

Pilates for Better Sports Performan

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Unlike other strength training regimens that focus more specifically on muscle mass, pilates focuses on re-balancing your muscles around the joints, and improving your alignment and flexibility.

Pilates is a form of conditioning used in the development of strong core muscles for all fitness levels and abilities. It also focuses on proper breathing, balance and sport-specific range of motion. Over the past two decades the original form of pilates has been refined to meet the demands of today's fitness needs. When all muscular systems work in a timely and coordinated fashion, participants can achieve large gains in strength, skill, coordination, and biomechanical efficiency.

"Pilates assists in rehabilitation after injury and creates balance throughout the entire body," says Moira Merrithew, co-founder of STOTT PILATES®. "As a result, you can withstand rigorous training regimes and ultimately improve your strength and endurance and ultimately prevent or recover from injury. Pilates helps increase joint stability and strengthens the deep core muscles which in turn prevents injuries and leads to improved performance in anything you do."

Pilates is effective because it trains all three functional muscle systems. Trainers can encourage their clients to stabilize the joints

effectively at low loads, and then progress to strengthening eccentrically which will control deceleration movements by using the global stabilizers and finally progressing to the larger global mobilizers with the inherent joint stability already in place.

"Pilates works on developing kinesthetic awareness of the body. It also focuses on good postural alignment which helps athletes perform movements efficiently, thus reducing the amount of unnecessary strain on the muscles and joints," Moira continues. "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 is a key component to strength conditioning because it focuses on the deeper muscle groups, or 'local' stabilizers. This is important when controlling joint movement and in sustaining the stability of the joints that can often be damaged through repetitive and high demand training.

Most pilates workouts begin in a supine (lying on the back) position, and then progress to sitting, or standing when stability

increases and can then carry over into the sporting realm. This allows the athlete to train or retrain muscles then transfer movement patterns to outside the practice environment and into the sport-specific skill.

Why Pilates?

Pilates helps build strong, healthy muscles, improves blood flow, and engages the proper muscles at the right time. It works your body inside and out for optimal body conditioning and is ideal for anyone wanting to expand their exercise regimens to include strengthening moves that also work the inner mechanism of the body.

According to Matt Nichol, former 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.

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Pilates focuses on improving stabilization of the lumbo-pelvic region, and the theory is that improved core stability gained through pilates training will carry over the sporting or high-level of activity realm, reducing the risk of injury and improving performance. So no matter what your goals or fitness ability, pilates proves to be a smart way to enhance performance for any activity you so choose.

“Most physical activities demand a delicate balance of mental and physical skill,” explains President and CEO of STOTT

PILATES®, Lindsay G. Merrithew. “Pilates enables you to focus on both through mind-body awareness by gaining insight into the inseparable connection between the physical and psychological components of physical performance. Athletes and very active people can take their physical performance to a higher level by training their minds in addition to their bodies.”

For more information on STOTT PILATES® exercises, education and equipment, visit www.stottpilates.com. 