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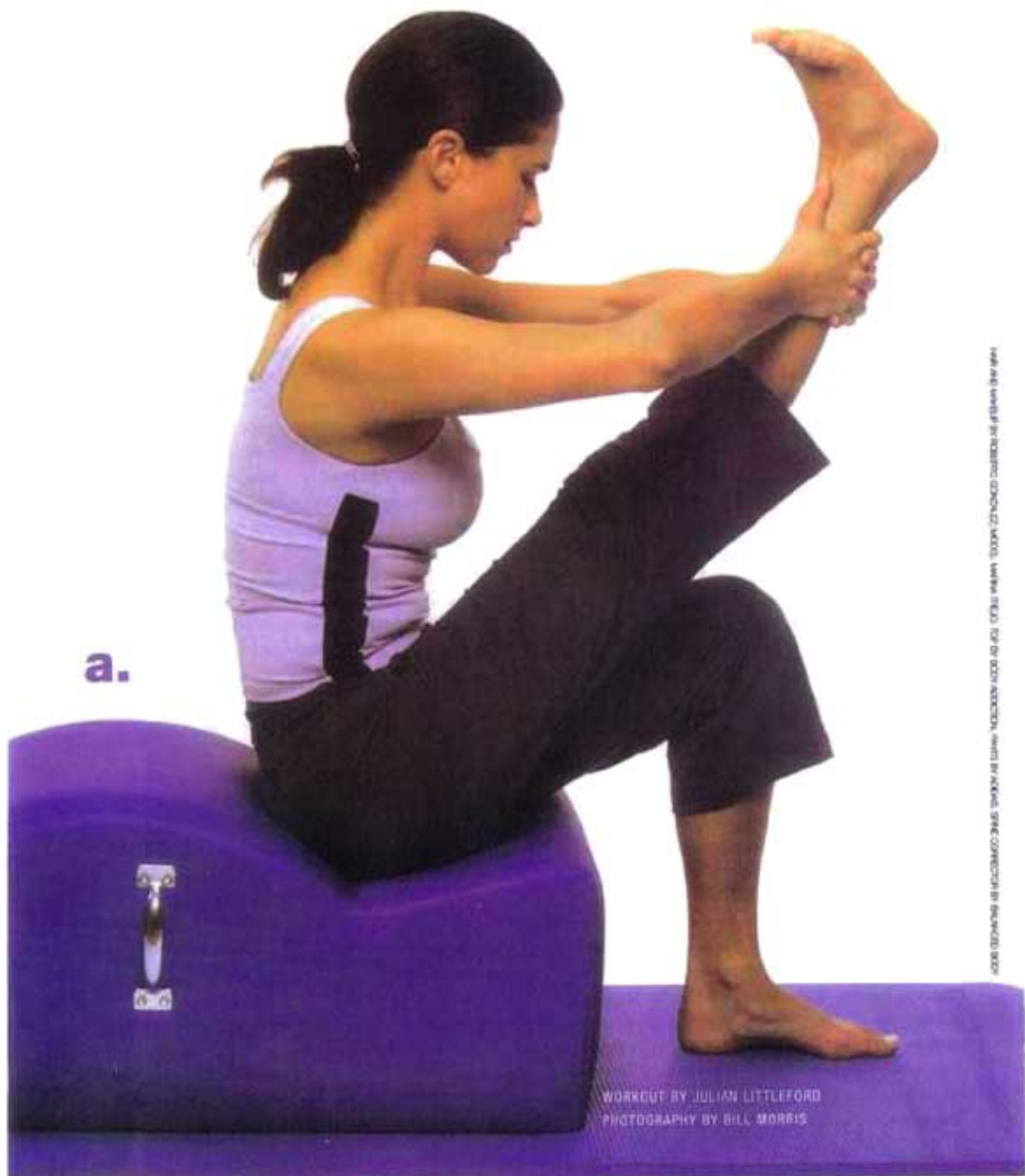
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Hidden Challenges

Julian Littleford crafts an intense Spine Corrector workout

The genius of the Spine Corrector, one of Joseph Pilates' original pieces of equipment, is its simplicity. While it looks like one of the least complex additions to the Pilates studio—it consists of a padded barrel with an attached step—the Spine Corrector can provide one of the most challenging workouts, if you know how to use it.

"The Spine Corrector requires tremendous strength and flexibility,"

says Julian Littleford, owner of J.L. Body Conditioning in Del Mar, California. "You can't cheat. There are no springs, straps or handles to help you. It requires everything to move from the center." Littleford, a former Martha Graham principal dancer who has been teaching Pilates for 28 years, says that matwork can be practiced with increased extension, range of motion and strength on the Spine

Corrector with the back safely supported. The apparatus is one of the smallest and least expensive pieces of Pilates equipment, which makes it a smart start for building a home studio.

