

THE ATHLETE'S WORKOUT



The game plan a Wunda Chair series that builds total-body strength, balance and stability. We're rooting for you!

By Steve Vicera • Edited by Amanda Altman

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AL MIDA; HAIR BY ANNIE CAVANAGH; MAKEUP BY AUTUMN ABRAMS; STEVE'S OWN CLOTHES

LONG BEFORE I BECAME A PILATES TEACHER, I WAS A BODYBUILDER, earning championship titles in prestigious competitions like Superbody Body Building and Fitness and also Mr. Philippines. But all that training came at a cost, and eventually, I developed spondylolisthesis, a painful spine condition. Thankfully, I found Pilates, a career I find so gratifying because it gives me the opportunity to help others, like myself, physically transform into healthier people. Although many of my clients are ordinary people who want to progress

their fitness levels despite their limitations, I regularly train professional athletes who enlist my services to improve their performance or rehabilitate from an injury. I created this routine for athletes, men and experienced Pilates professionals looking for a challenge. Because it's geared toward those with a higher muscle density, especially in the upper body, it's not suitable for beginners. The exercises focus on increasing overall strength, with an emphasis on balance, stability and spinal health. Men, in particular, tend to have decreased flexibility, and

this program works around those limitations. Although many people shy away from the Wunda Chair because they fear the smaller base of support or they're intimidated by the potential difficulty of the exercises, that's why I love it! Despite its appearance, the Chair is stable and sturdy, with a platform that requires more core engagement and balance than other apparatus. I only have an hour to give my clients an intense and efficient program, and the Chair provides an ideal means of achieving that goal, especially for athletes. Read on for the play-by-play. **PS**



ABOVE: VICERA FLEXES FOR THE CAMERA AT THE SUPERBODY BODY BUILDING AND FITNESS COMPETITION IN 1989.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- PROP** none
- BREATH** Inhale as you lengthen your spine, and exhale as you round it.
- REPS** 8–10 (unless otherwise indicated)
- TIP** Focus on quality—i.e., precision—over quantity.

JACKKNIFE

SPRING SETTING heavy
PURPOSE strengthens the abdominals (rectus, transverse and obliques), glutes and hamstrings; promotes shoulder stability
SETUP Lie on your back with your head near the pedal, hands on the sides of the pedal, and legs together and extended to 45 degrees. Keep your pelvis and spine neutral.

1. Hinging from your hips, reach your legs toward the platform, keeping your shoulders stable.
2. Extend your legs toward the ceiling, engaging your glutes and hamstrings, and sequentially lower your spine to the starting position.

TIPS Press your hands against the pedal to stabilize your shoulders. Push energy into your toes during the extension, keeping your hips elevated.
MODIFICATION Omit the hip extension when you roll down.

SETUP



STEP 1



STEP 2.1



SWAN DIVE

SPRING SETTING: medium (1 heavy, 1 light)

PURPOSE: challenges the back body; creates mobility in the thoracic extensors (upper back)

SETUP: Lie facedown with your hips on the platform, legs laterally rotated hip-width apart. Place your palms on the pedal shoulder-width apart in the down position, and keep your pelvis and spine neutral.

1. Engage your upper-back muscles as you extend your spine, allowing the pedal to assist the movement.
2. Return to the starting position.

TIPS: Engage your glutes and hamstrings, and think of sending energy out through your toes. Keep your neck long.

MODIFICATION: Connect the Cadillac to the Chair to support your lower body.

SETUP & STEP 1



GEAR GUIDE

BASI Systems Wunda Chair
(\$1,645; www.basisystems.com)

SETUP



STEP 1



OBLIQUE PIKE

SPRING SETTING: heavy

PURPOSE: increases shoulder stability and strength; strengthens the rectus abdominis (six-pack muscles) and obliques

SETUP: Standing sideways to the pedal, stagger your feet on the pedal (inside foot on the back) with your hands on the front corners of the platform. Shift your weight over your hands, aligning your shoulders over your wrists.

1. Exhale, using your core to lift your pelvis, allowing the pedal to lift.
2. Lower the pedal to return to the starting position.

TIPS: The goal here is to completely lift the pedal. Keep your lumbar spine (lower back) rounded as you lift and lower your pelvis. Avoid hyperextension in your elbows.

ADVANCED: Extend your outside leg off the pedal.

INVERSION

SPRING SETTING: none

PURPOSE: enhances body awareness, upper-body strength and core stability

SETUP: Adjust the handles according to your arm length, so that your shoulder blades are on the edge of the platform. Lie on the platform with your head toward the pedal, and legs in tabletop. Hold onto the handles, palms inward, and lift your chest.

1. Lift your legs towards the ceiling, slowly shifting your weight toward your shoulders, until you reach a vertical position. Hold for 10–15 seconds.
2. Flexing from your hips, articulate your spine back to the starting position. Do 3–5 reps.

TIP: Press your shoulders against the side of the seat for stability.

MODIFICATION: Have an instructor assist the inversion.



