This may be a link that leads to membership information.

Don't get me wrong, your web site should contain information such as service listings, staff contacts, and even certain features of your club. These type of pages, links, and listings should not glare at your visitor when they first enter your site. They should only be

noticed if the visitor is particularly seeking that information, somewhere small and out of the spot light. To guarantee that your site is client centered, take this following test. If you answer "yes" to any of the questions below, I would suggest rethinking your strategy.

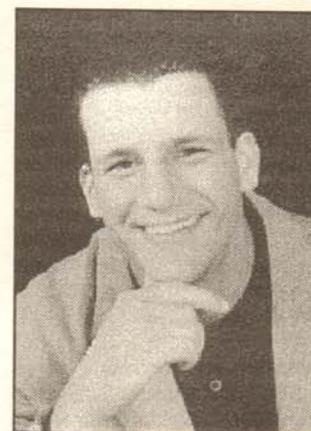
1. Does your site have pictures of the outside or inside of your facility on any of your main pages? This again, makes people think. Your prospects don't need to see pictures of the inside or outside of your facility when they come to your site. First, get them emotional enough to act, then they'll see your facility when they come in to join. Your members see your facility all the time, why distract them from purchasing or giving referrals by showing them pictures when they visit your site?

2. Does your site have the word "us, our, or we" on it? Take these words off and replace them with "you" and "you get"

3. Does your site have a "guest book" or "feedback" form? Change these to "instant info request forms" or "instant discount forms" or something of the like and give them something of value instantly when they fill out these forms, not just a promise to review their message

4. Does your site have a "cool links" or "other links" or "related links" page listed on your home page? Why lead your prospects and members away from doing business with you? If you want to give your visitors access to other related pages and sites, include these links within articles or on banner ads. Never have an "other links" section visible on your home page or any other significant page

5. Does your site invite your visitors to call or stop in? Change these invitations to "e-mail us here" and put your e-mail address visibly on every single page and after every single offer. Gather e-mails and start contacting your visitors regularly with



Pat Necerado

offers and special deals. If they need to call you they'll easily do so on their own, or after you invite them to within your e-mail campaign.

(Pat Necerado is the President of success-ercise, a website consulting firm specializing in the health club industry. Pat may be reached at: www.success-ercise.com)

..Brown continued from page 16

the sales process.

4. HOW YOUR SALES FORCE PERFORMS is directly related to how well you manage them. Salespeople left to their own devices will routinely take short cuts that they perceive to be "A better way". Our philosophy is we want it done "Our Way". There are very few people who will "Self Manage" very well. It's up to you to consistently monitor, guide, train, teach, and direct the efforts of your sales team. Be open to new and improved ways of doing things, but keep abreast of the basic immutable laws of sales and don't "Let the tail wag the dog."

5. TRACK and STUDY YOUR SALES DATA DAILY. Investigate. See if you can reconcile every sales opportunity, which occurred yesterday? If your staff isn't closing over 60%, something is wrong. 50% of the people tell you they want to join without you even asking them! You need to ask yourself, "Am I better off with a sales team who can only sell half

the time or flipping a coin with the potential member?" You can manage your staff to improve dramatically if you have and understand the facts.

6. TRAIN YOUR PEOPLE TO SELL OUR PRODUCT, NOT OUR PRICE! Are your people selling product or price? My bet is 8 out of 10 are really selling price. It's so much easier to ask people to join when your people actually care about people and truly understand that their job as salespeople is to get every individual who walks in the door started and maintaining a regular exercise program! Remember, price is only a consideration, not the deciding factor in the prospect's mind. If they like it, if they like you, if they feel good about the whole product, that is what's really important. If they like it, they don't care what it costs. My experience has told me that price is always more important to the salesperson than to the customer.

7. DON'T THROW UNTRAINED SALESPEOPLE "In the Creek without their knowing how to swim!" I would like to have 1% of all the money lost to

untrained staff. It's not their fault. It's yours, if you allow it. But the amount of lost revenue due to missed telephone inquiries and mishandled guests is staggering. If you think training them is expensive, then compare it to the cost of the equivalent of just one membership per day in your club. In most clubs that would equal somewhere in the vicinity of \$150,000 per year! Let me tell you, the loss of one membership per day is a very conservative estimate in most clubs. Forget the money for a minute, think about the human costs. That means 365 persons didn't get the chance to improve the quality of their lives. We should not forget that we truly do make a big impact in peoples lives everyday lives.

8. MAKE SURE EVERY GUEST IS TREATED EQUALLY WELL. This is a big problem in clubs these days. Salespeople try to read or qualify guests and don't discipline themselves to treat every guest as a legitimate sales opportunity. I would like to meet the salesperson that can qualify

guests accurately, even 50% of the time. Know why? Because no one can know what people are thinking. You have to take the time and effort to find out. The best advice is to treat everyone with a blank slate and treat every guest equally well.

9. WHEN PEOPLE DON'T JOIN, FIND OUT WHY! I once had a very wise man say to me after I had missed a sale, "Brown, what did you say to talk that person out of joining my club?" Years later I realized the wisdom of that statement. The assumption and core belief down to your very soul should be that if they came in the front door they MUST want to join. Salespeople in their infinite wisdom tend to give the "Gettysburg Address" when talking to potential members. Meaning they talk too much and love to hear the sound of their own voices. My vision of the perfect tour/presentation would be if the salesperson didn't say a word. Just listened and took notes. That is probably never going to happen, but at least move towards letting the potential member talk more than you. Investigate why people didn't join. Ask your staff

immediately after their presentation while its fresh in their minds and try to identify and learn from it.

10. IF NOTHING ELSE, MAKE SURE every guest is receiving a direct, sincere, urgent invitation to join today. Once this concept is securely entrenched in your people and culture then you can begin to see and pursue all the other opportunities available to you. Remember, secure it.... After years of being in this business, one night I sat straight up in bed about 3am thinking I better check my own backyard. Lets take the opportunity that is right in front of our eyes every day and make sure we are doing this one key core skill well. It benefits everyone, especially the customer. I wonder, have I visited your club lately?

