



Newsletter of the American Sambo Association. Vol. 7, Number 1. January/February, 2009

End of Year Issue!

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1) President's Remarks
- 2) Sambo and ASA News
- 3) ASA Member News
- 4) Photo of the Month
- 5) Wrestling Eases its Strangle Hold on Sambo
By Scott Anderson
- 6) 2009 Events

A Word from the President:

Greetings everyone,

First off, please accept my sincere apologies for delaying the publication of our first 2009 issue. I had been in Russia during the last 2 weeks of February, but now I am back and have lots of great Sambo news to share!

You will see that 2009 is shaping up to be a great year for Sambo in America! Enjoy the newsletter...see you in April for our next issue.

Sincerely,
Stephen Koepfer
ASA President

Sambo and ASA News:

- [Travel Channel's "Dhani Tackles the Globe: Russian Sambo"](#)

The ASA and our partner group in Russia, the FKE, have joined forces to assist the Travel Channel with filming on location in St. Petersburg, Russia!

The Travel Channel crew and host Dhani Jones (described below) spent 10 days filming Combat Sambo training at the FKE training center as well as the Ministry of Internal Affairs Military Academy. We don't want to give away the scoop on the show, but rest assured this will be one of the best displays of Combat Sambo to come to American television.

Featured in the episode (which is scheduled to air in either the last week of May or first week of June) is NFL linebacker Dhani Jones, FKE Head Coach Alexander Barakov, NYCS Head Coach Stephen Koepfer and many others.

There are plenty of surprises to come as Dhani travels throughout St. Petersburg and trains Combat Sambo! How does Dhani do? Is he able to hang with the big boys in Russia? Tune in to the Travel Channel to find out!



Stephen Koepfer demonstrating an armbar on the set of Dhani Tackles the Globe

About Dhani Tackles the Globe.

Dhani Jones will need more than shoulder pads where he's going. This NFL linebacker and Renaissance man is about to embark on a global sports odyssey that will take him anywhere with a scoreboard.

By trying his hand at beloved national pastimes from around the globe, Dhani explores the way sports help to define culture. As a top athlete, Dhani will be able to demonstrate the thrills and challenges of each game by playing it himself.

Off the field, Dhani immerses himself fully in each city, getting the locals' take on the best places to eat, drink, shop and sleep. Throughout his travels, Dhani finds the love of sports to be universal, providing common ground wherever he lands.

Learn more about the show at www.travelchannel.com

- **ASA to be Sole Supplier of Hadjiev Sambo Kurtki and Gear!**

We know you have all been waiting patiently and the ASA is proud to announce that we has made an agreement with Hadjiev to be the first to provide their high quality Sambo jackets in the United States!

We will soon be sending out information regarding our initial pre-orders including ASA member and non-member pricing. To start we will be offering single color and reversible red/blue kurtki. Bulgarian manufacturer Hadjiev produces very high quality Sambo gear and is also a supplier for the Japan

Sambo Federation. For order information, please contact the ASA.

- **Sambo Coverage on Slate.com: "From Russia with Blood, Beauty, and Beasts".**

Travel and Sport writer Matthew Polly (author of American Shaolin) travelled to St. Petersburg, Russia along with the 2008 US National Sambo Team last November as part of his Russian travel essay.

After a long wait, Matthew's five part story on St. Petersburg, Fedor Emilianenko, and Sambo is finally here!

Matthew's "tongue in cheek" style of writing brings a fresh flavor to the often stale world of travel writing. Click here to read "**From Russia with Blood, Beauty, and Beasts**":

<http://www.slate.com/id/2211882/entry/2211884/>

- **NY Combat Sambo and Remix Dojo Merge!**

Making it the largest Sambo gym in the New York area, Remix Dojo (formerly under the direction of NYCS team member Reilly Bodycomb) has merged with NY Combat Sambo (under the direction of Stephen Koepfer).

In addition to this new and larger NYCS, Koepfer has brought in several new staff coaches including Miguel Rivera (Muay Thai), Tyga Maclin (wrestling), and Masahiko Honma (Knockdown Karate).

NYCS will now offer classes seven days a week and present one of the most comprehensive martial art training opportunities in New York City! For more information, please visit www.nycombatsambo.com

- **2009 ASA Newsletter Publication Schedule.**

For the 2009 year, the ASA newsletter will be published bi-monthly. If you have news or articles to submit for the newsletter, you must have it to the ASA before the following publication deadlines:

Feb 15, April 15, June 15, August 15, October 15, December 15.

