

The Skinny on Cycling  
Wade Wingler (wade@wingler.com)

9-5-06 Central Indiana Bicycling Association Newsletter

Yogis and Boo-boos

I think I like the fall cycling season the best. The leaves are beautiful, it's not terribly hot and humid and the most grueling rides of the year are behind us. As I ride along enjoying the lovely scenery, I think about my cycling accomplishments for this season, the fact that I'm in better shape than when I hit the saddle this spring and I pause to take a very deep breath and fill my lungs with the clear autumn air.

As I ride along, I think briefly about the soreness in my legs which have not been brought about by recent cycling adventures, but by the last minute roller skating trip I enjoyed with my nine-year-old daughter. As I drop my heel toward the ground and stretch my hamstring, I realize that practicing Yoga to ease my body's aches and pains has become second nature.

I started practicing Yoga a little over two years ago. I had just begun my weight loss routine and was on a vacation with my family when I realized that losing weight was only part of the life change that was in store for me. After an afternoon of huffing and puffing in the Washington D.C. heat, I headed to the local bookstore to find a book on some sort of exercise program that would allow me to increase my strength, balance and flexibility. Being the kind of person who reads magazines starting with the back and working my way to the front, I started perusing books in the health and fitness section of the store and quickly ran across a book entitled Yoga for Wimps. This book immediately seemed like a good match for me! That night I did my very first yoga practice in a hotel room. I have never missed my daily yoga practice since and will soon complete my 1000<sup>th</sup> practice.

In addition to my daily yoga practice, I have learned to incorporate many yogic principals into my cycling routines. Try incorporating some of these yogic activities into your next ride:

Focus on the breath:

When you're riding, focus on your breath. As you ride, try to make your inhale slightly longer than your exhale for a few breath cycles. As you do this you will work to increase your lung capacity.

Rolling Cat/Cow:

When you're coasting on a flat or down a hill, do a rolling version of cat/cow posture by first putting your hands firmly on the hoods or flats of your handlebars, then work to make your shoulder blades touch one another while dropping your belly. After a few seconds in this position, try to reach your

sternum toward your navel while arching your back. Repeat this cycle a few times.

Lengthen the spine:

While you're riding consciously think about lengthening your spine. Think about a line reaching from the top of your head into the sky while at the same time thinking about a line reaching from your tailbone to the ground.

Rolling twist:

While you're coasting, turn your head and shoulders to the right and let your torso and spine slowly release. Repeat the same twist to the left. Make sure you do this carefully and keep your eyes and bike safely on the road!

Hamstring stretch:

While you're coasting lock one knee at the bottom of your pedal stroke and drop your heel toward the ground and feel the stretch in your hamstring and the back of your knee. Repeat on the other side.

There are many yogic postures that can be adopted to provide relief on the bike and at SAG stops. As we head into fall, why don't you get a yoga book or video and look for ways to incorporate yoga into your cycling. If that goes well, find ways to use Yoga throughout the winter to retain some of the strength and flexibility you've worked so hard to develop this cycling season.

Who knows, maybe by being more of a Yogi, we can all avoid some of those painful Boo-boos!

-----trailer-----

Wade Winger, the author of "The Skinny on Cycling" is the father of one adorable little girl, the husband of a beautiful & talented librarian, a Yogi and an avid cyclist. His web site, [www.HowILost100Pounds.com](http://www.HowILost100Pounds.com) features common sense advice on losing weight without suffering and improving your cycling through healthy living.