(John Brown is a nationally known consultant, speaker and author. A veteran of the club industry for over 23 years, he owns, operates, manages and consults with over 80 clubs across the country and in South America. His company, Professional Club Management, Inc. is a leader in developing clubs. He can be reached at: (913) 557-9018 or email: Jbrown8137@aol.com)

...Minton

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the club closed and Minton inherited it. He recalls, "My goal was basically to keep the doors open long enough to liquidate it, so I could recover the tenant finish with a new tenant. But, I got in there in the mid 80s when the RTC and real estate went to hell in a handbasket. But, the little club started to grow and before you know it, I was spending more time on the club business than I was on my financial consulting firm!"

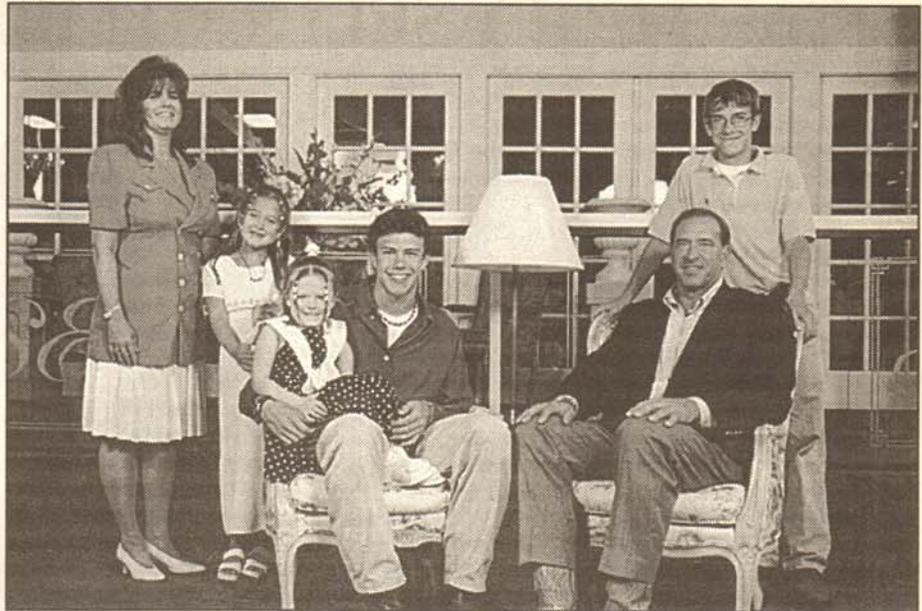
Mike Minton's Experience Could Help Your Club Change From Fitness Only To Family Fitness and Programming

A high percentage of commercial health club operations in the U.S. and overseas are indoor fitness only facilities catering primarily to adults. The things Mike Minton has learned and done to respond to his market opportunities could provide a blueprint for many of you that are out there thinking, "What am I going to do next?" Have you ever thought about it? Many of you are working day in and day out for your landlord. Mike Minton's story is all about changing that. It is about owning the land and buildings and facilities that you operate instead

of leasing. If this rings your bell, stop and take some real time to contemplate your own future. You may have new opportunities staring you right in the face and not even realize it.

We asked Mike Minton how he went about deciding that he was going to buy land and build a free standing building and eventually develop a unique multipurpose facility. Minton recalls, "Norm, for years I swore I wouldn't get into a multipurpose club operation because of the capital expenditure required to do so and the ongoing high overhead associated with such operations. Through the '80s and '90s we did great as the Icarian Fitness Center. We were generating around \$60-65 per square foot and I am told that was good. But, as non-profit, tax-free competition began to arrive, it became clear to me that we would have to make some significant changes just to survive the tax-free competition. We were virtually forced to become very creative, just for survival."

Minton continues, "Our first expansion was from 3,500 to 7,200 in space next door to the original shopping center location. Our next expansion was in 1993 when we acquired .62 acres at this site and built this 11,000 square-foot building that we now occupy. In 1997, we purchased additional land and expanded again with the 'Oasis' pool, sand volleyball courts, basketball court, pavillion, concession stand and restrooms. In September, 2000, we opened the 13,600 square-foot Field House Recreation Center with the basketball gym, kids play and activity center, snack bar and private party mezzanine. This Spring we added



The Minton Family (left to right) Marsha, Molly, Mendy, Zachary, Mike & Jairston

our Junior Olympic Pool in the Oasis area. After I opened the first outdoor pool and the 'Oasis', my 'not-for-profit' competition was telling prospective members that our Oasis Pool is just 'for little kids'. Of course Norm, you have seen that it is certainly not 'just for kids.' But, since we added our Junior Olympic Pool, we don't hear that from our tax-free competitors anymore! Plus, by using our bubble, we have made the 'Oasis' a year-round recreation environment with a resort atmosphere!"

Red Lerille, Ron and Sandy Franco and Jim and Lori Horvath Help Minton

Once Mike Minton had made up his mind to go forward with the club expansion and changes he decided that research would be wise in order to decide what to do and when to make the expansion and changes that he was going to make.

He recalls, "We started to travel to look at other club operations. Brad Burnett, of StairMaster, has been a tremendous resource for us. Whenever Brad would travel and see a unique operation he would tell me about it and I would put it on my list to visit. Red Lerille's in Lafayette, LA. and Ron and Sandy Franco's in Mandeville, LA. and Elmwood Fitness Center in New Orleans have all been great models for our club expansion. Red Lerille, Ron and Sandy Franco, and Lori and Jim Horvath have all taken time to

visit with Marsha and myself. And, anytime someone asks me to spend time with them so they can learn from what I have done, I will always take the time to do so because those folks were so generous with their time. Then we traveled to the New Braunfels General Store, the Schlitterbahn. They are the world famous water park designers and that's where we found out the manufacturers and suppliers of water slides, fountains and specialty pools. We took guidance from them and they are the ones that turned us onto IAAPA (International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions) in about 1996. IAAPA is an 85-year old trade association for amusement park, water park and other recreational facility owners and operators."

