

Irshad Manji and Alan Dershowitz on Israel. A10, 16

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## Tellier attacks

It's a myth that Bombardier is at the public trough, CEO says. FP1

## Balletrobics

Star athletes swear by a former ballerina's stretching regimen. B3

# Now that's a real stretch

Program combines ballet, Tai Chi, yoga and Pilates

BY SAMANTHA GRICE

When Canadian gold medal squash player Jonathon Power was preparing to leave for back-to-back tournaments in Boston and Detroit last week, he made sure to take along Miranda Esmonde-White.

Esmonde-White is the creator of Classical Stretch, a fitness program entirely focused on stretching that promises to elongate, melt off inches, increase flexibility, relieve back pain and decrease the risk of injury in athletes. Power credits the program and Esmonde-White with revitalizing his career.

"People think of stretching as targeting one muscle group, holding it for 15 seconds and doing that for five to 10 minutes before running," explains Esmonde-White, hopping out of her chair to demonstrate a stretch, as she is prone to do. "They don't see stretching as a complete workout that stands alone, that can get you in shape, keep you in shape, strengthen your muscles and improve every facet of your health. That's what this program does," she explains of her eight video/DVD series.

Two years ago when Power was introduced to the 53-year-old former ballerina with the National Ballet of Canada, he was on a seven-month-long losing streak. "My body was starting to

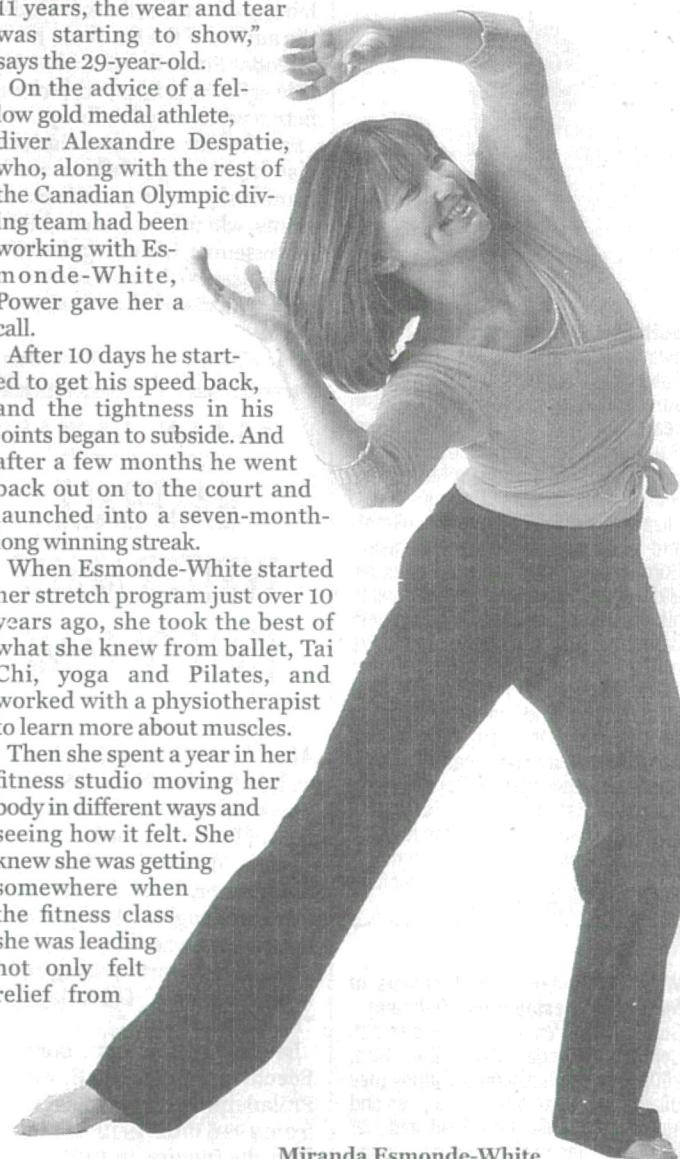
every week brought a new injury. After playing the circuit for 10 or 11 years, the wear and tear was starting to show," says the 29-year-old.

On the advice of a fellow gold medal athlete, diver Alexandre Despatie, who, along with the rest of the Canadian Olympic diving team had been working with Esmonde-White, Power gave her a call.

After 10 days he started to get his speed back, and the tightness in his joints began to subside. And after a few months he went back out on to the court and launched into a seven-month-long winning streak.

When Esmonde-White started her stretch program just over 10 years ago, she took the best of what she knew from ballet, Tai Chi, yoga and Pilates, and worked with a physiotherapist to learn more about muscles.

Then she spent a year in her fitness studio moving her body in different ways and seeing how it felt. She knew she was getting somewhere when the fitness class she was leading not only felt relief from



Miranda Esmonde-White

their back pain but began losing inches off their figures as well.

"Any changes to people's bodies was a shock," she says.

"Ten years ago I had no idea of the profoundness of this program. I had no idea that it would be phenomenal for breast cancer rehabilitation, for osteoporosis prevention, to take away and treat some forms of arthritis, to get rid of and control back pain."

Five years ago, Esmonde-White was diagnosed with breast cancer. The horrible news came one month after she signed a contract to do a Classical Stretch series for PBS, which would air on more than 100 stations across North America. When she got home from the surgery, she couldn't move her arm because the lymph nodes under her arm had been cut. She had two months to get in shape before shooting began, and it took her six weeks just to get the mobility in her arm back. And she did it by slowly reintroducing the Classical Stretch program.

With the help of her oncologist, Esmonde-White has put what she learned from her own rehabilitation into a Classical Stretch breast cancer video to help other women recovering from the disease.

Esmonde-White credits stretching with a number of health benefits, from improving bad posture to providing pain relief by promoting muscular relaxation.

"I'm looking at the body in circles, and you have to stretch the whole circle," she explains. "If you look at the leg, you want to get the hip, the hamstring, the groin and the foot. And you have to stretch the whole thing at the same time to balance it out."

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