ASA Member News:

- **Welcome New ASA Members!**

Tennessee - SSF Submission Academy under the leadership of Ron Daley have joined the ranks of our ASA affiliate member clubs! Ron has trained at the Lion's Den as well as with Larry Hartsell. He holds a purple belt in BJJ and has trained Sambo with Dave Womack and Rick McCoy. www.mmaclarksville.com

Texas - John Paul Reister is one of our newest individual ASA members. John is a long time martial artist. He has trained under and holds Black Belts in Kodokan and Kosen Judo under Tarow Ty Hayashi-Ito, Randy Leatherwood, Ted Price, and Phil Porter. John's Shodan is recognized by the USJA as well as the US Martial Arts Association and The International Zen Martial Arts Federation.

- **NY Combat Sambo Brings 5 Medals in January and February!**

New York - January and February started off the year well for NYCS as Reilly Bodycomb, Alexius Phoenix, and Jon Sichel brought home Gold, Silver and Bronze respectively from the Ultimate Sambo No-Gi Submission Challenge! In February, Jon brought home an additional Silver and team newcomer Larry Perna brought home a second Silver from the NYC Submission Shootout submission or draw tournament.

- **Grappling and Kickboxing Victories for Remix Dojo!**

New York - Remix Dojo starts of 2009 with a winning record! Mike Chesbro won his kickboxing bout against Travis Butler with a 2nd round TKO on the Modern Day Warrior Kickboxing card. Remix also brought home 2 Silver medals (Chuck Reina and Mike Chesbro) and a Bronze (Brian Farni) from the Ultimate Sambo No-Gi Submission Challenge as well as a Silver Medal (Mike Chesbro) at the NYC Submission Shootout submission or draw tournament.

- **Cali Combat Sambo at Oakland's Cheetah Muay Thai!**

California – NY Combat Sambo Certified instructor Serge Gerlach now offers Combat Sambo training at

the legendary Cheetah Muay Thai Gym in Oakland! For more information e-mail Serge at calicambo@gmail.com

- **Two Students of ASA Member John Paul Reister Make Some Wrestling Waves!**

Texas - Adrian and Dakota are both ranked #1 heading in to the Jr. State Championships (New Mexico) which happens in three weeks. They have both only lost once this year.

Alex and Jonah both went undefeated through their Jr. High School season, which lasted about a month and a half. When they were done with Jr. High season the High School pulled them up and they are both currently wrestling varsity. Alex is wrestling at 103 and Jonah at 130. They have been taking their lumps after the jump, but impressing the high school coach. They both may qualify for the State Championships.

Photo of the Month



Victor Tatarkin, Alexander Barakov, David Rudman, Stephen Koeper, and Oleg Savitsky are interviewed for Russian Television about the future of Sambo in the United States. Photo taken at the 2008 World Sambo Championships.

A History Lesson: Wrestling Eases Its Strangle Hold on Sambo

By Scott Anderson

As a crumbling Imperial Russia was forged into what would become the Soviet Union's Iron Curtain, World

War I raged as the “war to end all wars” with many of the war’s lessons so poorly learned that World War II became a certainty.

Prior to the First World War, western military experts truly believed that modern mechanized warfare had rendered hand-to-hand (H2H) combat obsolete with perhaps bayonet fencing being the exception. Mother Russia, herself, put little effort into this area, and abdicated her bayonet training to English manuals, and empty-handed fighting was relegated to whatever the English had deemed to include in their manuals. However, the brutal European trench warfare changed this perspective.

Any living thing that showed above the trench lines was almost always immediately doomed by geometry and geography to be in the sights of some mechanized device be it artillery, aircraft, or the humble sniper’s scope. That said, on the rare instances when a trench line could be stormed, the invaders were dismayed to see how little affect that artillery bombardments had in terms of softening up the defenders.

Once in the trenches, neither side had room to effectively bayonet fence—at least, when the bayonet was still attached to the rifle. Trench warfare truly was H2H combat with knives and improvised weapons (entrenching tools, helmets, rocks) used to give a fighter an edge over his empty handed or similarly armed attacker. The Soviets left this war with an understanding that H2H was not obsolete, and if the Soviet military was to gain any advantages against enemies in this modern warfare, then H2H required scientific study.

