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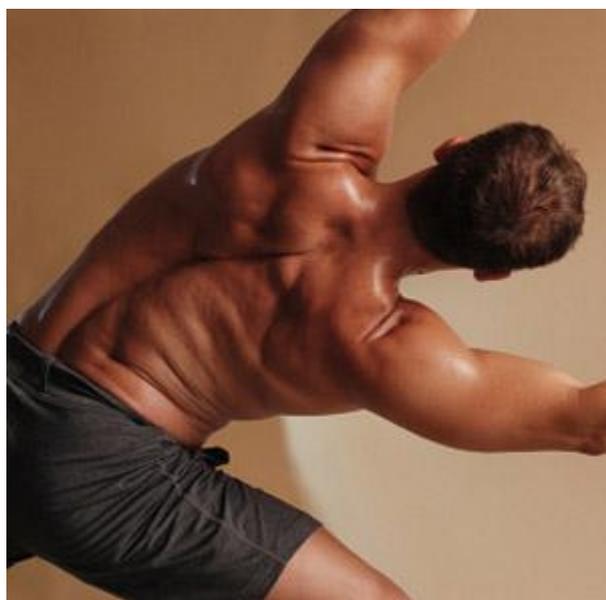
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## New NFL Training Methods

Forget standard weight training, today's NFL players are using new and unorthodox workout and recovery strategies

by Tracy Wholf



### 1.) BIKRAM YOGA

You wouldn't expect burly guys to love Half Moons and Half Tortoises. But Bikram is no standard yoga. This athletic variation of the practice is 90 minutes of hardcore stretches performed in a 105-degree room with 40% humidity. Bikram forces participants to simultaneously stretch and work on their balance, improving blood flow, and building strength and flexibility while also cleansing the body of toxins. No wonder the Pittsburgh Steelers added hot yoga as optional workouts years ago. And according to Cleveland Browns wide receiver Braylon Edwards, Bikram is "the way to go" to increase the stamina needed for this position. "I couldn't last 20 minutes, at first. You really have to be mentally strong [to do it]." He's since learned how to improve his breathing techniques.

### 2.) KETTLEBELL TRAINING

These Russian cast-iron weights look like cannonballs with handles attached and can weigh between 10 and 106 pounds. Kettlebells improve grip, core, and explosive strength while also increasing flexibility. The Baltimore Ravens and Tennessee Titans have added them to their training rooms in the past few seasons. The biggest benefit? When players swing a kettlebell, the weight distribution changes, unlike with regular dumbbells where weight remains equal. This forces the user to stabilize more parts of his body, hitting his core, and helping to increase grip strength as he adjusts to control the weight.

### 3.) MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

Oakland Raiders fullback Lorenzo Neal and Denver Broncos safety Brian Dawkins and other NFL stars have turned to MMA training techniques to increase balance, body control, and mental toughness. Baltimore Ravens linebacker Brendon Ayanbadejo even regularly works out with UFC star Rashad Evans. The NFL is so turned on to MMA that several former pros were cast in the current cycle of Spike TV's *The Ultimate Fighter 10*, including Marcus Jones, Matt Mitrione, Brendan Schaub, and Wes Shivers.

#### 4.) ACUPUNCTURE

New Orleans Saints tight end Jeremy Shockey and Seattle Seahawks quarterback Matt Hasselbeck are regular followers of this ancient Chinese technique. Thin needles are inserted into specific points on the body to relieve pain by decreasing swelling, bruising, and muscle spasms while improving mobility. Many athletes turn to acupuncture for recovery purposes and improved performance on the field. "There are a lot of muscles that are hard to stretch," Seahawks defender Patrick Kerney has said. "Acupuncture hits those and releases them and makes you feel a lot better."

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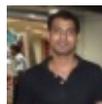
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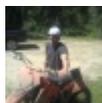
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