This selection of exercises spans all levels of difficulty, so beginners can work up to the more challenging moves. These exercises were not designed as a sequence, so you can fit single moves into your standard Pilates routine.

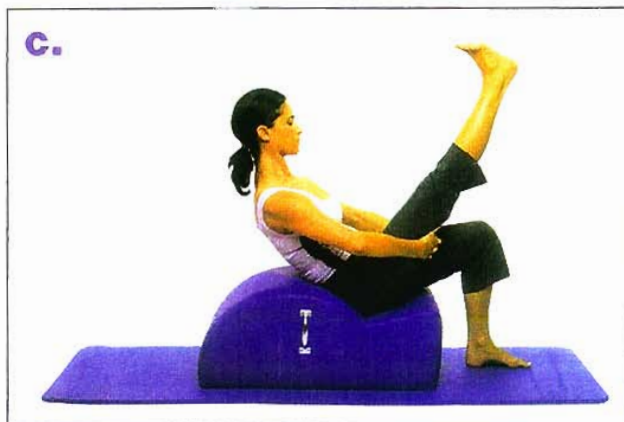
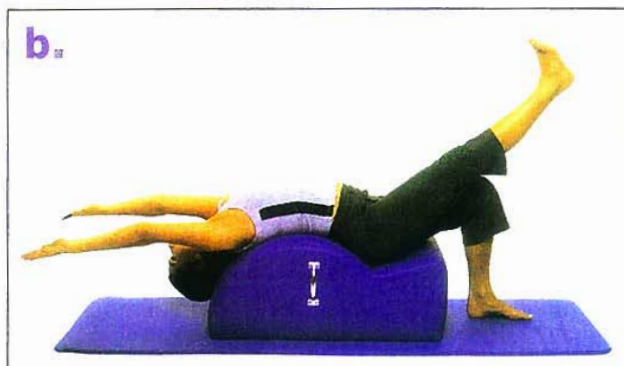
Climb a Tree

LEVEL: Beginner

a. Start seated on the step of the Spine Corrector, with the sitz bones pointing directly down and the crown of the head lifted toward the ceiling. Extend the right leg up toward the ceiling with the foot flexed, and hold behind the calf as high as you can, stretching the back of the thigh. Round forward slightly, drawing the abdominals back toward the spine.

b. Keep pulling back with the abdominals until the lower back touches the barrel. Begin to walk your hands down the leg, rounding back over the barrel and holding the leg in place. When you can no longer comfortably reach your leg, release your hands and gently lower your upper back, shoulders and head to the barrel. End with the arms extended overhead.

