

Making Yoga Less of a Stretch for Athletes

BY LESLIE McELROY



The fact that athletes covet the competitive edge is certainly no news flash. Only those who go to extremes grab the headlines. But up until recently, practicing yoga was considered a stretch for most pros. Enter sport-specific yoga expert Dana Edison, whose mission is to help athletes extend beyond training “comfort zones” to gain the edge. She shares that by using yoga as a conditioning tool, rather than merely focusing on stretching, her programs keep athletes healthier, enhance their performance and prolong their careers.

The founder and director of Boston-based Radius Yoga Conditioning, a national fitness consultancy, Dana specializes in personalized yoga for athletic cross training. She conducts one-on-one and team programs tailored to the specifications of each sport, as well as individual player’s bodies and the demands of their positions. “Take Jason Varitek,” Dana says. “Squatting behind home is not just about his knees and legs. His hips and core, which include his lower back, are under some serious stress. Uncovering and addressing all of his vulnerable areas – not just the most obvious – are the keys to keeping him healthy.”

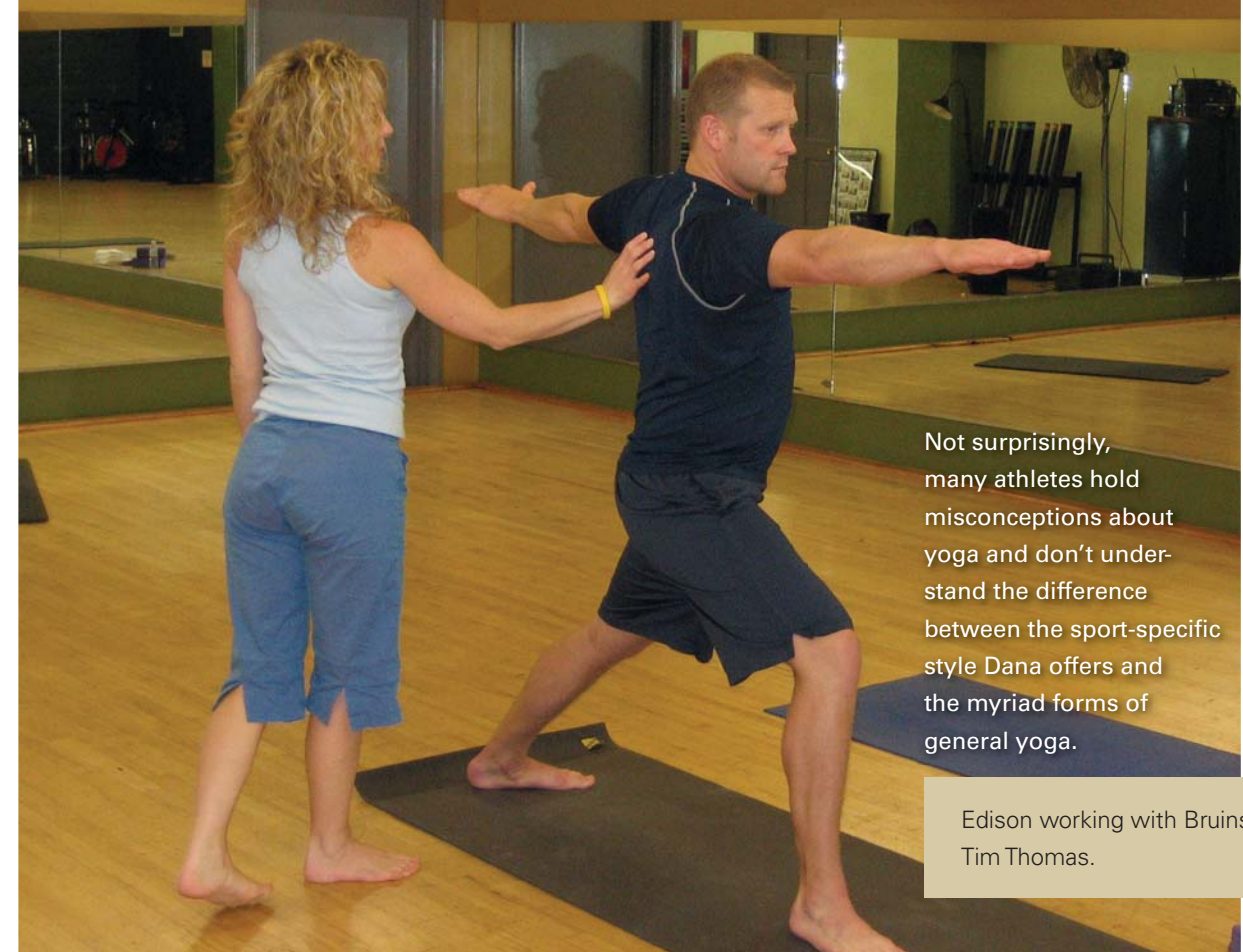
According to Dana, her approach to yoga conditioning increases the longevity of an athlete’s career by preventing injuries. In fact, a primary goal of her sport-specific training is the correction of compensations and imbalances brought on by the sport’s particular movements, which she points to as the

source of most avoidable injuries across all sports. “Compensation of one area of the body inevitably produces weakness and vulnerability in another area, so creating balance reduces injury. And correcting compensations to generate a greater and more stable range of motion can also enhance performance,” says Dana.

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Edison working with Bruins goalie, Tim Thomas.

Some think it’s going to be mystical, too easy, feminine, or just about stretching. But with her pro clients making comments like, “It will kick you’re a**” and “it’s the kind of strength training you don’t get from weight lifting,” it’s no wonder Dana has been able to break through the barriers. With the help of a keen sports interest, a quick wit, and a thick skin, in less than two years she’s worked with coaches and players in more than a dozen professional teams across MLB, the NBA, NFL, NHL and MLS.

As the team instructor for the Toronto Blue Jays and the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, she’s trained a vast array of players: from veteran Cy Young award-winning pitchers to promising first-year rookies. As a Boston sports fan, she’s happily worked with members of the Patriots, Red Sox, Celtics and Bruins. She most recently conducted an off-season program with Boston Bruins Goal-tender, Tim Thomas.

According to Tim, working with Dana helped him create and maintain a higher level

of functional strength and flexibility throughout his body. “Her workouts always focus on complementing my current training and addressing whatever is going on with me,” he shares. “I believe it will help me prevent injury during the season. Overall, I just feel better after working out and practicing. I experience less tension and soreness.”

Professional athletes are just one group on which Dana sets her sights. Through her company’s charitable arm, the “Bigger Picture Effort,” Dana conducts donation-based training programs with Boston Firefighters. “After all,” she says, “firefighters are our community service athletes.”

When she’s not doing yoga, you can usually find her cheering loudly in the stands at her clients’ sporting events. What does she do when her clients are on opposite sides? “I take a page from Switzerland’s playbook and clap for everyone,” she says. “But I’m sure the fans around me are thinking, ‘oh boy, the blonde doesn’t understand sports.’” Little do they know....

For more information on Dana Edison and Radius Yoga Conditioning, visit www.radiusyoga.com.