

# THE 4 BEST PILATES EXERCISES

FOR DRAGON BOATERS

By Jan Ball

To excel at (and enjoy to the max), dragon boating ideally you need endurance, strength, power and coordination. Here are Jan's top four Pilates exercises for enhancing your performance on the water while in the studio. Of course at the same time they'll give your body that Pilates renowned alignment, spine articulation, mobility and stability and all-over body strength, control and tone.

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## 2 – THE ROLL UP

Muscle Focus: Abdominal muscles

**START POSITION** Lie on your back with your hands at your sides and reach your arms overhead, palms facing each other. Draw the ribs down and together while accentuating the overhead reach of your arms. Keep the arms shoulder width apart.

**MOVEMENT SEQUENCE** Inhale – Squeeze upper inner thighs together, flex your feet and engage the abdominals as you reach the arms up to the ceiling and roll the head and upper body up off the mat. Pause to deepen the hollow in the abdominals and imprint the lower spine into the mat. Exhale – Continue peeling the torso off of the mat vertebra by vertebra, maintaining a C curve of the spine and a lift of the abdominals until you are sitting up on your sit bones. The upper body is curved over and reaching towards the feet as if you are wrapping your body around a large fit ball.

Inhale – Engage the abdominals, deepening the hollow, gently squeeze the sit-bones together and tuck the tailbone under to begin rolling back down vertebra by vertebra. Maintain the C curve of the spine.

Exhale – Lower the head and reach the arms back overhead to return to the start position.

**Note:** keep the gaze forward down the bridge of your nose, keep the front of your throat soft.

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## 3 – THE SWAN

Muscle Focus: Back extensors

**START POSITION** Lie prone with the arms bent in a goal post position, elbows in line with the shoulders and palms of hands face down. Stretch legs out long and keep as close to gather as is comfortable for the lower back.

**MOVEMENT SEQUENCE** Inhale – Press the pubis symphysis gently into the mat whilst engaging the abdominals. Slide the shoulder blades down the back and lift the upper body into extension as you press through the pinky finger side of the hands.

Exhale – Lower the torso back down to the mat with control.

**Note:** Maintain a long C Curve in spine.

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## 1 – THE SAW

Muscle Focus: Back extensors, hamstrings, adductors

**START POSITION** Sit up with legs straight and open, shoulder width apart. Reach arms out to the side level with the bottom of the sternum. Sit up tall on the center of the sit-bones.

**MOVEMENT SEQUENCE** Inhale – Rotate the torso to the left and reach the right arms towards the left foot.

Exhale – Engage the abdominals and round the head and torso forward, reaching the right arm towards the outside of the little toe of the left foot. Reach the left arm back while medially rotating the shoulder so that the palm faces the ceiling.

Inhale – Return to the start position with the weight centered on the sit-bones and the arms out to the sides.

Repeat on the other side.

**Note:** Reverse the breathing by exhaling to roll forward and inhaling to sit back up. Notice how it changes the stretch in the back.

**Modification:** For tight hamstrings bend the legs or sit on a partially rolled up mat.

## 4 – SIDE BEND (and variations)

Muscle focus: abdominal muscles & scapular stabilisers

**START POSITION** Side plank with the wrist under the shoulder & top foot in front of bottom foot. The top hand is reaching straight up towards the ceiling

**MOVEMENT SEQUENCE** Inhale- Reach the top arm towards the ceiling & make the torso as long & strong as possible. Imagine you are in between two,plane of glass.

Exhale- Lower the hips towards the mat & look toward the hand as the arm lowers towards the hips.

Inhale: Lift the hips up towards the ceiling & reach the arm up & overhead in a long arc. Take your gaze towards the ceiling. Repeat x 3.

Change sides by placing the free (gesture) hand onto the mat in a plant position & rotating the torso & feet to balance on the opposite arm Repeat x 3.

Flex's Pilates classes can be personalised to whatever sport, physical issue or lifestyle activity you like, especially when taking private lessons, or booking a trio.

Check out the options on our website.