

Cross Training with the Pilates Method

Why is cross training important and what is it?

For each sport or activity the body performs certain actions or movements. Some sports are non-weight bearing, like cycling and swimming. Some are weight bearing, like weight lifting.



Performing the actions required for any chosen sport or activity places stress and load on the same joint(s) and muscles time after time – thus quickly creating an imbalance within the body. Non-weight bearing vs. weight bearing has an impact on the survival of the skeletal system as a whole. Addressing that imbalance both muscularly and skeletally will not only improve your ability to execute that action or combination of movements more accurately, efficiently and effectively, but you will also minimise your risk of injury.

We have seen that increasing range of motion/flexibility, along with joint stability, and addressing loading vs. unloading of the joints, can have enormous cross training advantages in terms of performance longevity.

Identifying the imbalance or overactivity is key. Getting to know the actions or movements related and required for each chosen sport or activity then leads to improved skills, and therefore the body feels like it can push the extra mile within specific training drills.

Due to its uniquely designed equipment, the Pilates method has the ability to have great effect on the body and is commonly used for cross training.

We work with dancers training to be professional classical ballet dancers, through to AFL footballers. Both are coping with a heavy load, both are required to be in peak physical condition all year.

A footballer needs to cope with the unexpected knock, hit, or punch and is putting their body on the line every week.

Our sessions with footballers each week are all about balancing the two sides and working for optimal range of motion, particularly in the spine. We take the body through combinations of movements which oppose those used within training and also games.

Pre-season in the Pilates studio we work for increased conditioning as the body has rested. During the season we do a combination, with more focus on mobilising, but also actively strengthening the opposing muscles in order to keep the body match fit. The game is fast, dynamic and unpredictable and the body has to be ready for anything. Using dynamics and tempo within the Pilates session is important so that reaction time is explored within the body.

We have found over the past ten years working with footballers from VFL to AFL level that the ones that commit are also preparing for life after footy. If balance is addressed and the body is functioning optimally, it can enjoy other activities post-professional football.

The football world is intoxicating, both positively and negatively. Attending a Pilates session, which is non-related and not about whether you won or not is often a great mental release. The player gets to work on their own body and its strengths and weaknesses without competition.

Author Katrina Edwards

*Advanced Diploma of the Pilates Method, Diploma of Dance (Australian Ballet School), Certificate IV Training & Education
Pilates Practitioner 20 years.
Director of Training at National Pilates Training
Owner/Manager of Aligned for Life Pilates*

