

## Alternative Training Methods

By: Long Track World Cup Team Member Patrick Meek

When most people look at our speedskaters, they marvel at their massive quadriceps and assume that they must spend all their time in the weight room and skating in circles. While this maybe true to an extent, many of the top athletes on the World Cup and World Championships Teams use other modalities of training to benefit their skating.

One alternative training method to speedskating that seems almost like a no brainer is cycling. Cycling uses many of the same muscles as speedskating, gluts and quads. It is also an exercise that is easier on the joints than continually skating or even running for our athletes. Many skaters have actually transitioned from speedskating to careers in the professional peloton. The best example of this is five-time Olympic medalist, Eric Heiden, who went on to start in two of the famous Tour de France.

Another alternative training method that many of our athletes have delved into is yoga. Many of our athletes can be seen in yoga studios around the Salt Lake Valley working on their balance, core strength and breathing. The practice of yoga has grown in popularity over the years—in fact many professional athletes, including LeBron James, Shaquille O’Neal, Andy Murray and the Philadelphia Eagles, all credit yoga with keeping them healthy and helping to build on their strength.

Why yoga? Aside from the benefits of balance and core, yoga helps to prevent one-dimensionality in athletes. Depending on the sport, athletes can be overdeveloped in some areas and underdeveloped in others. For instance, cyclists typically have tight quads, swimmers may have tight shoulders, golfers can be more flexible in one arm then the other and speedskaters can suffer from tight quads and backs from the skating position. Yoga can help athletes find balance in their entire body rather than just focusing on the same muscle groups as they do in practice.

Another benefit of yoga is the mental game. Yoga isn’t considered a competitive sport. In fact, anyone who has ever taken a yoga class has probably heard the instructor say not to compete with the pose your fellow students can do, just find your own posture. Taking an athlete out of the competitive setting, even for just an hour-long class, helps them to be more aware of their own body, relieves stress and can sharpen concentration.

So the next time you’re sitting in a yoga class and thinking you’re not working as hard as our athletes, look next to you...one of them might be doing a downward dog pose in your class.