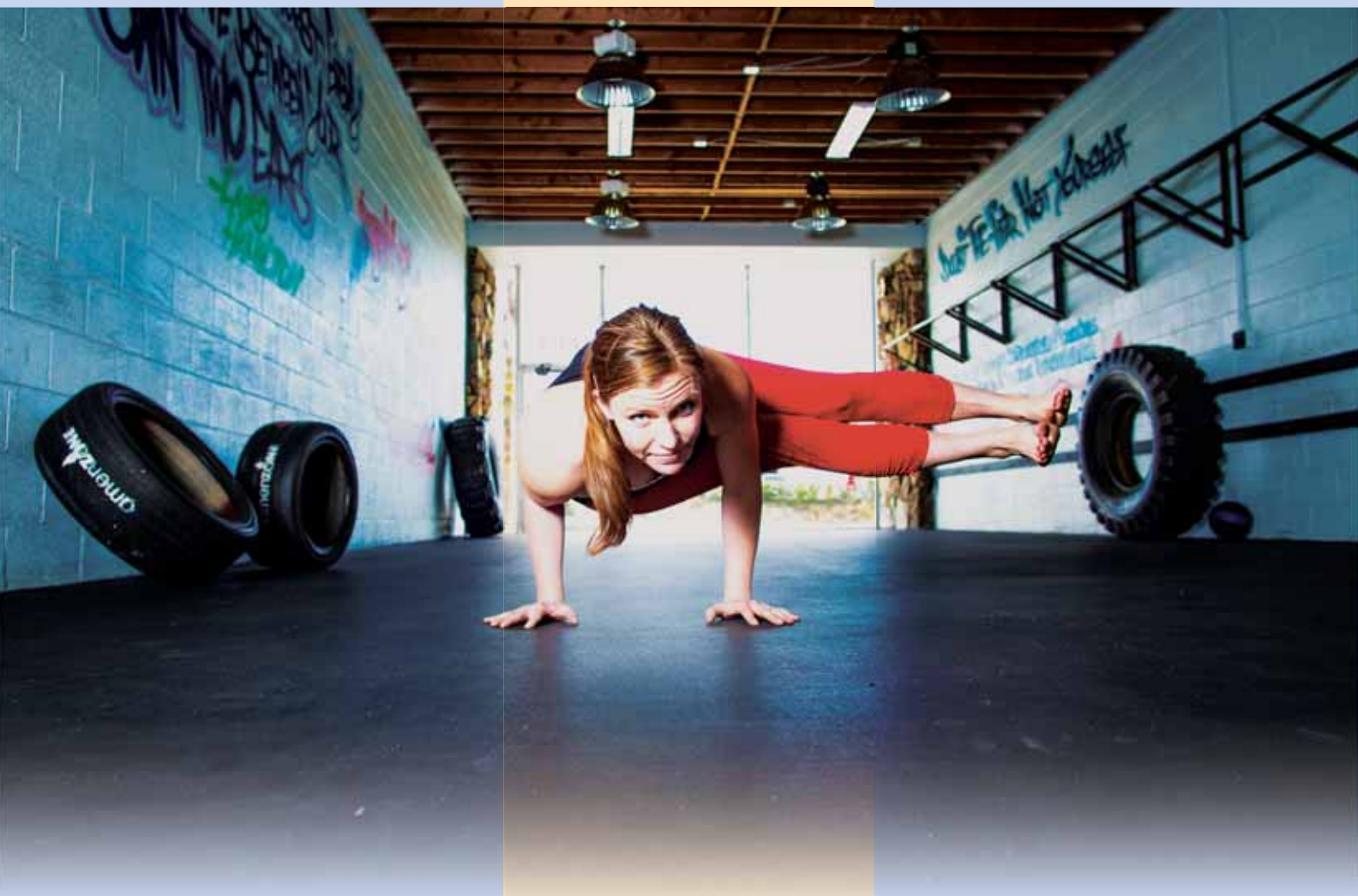


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Stay Calm and Yoga On

By Anna Jensen



better body awareness, flexibility, balance, presence of mind, focus, and relaxation- those all seem like extremely beneficial abilities for a rider to possess. Lindsay Smith, a beautiful redheaded yogini and equestrienne who has been riding since she was nine, is hoping to bring all of those elusive skills to riders everywhere.

Lindsay started in hunter and jumpers, but has also dabbled in eventing and dressage, and currently shows Arabians and Saddlebreds nationally with her husband. Based out of Los Angeles, Smith teaches sport-oriented yoga at a variety of different area studios. She is currently the yoga coach for the LA professional soccer team, Chivas USA, and is the exclusive yoga instructor for the athlete's village at the upcoming X-Games in Austin as well as the World Series of Beach Volleyball. She has amassed a client list that includes players from NFL, NBA, and MLB teams, as well as numerous college athletes.

Smith started doing yoga about 15 years ago when she was a fashion industry executive and, as she describes herself, was "well dressed and high stressed" Her hours on the yoga mat immediately made her feel better mentally and physically, especially with aches and pains caused by falls from horses.

"Taking those few minutes before I get on helps me to have a really clear mindset and be a little bit more present. I'm not thinking about what happened in the last ride, and then freaking out about that. I'm thinking, okay, this is a new ride, this is a new day and I'm able to take each little thing as it comes and be more confident."