SETUP



STEP 1

UNILATERAL LEG WORK

SPRING SETTING: heavy

PURPOSE: develops leg strength and stability

SETUP: Facing away from the pedal, stand upright with your heels fully on the platform and arms extended to 45 degrees. Place the ball of one foot on the pedal, keeping your hips and shoulders square, and bend your supporting knee.

1. Lower the pedal as much as possible while keeping your supporting knee tracking over your toes.
2. Push through your heel to straighten your supporting leg. Do 8–10 reps.
3. Repeat sequence, but only go for partial range, then mid-range, and finally, do leg kick-backs.
4. Repeat on your other side.

TIPS: Watch out for proper tracking of your knee and that your ankle doesn't roll. Stay as upright as possible—avoid leaning forward or back.

MODIFICATION: Place your hands on the handles.

ADVANCED: Place your hands behind your head, in "genie" position or hold 8–10-pound weights.

SETUP & STEP 1





HUNDRED

SPRING SETTING none

PURPOSE coordinates breath with core engagement

SETUP Lie on the platform with your legs in tabletop, arms long by your sides and spine neutral.

1. Lift your head, neck and shoulders, and extend your legs to 45 degrees, then start vigorously pumping your arms with the movement coming from your shoulders. Inhale for 5 pumps, then exhale for 5, until you've completed 10 cycles.

TIP Reach your fingers past your hips, and keep your core engaged throughout.

ADVANCED Extend your legs to a low diagonal and/or do staccato breathing.



SIDE-BEND

SPRING SETTING medium (1 heavy, 1 light)

PURPOSE focuses on balance and stability, especially for the obliques

SETUP Lie on your side with your hips and shoulders stacked. Place your bottom hand on the pedal directly under your shoulder, and extend your top arm over your hips.

1. Laterally flex from your spine, allowing the pedal to lift.
2. Return to the starting position.
3. Repeat on your other side.

TIP Focus on lifting from your obliques.
ADVANCED Place your top hand behind your head, and lift your top leg as you side-bend.



DIPS WITH THORACIC EXTENSION

SPRING SETTING heavy

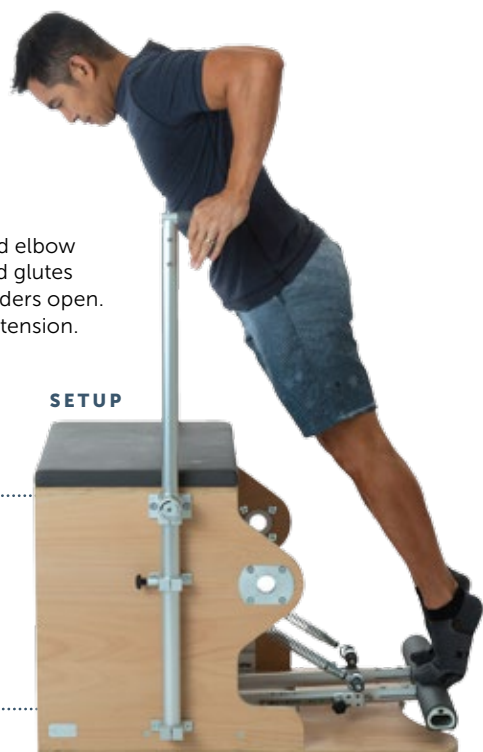
PURPOSE promotes upper-body strength and mobility, plus stability of the scapula, pecs and triceps

SETUP Stand on the platform facing away from the pedal, holding onto the handles. Place the balls of your feet on the pedal, bending your elbows to lower the pedal.

1. Push through the heels of your hands to extend your arms and open your chest, allowing the pedal to lift.
2. Extend your thoracic spine (mid-back), with your gaze slightly upward.

TIPS Be careful with cervical, wrist and elbow hyperextension. Keep your core and glutes engaged, and your chest and shoulders open.

MODIFICATION Omit the thoracic extension.



SETUP



STEPS 1-2

WANT MORE?

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PIGEON STRETCH

SPRING SETTING medium (1 heavy, 1 light)

PURPOSE stretches the gluteus maximus and the deep six muscles (e.g., the piriformis)

SETUP Standing behind the Chair, place one leg on the platform, deeply bending your knee, with your opposite toes on the floor. Place your hands shoulder-width apart on the pedal, slightly extending your spine.

1. Round your spine, allowing the pedal to lower, for a few breaths.
2. Return to the starting position.
3. Repeat on your other side.

MODIFICATION If you're feeling tight, allow your leg to hang off the platform edge.



SETUP



STEP 1



STEVE VICERA began his fitness career in 1986 as a bodybuilder. Today, Steve is a fitness trainer specializing in spinal stabilization and corrective exercise, with certifications from STOTT PILATES® ACE®, Titleist Performance Institute, FMS and K-VEST®. The founder of Sommet Fitness in Scottsdale, AZ, Steve has been helping people reach their goals for better function, greater fitness and an overall sense of well-being for more than 20 years. For more information, visit www.sommetfitness.com.