We asked, "How did you get clear in your mind what to do first and when?" Minton responded, "That had a lot to do with listening. I told Red, Ron and Sandy and Lori and Jim, 'We're little fish. We've got a 11,000 square-foot adult fitness center. We want to go into the family market. What is going to have the biggest impact and will allow us to go to the next level? We know we have to have pools, gymnasiums, etc. Since we didn't have a pool, they recommended that a pool be the first thing we should add. So then, the question became: 'What type of pool?' Due to head-to-head competition with these non-tax paying non-profits who can dump something on you overnight, we knew we had to get very, very creative, go to the IAAPA Convention and design a pool that was so unique the hospitals couldn't reproduce it just by

calling a pool contractor. The beauty of that 'Oasis' facility is that with a little more land we installed sand volleyball courts, outdoor basketball courts, a pavillion and concession stand. And, with our air bubble, we created more of a year-round resort atmosphere. Years ago when we would give a tour, we might say something about how many Icarian and StairMaster machines we have and how many classes we offer. Now, we give a very brief tour of the fitness building, answering questions along the way, and then we go immediately to the 'Oasis.' By the time we get to the field house, they are ready to join! We tell them that they basically get the fitness free! We tell them 'If you don't exercise, don't worry about it, you get the fitness for free with the 'Oasis' and the field house! You relieve that pressure when they say, 'Well, I don't want to make a commitment right now because I might not use it.' We say, 'Believe me, you and your family are going to use and enjoy this facility all year round!'"

The 'Oasis' and the New Field House - Value Laden Investments

We asked Minton to tell us how much land was used for the 'Oasis' component of his club and he indicated that it was approximately one acre. He also told us that the cost of the 'Oasis' water environment, sand volleyball courts and basketball courts, pavillion, Junior Olympic Pool and outdoor snack bar was under \$250,000. He said that he built the 13,500 square-foot Field House for about \$20 per square foot, making that addition extremely economical as well. These two installations costing under \$500,000 truly give the
 (See Minton page 22)

TEXARKANA HEALTH CLUB GRAVEYARD

These clubs have closed since 1987.

- European Health Spa
- Pumping Iron Gym
- Nautilus Fitness Center
- Superior Fitness Center
- Hard Bodies
- Texarkana Racquet Club
- Olympia
- J. Michaels
- Law Dogs Gym
- Curves
- Legends - Dr. Contreras
- Ashdown Nautilus
- Bubba's Gym

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club a 'resort' atmosphere and obvious year-round appeal. I arrived on a Sunday afternoon and the club parking lot was jammed. The 'Oasis' was packed with adults and kids and the place was just humming with activity that also spilled over into the Field House. If you didn't know that you were in East Texas, you would think you had just arrived at a popular beach resort. When I commented on the great value that investment meant to the club, Minton commented, "But Norm, we've done a lot of it with 'sweat equity.' The original facility was 3500 square-feet of leased space. Our first expansion took us to 7,200 square-feet of leased space. (These were fitness only facilities). In 1993 we secured our first SBA loan for Phase I, which is the 11,000 square-foot building we are in now. Several years later we utilized our second SBA loan to acquire the land for the Oasis pool complex, which was Phase 2. The most recent expansions, Phase 3, which was the addition of the Field House complex and Phase 4, which was the Junior Olympic pool, we capitalized ourselves from cash from operations. These developments have allowed us to grow the business to over \$1 million a year in revenue with \$300,000 in annual profits!"

Getting Fit While Having Fun!

While Minton was showing me around the club we were approached in the 'Oasis' area by one of Minton's club members, Doug Oulette. Spotting my camera, Doug came up to me and just started raving about Minton's SportsPlex and the terrific job Mike Minton had done over the years. Doug's enthusiasm for the SportsPlex was amazing so I asked him to put his comments in writing and this is what he said, "I moved from Maine to Texarkana 10 years ago and discovered Minton's SportsPlex and have been working out there ever since. From the first time I met Mike and Marsha, I felt like I was part of their family. I have worked out at a lot of different gyms in my lifetime but none compare to the SportsPlex. It has grown from a 3,500 square foot facility to what it is today, over 24,000 square feet! I was blown away by Mike's approach to fitness. Having a clean, well-kept fitness facility is great, but having a fun time with your family is the real backbone of why

Minton's does so well. You not only have the opportunity to exercise at Minton's. You can also swim, play in the field house with the kids, or play volleyball! Minton's SportsPlex is an all-around fun place to get fit and have fun with the family."

IHRSA and THRSA

Mike Minton joined IHRSA over 10 years ago and THRSA about two years after its inception. While he feels he has benefited from both relationships, Minton expressed concern with both IHRSA (International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association) and THRSA. Here is what he had to say, "The problem that I had with both IHRSA and THRSA is that they are both geared toward these big mega clubs with big budgets. The majority of clubs across America are Mom and Pop operated fitness centers and they can't afford to travel to San Francisco and Atlanta and many other places. But, over the years we read that CBI Magazine from cover to cover every month and we educated ourselves! I knew nothing about the fitness industry when I started. While I think I am a good businessman, until you actually do this, you don't really know and understand it! I really learned everything out of CBI and meeting people like Red, Ron and Sandy and Lori and Jim." We asked when he became involved in THRSA and he responded, "I joined THRSA about 5 years ago. The thing I liked about THRSA is that they have staff training here in Texas. And, they have a trade show in San Antonio close to us that I can drive to. The people I have networked with at THRSA have been terrific. Lori Horvath has really taught us a lot. I think the world of her. She and her husband, Jim have come over and looked at our books with Marsha and I and have been very helpful. Her husband, Jim is a highly successful personal trainer and has a P.T. operation at the Mansion Hotel, the most prestigious hotel in Dallas. In fact, Jim developed a Personal Training Video Tape for sale at Neiman Marcus a couple of years ago."

