

Local man trains students to defend themselves



ANTHONY VASSALLO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Philip Ross trains students at the American Eagle Martial Arts Academy in Ho-Ho-Kus.

He also sustained injuries such as broken ribs and various cuts.

"The worst thing that ever happened, I broke my leg in three places," he said. "That was kind of a freak accident, but I bounced back."

Ross attributed his interest in competition to, "the burning desire to be the best

at whatever I do." Although he doesn't take part in fights anymore, the last time that he did, he won two gold medals at the 2000 Garden State Games.

Despite that personal success, he said that he was prouder of the impact he has had on others, training six students to national titles in the martial arts.

BY JONATHAN CHIN
For Suburban News

Local martial arts instructor Philip Ross of Mahwah has trained thousands of people over the years. But perhaps none of his pupils stick out in his mind like one American Uni-

versity student.

Ross recalls that the young woman was walking home in Washington D.C. when a large man, wielding a knife, attacked her. With the man later identified as a suspect in four rapes, the situation looked dire for Ross'

former student.

However, a strange thing happened - *she sent him to the hospital.* "That's the most dramatic story," said Ross.

Although not too many of Ross' pupils will ever find
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themselves in that type of predicament, they still enjoy learning tae kwon do, jujitsu and other activities at his American Eagle Martial Arts Academy, located in Ho-Ho-Kus.

Ross explained the benefits of the martial arts, saying that parents oftentimes tell him about the improvement in academics that their children have shown, as well as an increase in confidence and self-esteem.

"You're never too old to start or too young," said Ross. "The one thing that I love about the martial arts is, you can do it for your whole life and benefit from it your whole life."

Ross, a 41-year old Mahwah resident, has been involved in the martial arts for about 25 years. Prior to that, he wrestled in high school and college, serving as captain of the Ridgewood High School wrestling team as a senior in 1980.

A veteran of over 300 fights, Ross is an eight-time gold medallist in the Garden State Games and a national kickboxing champion in 1995, and has competed at Madison Square Garden, Atlantic City, on ESPN and ABC's Wide World of Sports in 1989.

He won the Big Apple Challenge, held in Brooklyn, that year.

He was also inducted into the Martial Arts Hall of Fame in 1994.

When asked what it had been like to be involved in over 300 fights, Ross chuckled and remarked that, "I've had some of them that have been pretty rough. I got my nose broken four times. I remember one fight that was so rough...I won the fight, but my feet were so swollen, I couldn't wear shoes for four days."