



Maintaining a Competitive Edge Using a Unique Relaxation Approach

Finding the right balance between rest and rigorous training is essential for any athlete, regardless of sport. Many athletes overtax themselves in order to achieve peak performance and maintain a competitive edge. Jann Girard, an Ironman triathlete, knows this first-hand. “I felt that every minute not spent eating and sleeping had to be used for training”, she said. “Although I was training harder, the only thing that seemed to be happening was that I was tired and run down. It was time to seek help and look at doing things differently.”

Rest and recovery is an essential but often missing ingredient to the athlete’s training regimen. Relaxation is critical because the relaxed muscle is toned and flexible, has better biomechanics, recovers more quickly from the muscle tears that occur in workout, and minimizes the risk of injury. It also promotes the release of lactic acid, promotes muscle growth, decreases adrenal stress and helps to maintain insulin balance.

Many athletes may feel as if they don’t want to be “too relaxed” before an event because they will be limp or unable to expend muscle energy. But is there a way to attain a quality of relaxation and recovery that not only keeps muscles toned and ready, but also puts the athlete “in the zone” both mentally and physically? Jann Girard found that the relaxation offered by the *Trager*[®] Approach helped her to improve her performances dramatically. “I started working with *Trager* Practitioner Lynette Brannon. At first certain areas like my shoulder, ankles and diaphragm

were very tight. After a few sessions, my body was comfortable and flexible, and I noticed significant improvement in my form. I started getting more done in training with less time spent. I not only felt better and had more energy during my training, but I also began performing better at competitions.”

The *Trager* Approach is unique because it has two aspects that can be used to benefit the athlete. *Mentastics*[®] are simple, effortless self-care movements that a *Trager* practitioner can teach the athlete to maintain a sense of balance and lightness. These movements can also be practiced at home, in training or even during a performance. The Olympic runner Carl Lewis would often take his foot out of the starting block and “toss” his muscles in a *Trager*-like fashion to loosen them before a sprint. In addition to *Mentastics*, the *Trager* Approach involves work on a padded table. The athlete’s body is supported and gently moved within its pain-free range and natural rhythm. As a result, tensions disappear and new movement patterns become possible.

“*Trager* also reaches the mind,” states Lynette Brannon. “It adds lightness and light-heartedness to the training process, which allows the athlete to continue. It anchors the athlete in how their body feels, and increases their self-confidence. Patterns in the unconscious mind are trained to notice what’s longer, what’s looser. Because it changes the template in the brain, then strong, efficient movements in the body can follow.”

To locate a practitioner, go to the *Trager*[®] website www.tragerus.org or call the United States *Trager* Association at 440-834-0308.