

band and theme. "We wanted to be able to dance well with the music," Malapaz says. After the first class, the couple knew how to do a basic step and had learned a few surprising things about themselves. "I didn't realize how tight my body was," Malapaz says. Dilcher noted the demands from head to toe. "Footwork is involved, but the stabilization of the upper body is also required," she says. "It definitely is a form of exercise because you are constantly moving and rotating your hips."

Ron and Colette McKie, who were in the same class, decided to try to take on salsa because it looked lively and fun. "It is a fast dance, with lots of body parts moving, so it exercises your body and stimulates your cardio," Ron says. "The hips and legs seemed to get a very good workout."

Salsa, while partnered, resembles swing variations with small concentrated steps that require a loose lower body. The movements are designed for a small dance space, and if you decide to dance solo, they free up your upper body for your own improvisation.

"Salsa can really help to tighten your core muscles and isolate the abdominals, especially the obliques," says Gooding. "For women, learning how to dance in heels helps with posture and balance, not to mention the great calf workout."

She adds, "I have had numerous clients who are athletes who say that learning salsa and other ballroom dances has improved their performance in their sports skills. Clients who do not exercise regularly often tell me how they have a new found energy when they start dancing and that they feel happier about their bodies as well as their lives."

Private and group salsa lessons are offered throughout the Baltimore-Washington, D.C., area. You can find them online at various Web sites, including www.latin-dance.com and www.salsawild.com. Local resources include Annapolis Dance Academy, (410) 757-8860, www.annapolisdanceacademy.com; Davidsonville Dance Club, (301) 805-0771, www.davidsonvilledanceclub.org; Anne Arundel Community College, (410) 777-2222, www.aacc.edu; Cancun Cantina, (410) 761-6188, www.cancuncantina.com, and Arthur Murray Franchised Dance Studio, (410) 544-0100, www.arthurmurraymd.org.

Capoeira—Brazilian Play Fighting

By Conal Darcy



Capoeira class taught by Jason White in Edgewater.

Capoeira (pronounced kap-oo-era) is a form of play fighting from Brazil that combines music, dance, and martial arts. It is a conversation of flowing movement where two players perform attacks and respond with evasions. The goal is not to injure but to trick your opponent into dodging amiss through feints and guile. There is no need to hit your opponent, as you have already shown your superiority as a player when you trick him.

At the core of capoeira is the music, whose beat dictates the style and flow of the game. The *capoeiristas* (players) sing and play traditional instruments, such as the drum and *berimbau*, a steel-string bow, as they stand in a *roda* (pronounced hoda), or circle. Two players are inside, rounding each other low to the ground, performing kicks and handstands, ducking, and, suddenly yet gracefully, sweeping to the side to avoid a return attack—all to the beat of the music.

The game originated in freed slave communities during Brazilian colonialism and was even outlawed due to association with rebellions and other illegal acts by those held in slavery. It remained an underground sport until 1937 when a capoeira master named Mestre Bimba was allowed to open the first school for the game in Brazil.

Now an integral part of Brazilian culture, capoeira has transformed from an unstructured game into a growing international movement. Thousands of schools have opened worldwide. Even Annapolis is home to a class. It is run by Pasadena native Jason White, who trained in Brazil while performing mission work.

"My missionary companion told me to put on sweats because we were going down to support an activity with the young men in the church. . . It turns out that they were beginning weekly capoeira classes that week. . . Before long, I was hooked," says White about his introduction to the game.

Capoeira values flexibility, agility, and cunning over strength. Moves like cartwheels and high kicks provide a "semi-aerobic" workout, according to White. "There is no stance and very little standing still in capoeira. . . Many of the same benefits you would get from going to a dance class and martial arts class are found in training," he says.

White's goal is to teach both the physical and the cultural aspects equally. "To balance learning the *gônga* [the basic movement] while learning kicks, dodges, Portuguese songs, and new musical instruments is a challenge. I try to make capoeira accessible and not offer drinks

from a fire hose. At the same time, I try to provide an environment where those who want to advance more quickly can do so."

This light approach makes it easy for beginners to become involved without overdoing it. While the sport can involve

some complicated moves, novices can approach these at a slower pace. "As far as I am concerned, the only thing that may keep someone from doing capoeira is their own desire," says White.

Capoeira classes are held in Annapolis

(www.balancecapoeira.com), Washington D.C., (www.capoeira-angola.org, www.capoeiradc.com), and Baltimore (oficinadacapoeira.tripod.com, www.baltimorecapoeira.org).

BOSU –Both Sides Up

By j.s. houck

Other than skis and snowboards, what equipment do members of the U.S. Ski & Snowboard Team rely upon for balance training? Survey says . . . BOSU. What the heck is BOSU? BOSU is an athletic training device consisting of half an inflated rubber ball affixed to a platform, which can be used with the platform side either up or down for different types of balance challenges. The name is an acronym for "both sides up," a reference to the ways a BOSU can be used. It was invented by David Weck of San Diego, California, after many attempts to rehabilitate a back injury he suffered. The result was a balance, core stability, and proprioception training device first introduced in 1999 to a select group of professional and Olympic teams, who quickly began to rave about and endorse the product.

Basic exercises with the BOSU have you standing or sitting on the half-ball, balancing while you go through exercises such as squats, compressions, leg abductions, side lunges, and V sit-ups, among others. Flip the BOSU ball-side down and you can perform push-ups, ball-tilts, etc. When you combine these exercises with maintaining your balance, they engage more muscles while stimulating neuromuscular and sensory training—*proprioception and kinesthesia*. Commonly used in physical therapy rehabilitation, proprioception training strengthens your sense of the position of parts of your body



A BOSU ball can be used in a variety of methods to increase strength, balance, and posture.

Training BOSU Style

On BOSU's official Web site, www.bosu.com, you can learn the ins and outs of what BOSU training is all about, the range of products available, and techniques to get you moving toward a healthier you. Another site is David Weck's (the inventor's) web blog, which offers BOSU insight, tips, and a gamut of exercises and fun ways to use the BOSU. Visit bosufitness.com/blog to read more. Now you're ready to move from the computer to the gym!

relative to other, neighboring parts. For example, after an ankle sprain, patients often feel an unstable sensation in the joint. Proprioception training reteaches your body to control the position of the injured joint. When you exercise on the unstable surface of the BOSU, your sensory input increases, which engages and improves motor skills, kinesthetic awareness, and balance. Your body blueprints the training so that later you physically adapt more quickly during activities of athletic training and daily living.

Today, word of BOSU training and its appeal is spreading like wildfire. Fitness enthusiasts continually search for new training methods to work into their exercise regimens, and BOSU has provided just that. Weck continues to devise new techniques and exercises almost daily and posts them on his blog: www.bosufitness.com/blog. One of his recent entries describes his daily improvement in incorporating a jump rope into BOSU training—"a breakthrough," he states.

In Anne Arundel County, two health centers are officially offering BOSU training classes, according to the BOSU.com index of national providers: Evolutions Body Clinic in Annapolis and Bally Total Fitness in Glen Burnie. Many area gyms, however, have BOSU devices available for unsupervised use by members. And in many cases on-site trainers will advise you how to use them and offer advice to get you started.