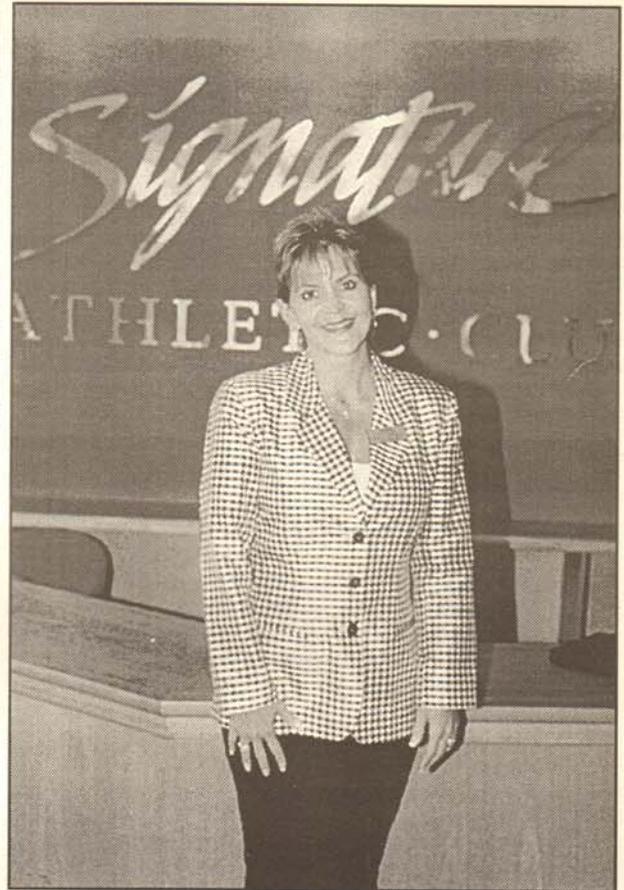
Lori Horvath, General Manager of Wellbridge's Signature Athletic Club in Dallas, Texas, said this about Minton, "I am jazzed to hear that you are going to do a Cover Story on Mike Minton in the July edition!!! It's the little guys (so to speak) not the big ones that put in the "sweat equity" in our industry and Mike

is an awesome example of just that! My husband Jim and I have known Mike for several years. Mike is the exception to the rule in having a vision "out of the box" and making it become something profitable within his Club. You've heard the old saying, "I'll believe it when I see it"....well, Mike believes in it first, and then we all see it!! This April I had the opportunity to travel to Austin to testify in front of the Ways and Means Committee with Mike regarding the Texas state tax on health club memberships and unfair competition in Texas. The passion he displayed for our industry that would benefit everyone was one thing, but the ability to make "the connections" to even get THRSA's foot in the door was another. I know every board member would agree he has been a true asset to our Government mission in Texas. Whether I'm consulting for his Club, as in years past, sitting on the THRSA board, or brainstorming children's programs over the phone, I am always "lifted" up after sharing time with Mike Minton, and those individuals are far and few between. You'll know Mike the first time you meet him by his energy (I truly don't think he even sleeps), and it is THAT energy you will always remember. He is a true friend of the industry, and I am so thankful that he is my friend too."

Mike Minton has become involved in serving THRSA and explains his role this way, "THRSA has a Board of Directors and three committees: marketing, education and government relations. I serve as Chairman of Government relations committee. Our committee's job is to stay abreast of Legislation that impacts our industry, and to work aggressively to introduce Legislation on behalf of our industry, which we did this past year."

One-By-One They All Left

Minton was asked, "Mike, give us a historical review of the departure of your competition over the years." Minton replied "Oh boy. Since 1987, I have seen 13 tax paying, for-profit fitness centers close. They included a Nautilus club owned by a very formidable competitor out of Little Rock, Arkansas. Over the years, there have been, on average, 3 to 5 other for-profit fitness centers in this market at one time. But, right now, the Minton SportsPlex is the only tax-paying, for-profit fitness cen-



Lori Horvath - GM - Signature Athletic Club

ter in Texarkana. There is St. Michael's Hospital Fitness Center that is about 17,000 square-feet and Wadley Hospital Fitness Center that is 20,000 sq.ft. Naturally, the Texarkana Community College is much bigger than that because they have indoor pools, courts, fitness areas, etc."

A Community Place For The Family To Enjoy

The Minton SportPlex provides a facility that offers a very well equipped fitness center, group exercise classes, two swimming pools (enclosed by an air supported bubble in the winter), indoor and outdoor basketball, indoor and outdoor volleyball, a pavillion, concession stand, a large, colorful indoor kids play area with all sorts of games and play areas for kids, a private party mezzanine overlooking the Field House gym, kids play areas and snack bar. All of this is available to the Texarkana community for just \$85 per month for families, \$64 per month for couples and \$47 per month for singles. Minton indicated that he has 1200 memberships with a total of 3,300 members. Minton commented on

his club's non-dues income by saying, "The non-dues income for the club is significant, often reaching \$200 per month per family for food, beverages and entertainment. In a small fitness only club, you can't generate anywhere near this amount of non-dues income. The beauty of getting into the family market is the additional non-membership revenue. Last year, 37 cents out of every dollar was generated from non-dues sales. This year, we will break 40 to 42%. My goal is to get to 50%!"

Children's Programming Is A Key

We spoke with Minton about the club's children's after school and summer programs. He said, "During the school year we pick up the kids that are enrolled in the after school program and bring them to the club. We assist them with their home work and then we get into their fitness and sports activities. It might be dance, gymnastics, swimming, karate, bowling, golf, you name it, we have a full curriculum. Then Mom or Dad will pick them up and take them home for dinner or if the parent wishes, we will provide dinner for the chil-

(See Minton page 23)

Sales • Retention • Referrals

"Circle of Membership Success"

