

Yoga and Sports: Skiing

It is incredible what yoga does for skiing. People can ski all day long and much better.

Conditioning before hitting the slopes can increase the safety and enjoyment of the sport. Most ski injuries occur early in the day when muscles are tight and enthusiasm is high, and late in the day when muscles are weakened and technique is poor.

A simple yoga exercise called the awkward pose, can increase your strength, balance and concentration which will make the ski season more rewarding.

It consists of three variations which are done sequentially.

To begin, stand with the feet apart, about shoulder width, an even distance (approximately six inches) between your heels and toes. Extend the arms out in front of you parallel to the floor with the shoulders pressed down and away from the head. Keep the upper body strong and firm in this position.

Bend your knees and shift the weight back into the heels, pushing the buttocks out behind you. When the top of the thighs are parallel to the floor and arms, hold your pose. The feet should be held parallel and the knees should only be shoulder width apart.

One good way to think of getting into this pose is to imagine that you are sitting in an invisible chair leaning back to bring the spine and shoulders against the back of the chair. The arm muscles are contracted, the abdomen is held tight and your breathing should be normal. Hold the pose for 20 seconds. Stand up.

The second part of this series is similar to the first. Keep the upper body the same as before and stand straight up onto the balls of the feet, standing as high as possible with the arches pressed forward. To keep the ankles strong and straight, press down with each big toe. Now, bend the knees again keeping the spine straight and stop when the quadriceps are parallel to the floor. Hold this pose for 20 seconds. Stand up. You will find this second pose a bit more difficult.

Third, assume the same basic pose with upper body firm and strong. Again, slowly bend the knees and this time sit all the way down lightly onto the heels. Now press the knees together and hold the body still. The quadriceps are again level with the floor and the spine is straight. Hold again for 20 seconds. Stand up

out of the pose slowly, bring the heels down and relax. Don't forget to do a second set of all three poses.