As the first of the combatives investigators researched this topic, they noticed that in these mass fights, the actual fighting disintegrated into individual “matches” where those soldiers with athletic backgrounds seemed to have an edge over those who had not received such training. Narrowing the scope of the athletics down further, it appeared that those most likely to be successful in life and death encounters were those who had trained in the sports based on single combat which in Russia and the early Soviet Union could be boiled down to boxers and wrestlers.

Essentially, this led to two schools of thought. The first school said that better wrestlers and better boxers could be better soldiers and fighters. This meant that the military should learn to wrestle and box. Remember, during this period, judo and ju-jitsu

were considered wrestling too, and Vasily Oshchepkov was a master judo instructor whose students helped him cull the native wrestling styles for better techniques to supplement their judo.

Oshchepkov was for a sport form of judo, but he also wanted an applied combat style with striking and kicking as well as shorter courses for teaching self-defense to students in the various Soviet school systems. Oshchepkov and his students truly loved their martial arts training, and many gladly spent every free moment training to be better fighters.

The second school of thought, led by Victor Spiridonov, believed that the vast store of martial arts and fighting techniques could be distilled down into a simple to learn and use course that could be used by professionals who might have to apply these skills, but would not necessarily spend a great amount of their overall training time working on combatives. They had other skills to learn such as sabotage detection, how to search and arrest suspects, and myriad reports to fill out.

While Spiridonov, with some WW I experience, believed that ju-jitsu - particularly when augmented by Western boxing, was a great start for his simplified system, he disdained judo. First, he knew that many of the throws from judo would be difficult to execute in confined spaces. Second, they took considerably more time to learn than did the basic strikes and joint locks. In fact, he found that in real world practical applications, only those who had previous wrestling experience were able to use throws effectively in either H2H or self-defense.

In between these two schools of thought, V.P.Volkov who studied under both Spiridonov and Oshchepkov was tasked to write a Self-Defense manual for training the NKVD that was released in 1940. In this manual, which was the first to officially use the term SAMBO in print, he recommended that SAMBO be practiced daily to be useful, and that “free-style wrestling” be used to supplement this training as it was the most practical method for rapidly teaching a fighter to use his ploys against a resisting opponent in stressful, less than ideal conditions.

This free-style wrestling was actually what the Soviet Union recognized as “Soviet Free-Style Wrestling” as proposed by Anatoly Kharlampiev in 1938. This was basically Oshchepkov’s judo (which he had begun to call free-style wrestling) with Kharlampiev’s systematization and terminology added. Many of those involved in applied SAMBO took Kharlampiev to

task for emasculating an effective fighting system by reducing it to common jacket wrestling.

How did this come about? The Soviet Union lost its focus.

Spiridonov proposed and developed a system that was simple to use and easy to learn. His focus on law enforcement caused him, per policies handed to him by his supervisors, to relegate striking techniques to more advanced courses. In his first stab at a course, he used almost entirely ju-jitsu ploys, but he also noticed that many of his students—particularly the smaller ones, had trouble pulling the ploys off.

Contrary to legend, Spiridonov was tall and not over weakened by his war wounds, and he realized that most encounters for his trainees would be surprise attacks that they would need to survive by first building a defensive shell around themselves before using strikes to regain the combat initiative before ending the encounter with a joint lock if possible.

He did not appreciate throwing in this system, and this caused him to provide almost no training in how to fall, but he did work on techniques for ground fighting and readily imported the leg scissors hold from Anglo-American catch-as-catch-can to supplement his strangle holds.

In short, he designed combatives for professionals who did not train full time to fight. Oshchepkov and his supporters, including Volkov, saw greater value in throwing, so they developed techniques for falling and throwing, and on average, their best fighters tended to put in more mat time than Spiridonov's. That said, Spiridonov's group challenged a visiting German ju-jitsu team and handily submitted them all. Many experts have noted this as the first semblance of SAMBO, and this event occurred without Oshchepkov's assistance.

Judo as envisioned by its founder, Jigaro Kano, was not to be learned quickly, in spite of any innovations by Oshchepkov, and to use it for self-defense was not easily done. The East German, Horst Wolf, in his book, "Judo for Self-defense" wanted a practitioner to have a brown belt in judo before beginning the self-defense training to have the control to apply techniques safely while also having such skills mastered as "ukemi" (falling) to be able to safely survive having these ploys applied in training.

