

Pilates Articles

Q&A with Carson Palmer

Carson Palmer is the Pro Bowl Quarterback for the NFL's Cincinnati Bengals. A major Pilates advocate and Balanced Body customer, Carson recently talked with Balanced Body about how Pilates has not only become a crucial adjunct of his training regimen but a huge part of his everyday life.



How did you first hear about Pilates?

My wife, Shaelyn, is actually a Pilates instructor and for years she was always trying to get me to try it. Like a lot of guys I mistakenly thought it was something that just the girls did – like an aerobics class or something. So I would always kind of laugh it off. I really didn't know much about it.

What made you decide to try it?

In 2006 I badly hurt my knee in a playoff game against the Steelers and ended up having reconstructive surgery on it. I ended up with a brace around my knee and I really couldn't do anything from an exercise standpoint. But I was just dying to work out. My wife was still begging me to try Pilates and my doctor OK'd me doing some of the basic exercises on the Reformer. Finally I gave in and tried it.

I've been hooked ever since.

What did you notice when you tried the exercise?

How it worked and strengthened not just the large muscles but the smaller muscles needed to support those larger muscle groups. When I had my surgery I had a tourniquet put around my knee to stop the blood flow in order to do the procedure. Because of that my knee, leg muscles, quads and hamstrings just began to completely atrophy. But when I started Pilates (once a day seven days a week) and worked on slowly getting those small muscles stronger in order to better stabilize the larger muscles, I noticed a huge difference in how I was able to move.

Now it is a major part of my season preparation and it's a huge part of my off-season regimen. From a performance standpoint I really think it has improved my strength and athleticism. I've been doing it for so long now that I know what movements to do for a particular part of my body that may need work – like my lower back or my groin. It really goes a long way toward creating an even musculature which, as an athlete, helps me be the best that I can be.

How has it helped you during the season?

On Mondays after games you can be really sore – especially as a QB. My knees get sore from playing on turf or my shoulders are sore from getting sacked or driven into the ground. On those days it is hard to do weight-bearing activities like a bench press or shoulder press because you are so beat up. But Pilates provides such a unique way to workout and has such gentle movements - it's non-weight bearing, it's easy on the joints and its slower strength-building stretching movements makes all the difference in the world. It is a great alternative on

days when cardio or weightlifting might be just too much. It really helps keep me fresh through 16 weeks of an NFL season.

Have you noticed an increase in flexibility?

It's funny - I don't really notice the flexibility during the season, I just know that I'm able to move well. But right after the season I take a month off and only do Pilates a bit. It's then that I really notice that the flexibility and strength have decreased. Especially in my groin - I have a very tight groin by nature and it gets substantially worse when I don't do Pilates.

How did you decide on Balanced Body equipment?

When my wife was training to become certified we started talking to other instructors about what kind of equipment we should be looking to buy. From what we heard Balanced Body equipment was widely regarded that was the best in the industry. We finally ended up choosing the Studio Reformer and we absolutely love it. It's beautiful, it's easy to get on and off, it's got a sleek design and it works great. We've had ours for a couple of years now and have never had a problem with it. I do Pilates a lot and I've tried other Reformers. They don't even come close to what Balanced Body makes.

What would you say to athletes (men) thinking of adding Pilates to their conditioning?

Don't make the same mistake I did by looking at a Pilates class and thinking "It's not for me." It is for you. It is for everyone, you just have to try it. I guarantee that in two weeks you will feel great and in three weeks you will feel better and stronger than ever before. For me the proof was in the pudding. It has become an absolutely essential part of my year-round conditioning. I can't even imagine *not* doing it anymore.