



## SELF MASSAGE

For any athlete remaining free of injury is obviously high on the priority list in terms of preparation and there are many guidelines on how to achieve this – self-massage/treatment is one of those.

Stretching prior, during and after athletic performance has long been an integral part of an athlete's regime. Massage has been predominantly performed by Sports Trainers, Massage Therapists or Physiotherapists. However not all athletes have the convenience of trained professionals to administer such services. What this booklet attempts to do is to introduce some of the concepts and applications of self-massage for an athlete's preparation.

### PRE EVENT MASSAGE

Pre event massage traditionally lends itself to such concepts as 'increasing blood flow' and 'warming up muscles'. Although the research to back these claims is limited the anecdotal evidence is substantial. Increasingly more elite athletes are utilising self-massage skills. Not only can they focus on individual target tissues, they can perform these simple techniques at the most appropriate time leading up to their event.

Pre event self massage does not have to incorporate a full body application. The athlete can simply concentrate on the prominent muscle groups they tend to use during their sport or on problem areas that they have encountered with training. The techniques are simple but effective and can be performed on various muscle groups with minor alterations. No oil is necessary and the techniques can be done through clothing. Oil or some form of liniment may also be used if the athlete prefers.

It is important to note that if the coach or athlete is not confident with applying these techniques to a current or past injury, to consult your health professional before doing so.

**Brad Hiskins**

**Massage therapist  
Australian Institute of Sport**

## SELF MASSAGE TECHNIQUES

### WARM UP SELF MASSAGE

To perform a warm up self -massage, three basic techniques may be utilised. The time taken to complete the sequence is totally up to the athlete. Experience of course will determine the individual preference for what technique to use and the variations of application. Try the following techniques on one of your quadriceps for a couple of minutes and then stand up, walk, move around and see the difference this short time can make.

#### 1. TAPPING OR POUNDING

With the fleshy part of your fist, tap or pound the muscle group you are working on.



#### 2. SQUEEZE

Again, with both hands if it's your legs or one hand if it's your arms, strongly squeeze the muscle for about 3-4 seconds and repeat 5-6 times.



#### 3. ROLLING

With both hands if it's your legs or one hand (obviously) if it's your arm your working on, vigorously roll the muscle from side to side.



**PARTNER WARM UP MASSAGE****SHOULDER SPECIFIC**

Begin with the person being worked on seated and the massaging person standing. Again we will utilise three basic techniques:

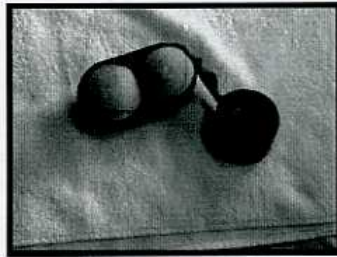


- 1. SQUEEZING** With firm hands, squeeze the deltoid muscle and hold for 2-3 seconds. Continue this procedure down the arm towards the elbow.
- 2. ROLLING** With both hands, roll the deltoid muscle vigorously. Again, continue this down the arm towards the elbow. Repeat 4-5 times.
- 3. SHAKING** With both thumbs placed on the tip of the shoulder and fingers underneath the arm for support, shake the shoulder up and down. Secondly, rotate the shoulder in big circles, backwards and forwards

### SELF MASSAGE FOR TRAINING

Many of the self-massage techniques described in this section utilise items such as tennis balls for those hard to get to areas. There are many massage 'utensils' on the market but for convenience tennis balls have been used here.

When working areas such as the back, both sides can be worked at once by taping two tennis balls together as shown below.



The taped tennis balls may now be used as the photo depicts. With the tennis balls placed in this region (or anywhere up into the upper back) the person can then lay on their back, placing the tennis balls in the tight and/or sore tissues.

## LOWER BACK REGION

### GLUTS:

1. Lay on your back with one leg crossed over the other (Cross the leg corresponding to the Glut you are working). Use a golf ball or tennis ball and place it under your glut, feeling for tight or tender areas. Hold these spots for 20-25 sec, and move on.



2. Lay on your side and place the ball in the region between your femoral head (ball joint at top of femur) and your Iliac crest (commonly referred to as hip). You will now be working one of two muscles, your Glut Medius or your T.F.L (Tensor Fasciae Latae, a hip flexor). Again, hold these tight or sore points for 15 – 20 seconds, and move on.



## HIP FLEXORS/ TFL

1. Keeping your hip flexor range is of utmost importance to allow full back extension. With the tennis ball placed over the TFL (3 cm down and 3 cm out from the bony prominence at the front of your hip) lie on your side to affect the technique. You may have to lay almost on your front to place pressure on this muscle with the tennis ball.



## LOWER BACK

1. Using a tennis or golf ball, place it to either side of your lower back, just to the side of your spine looking for tight or sore points. Again hold for 15 - 20 seconds and move on.
2. Resting on your elbows, rock back and forth, moving the ball up and down the muscles just to the side of your spine.