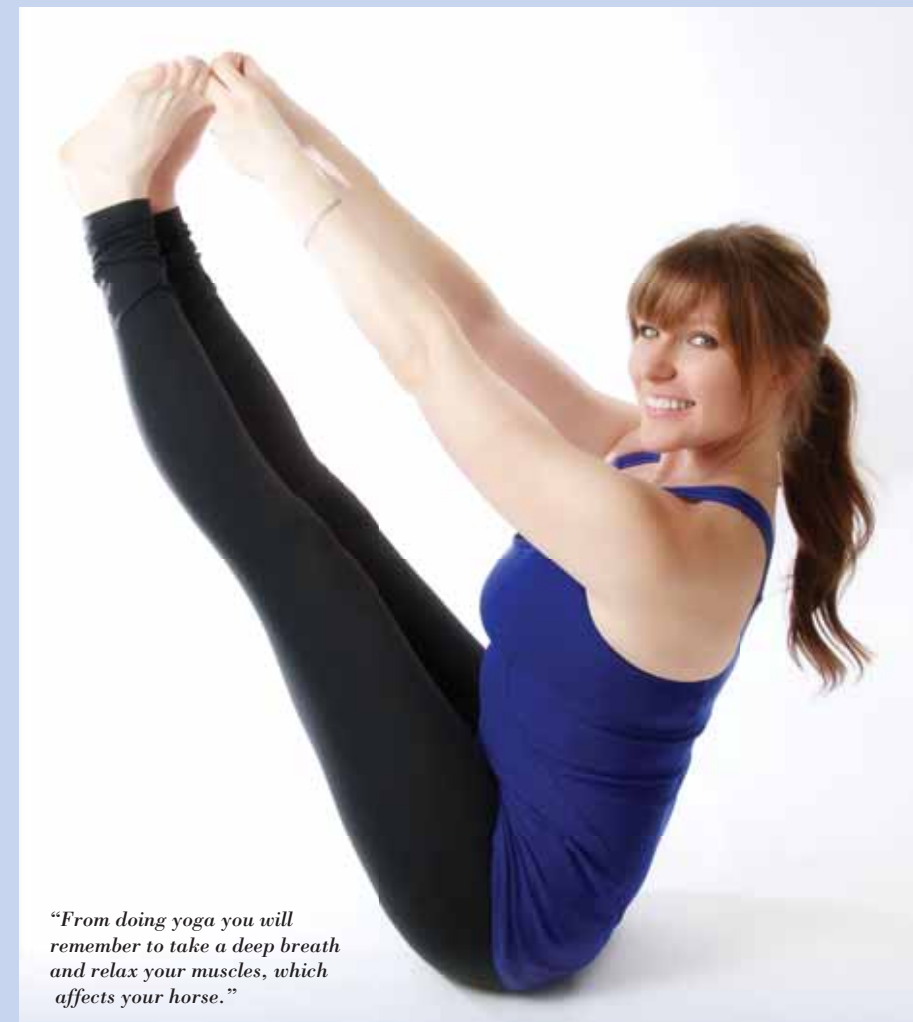
Many riders say that riding is their yoga and Smith agrees that the benefits can feel similar. "I think so many people find meditation, or that calmness of mind, through movement and being really present. Many riders are able to find that moment of stillness through the movement created, that trust created,

through horse and rider." Smith insists that adding yoga to your riding, not just experiencing a blissed-out ride as "good enough" to get your Zen-fix, can bring about profound changes in your physical and mental state and consequently your horse's physical and mental state.

"What I see in riders that I've been helping is that yoga is great for correcting any imbalances that could be translating to your horse. By that, I mean the little things we do in our daily lives. We always drive with our right foot, so that hip may be a little bit tighter and a little bit stronger so cueing with our right leg might be a little bit different. On a really sensitive horse that makes all the difference." Smith explains.

How many times have you been asked to move your leg a certain way, to bring your shoulders back more, to tuck in your tush- and that same instruction seems to be repeated from your instructor with every single lesson you take? Smith says that's another plus from time spent on a yoga mat.

"I grew up doing ballet and riding, and I think body awareness and position is a really hard thing to grasp if you haven't been taught that from a very young age. I think that is something yoga really emphasizes- knowing where your body is in space- without actually having to look."



"From doing yoga you will remember to take a deep breath and relax your muscles, which affects your horse."

Lindsay Smith, when not riding, teaches sport-oriented yoga to equestrians and athletes and is currently the yoga coach for Chivas USA, the Los Angeles professional soccer team.



Smith also has an interesting way of helping riders prepare and practice for those times when mid-course, or mid-ride, you lose your cool and everything seems to shut down. "I will put you into really uncomfortable situations. I'll put you in a deep stretch and make you hold it for a really long time. It takes a little time for the body to get over that period of freaking out because it's a really hard stretch and you wondering how you are going to make it. That allows you to let go and then the mind clears and you realize it's going to be okay. I think that directly translates to riding because if something happens unexpectedly you might have that moment where all of your muscles tense and your breath stops. From doing yoga you will remember to take a deep breath and relax your muscles, which affects your horse."

Smith says that learning to stay mentally present through yoga and then on your horse also affects your horse's trust in you and what you ask them to do. She says that when we get nervous it is easy to go into a kind of anxiety-fueled tunnel vision. By staying present and calm, she says we take in the entire field of vision around us and our mounts can detect that. Smith says that when your mount senses that you are on the same wavelength as to what your surroundings and possible dangers are, they will feel more in-sync and more trusting of you as leader.

Smith believes equestrian-oriented yoga is in its infant-stages, but it's growing. She works with many equestrians privately and in her yoga classes throughout the LA- area. She is currently developing a workshop series to bring to interested show-stables, equestrian centers and groups, and is available for private instruction worldwide though various media platforms.

For more information visit www.facebook.com/YogaForEquestrians or www.rawsportsyoga.com

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