

WHAT MATTERS TO MEN

BEST LIFE

A WINNER'S PLAYBOOK

Tom Brady on What Every Successful Man Must Know

(Mr. Brady wears Tom Ford. Details on p. 158)

PLUS

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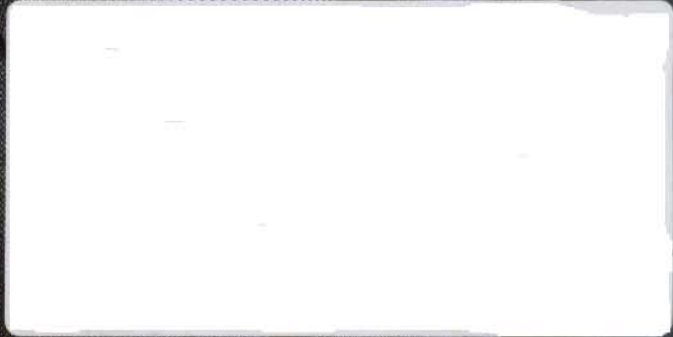
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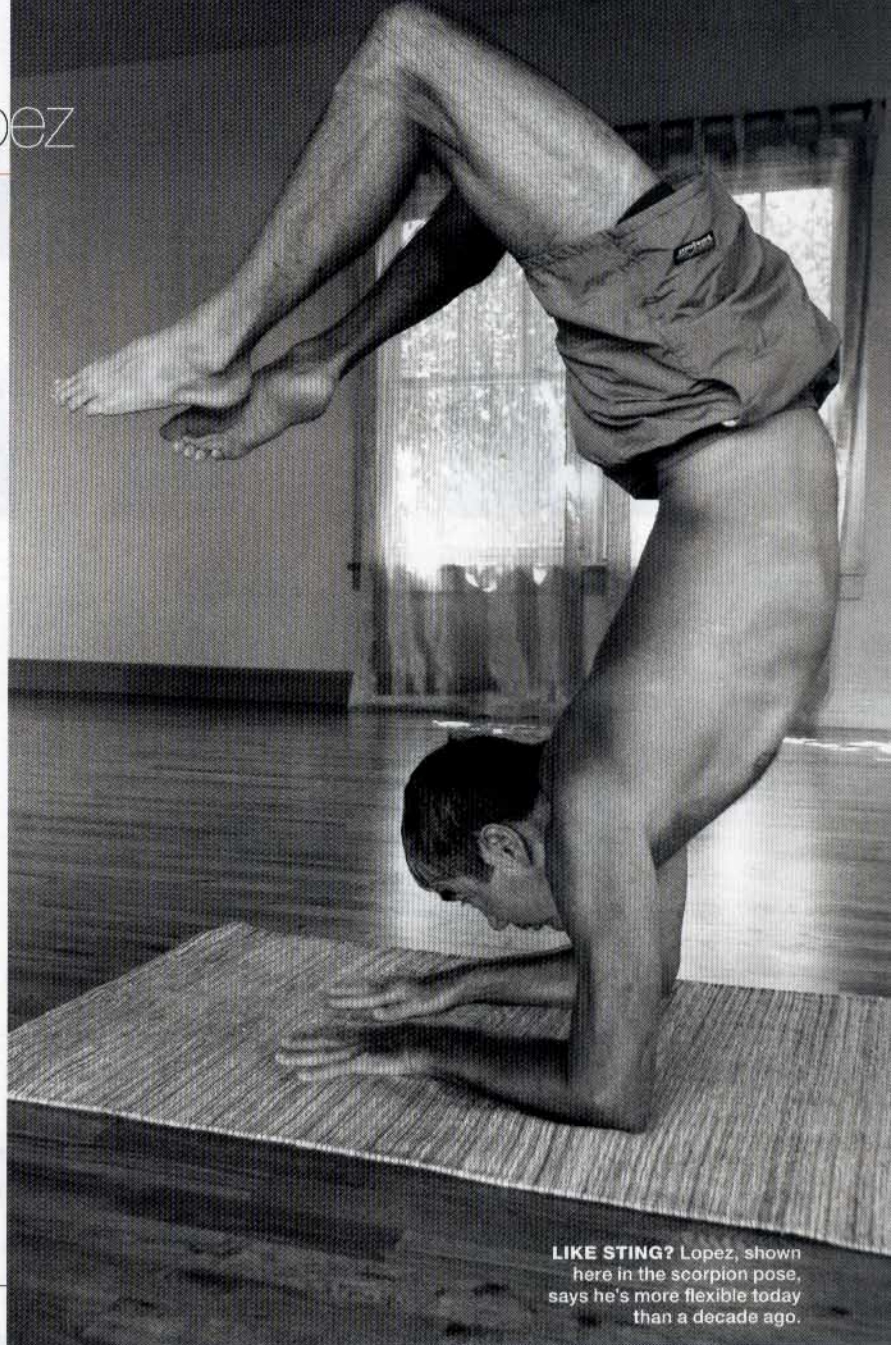


