



The Chicago Bears do Yoga
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By "Bears" senior writer Larry Mayer

LAKE FOREST, Ill. - "I'm kind of tight, so it helps with my stretching techniques," said safety Mike Green. "And when I get tired I feel myself doing yoga breathing, so it's helped a lot."

"My problem is with my hips," said cornerback Todd McMillon. "I try to work on them, and by doing that I feel my hips loosening up."

The Bears were decimated by injuries last season, but that isn't why Jacquelyn was brought in to teach the classes. Most of the injuries in 2002 were more serious than muscle pulls or strains. "The injury factor from a year ago really didn't play any part in the decision to have yoga," said head coach Dick Jauron. "In our offseason program, our number one goal obviously is to get our players better prepared for the football season, and yoga fits in well for us. Everybody on our team could gain something from it in terms of the flexibility, the discipline necessary to work in the class and to get something out of it and just the mental side of it. It's another thing you have to prepare for. You have to understand what you're trying to get done and you have to work at getting it done to get something out of it."

Jacquelyn was apprehensive about how she would be accepted by the players, but she has been pleasantly surprised. The athletes check their egos at the door and don't balk at trying anything she suggests--even if that means doing a headstand to improve circulation.

"They really are pretty open-minded," Jacquelyn said. "They've all tried everything, and most of them have done better than they thought they could. They have a lot of strength, which is really a big component of it. They're working on their flexibility and they participate pretty well. It's not like any of them sit out, so that's a good thing for them."

Jacquelyn plays soothing music and prohibits gum chewing in an effort to keep the players focused on the task at hand. But that mission isn't always accomplished.

"She's doing flexible moves and hardly anybody on this team is flexible, so when we see her get in those positions, people start to laugh," said receiver Ahmad Merritt. "Everybody else is trying to get in those positions and they're falling over. Sometimes it's hard to concentrate in there."

While some players were initially skeptical, most are now yoga converts. "I do believe it works," McQuarters said. "I think a lot of players believe it works. It's just a matter of getting into it and being consistent with it. I think one day a week, starting out, may be OK. But as you get into a flow, I think two, three, four times a week will help. If you can do yoga 15, 20, 30 minutes a day, you'll definitely start seeing some improvements."