Part 3

By Ray Gordon

“What this means to you is...” Six magic words that identify a professional membership salesperson. In previous articles, I have discussed the value of the proper greeting. Presenting yourself as someone who is genuinely enthused to meet the prospect and is willing to help him is a key to sales success. The non-exercising prospect has many options other than joining your club. Remember, other clubs in your area are NOT your biggest competition. Home equipment, diets, quick weight loss centers, books, etc., are the proper attitude at the initial greeting starts the selling process, but it is just that, the start of a trusting relationship and sales process. People love to “BUY” but hate to be “SOLD”. The core of the “Circle of Membership Success” is the non-member’s needs. Yes, they have them and yes, they may be very conservative about letting you know what they truly are. A series of concerned open-ended questions will assist in

discovering the true needs and fears of the non-member. Remember that the “fear of failure” or “I’m too fat/old/skinny etc.” also qualifies as a need. The information that we gather then sets the stage for giving the benefits of your club and your fitness equipment. This is the time to show solutions to their needs. Let me say that in other words. “Use your product to propose results-oriented solutions to their problems.” Satisfied customers have purchased solutions to problems. The goal is to make people want to do business with us. This is crucial to the selling process. In order for people to want to change their lifestyle, start something that is not currently a habit and pay us money for it, there must be a benefit for them. Are all benefits the same for everyone? Absolutely not. That is why you must always find some portion of their needs and then give a solution or benefit for solving it. After 20 years of consultation with over 600 clubs and shopping thousands of others, I still find many (most) membership sales staff conducting a ‘PRODUCT DUMPING’ tour. Dumping is best described as reciting features

of their exercise machines or classes without the important words **“What this means to you is...”** Remember that people don’t buy memberships for what they are; they buy memberships for what it will do for them. I want to digress a little here and talk about a pet peeve of mine. Over a recent period, as I was visiting competing clubs and taking tours, I asked a simple question. “Why is your equipment better?” Responses ranged from “It’s the most expensive” to “It’s brand new!” To be fair, I would give an A+ in sales to the few that explained how the design would assist me to achieve safer and probably faster results. I would like to issue a challenge to all equipment manufacturers: Don’t just sell the equipment to the clubs. Help them train and educate the membership staff to sell and retain more members on your equipment. (Hint: the warranty and price are only important to the owner.) New members will give the owner justification to buy more equipment. Now that I got that off my chest, let us get back to the product benefits. Focus on the desired end-results benefits, not just the product. Give a ben-

efit of a machine or class, then go back to the center of the circle and ask an additional open-ended question. People will buy when the value to them is more than the price. You must present logical understandable proof of **“Why this is important to you is...”** One of the biggest mistakes membership sales people make is believing that price is the most important consideration to the prospect. Most sales staff are brainwashed into believing that. Buyer surveys constantly look for value (although price is included in value). On the tour you have the opportunity to explain the value of being a member of your club. “Perceived” quality and benefits are based on what the prospect “expected”. Convincing them of the benefits is the easiest way to overcome any objection to buying a membership. One of the objectives of the tour is to learn your customer’s buying motives and then solve that problem. Remember on your next tour, the difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra. In upcoming issues of *The Club Insider* we will discuss the importance of solving objections BEFORE you get to the



Ray Gordon

membership presentation. Have a great day and remember: if Better is possible, then Good is not enough. YOU can make a difference.

(Ray Gordon is the Founder and President of Sales Makers, a 20-year club membership sales management and consulting firm. In March, 2001, Sales Makers was honored by IHRSA as The Associate Member of the Year at the 20th Anniversary Convention.)

...Minton

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dren as well. We charge \$220 per month for one child after school Monday through Friday from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. For the Summercare Program, kids are dropped off beginning at 7:00 a.m. and they stay until 5 or 6:00 p.m. in the evening. The cost for Summercare is \$400 per month for the first child and \$350 for the second child and so on. The child care programs are an important aspect of our business, generating \$43,000 per month this Summer.”

Minton's SportsPlex Has Been Working With The Special Olympics Since 1993

Minton's SportPlex became involved as an Official Special Olympics Training Site in 1993 when Arnold Schwarzenegger was Chairman of the President's

Council On Physical Fitness and Sports and continues that program today. Minton comments, “They started a program in conjunction with IHRSA called the ‘Official Special Olympic Training Centers. Through that program we open our facilities free of charge to the Special Education/Special Olympics and then we hosted a Special Olympic fund raiser once a year. Since 1993 we have raised over \$75,000 for Special Education departments in our school districts. We are proud to still be a Special Olympics Training Center.’ We also provide free memberships to the Special Education school teachers of our community. In fact, in one year, one school lowered the teacher’s workman’s compensation claims by 50% as a result of their utilizing our free membership programs. Right now, we serve as a conduit and organizer of area Special Education for seven school districts that go out and raise money from cor-

porations in the area to sponsor the Special Education Kids. It has gotten to the point where there is some expense involved and we have dwindling dollars in the school districts for handicapped kids, so what we are doing here is to organize a group of industries that will pay for these children to come to the SportsPlex Field House on a weekly, instead of a monthly basis.”

A Chamber of Commerce Supporter and Worker

Mike Minton, as do other smart business people across the country, has been actively involved in the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce for years. We contacted Mr. Stewart Daniels of the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce for his comments. He said, “What is so interesting about what Mike has done here is that he has added that Field House and this year a second

swimming pool. So now he has very good after school and summer programs for youngsters. And, one of the things I am excited about from the Chamber’s prospective is that the way the facilities are laid out, it is one of the few places in the country that can host an all-terrain volleyball tournament all on one site. They can have indoor volleyball in the Field House, sand volleyball on the sand courts, water volleyball in the new Junior Olympic Pool and grass volleyball on the grassy areas. He had one such event with 32 teams, four from the local area and 28 from out of town. We are planning to conduct another Tournament this Summer and two next year. We see all terrain volleyball tournaments as a very unique tourist draw. We at the Chamber are working with Mike and we are going to invest some dollars in soliciting teams to come here and we will assist with trophies. There will also be some other corporate sponsors in-

involved. From a tourism development standpoint we are going to make an investment promoting all-terrain volleyball tournaments because we see it as a unique tournament that every community up and down the road will not have. That is not the case with youth baseball or softball tournaments. I just see this as a very unique opportunity to bring some people to Texarkana that are not coming here now. Mike has a club member named Randy Hilton, that is a volleyball enthusiast and has assisted him in this effort and that has been helpful.”