Put Your Back Into It

Use yoga to keep your spine young, strong, and healthy

I can touch my toes easily these days, something that wasn't possible when I attended my first yoga class 40 years ago. Paddling a surfboard every day had made my back muscles tight, and I tried yoga because, well, that's where I thought the girls were. ■ I was attending the University of Hawaii then, which is when I found my guru, the yogi Swami Vishnu-devananda, who spread the way of yoga throughout the West. I was surfing a place called Pipeline, and because of that special break on Oahu's North Shore, I ended up in a lot of surf movies. The flexibility from my yoga routine had simply made me a better surfer. ■ Today, at 58, I'm an active guy: I mountain bike, snowboard, or swim several times a week, and I surf when I can. If I tweak my neck or back, I recover quickly. The credit belongs to my yoga routine. As I've grown older, I've learned that the key to staying active is maintaining a flexible spine. Our spines affect almost all aspects of our bodies. Some guys I used to surf with have stopped because of spinal issues. ■ I practice yoga for several hours every morning before going to my shop to work. Most of my favorite yoga postures, called *asanas*, focus on the back. Holding them for 30 seconds stretches and strengthens the muscles surrounding the spine. Here are five good *asanas* for loosening your back muscles and feeling younger. AS TOLD TO MARK ANDERS

Gerry Lopez, 58, a former professional surfer, lives—appropriately enough—in Bend, Oregon, where he makes handcrafted surfboards.



LIKE STING? Lopez, shown here in the scorpion pose, says he's more flexible today than a decade ago.

you can do it too

Say good-bye to back pain with these yoga postures (but start slowly)

HEAD-TO-KNEE POSE (JANUSHIRASANA)

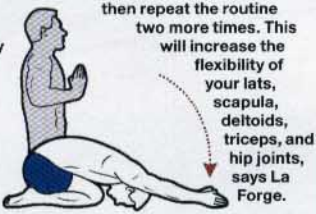
Sit on the floor and extend your legs in front of you. Bring your left heel to your groin. Clasp your hands, raise your arms, and reach forward to grasp your right foot below the toes. Touch your forehead to your right knee, even if it requires raising your knee from the floor. Hold the pose for 30 seconds.

Switch legs and repeat. Ralph La Forge, a physiologist at Duke University Medical Center who trains yoga instructors, says this will stretch your lower-back muscles.



HALF TORTOISE (ARDHA-KURMASANA)

Kneel on the floor with your knees hip-width apart. Sit on your heels and straighten your back. Take a deep breath, bring your palms together, and raise them overhead. Exhale and bend forward. Let your forehead touch the floor first, and then your pinkies. Stretch forward a few inches. Hold this pose for 30 seconds. Return to the starting position, rest for 20 seconds, and then repeat the routine two more times. This will increase the flexibility of your lats, scapula, deltoids, triceps, and hip joints, says La Forge.



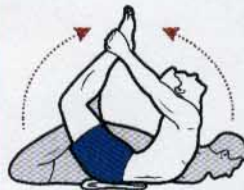
CAMEL POSE (USTRASANA)

Kneel with your knees hip-width apart. Rest your hands on your hips. Push your hips forward to gently stretch your back muscles. Take a deep breath, arch your back, and reach down to grab your heels. Your hips should be above your knees. Let your neck relax. Hold this pose for 30 seconds, breathing slowly and deeply, to strengthen your lower back. This pose increases spinal flexibility, says La Forge, but it is the most difficult pose shown here and should be attempted only after a few months of practice.



BOW POSE (DHANURASANA)

Lie facedown with a rolled-up towel under your hips for padding. Exhale and bring your heels as close to your butt as you can. Reach back and grasp your ankles. Inhale and slowly raise your torso and thighs off the floor, keeping your knees hip-width apart. Relax your shoulders, look upward, and try to straighten your legs. Hold for 30 seconds, then rest for 20 seconds. Do this two more times to improve blood circulation in your back.



SPINE-TWISTING POSE (ARDHA-MATSYENDRASANA)

Sit on the floor and extend your legs in front of you. Slide your left foot under your right hamstring as you lift your right leg across your left. Place your right foot on the floor beside your left knee. With your left leg flat on the floor, twist your body to the right. Post your left triceps on your right knee and place your right hand on the floor behind you. Look over your right shoulder. Hold for 30 seconds, and then do the same exercise to the opposite side. According to La Forge, this move helps you rotate your cervical spine more easily.

