

Yoga... but what do you do for cardio?

by Cameron Storey

It's a question I get asked often, and the answer I give is "Yoga".

People have the misconception that there is no training effect on the heart with yoga. Really? Is this based on their experience of yoga classes? Maybe, or maybe just their idea of classes. Maybe they imagine a class of people lounging around.

Before I started yoga I did solid cardio by running long distances (half marathon, twenty mile and two marathons by age 14) and several other sports, seven days a week for 13 years. My resting heart rate was 56 beats per minute (BPM).

Move forward 25 years, I do hardly any cardio, have a 20-minute walk or paddle once a fortnight, daily yoga practice and have recently introduced High Intensity Interval training (12 minutes a week!) My resting heart rate is now 48 BPM.

Let's examine how the heart rate

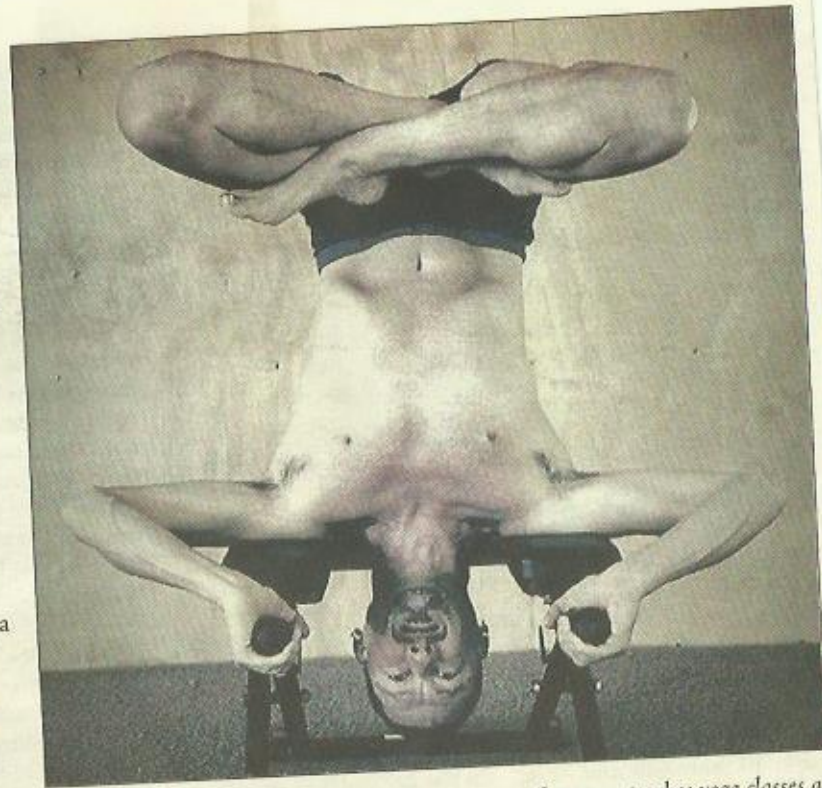
changes during a regular medium-paced yoga session. From resting heart rate 15 minutes of sun salutes raises the beats to around 80-90 per minute. After 15 more minutes of standing poses the heart rate is near 100-110 BPM. During the next 35 minutes of forward bends and twists with some up-dogs and down-dogs it's around 125-135 BPM. At the peak of the practice the heart rate can reach 165-175 BPM for back bends or bird poses. Then the heart rate is brought down slowly over 20 minutes back to resting again.

But this is for my body that has trained every day for many years. Your body may actually have a faster beat rate for most of the workout if you are not used to the yoga workload. But just know this: yoga which raises the heart rate on average from around 80 BPM to around 150 BPM is perfect for stimulating a cardio effect (and of course you need to take into account your age when calculating

cardio heart training ranges). If you like extra cardio, go for it but you can get what you need (in terms of cardio) from Yoga.

One factor that is not mentioned is why top athletes who do so much cardio can have heart problems. Yoga recognises that working the heart is one aspect, but resting the heart is also vital for maximum health. Long forward bends and passive inversions rest the heart because the brain is below the heart level so the heart can relax more as gravity takes some of the circulation workload.

Yoga Master T. Krishnamacharya (1888-1989), who taught B.K.S. Iyengar (1918-2014), K. Pattabhi Jois (1915-2009) and Indra Devi (1888-2002), could actually stop his heart as he demonstrated with a combination of asana, prana and mind control, and look how long they all lived with their yoga practice. One small piece of advice after 40 years of physical training: start gently and



progress slowly with awareness – it's a thousand times better than an inconsistent and spasmodic practice interspersed with weeks of no practice at all.

Cameron teaches yoga classes at Dharma Centre Yoga Space, Lillifield Community, (15 minutes from Nimbin) For more yoga info Ph 02 6689-7120 or Facebook 'Dharma Centre, Lillifield'.