Mr. Daniels added, “As long as Mike Minton has been in Texarkana he has been an avid community supporter. He is always on the giving end. You’ve got to have those givers to have the right kind of community and he is one of those. He has done a lot of volunteer work with the Chamber. Membership drives, special events, you name it, he has done his share. He is involved a lot right now with

(See Minton page 24)

New Scholarship to Benefit Students in CHHP

By Bob Demyan,
Oregon State University

Thanks to the efforts and vision of a local entrepreneur, each year two students in the College of Health and Human Performance will be one step closer to realizing their dreams.

The Corvallis Fitness Center Scholarship was established in 1999 to help students in financial need pursue their academic goals. The Scholarship is the vision of Corvallis Fitness Center president and owner, Rick Bennett. He cites the success of his business as one of the driving forces behind the Scholarship. "I've been in this business for nineteen years and the main rea-

son for our success has been our staff," said Bennett. "My management staff is all OSU grads, and they've made all the difference. This is a way for me to express my commitment to a program that has been essential to my business' success," continued Bennett.

"This Scholarship is a terrific example of a local business entity giving back to its community in an enduring and significant way," said Jeffrey McCubbin, interim dean of the College of Health and Human Performance.

According to the fund's guidelines, students with an interest in either Exercise and Sport Science or Health Promotion and Education are eligible to receive the award. The fund's emphasis is on supporting students with an interest in fitness and health activ-

ity issues as well as demonstrated financial need. "As often happens in higher education, a qualified and capable student finds himself or herself struggling to make ends meet," said McCubbin. "This sort of support can make all the difference in a student's ability to succeed," he continued.

For Rick Bennett of Corvallis Fitness, this scholarship is also a commitment to the future of his profession. Mr. Bennett and his club are members of IHRSA, the International Health and Racquet Sports Association, the flagship organization for health and fitness clubs which has set membership goals for the coming decade. "By 2010 we hope to double health club membership in the United States

and worldwide," said Bennett. "We'd like to have 50 million people working out in America by that time," he said.

Clearly, such growth would spur a large demand for athletic trainers and fitness professionals. "In the last five years we've seen the most successful clubs being the ones that are service-driven," Mr. Bennett said. "Clubs that have staff on hand with fitness backgrounds are going to be the way of the future. They'll be able to provide a level of programming and activities that consumers will come to expect."

As America's "Baby Boomers" enter their leisure years of retirement, they will no doubt spur a growing demand for structured and guided physical activities from their health clubs. Traditional

workouts will be increasingly enhanced by staff knowledgeable in areas that benefit this graying population.

For Rick Bennett, these trends bode well for his industry's future, a future that is inevitably tied to the quality of its people. "I'm a believer in the program at OSU," said Mr. Bennett. "The leadership and faculty at the College of Health and Human Performance have developed an excellent and innovative program," he continued. "They've demonstrated time and again that they understand the needs of this industry and care deeply about their student's future. This is my way of helping them continue to do that."

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•**PAT NECERATO** - President - www.successercise.com

•**CINDY SCIBETTA** - Associate - JLR Associates - (401) 245-0077.

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•**CARRIE MORROW** - Legal/Fitness Consultant - carriemorrow@aol.com

•**MIKE CONNOR** - President - Optimal Fitness - (413) 567-7300

•**TOM LINCIR** - President - Ivanko Barbell Company - (310) 514-1155

•**JOHN BROWN** - President - Professional club management - (913) 557-9018

•**ARMAN ECKELBARGER** - President - Company Wellness Plans, Inc. - (727) 372-3882

...Minton

continued from page 23

the youth programs and I couldn't begin to tell you all he's doing in that regard. But, just knowing Mike and the family, that is the way they are. He has made a significant capital investment there that benefits the community and school districts. He has grown the business from scratch. What you see out there is his vision coming to reality. And, Mike already has a mental picture of the next expansion. It is the American way!"

Just for the record, Mike Minton clued us in on his vision of his Phase V expansion. He says, "On the drawing board at this time are several further expansions to our current facilities. We are determining the feasibility of

erecting a 35,000 square-foot multi-purpose indoor facility that can house a soccer arena, up to 4 full court basketball courts or 4 tennis courts and could be used for special events including corporate parties, class reunions, etc. Also, we are considering a second location for a similar SportPlex facility on the Arkansas side of town.

There are over 16,800 commercial health clubs in the United States and the Minton SportPlex, developed by a terrific entrepreneur, Mike Minton, stands out and sits proudly in East Texas as a shining example and model for "thinking outside the box." If you are sitting in your club, gym or fitness center and are thinking about what you can do to grow your business and how you can quit working for your landlord, use the lessons learned and shared by Texarkana, Texas' Mike

Minton as a guide. You might be surprised how it changes your business and your life. Go to: www.sportsplex.com and check out Mike's Website.

(Norm Cates, Jr. is the Publisher and Editor of The **CLUB INSIDER** News and a 27-

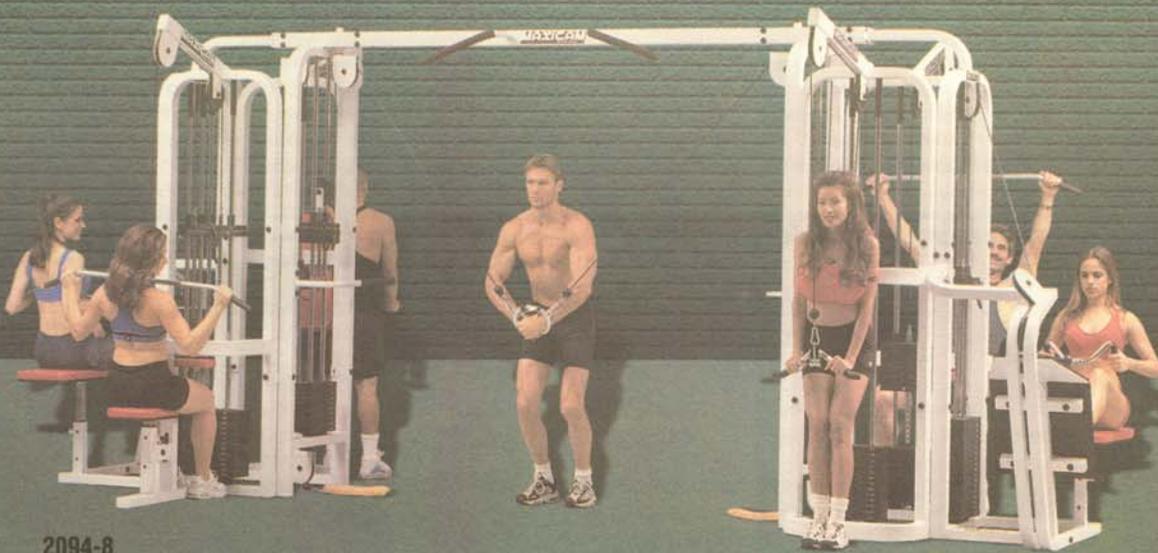
year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. Cates was the 1st President and a Co-founder of IHRSA in 1981. In March, 2001, Cates was honored with IHRSA's highest award when he received the DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award. In June, 2001, Cates was again honored, this time by the

