



maleroom 

RETHINKING CORE VALUES

Pilates, now there's a word that very rarely features in the same sentence as "Aussie bloke". I'm guessing that in the male mind, Pilates is to exercise what quiche is to food. We might like it. We accept that it could even be good for us, but then there's the whole "real men" thing, lingering menacingly in the background. We don't want to take the risk, in case one of our mates spots us walking out of a studio, alongside a gaggle of dancers. Well listen up lads, it's time for a rethink. All that running, biking, swimming, buffing yourself up in the gym – that's great, but it's even better when it's balanced up with a bit of work tightening up the transversus abdominis, or the TA as it's known in Pilates-studio land. Maybe it's an age thing, but more and more blokes I know are matting down, lunging, stretching, flexing, arching, reaching and improving "core strength". For the uninitiated, the discipline bears the name of a German bloke by the name of Joseph Pilates, who started exploring the link between the mind, strong torso muscles, good posture, correct breathing and a whole bunch of other stuff I don't understand. Personally, I wondered how something that didn't involve sweating could be so good for you, but after a couple of hours of being contorted and stretched by my Italian instructor Antonella, I found I was hooked. She tossed around terms like balance point and scapular stability, while I was breathing out, arching up, sucking in and pushing down, all at the same time. Therein lies the problem for most blokes – doing more than one thing at once – so you need a really patient instructor. I became an instant Pilates convert. In fact, I was so impressed with Antonella, next session I'm going to take her in one of my homemade quiches, just to say thanks. A couple of good Pilates spots for blokes to try: XPilates at Toowong (ph: 3365 0901), and Olympic

swimmer Jade Winter's Studio Pilates at Hawthorne (www.studiopilates.com).

BLOWN AWAY

The footy season's only a week or so old, and we've already had our first refereeing controversy. No real surprise there, except that it came before the first nightclub incident. I notice rugby union referees are now being given the opportunity to explain their decisions to reporters after the game. Not sure that's a great idea – additional focus and profile being allocated to officials. They can be an unusual breed, referees. A few years ago, one whistleblower was overheard psyching himself up before taking the field for a big match. "Come on whistle, let's go get 'em," he said, much to the delight of the seven people huddled together in the outside broadcast van. Yep, looking forward to those post-match interviews.

NOT HAPPY, JAN

An ongoing dilemma in our household is what to do with all those telephone books that arrive annually – or is it monthly? It seems rude to throw them straight in the bin, given all the trouble that so many people have gone to in putting them together. My mate Cam came up with a good idea. He stashed them in his backpack as ballast – all part of an intensive training program to prepare him for a difficult bushwalk up and across the McPherson Range. At least it was a good idea until he forgot to take them out. The good news is any bushwalker, from here on in, who has a sudden urge to order a pizza and have it delivered to the top of Mount Barney, can do so without complication, courtesy of Cam's hard labour, as that is where he decided to leave his load.

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ABS SOLUTION ... Jade Winter and why pilates is good for everyone; a yellow card for ARU refs meeting the media; and telephone books, the latest exercise regime