



Building the Athlete's Body

So you have found the sport that is your passion! You started running and doing drills to increase your speed and endurance and that helped. You hit the weight room to develop the muscles that are necessary to help you perform your sport better and that helped also. But, you still need something more to take it to the next level. What are you missing? What else can you possibly do to take you to the top of your game? The answer is pilates.

Pilates at its simplest definition is an exercise program whose primary focus is the core. Every exercise starts by engaging the transverse abdominis before you ever mobilize the body. It doesn't matter if you are going to work the chest, the back or the legs if you don't engage the abs you don't move. Why? Because by engaging the abs we strengthen and stabilize the body for the task at hand. It makes us more powerful and focused as well as lessens our chances of injury while performing that task. So, if you are sprinting across the soccer field, swinging a golf club, setting up on the offensive line or getting ready to make that 3 pointer, by simply having the abs turned on our chances for success increase substantially.

Most abdominal workouts focus primarily on the rectus abdominis and the obliques using these muscle groups as mobilizers for the body. Nothing wrong with that since that is part of their purpose. But did you know that an equally important task for the obliques is to stabilize the torso as well? If you never train these muscles to stabilize you, how can they be called upon to work when you need them? Your obliques muscles are powerhouse muscles. There isn't an exercise or a sport that they aren't called upon to work. They flex, rotate and stabilize the torso when you are sitting, standing, jumping or hanging from a cliff. They even work when you are sleeping, rolling you from side to side or curling up in the fetal position. Without training these muscles as stabilizers your game won't progress to the level you want. Injuries occur when we push, pull, lift or move heavy objects (i.e. opponents). We need torso stabilizing strength to keep gravity from pulling us out of neutral and thus resulting in injuries that keep us out of our game. So, find a reputable, well trained pilates instructor who has spent several hundred hours practicing and teaching before they were allowed to test and call themselves certified. Be picky, check their credentials and give pilates a try. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.