

# The Indians' secret weapon: Pilates from Toronto

## Exercise program keeps Cleveland in tip-top shape

Toronto has played its part in helping the Cleveland Indians stay on top.

A fitness program developed by a company here helped Indians regulars Jim Thome, Sandy Alomar and Travis Fryman come off the disabled list last year and win a fifth straight division title.

### ■ Boxscore and standings, C11

"Any time you can do something new to help yourself, you're going to try it," first baseman Thome said before yesterday's game against the Blue Jays.

Thome used equipment and techniques developed by the Stott Group on Yonge St. to rebound from painful back spasms that sidelined him last May.

It was Indians conditioning coach Fernando Montes who

first became interested in the company's Stott Pilates program, which concentrates on stretching and developing the abdominal area.

Montes had met representatives the company trained in Cleveland. He later travelled to the company's offices here and bought equipment the team now uses at Jacobs Field.

The Pilates form of exercise was created by fitness guru Joseph Pilates in the 1920s in New York City. He developed more than 500 exercises that built strong, flexible muscles

without adding bulk.

The Stott Group's version of Pilates exercise incorporates machines into its no-impact, stretch and strength workouts. A fair degree of concentration is involved.

"It's more mind-body, more focus," said Moira Stott, a former ballet dancer who designed the program. "You have to focus on the movements as you do the exercise. It's not 'How many reps are going to get me there?'"

"It's 'How am I going to bend my knee to get the most out of

this exercise?'"

Many of the exercises, tailored for different needs, are done on a simple mat. Others involve the machines, which use spring-coil resistance rather than weights.

"For a long time, there wasn't emphasis on core development," said Stott. "But if your trunk isn't strong, your peripheral limbs like your arms and legs are going to get hurt."

Stott's husband, Lindsay Merrithew, serves as president and CEO of the company and said worldwide sales have sky-

rocketed the past three years as all types of Pilates exercise gained in popularity.

Professional athletes, he said, have been slower than ballet dancers and Hollywood actors in accepting Pilates exercise because "it isn't as macho" as other conditioning programs. Thome wasn't worried about that.

"You've got to throw all that out the door," said Thome.

"When it comes to taking care of myself, I don't care how it looks to other people."

— Baker