Italian Fitness Federation, who named Cates the Fitness Journalist of the Year at its 3rd Annual Awards Ceremony held in Tortoreto Lido, Italy. Cates may be reached at: clubinsidernews@mindspring.com)

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The CLUB INSIDER News Worldview

THE 2001 PREMIO FITNESS ITALIA AWARDS CEREMONY were presented on June 23, 2001 in Tortoreto Lido, Teramo, Italy.

A performance of 17 dynamic fitness programs was staged by 300 enthusiasts and as a special event Fausto Di Giulio has entered into the Guinness World of Records book by leading 198 3B Fitboxing instructors from all Europe for the title of "World's Longest Fitboxe Lesson" with a lesson stretching 1215 meters for 30 minutes with 99 3B standing bags on the seaside of Alba Adriatica, Teramo, Italy.

Results for the international awards are listed on page #5. The Italian award winners appear follow. Next month we will have photos of the event and a more in-

depth report. Our thanks to FAUSTO DI GIULIO

Italian Categories Winners were:

Premio Sociale - Italian Philanthropy Award sponsored by ADVCOM.

This award was chosen from Italian based organizations ranging in interests from human rights, animal rights, global and local environmental concerns, community services and outreach through fitness programs.

The winner was RED CROSS

Premio "Medicina and Fitness" sponsored by Professione Fitness for the research in the fitness health related field. The winner was Dott. Leonardo Vecchiet

Premio "Fitness and Stampa" sponsored by Life Fitness

For national writers and Journalists specializing in reporting on fitness matters, who are authors of articles published in newspapers or cultural and information magazines about fitness, well being, and fitness marketing

The winner was Redazione de Il Sole 24 Ore Sport

Premio "Presenter dell'anno" sponsored by FIF

To the best International Aerobics, Funk or Step presenter.

The winner was Diana Pagano

Premio "Presenter Fitboxe" sponsored by 3B Fitness Systems. To the most charismatic and technical national Fitboxe presenter

The winners were

Sabino Vanni and Mario Di Loreto Premio "Fitness and Sport" sponsored by Raybest. To the national sportsman who is promoting a healthy and active way of life

The winner was Yuri Chechi

Premio "Fitness Club dell'anno" sponsored by 3B Fitness Systems. This award recognizes architects, consultants, facility owners and managers who have embarked on construction or renovation projects that meet the highest standards required to further the prosperity and future success of fitness clubs. The winners are evaluated according to several criteria, including: functional, planning, design, site and cost.

The winner was VicoCenisio - Lorenzo Schnur - Milano

Premio "Direzione Commerciale dell'anno" sponsored by Break Even Point

For the best sales team of the year that is showing not only good results, but a genuine care of the life and health of the clients.

The winner was Direzione Le Club- Piacenza Premio "Fitness and Spettacolo" sponsored by Patrizio Panichi. For the Movie or TV VIP that is promoting the fitness, health and wellbeing lifestyle.

The winner was Cristina Plevani

Don't miss next years event the 4th International Italian Fitness Awards to be held in Tortoreto, Teramo, Italy on Saturday 22nd June 2002 more information and photographs of the 2001 night of winners is available on www.fitnessmarketing.it <http://www.fitnessmarketing.it/info@fitnessmarketing.it>

