

Traditionally referred to as a woman's workout – Pilates is growing in popularity among men. No other method of exercise can offer such dynamic core workouts with the help of unique, state-of-the-art equipment and programming.

Guys are always looking for alternative ways to build strength, increase energy, and get in shape for their favorite sport. No matter what, there's always something better on the market or in the gyms that men gravitate towards to help them get an edge on their competition.

Much to most guys' surprise, Pilates is a great way to incorporate invigorating and challenging moves into strength training and sport-conditioning regimens. It is only recently that men have realized the potential for Pilates training, although they still have to get past the stigma of it being 'women's exercise'. Men tend to strengthen the body from the outside rather than from the inside as Pilates does.

Over the past twenty years, Pilates has evolved to help athletes accomplish their competitive goals by focusing on the modern day biomechanics of the body through essential scientific research. As a result, Pilates can help with overall athletic enhancement. Gym owners are making Pilates programs more accessible for their patrons, and top fitness facilities like Gold's Gym are implementing Pilates into their locations.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Pilates helps build strong, healthy muscles, improves blood flow, and promotes engagement of all the muscles efficiently. It works through every layer of muscle groups inside and out for optimal body conditioning, and is ideal for anyone wanting to expand their exercise regimen to include overall conditioning and strengthening moves that also work the inner mechanism of the body.

Pilates works on developing kinesthetic awareness of the body, or where it is in relationship to itself, and the world around it. It also focuses on good postural alignment which will help an individual perform a movement efficiently thus reducing the amount of unnecessary strain on the muscles and joints. Specific strengthening exercises will also help to balance the muscles around a joint and balance pairs of muscles from one side of the body to the other.

Pilates helps athletes develop core strength, increase flexibility, assist in rehabilitation after injury and create balance throughout the entire body. As a result, athletes can withstand rigorous training regimes and ultimately improve their golf drive or baseball pitch, prevent or recover from injury, and maintain an optimal fitness level for the activity of choice.

One concept among others being embraced by sports trainers is called LATD or Long-Term Athletic Development. This type of training progresses from general to specific and from simple to more complex. The lighter resistance and multi-angular training makes Pilates perfect for LATD as well as anatomical adaptation, focus on developing muscle memory and patterning. This usually occurs in the preparatory or pre-competition phase of training for an athlete.

Experts have identified seven physical performance factors of great significance to athletes' overall conditioning practices and rehabilitation of sport-related injuries including: posture, balance, mobility/flexibility, stability, coordination, functional strength and endurance – all of which are addressed with Pilates.

YES,

PILATES IS FOR MEN!

By Lindsay G. Merrithew

REHAB AND INJURY PREVENTION

Men are also turning to this method for rehab and strength conditioning purposes. Athletic trainers are realizing the benefits of core conditioning, balance and flexibility for injury prevention for their clients. These are individuals who go through intense training and who are perhaps at first

introduced to it while on the mend from injury. Nonetheless, most newcomers to Pilates are sticking with it throughout the season – and making it a regular part of their program.

Pilates is particularly effective in injury rehabilitation settings because it provides athletes with a challenging workout without impact or excessive weight bearing. According to

Matt Nichol, Head Strength and Conditioning Coach for the Toronto Maple Leafs, Pilates teaches athletes to be mindful in their movements – integrating their pelvis, trunk and shoulder girdle in a safe, challenging and progressive system. “Pilates can be a very effective supplement to an injury re-habilitation program as it provides athletes with a challenging workout without impact or excessive weight bearing,” says Nichol.

PILATES EQUIPMENT ATTRACTING MEN

Traditional athletic training methods will help develop the muscles required in a specific sport, but may not address the stabilizing muscles around the joints or the torso. Often, one muscle is identified and exercises are designed to isolate that muscle, usually in a single plane of motion. However, Pilates exercises can be more complex than traditional moves and will therefore recruit a larger number of muscle groups or strengthen them from many angles and in a variety of different ranges of motion.

The opportunity to experience the work on some of the new, innovative pieces of Pilates equipment is another reason why Pilates is becoming more popular with male exercisers. More and more fitness facilities are incorporating such machines into their locations and men are reaping the benefits of these technologically advanced systems. Some of these “all-in-one” units feature traveling pulley systems on the vertical frame which allow for more functional movement patterns, such as overhead motion like a baseball pitch or golf swing. They can

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also be easily and precisely adjusted, which give facilities more programming options to accommodate unique sport conditioning moves.

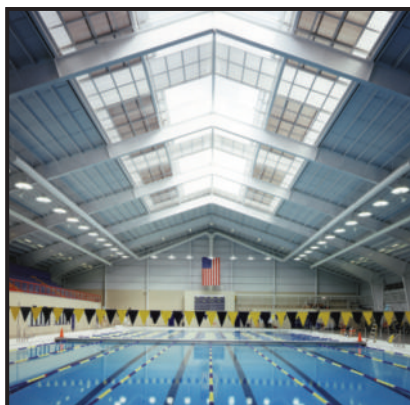
PROS AND PILATES

The endorsement of Pilates from a wide variety of male professional athletes may be spearheading the trend in male participants. These spokespeople include golfers Tiger Woods, David Duval, and Steve Ballesteros, basketball star Jason Kidd, pitcher Curt Schilling, pro hockey player Carlo Colaiacovo, and offensive lineman Ruben Brown to name a few. They're all getting an edge on their competition through Pilates.

Over the past two decades the original form of Pilates has been refined to meet the demands of today's fitness needs - and people of all ages, fitness abilities and levels are benefiting like never before. Pilates has become a method of exercise for all from the elite athlete to guys who go to the gym regularly. **OSF**

Lindsay G. Merrithew is President and CEO of STOTT PILATES®, for more information call 800-910-0001 or visit www.stottpilates.com

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