

SPORT

Athletes fine-tune their bodies

Some big names are catching on to Pilates as part of their fitness programmes, writes Hugh Chalmers

What do All Black Steve Devine, champion triathlete Hamish Carter, and Kingz soccer players Mark Burton and Jeff Campbell have in common?

They all have the same secret weapon as part of their fitness regime — Pilates.

Pilates is a form of exercise that helps build core strength and flexibility. Clinical Pilates is used by some physiotherapists as a preventative and rehabilitative tool and differs from the mass-market Pilates classes.

Devine does Pilates as part of his training programme. Like Carter, Burton and Campbell, he attends Re-Ab, a clinic run by physiotherapist Lou James. "It's an integral part of my sports training and rehabilitation," says the Aussie import half-back. "Having physiotherapy and Pilates combined has improved my core strength, muscle and spine flexibility and helped in injury prevention and treatment."

Devine isn't the only person recommending Pilates — some doctors are also noticing its benefits.

"A lot of surgeons agree with the methods and are starting to refer people now," says James.

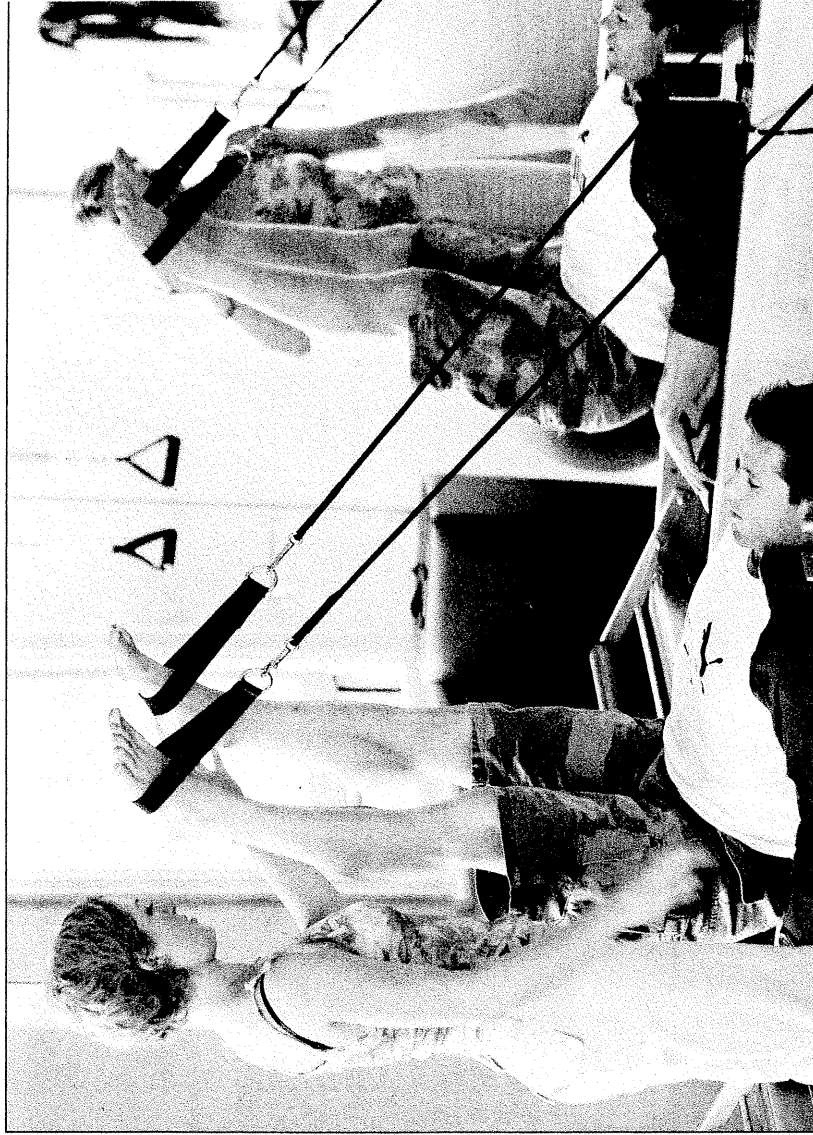
"Because we are physios we do Pilates differently. It's not just a class, we assess the athletes' bodies. So if they're a rugby prop, their workout will be different to those playing other positions."

Shortly after gaining her Bachelor of Health Science and Physiotherapy, James worked with two top local rugby teams.

"I used to be with Auckland and the Blues but the problem was, you only see people for 15

minutes. We only treated the symptoms, but then I heard about Pilates."

James started up Re-Ab in May and has already expanded her business to cater to demand. "I now have five other physios working here," she says. "It's become really popular. My main problem now is finding staff and space."



● Lou James assists All Black halfback Steve Devine during an exercise session at Ponsonby's Re-Ab
PHOTO: AMOS CHAP

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