**Moves of the Month:**

**STEP 1**

**Moves of the Month:**

**SIDE LEG LIFT**

**PURPOSE** Increases core stability; strengthens the lateral hip

**SETUP** Lie on your side, propped on your bottom elbow with your body stacked in one long line. Place the palm of your top hand in front of your body.

1. Lift and lower your top leg, keeping your leg straight, foot flexed, and pelvis and shoulders stable. Do 15–20 reps on each side.

**ADVANCED** Get into a Side Plank with your bottom knee bent, and lift and lower your leg for 15–20 more reps.

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**TABLE WITH MARCHING**

**PURPOSE** Strengthens the spinal extensors, glutes and hamstrings; improves upper-body flexibility by opening the chest and shoulders

**SETUP** Sit tall with your knees bent and feet hip-width apart on the floor. Place your hands shoulder-width apart about 6 inches behind your hips; your fingers can either be facing forward or to your sides.

1. Lift your hips toward the ceiling, creating a straight line from your shoulders to your hips to your knees, keeping your neck long.

2. Lift one leg to tabletop. Hold for 8 counts, keeping your hips even and your weight centered over both hands. Repeat with your other leg.

3. Alternate single-leg knee lifts while keeping your torso stable. Do 4 sets of 8 reps.

**MODIFICATION** From step 1, lower your hips to the floor, then return to tabletop.

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**STAND AND TWIST**

**PURPOSE** Stretches the entire body, especially the hips and outer legs; challenges balance

**SETUP** Stand with your legs shoulder-width apart and turned out, arms hanging naturally by your sides.

1. Lift your heels as you raise your arms overhead.

2. Twist and turn your body 180 degrees to face the opposite direction. Deeply bend your front knee and wrap both hands around the ankle of your back leg, reaching your head toward your back knee.

3. Twist and spiral back to center with your arms reaching toward the ceiling.

4. Twist to your other side, then lower your heels. Do 3 more reps.

**TIP** Keep your feet parallel when you twist, and reach for your back ankle.

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**ELEPHANT**

**PURPOSE** Enhances flexibility of the calves, hamstrings and lower back; challenges the core to stabilize the spine during limb movement

**SETUP** Lie on your side, propped on your bottom hip with your body stacked in one long line. Place the palm of your top hand in front of your body.

1. Lift and lower your top leg, keeping your leg straight, foot flexed, and pelvis and shoulders stable. Do 15–20 reps on each side.

**ADVANCED** Get into a Side Plank with your bottom knee bent, and lift and lower your leg for 15–20 more reps.

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**Many runners training for a marathon discover that as they run longer distances, their body tires and their form collapses. Often the core is not strong enough to support proper running form, which can lead to injury and muscular imbalances. These imbalances can cause wear and tear that inhibits performance, possibly even sidelining the runner. Pilates is an excellent form of cross-training for marathoners. It effectively develops muscles that stabilize the pelvis and strengthens the core to keep the body properly aligned. The method also improves flexibility. A strong, flexible core protects the back and absorbs the impact that comes from every step. The following exercises blend stability and flexibility. Add them to your workout to help you run those 26.2 miles with less effort and risk of injury. See you at the finish line!**

**Mary Bange** • Photos by Tricia Sweeney

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**Mary Bange** is a former Olympic Marathon Trials qualifier and world-record holder at 50 kilometers. The PMA- and Peak Pilates–certified instructor teaches Pilates in Houston. For more information, visit www.marybange.com.