The older schools of ju-jitsu scorned judo's combat value for what they deemed an over dependence on

timed foot sweeps. Ju-jitsu's sweeps were limited to blocking sweeps and foot hooks that could be applied on the battlefield's uncertain terrain as opposed to Kano's nicely timed sweeps that depended on a level indoor tatami surface with an opponent wearing the proper uniform that could be sufficiently gripped to apply these ploys. Nonetheless, Judo gained ascendancy in Japan, and other nations followed suit until the West eventually revived ju-jitsu even as Japan perfected sport judo.

Just before WW II, Spiridonov's supervisor at Dynamo where he taught the NKVD and the border guards became a gentleman named Zhamov who trained under Oshchepkov in the 1920s in Vladivostok, and Zhamov preferred a throwing system over Spiridonov's, so Spiridonov was asked to move on.

With both Spiridonov and Oshchepkov dead, Kharlampiev carried on Oshchepkov's work to popularize judo among the masses even if it had to be called "Soviet free-style wrestling". This meant that there had to be a style that could be safely practiced without revealing any of the classified techniques. Spiridonov's system was a classified system, so it could not be popularized by the masses.

With no World War to provide urgency (WW III was supposed to be atomic), Kharlampiev's sambo-wrestling still made its way into applied SAMBO, but both were losing the interest of the Soviet Union. There were great sambists reared in the hey day leading up to its golden years just after WW II when Chumakov came into his own as both a wrestler and a coach, but the Soviet Union's quest for Olympic gold took resources away from its native sambo-wrestling for Japanese judo.

With sambo-wrestling diminished, its influence on applied SAMBO waned, and applied SAMBO went back to its principle that everything should be used for self-defense and simplicity was replaced with books of ploys as mui thai, karate, kick boxing, tae kwon do, etc. were called upon to toughen up applied SAMBO—however, the newer generations lacked their own Spiridonov's and Oshchepkov's for this integration effort as the students of these innovators had drifted off to judo or what was left of sambo-wrestling. Even Volkov quit SAMBO entirely to pursue a medical career.

In the 1990s, applied SAMBO began to reintegrate with "Soviet free-style wrestling" (but not necessarily modern sambo-wrestling) as sport combat SAMBO made its way onto the Soviet sports scene. Both

Spiridonov and Oshchepkov had wanted a sport to train for combat, and that meant being able to strike and kick to implement the finishing plays: joint locks or throws or strangles. However, in their day, the technology was not yet there. If they could pad a fighter sufficiently to be safe, he was too padded to move naturally, and his padding could give him false confidence in his abilities to take damage from strikes.

However, in the 1990s, the interest in the foreign martial arts with their striking styles also brought in news of the latest innovations in safety equipment that could be rolled into the "SAMBO" match to allow strikes and kicks as well as throws, locks, and strangles.

Thus, what had become stale became renewed as sambists remembered Spiridonov's principle that SAMBO must be constantly studied and audited to be appropriate to its times and circumstances, so that 21st century Russians could carry on the work begun in the 1920s.

Upcoming 2009 Events:

- **March 29, 2009**
Renegade Freestyle Sambo Invitational.
Levittown, New York.
This is an ASA member tournament. Get together, compete, and meet your fellow ASA members! If you are not yet an ASA member and would wish to take part in this event or for registration information contact the ASA at americansamboassociation@att.net
ASA Sponsored Event
- **May 3, 2009**
AASF USA Sambo Open. Brooklyn, New York. This is the AASF's annual sport sambo nationals and open tournament. Please visit www.sambo.com/aasf for more information
- **June 11-15, 2009.**
The **2009 Sambo Summit Training Camp** in **Tortola, British Virgin Islands**. This will be a five day camp with daily training and recreational activities. Coaches will include Aaron Fields, Dayn DeRose, Gregg Humphreys, and Stephen Koepfer. Many thanks to our ASA member Mike Pringle who will be assisting us with planning this camp! Contact the ASA for registration information:
[Americansamboassociation@att.net](mailto:americansamboassociation@att.net)
ASA Sponsored Event
- **July 16-19, 2009.**
Without Limits Training Camp.
East Strouburg, PA, USA.
Kyokushin Karate, Combat Sambo, and Boxing. Four hard days of training and conditioning! Room and board included. For more information please contact Camp Director Tony Capraro at ckyokushin@aol.com or www.masoyamaskarate.com
ASA Sponsored Event
- **September, 2009 (date/location pending)**
2009 Sambo Summit Training Camp
ASA Sponsored Event
- **October 3, 2009 (date to be confirmed)**
6th Annual North American Freestyle Sambo Championships. Rahway, New Jersey. Contact americansamboassociation@att.net for more information
ASA Sponsored Event