

SKIING FIT TO SKI

The Pilates Alternative

If you still can't come to grips with traditional exercise programs or have an injury which rules you out, read on . . .

To successfully master a mogul field, race down a slalom course, or even negotiate the beginners' slope at your local resort, your mental and physical states must be "in balance".

No matter how fit you are, if you're



psychod out you just won't make the grade and, even if you have all the good intentions in the world, without a body fit enough to perform the task you'll be going nowhere fast.

It all makes sense, right? Enter the Pilates Method of exercise . . .

"Our program, at the Body Control Centre, follows the Pilates Method," explained director, Allan Menezes, "the exercises are designed to work out both body and mind.

"We mix the best of Western physical training methods with Eastern meditation ideals."

Don't worry, you won't be forced to chant a mantra while doing sit-ups or inhale incense during a workout. Instead, the mind skills come from the concentration required to perform the 30, or so, exercises.

To do this, you must block out all other thoughts and focus on the given task. After a one and a half hour session, you leave thinking clearly and feeling relaxed. You've exercised your mind while you tone your body.

Menezes: "The idea goes back to the early 1900s when Josef Pilates developed the exercise program for ballet dancers looking to improve muscle balance, flexibility and co-ordination to help prevent injuries.

"From there the method has evolved to cater for everyone, from top-class athletes to ordinary people who want to improve their shape and fitness."

Menezes discovered the Pilates Method the hard way . . .

"I was very good at track and field and football," stated Menezes, "until I



TOP: Pilates Method guru, Alan Menezes, can help you rehabilitate from an injury.

ABOVE: Go skiing at the Body Control studio: this machine works out all the right muscles.

suffered a chronic back injury which put my athletics career on hold. Nothing I tried alleviated the problem.

"I moved to London and put my athletics on hold," he continued, "I went back to studying for my Masters Degree. By accident I picked up a leaflet which promised to fix injuries . . . that was it: after an intensive session I was cured, became a devotee of the method, learnt the techniques and set up my own studios in Sydney.

"The thing which impressed me was the totally different approach offered by

If you suffer an injury, check out the Pilates alternative.

Pilates. I discovered stretches and techniques which I'd never been exposed to during all my years of athletics and even karate.

"I did a class every day, for six weeks and I haven't had a single pain for 10 years."

Looking around the Body Control Studio, the majority of customers were ballet dancers. Some attended for injuries, others to maintain fitness.

Menezes was keen to stress, although the exercises were originally developed for ballet dancers, anyone can benefit from the techniques.

So, what's it all about? What can this method offer a skier?

"For 'Joe Average' the exercises will give you tone and confidence and you don't have to be in any shape at all to begin a program.

"All classes are conducted on a one-on-one basis: one instructor for every client, for the one and a half hour session. This personalisation is essential to ensure the exercises are done correctly and maximum progress is achieved.

"During the first session we'll determine how we can help you, it's more for our benefit than the clients. Then it's right to work: we require customers to attend three times a week, for two months to really feel different."

Menezes handed me pages and pages of personal recommendations of the Pilates Method from physiotherapists, sports doctors and injured athletes, all extolling the virtues of the method which has "no danger of injury".

Like all alternate methods, you must try the Pilates routine for yourself to understand the concept. For the record, our 'traditional' personal fitness trainer, Steve Lomas, has worked out at the Body Control Studios and thoroughly recommends the exercise routine.

Details . . . details

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- Allan Menezes, Body Control Studios, 2nd floor, Royal Arcade, 175 Oxford St, Bondi Junction NSW, tel: (02) 387 2986 or 5 Falcon St, Crows Nest NSW, tel: (02) 906 8824

- Andrew Baxter, Body Concept Studio, c/-Australian Ballet Foundation, 2 Kavanagh St, South Melbourne, tel: (03) 649 8666 (Pilates Method for Melbourne readers)