Norm Cates' **THE Club Insider** NEWS

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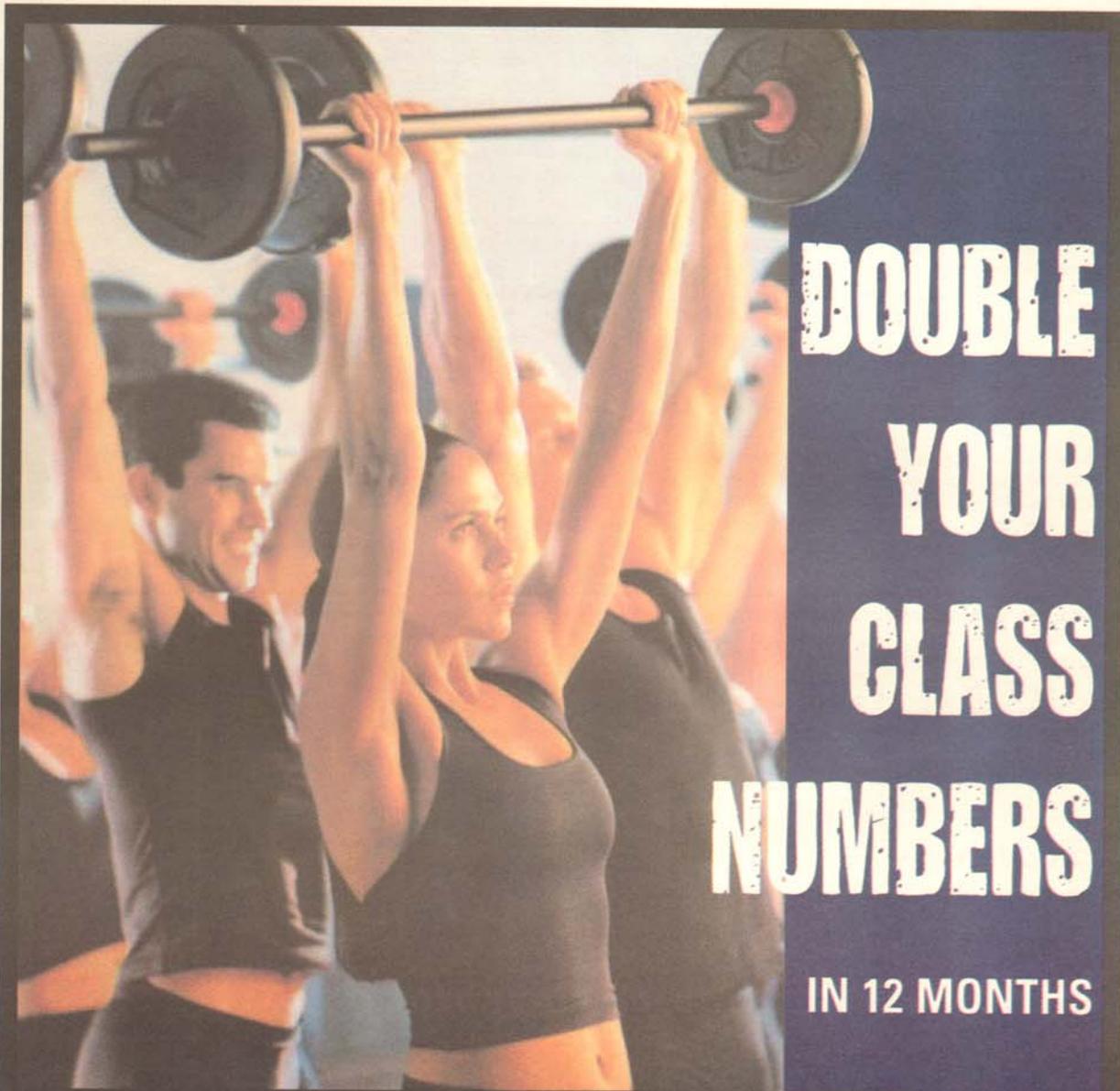
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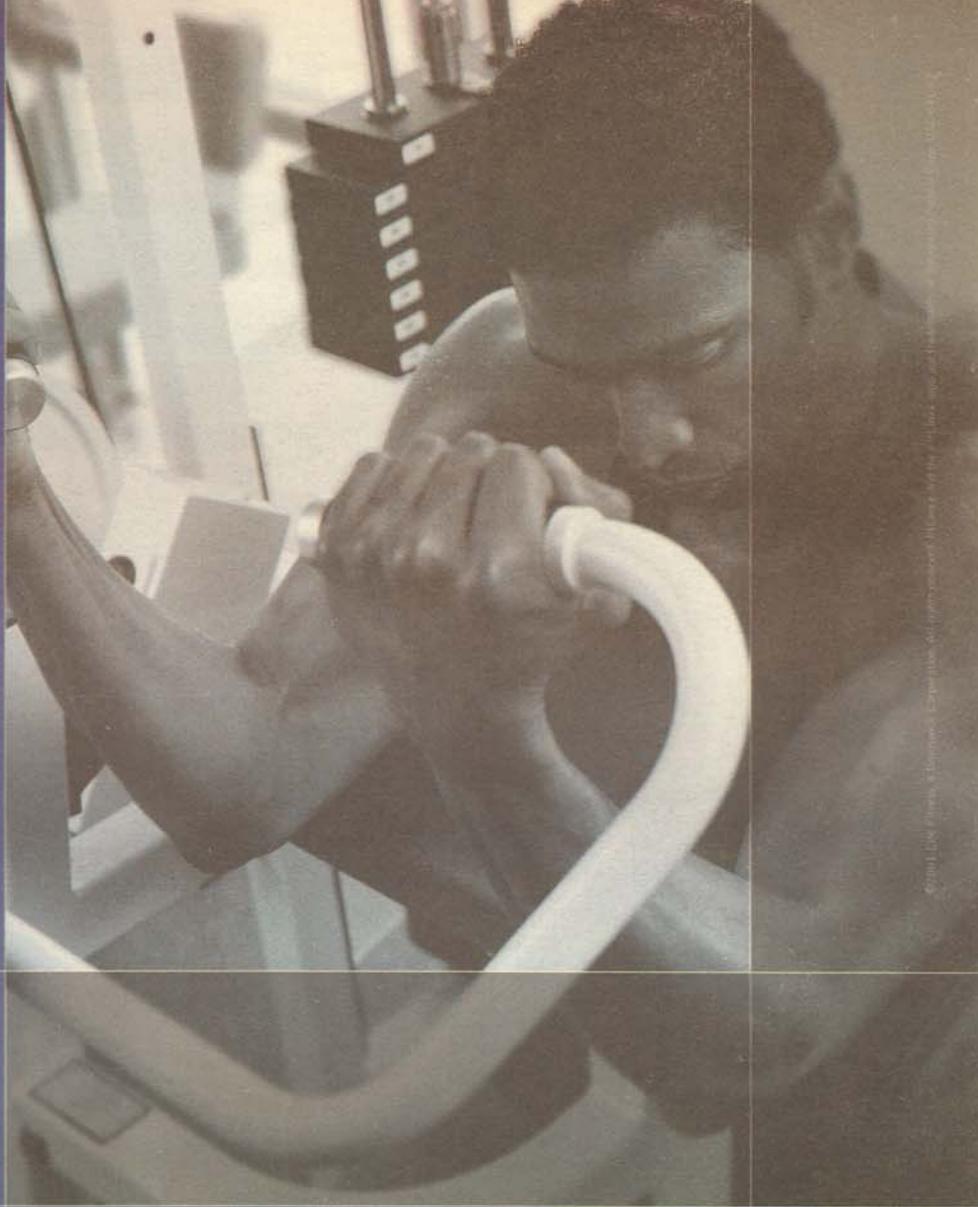


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