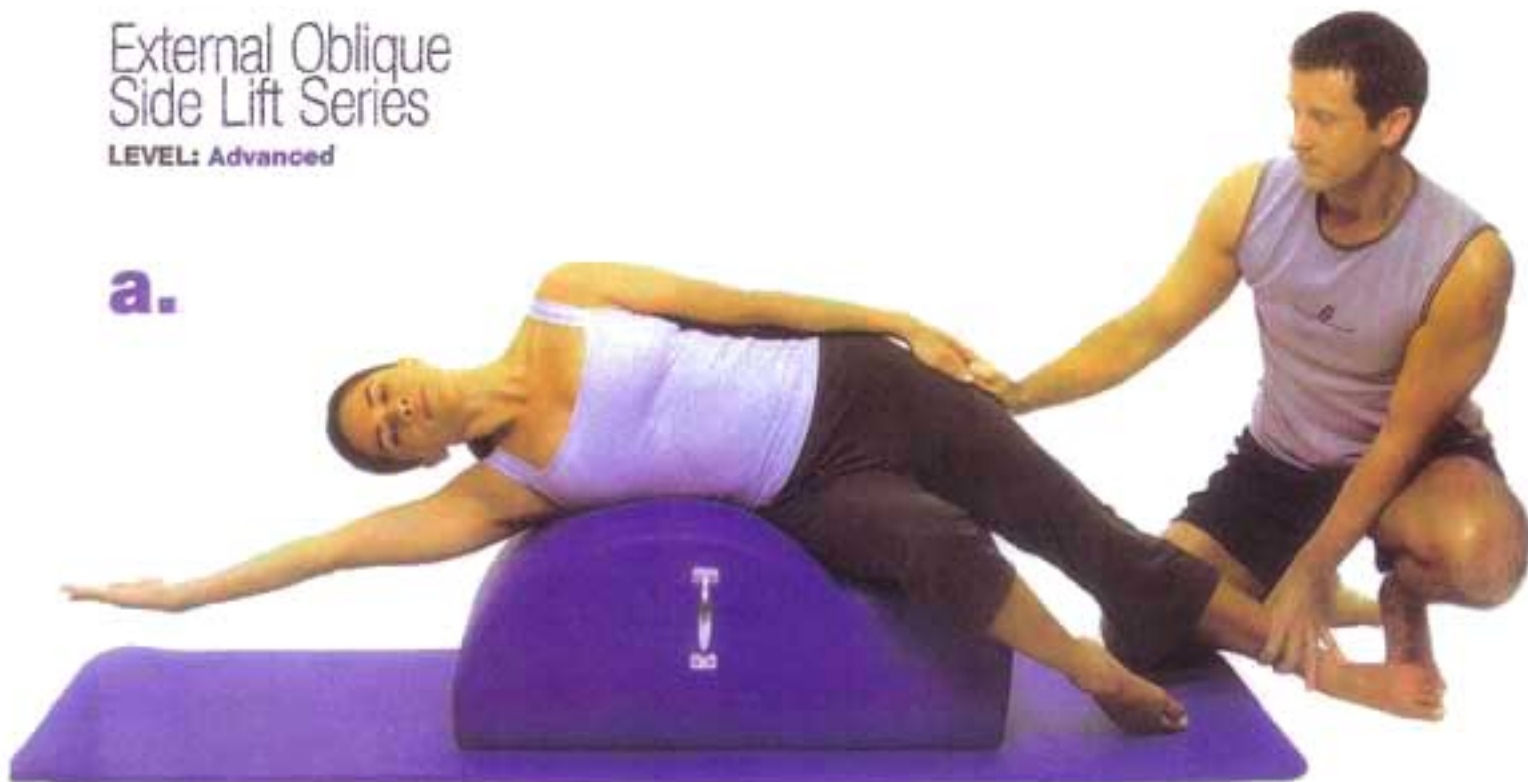
c. Circle the arms down to the sides then reach toward the back of the thigh, lifting the chin toward the chest and rounding the head and shoulders forward. Use your abdominals to bring yourself to a seated position, climbing back up the leg with the hands. Sit tall, then repeat. Do 5 on each side. To increase the challenge, do not use the hands to support yourself on the way down or up.



External Oblique Side Lift Series

LEVEL: Advanced

a.



a. Sit sideways on the step of the Spine Corrector with your right hip against the barrel and your right knee pointing forward, leg bent. Lean the right side of your torso over the barrel and extend the left leg so it is in line with the upper body, and the inner edges of the foot is pressed into the ground. Press the palm of your left hand against your left thigh and relax your right foot just front of the step. Extend your right arm overhead, palm facing up.

Tip: For comfort, you can place a rolled up towel between your neck and upper arm, though the towel will fall when your arms open to the side.



b.

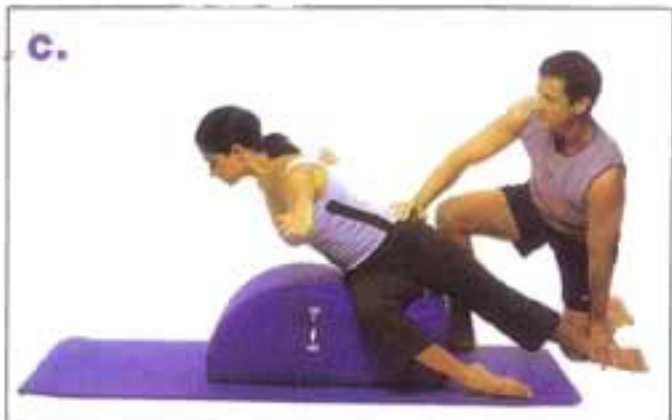


b. Use your obliques to lift your torso, creating a diagonal line from left foot to left shoulder. Both sides should be stretched evenly. Lift your left arm overhead, palms facing one another.

c. Rotate at the waist toward the barrel, at the same time opening your arms wide to the sides. Keep your hips facing front, and the top hip heavy.

Return to facing front and bring the arms overhead. Return the left hand to the side of the left thigh, then lower the right side over the barrel. Repeat this series 5 times, then switch sides. ②

c.



Marina Trejo, pictured here with Julian Littleford, started studying Pilates with Littleford at the age of 16. She was certified in 1994 and owns a Pilates studio, happy now flat belly, in Brooklyn, New York.