

A Closer Look at the *BFS FLEXIBILITY PROGRAM*

Flexibility is as easy as 1-2-3-4

We've found, after giving thousands of BFS clinics over the past three decades,



Photo by Dean Atkins, Timeless Images Photography, Inc., www.timelessimages.com

All athletes, not just gymnasts, need to stretch daily. Showing extreme flexibility is Mary Beth Lofgren, a Level 10 gymnast who represents the Olympus School of Gymnastics in Sandy, Utah and has competed in the last two Junior Nationals.

that stretching is the one component most often missing in an athlete's training. This omission is odd, considering the tremendous amount of research available on the value of stretching.

Athletes can gain several specific benefits by following the BFS 1-2-3-4 flexibility program. Here are a few:

- Increased joint range of motion
- Increased speed
- Improved overall performance
- Improved posture
- Decreased number and severity of injuries

BFS regards stretching as a separate exercise regimen, such as plyometrics and weight training. Stretching should not be thought of as part of a warm-up or cool-down for physical activity that athletes only need to do occasionally. They must stretch *daily*, in both the off-season and the in-season.

A stretching regimen involves serious work, concentration and adherence to proper technique. We want our athletes to look like sprinters when stretching, with every limb and joint straight and perfect. We use the Six Absolutes and ask, "Are the knees aligned; are the toes aligned?" Most coaches don't consider those important aspects of stretching, but attention to detail is what makes our program unique and, more importantly, what makes our program work.

We have created a stretching program that takes about 10 minutes per

session and thoroughly stretches every major area of the body, especially the trunk, hips and legs. The program has been field tested in thousands of high schools and used by countless athletes of all ages, so we know it works. After athletes learn the program, they can stretch anytime, anywhere, and without a partner.

The BFS stretching program is as easy as 1-2-3-4. We say that because those numbers help everyone understand and remember the program. Specifically, the program consists of 10 stretches, divided into four groups, performed in the following order:

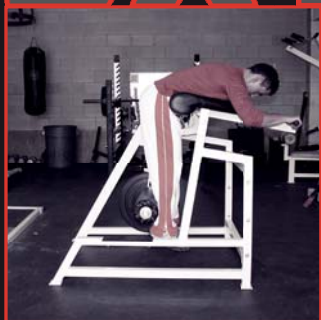
1. On a bench
2. Standing
3. On a wall
4. On the floor

The numbers 1-2-3-4 refer both to the order in which the athlete performs each group of exercises and to the approximate amount of time, in minutes, the athlete devotes to each group of exercises. Thus, the athlete spends one minute performing stretches while sitting on a bench, two minutes while standing, three minutes in contact with a wall and at least four minutes (performing five stretches) while sitting on the floor.

Each stretch should be held for at least 30 seconds, although it's fine to hold a stretch up to 60 seconds to create a higher degree of relaxation. Stretches involving single limbs are performed for 30 seconds on each side for a total of one minute. Beginners have the option of holding each stretch for only 10 seconds, performing three sets per stretch to equal 30 seconds.

After a few weeks of BFS stretching exercises, athletes will begin to enjoy significant improvements in flexibility and overall athletic ability. Just 10 minutes of intelligent stretching each day is a painless way to move closer to your goals. **BFS**

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