

Gain the Edge: Pilates Boosts Cycling Performance

By Jocelyn Paoli, Stott Certified Pilates Instructor; Johnny G Certified Cycling Instructor

Benefits specifically related to cyclists include:

- Greater effectiveness of pedal stroke
- Increased upper body strength
- Prevention of lower back pain
- Better endurance through focused breathing
- Correction of muscle imbalances

Next time you ride, think about how your body is positioned on the bike. Proper alignment helps you power up hills and sprint past opponents. Most common postural faults are:

- Rounded (hunched) shoulders
- Excessive curve of spine
- Forward head posture
- Tight calves, hip flexors, hamstrings and low back muscles

Pilates can help correct these faults. It promotes proper body mechanics and postural awareness. Joseph Pilates believed that "the mind moves the body". Pilates gives you the tools to create that body awareness.

Regular Pilates also helps prevent common injuries and discomfort. For example, cycling works mainly the quadriceps (front thigh). This can lead to a strength imbalance in the leg muscles and to muscle injury. Therefore, having balance between the quadriceps and the 'opposing' muscle group--- the hamstrings -- boosts the recruitment of those under used muscles. The body works as a unit, giving you the edge.

Consider adding Pilates to your workout regimen-it can pay off big; enhancing your performance and enjoyment of cycling as well as the activities of daily living.

Two Pilates exercises that will enhance your cycling:

1. Single Leg Stretch
2. Single Leg Kick

