

SAILING FIT

By: Meka Taulbee

ACE Certified Personal Trainer

SAILFIT Inc

Stretching Strategies

At a recent regatta I attended I watched as everyone got their boats and themselves ready to hit the water. I noticed that each and every sailor has their own method of madness when it comes to stretching or the lack of. The truth of the matter is that this can be one of the most important things you do before you get on the water and after you get off the water.

No one wants to suffer from a pulled or strained muscle during a regatta or for that matter after a regatta either. The best way to prevent this is to properly stretch your muscles both before and after you go sailing. Here are a few simple stretches you can practice.

1. Stand up keeping your legs straight with your knees slightly bent. Slowly roll your neck forward followed by your shoulders, back and then your hips down so that your fingertips are reaching for your toes. Hold this position for a minute and then slowly roll back up to a standing straight position. This will stretch your neck, shoulders, back and hamstrings.
2. Stand and bend one leg at the knee behind you so that your foot is touching your butt and your toes are pointing toward the sky. If you are bending your right leg use your right hand to pull your foot close to your butt. You can use your other hand to hold onto something to help keep your balance. Hold this position for a minute and then switch to the other leg. This will stretch your quads.
3. Sit with your legs straight out in front of you. Bend at the waist keeping your back straight. Work towards being able to grab your feet. Hold this stretch for one minute. If you can grab your feet pull yourself down by bending your elbows until you feel a stretch, but not so far that it is painful. This will stretch your back and legs.

With any stretch it is important that you do not bounce. This can strain your muscles. It is just as important to stretch when your muscles are warm as it is when you are warming up when trying to prevent an injury. Even though you may take preventative measures chances are, that at some point in time you will encounter a pulled or strained muscle to some degree. If you feel a strained muscle or clearly know that you have pulled one you should continue to stretch until it has healed. If you do not keep working the muscle it will become tight at even more prone to becoming hurt again or even making the existing damage worse. In this situation you need to do every stretch very slowly and not as intensely. The best way to get the most out of a stretch in this case is to do it in the shower under hot water. This will help warm up your muscles and even loosen them up.

I would like to address topics and questions that sailors have in this article. Also I'm sure that many of you have the same questions. If there is a topic you would like to hear more about or a more personal question please email me at meka@sailfit.com or look for me at many of the regattas. You can find our schedule on our website at www.sailfit.com.