

Exercises for Yoga for Athletes

1). Warm Up Exercises

- **Cat/Cow** (warm up the spine – start on hands and knees and inhale as you arch the back and look up at the ceiling, exhale as you round the spine and look down at the mat; continue sequencing for 4-5 breaths)



- o **Quad stretch** – from cat/cow extend one arm out in front and opposite leg behind on an inhale and bring elbow to knee on an exhale. Second round take a strap or your hand and grab opposite ankle for a quad stretch – repeat other side.
- **Downward Facing Dog** – pedal feet up and down in an upside down vee position. Bring heels up and twist to one side bringing them down and then reverse the direction to get an even deeper stretch into tight calf muscles

2). Asana stretches (can either start from downward facing dog or walk back to the position)

- **Low runner's lunge** – use padding underneath the knee. Deep stretch for hip flexors
- **Warrior I → humble warrior** (clasp hands at the base of the spine and then fold to the inside of the knee) – deep stretch in inner groin and hamstring



- **Triangle pose** – (can use a block inside of the foot) – reach and extend keeping chest directly facing the wall and careful not to fold over the leg – deep stretch for inner groin, leg, and hamstring



- Can use a block on either side of the front leg
- **Pyramid or Parsvottanasana** – (can use blocks on either side of the leg out in front) – square off the hips and fold forward over the front leg – deep stretch in the hamstring
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- **Revolved Triangle** – (can use a block on the inside or the outside of the front foot) – Take the opposite hand to the block or the floor on the inside or outside of the front foot and twist and open to the other side – deep stretch in the IT band



- **Wide legged forward fold** – Clasp hands at the base of the spine and reach the arms overhead as you bend down towards the floor while legs are spread far apart. Deep stretch in your shoulders and inner thigh, groin.
 - o **Variation** – release palms of the hand underneath the shoulders and walk hands towards one foot and then to the other. Deep stretch isolating inner thigh and hamstring muscles.
- **Lizard Pose** – Can start off in a low lunge. For a more restorative stretch, keep your back knee down; you can use a bolster or blocks for underneath your palms or forearms. If your back knee needs a little extra support, pad it with a folded blanket or fold your mat in half.
 - o This pose opens the hips, hip flexors, groins and inner thigh, along with the quadriceps



- **Pigeon (on left) or reverse pigeon (right)**
 - o Deep stretch in the pyraformis, outer thigh, and glute muscles. If in traditional pigeon can reach opposite arm back and grab hold of the ankle or use a strap for a deep quad stretch.



- **Gomukhasana Pose (cow face pose)** – Can do just the arms for a deep shoulder stretch or add the legs (don't worry about getting knees on top of each other and if it hurts your knees, back off on the stretch). Leg variation stretches your three gluteus muscles (maximus, medius, and minimus) along with your piriformis. Tight gluteus muscles and a piriformis can result in sciatic pain stemming from a large nerve, which can become impinged by tight muscles.
 - o Shoulder stretch – Anteriorly, there is a deep stretch of the pectoralis muscles. Posteriorly, there is a deep stretch of the tricep muscle. If this arm position hurts

your shoulders, try not clasp the fingers together, back off from the stretch using a strap.

*** Can use a strap if it is difficult or uncomfortable (for most of us it is!) for fingers to touch



RICK CLARKE

- **Garundasana arms** – Deep stretch for muscles between the shoulder blades, the trapezius and deltoid muscles and muscles of the four muscles of the rotator cuff; infraspinatus, supraspinatus, subscapularis, teres minor.



- **Supta Baddha Konasana** – inner groin stretch, relaxation. Bring one hand to the belly and one to the heart and listen to relaxing music as you monitor your breathing. This is a great relaxation pose after a practice, long day, stressful events. (It is contraindicated with knee injuries or discomfort. You can try putting a blanket under each knee or a block if this helps. For lower back issues, try putting a bolster vertically underneath your head and ending at the base of your lower back. This pose should be comfortable, so if it's not, it's time to ease up).



- **Svasana** – PLEASE – even if it is just for 5 minutes! Can take traditional svasana or try legs up against the wall. Note; legs up against the wall is a type of inversion. Inversions of immunological benefits and stress release benefits – no kidding! Unwind and be healthier especially as you get into the fall and winter seasons!

NOTE: Props – straps, blocks, bolsters, knee pads are excellent resources to help maximize the benefits of a stretch, move into a comfortable position, and relax into the moment.