

Yoga for Athletes

Yoga is complimentary to sport in both a physical and mental sense. It is a practice for everyone. It can be a practical way to respond to our modern, hectic lifestyles. It can teach you how to deal with stress and approach difficult situations with a different attitude. In fact, with regular practise it can become a complete way of living whereby the practitioner learns to calm mental distractions and live life more in the moment, leading to a peaceful state of mind and sense of freedom.

How might yoga help?

- **Correction of muscle imbalances** - stretching and strengthening of muscles preventing injury.
- **Improved postural alignment and biomechanics** - joints become better aligned preventing muscle imbalances and strain.
- **Improved strength, flexibility and core strength** - Physical yoga is about arriving at an ideal combination of strength and flexibility. It challenges upper body and core strength and regular practise will greatly improve flexibility.
- **Improved stamina** - Many postures condition the body using stamina, strength and toning of muscles. Dynamic yoga is cardiovascular and challenging.
- **Better balance.**
- **Faster recovery** - relaxation of muscle tension; improved circulation in connective tissue.
- **Improved breathing** - awareness and focus on the breath can help with breathing patterns in sport.
- **Improved concentration and focus** - breath work and concentration exercises can improve focus and confidence in sport.
- **Increased awareness of body** - how to stretch muscles; greater intuition about pain and potential injury.

Naukasana (Supine boat pose)

Technique:

- ❖ Lie in supine position. Palms facing downwards on the floor.
- ❖ Inhale, lift both legs above the floor at 60°. Straighten your knees. Breathe evenly.

- ❖ Inhale, use your abdominal strength to lift your upper body, hands, shoulders and head off the floor.
- ❖ Point your fingers towards your legs and straighten them. Look at your feet.
- ❖ Retain the breath.

Getting out of the pose:

- ❖ Exhale, slowly lower down to the supine position.

Cautions:

- ❖ Those suffering from back aches should not do this pose.
- ❖ Do not jerk your legs up while raising them off the floor.

Counter pose:

- ❖ Shavasana