## SHOULDER REGION

### THORACIC

1. Both techniques used for the lower back can also be used for the thoracic area.
2. Using a tennis ball placed in the area of discomfort, lean up against a wall, bending and straightening your knees to run the ball up and down your thoracic area.

### RHOMBOID AREA

1. Lying on back with one arm laying across your chest, place the ball just on the inside of your scapula. Hold for 20-25 secs and move on. Work all along the inside of your scapula and between your scapula and spine.



### THORACIC ROTATION

1. Lack of thoracic rotation may place too much pressure on your shoulder girdle resulting in poor mechanics and an increased potential of injury.

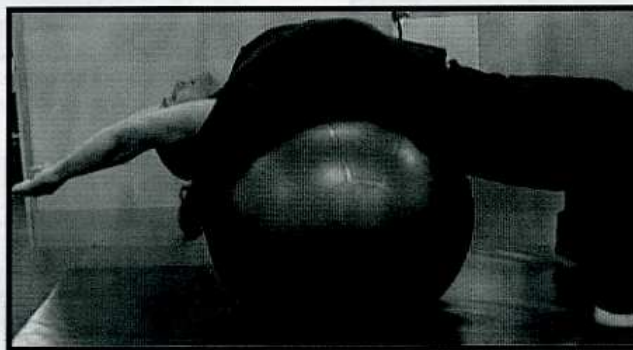


## THORACIC EXTENSION:

1. Thoracic extension is essential to allow you to get into a comfortable preparatory position for many functional activities. Utilise the thoracic chairs in the physio/massage area as suggested below.



If this equipment is unavailable or difficult to access then utilise a swiss ball as an alternative.



## CALVES

### 1. THUMB DRAG

Start with your thumbs placed in the centre of your calf and fingers on your tibia (front of foreleg). Drag your thumbs through the calf towards your fingers slowly.



### 2. TIBIA PUSH:

Place thumbs just inside your Tibia and push muscle tissue away from Tibia. (Work from ankle to knee)



### 3. THUMB PRESSURE

Place both thumbs in the centre of your calf just above your Achilles. Slowly drag your thumbs up your calf. If you find tight, sore areas, repeat through that area. Use a lubricant if you wish.





## SHINS

1. While sitting on the ground with one leg bent, place both thumbs on the anterior portion of your leg (shins), just below your knee. Slowly drag your thumbs down your shin towards your ankle and repeat. Use a lubricant if you wish.
2. As you locate any tender spots apply direct pressure over the site with your thumbs, slowly plantar flex then dorsi flex your foot.



## QUADRICEPTS REGION

### QUADS

1. Place hands either side of your upper leg and shake vigorously. Similar to the warm up section.
2. Place your hands on your quads facing opposite directions. Squeeze the tissue under your palms and then twist, similar to a "Chinese burn". Do this the length of the quad. Again similar to the warm up section.
3. With your knuckles, friction the quad from the knee to just below the hip. Don't run your knuckles over the skin, keep firm enough pressure to only friction the tissue below.
4. Same technique applied to the outside of your quad (I.T.B or Iliotibial band) from knee to hip.

### HAMSTRING REGION

1. Lying on your back, have one leg bent to 90 degrees at the hip and the other laying flat. Place your fingers of both hands in the belly of your hamstring while your knee is bent. Keeping the same pressure with your fingers, now straighten your knee. Repeat 10-12 times in various hamstring positions.



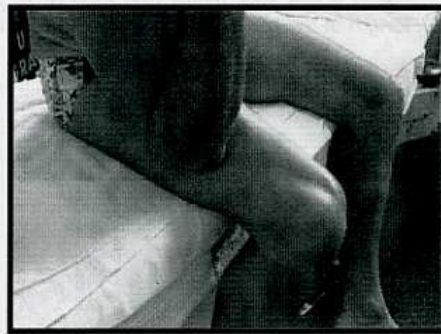
2. Sitting on a chair, place a tennis ball under one hamstring. This in itself maybe enough to relieve some of the tightness in this muscle. To further this process, now straighten your leg SLOWLY. Repeat this 9-10 times.



5. **Thumb frictions.**

Where the quad is exceptionally tight or sore, apply sustained pressure with thumbs or frictions across the area for 5 to 6 seconds and move on. You may wish to concentrate on the area just above the patella while applying this technique.

5. Use your forearm to drag up your quad from your knee to your hip. Use your elbow where you believe it is necessary. Concentrate on the lateral (outside) portion of your quad muscle.



### UPPER TRAPS

1. The Upper Trapezius muscle, which runs from your shoulder to your neck, can be worked by pinching the muscle between your thumb and fingers, and rotating your head. It is important to rotate the head slowly and to hold the head in the fully rotated position for 2-3 seconds before moving on. It is also important to keep the pressure. Feel for the tight or sore points, don't avoid these spots as they are the ones which need the work.



### NECK

1. Lying on the ground, place both your hands, with fingers interlocked, behind your head. Your thumbs should be free. Now make large circling motions with your thumbs just below the line of your skull. Continue this action down your neck toward your shoulders.
2. If you find a sore spot during this action, press into the area and hold for approximately 15 - 20 seconds, then move on.

