

Golfers getting into swing of fitness regimen

By Jill Lieber, USA TODAY

Of all the professional athletes doing Pilates, golfers have adapted to it the fastest. Pilates disciples include David Duval, Annika Sorenstam and Kelli Kuehne. Other devotees are Andrew McGee, Carin Koch, Grace Park and Betsy King, who have been trained by Angela Sundberg, owner of Bodyscapes in Scottsdale, Ariz.



A Pilates program has helped Annika Sorenstam dominate women's golf.

By Alastair Grant, AP

"Pilates is about focus, and so is golf," Sundberg says. "Pilates is also about movement from the center of the body, using all of the muscles of the body, and so is golf. Pilates allows golfers to move differently."

Sarah Christensen, owner of the Orchid Pagoda Studio in Fairfax, Va., has seen Pilates have a profound impact on her clients who golf. So she has created a golf-specific Pilates exercise program for every level of golfer that's taught in resorts and golf clubs throughout the country. She also has written a manual with golf-specific Pilates exercises that can be done at home and on the course.

"Your golf pro can say, 'Swing this way.' But you won't be able to do that if your body can't do that," she says. "By doing Pilates, you can make corrections to your body — strengthen the core, increase flexibility, build stability in the pelvis and shoulder girdles, balance both sides of the body, which will allow you to hit it farther, straighter and more accurately."

She is so sold on this training method that Christensen has filed a trademark application for the term "Pilates for Golf" and certifies instructors in her program.

Christensen says there's another reason Pilates for golf works so well, especially for the pros.

"I hate to say this, but a lot of pro golfers get a lot out of Pilates because they probably aren't in as good a shape as pro football, basketball or baseball players," Christensen says. "Only in the last few years have pro golfers found fitness."

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