

# YOGA FOR CYCLISTS

Words by Julian Abraham Chua

## YOGA BENEFITS IN SPORTS

For those who are unaware of its benefits, they include:

- Slowing down the aging process
- Increasing flexibility
- Benefits chronic medical conditions like arthritis, back pains and osteoporosis
- Improving balance and strength
- Promoting calmness of the mind
- Excellent toning of the muscles
- Complete detoxification
- Increasing lubrication of the joints, ligaments and tendons
- Stress reduction

## FAST FACTS

The word Yoga comes from the Sanskrit root *Yuj* - to join, to connect, to unite the self with the source.

- It is a physical, mental, and spiritual discipline, originating in ancient India.
- Yoga is one of the six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, the other five systems being Sankhya, Vedanta, Mimamsa, Nyaya and Vaisesika.
- The goal of yoga, or of the person practicing yoga, is the attainment of a state of perfect spiritual insight and tranquillity.

## IMPORTANT TIP TO LEARN YOGA

The best way to learn yoga is to go to an experienced yoga teacher that you can connect with and start from basic. Once you have learnt the poses correctly and understand them well, then you may practice on your own. This will prevent and minimise injuries.



**A**mongst the various methods and remedies to improve performance or speeding up the recovery process of a nursed injury, more and more cyclists are turning to yoga these days to enhance both their body and mind's wellbeing. Yoga has seen a steady incline in interest as more people are now becoming more concerned with coping with stress in the city's hectic pace of life, but increasing numbers are also discovering the sports benefits of the physical, mental and spiritual discipline.

Meet Yvette Tee, a prominent yoga instructor in Singapore who has taught this ancient form of art since 2004. "Yoga is extremely popular in Singapore - just look at the number of large and small centres that have opened up in the last five years. There is definitely an increase in interest as more people realize the benefits of it." Her dynamic style of yoga combines movement and holding of poses for the purposes of strengthening and toning the body. Her style combines Hatha yoga (physical) with Raja yoga (meditation).

Cyclists, like sportspeople of other fields, have the tendency to get injured and muscle aches and cramps. Thus the benefits of enhanced flexibility on the bike

provided by regular yoga practice are numerous. Flexibility is believed to improve performance, reduce risk of injury, improve transport of blood and nutrients to muscles, and reduce muscle soreness. It also builds up your core strength, which plays a vital role in generating power on the bike. As Yvette puts it, "Many cyclists suffer from stiffness in the hip as their hips tighten to protect their bodies from injury. With little stretching, the hip becomes tighter and this can cause injuries and restrict blood flow to the organs in the pelvic area."

### Dealing with Time Constraint

So what if one has little time for regular yoga sessions? Juggling between training, work and family, this may prove to be an obstacle for many cyclists in becoming an avid yoga devotee. But Yvette has a solution: "If they have little time and had to pick a class, they should pick one that includes a lot of stretching in the hip area, calf and thigh muscles as well as core strengthening." She adds, "It's also good if cyclists could pick up several breathing techniques in yoga that improves oxygen intake, concentration and calmness in the mind - which are very important for cyclists."