

thletes are a unique class of people. Whether professional or amateur, athletes are constantly pushing their bodies to the limit for the sheer pleasure of seeing how far they can go. Because of the wear and tear their bodies go through, spa treatments are becoming an essential aspect of any training regimen. And with good reason. Athletes need to give their muscles a break to enable them to push themselves to even further limits. What better way to relax and rejuvenate than at the spa?

"For the past few decades, spas have been seen as a place for pampering and indulgence rather than impactful therapy," notes Kristi Dickinson, director of spa and fitness at Rancho Valencia

Resort & Spa in Rancho Santa Fe,
California. "With the wellness boom, consumers are starting to become more

educated and expect more from spas. Athletes are turning to spas because we have specialized equipment and therapies that can address the specific recovery goals of athletes."

"Athletes and active adults in general are eagerly investing in services and products that support their health and wellness goals. When you offer these specialty treatments, you have a broader appeal, which will expand your client base."

— LYNDA SOLIEN-WOLFE

Emerging Need

According to a March 2015 ISPA Snapshot Survey, only 40 percent of respondents included fitness or sports-directed treatments on their menus. Of that, only 14 percent of day spa respondents have sports or fitness treatments on their menus. That number is entirely too low for such an emerging consumer group. "Spas need to be prepared to meet the emerging needs associated with today's trend toward greater activity, either

through exercise or sports programs," says Raizelah Bayen, training director and massage therapist supervisor at Osmosis Day Spa Sanctuary in Freestone, California. "It is important that spas offer fitness and sports-related services to address sore muscles, limitation in joint mobility or depleted energy levels."

Dickinson continues by noting that "athletes are a rapidly growing segment of the market. What was once a classification reserved for the young alpha male is now applicable to a broader audience, thanks to the Tribe Fitness Movement lead by SoulCycle, CrossFit and the like. The soccer mom that was once your loyal Monday manicure client is now training for a ToughMudder. We need to stay agile in our offerings to meet the changing lifestyles of our clients."

Lynda Solien-Wolfe, vice president of massage and spa at Performance Health agrees. "Athletes and active adults in general are eagerly investing in services and products that support their health and wellness goals. They've become more aware of the benefits of sports massage and other fitness treatments, and they want access to those services, whether they're on the road or close to home. When you offer these specialty

Sometimes all an athlete needs is a good soak. The atmosphere at Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa offers the perfect place to wind down after a workout.

treatments, you have a broader appeal, which will expand your client base."

Reaching Out to Athletes

As important as marketing to this segment of the population is, you don't need to completely revamp your menu to cater to them. You probably already have the treatments athletes need on your menu, it's just a matter of reaching out to that base. "Simply put, athletes are turning to spas because treatments have become holistic and are intended to promote lasting wellness, not just temporary relief," says Erica Korpi, director of Stillwater Spa & Salon in Incline Village, Nevada. "From soaking in hot tubs and steam rooms to loosen muscles to regularly scheduled massages to compliment a training regimen, spa

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- ERICA KORPI



The reception area at Stillwater Spa appeals to the outdoorsy athletes that are attracted to the adventurous nature of Lake Tahoe.

services offer a bit of relaxation paired with lasting physical relief"

So how do you market your spa to this diverse customer group? Start directly reaching out to athletes or athletic groups. Offer a combined fitness class and spa treatment deal to introduce fitness-minded customers to your facilities. If you don't have a fitness facility on-site, work with popular fitness gyms and groups nearby to offer exclusive discounts to their members. Both tactics will introduce your spa to local athletes, who will continue to come back for the restorative treatments you offer.

Also, consider adding a few treatments specifically designed for athletes to your menu, as these treatments can be marketed to a broad audience. "A diverse population of people can benefit from fitness and sports treatments: the novice athlete trying their first triathlon, someone dedicated to working out or playing sports as a hobby, or the professional athlete," says Kara Thomas, director of health and wellness at CopperWynd Resort and Club in Fountain Hills, Arizona. "There are so many massage therapy experts who can use their knowledge, expertise and experience to help these athletes."

Sports-Focused Therapy

Some popular athletic treatments include Myofascial Release Therapy, PNF Stretch Therapy (proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation), Deep Tissue Sports Massage, cupping, cryotherapy,

Spa Treatments Fit for Olympians

Athletes are turning to spas more than ever to help them condition their bodies or physically recover after a grueling sporting event, and Tania Farah, wife of Olympic Gold Medalist and track athlete Mo Farah, understands why. After moving from London to Portland for her husband's training schedule, she opened a unique, high-end spa for local spa-goers to escape. At British Manor Spa, Farah is channeling both her British heritage as well as the needs of world-class athletes she is surrounded by to create a unique day spa experience in Beaverton, Portland.

Pulse: Because your husband is an athlete, you no doubt understand the immense pressure an athlete's body undertakes during training. How has this influenced your spa's offerings?

Tania Farah: Being married to an athlete and Olympian has enabled me to understand the human body a lot better, particularly the most effective recovery methods for the body. When creating my menu of services, I wanted to include those same world-class recovery elements that are so successful for elite athletes as well as everyday people.

P: Why do you think athletes are turning to spas for treatments?

F: Athletes more than most see the need for wellness of the mind and body to perform at their best. With spas being able to focus on specialized recovery and relaxation, it has become an ideal place for athletes and active people to go for complete rejuvenation.

P: Why is it important for spas to consider adding sports and fitness treatments to their menus?

F: As more and more people become active and lifestyle conscious, it's important for spas to be able to offer quality, bespoke recovery treatments geared toward those leading active lives. By focusing equally on sports recovery elements as relaxation services, spas will have a greater appeal to active people seeking specialized treatments.

P: Where do the principles behind your fitness and athletic recovery therapy offerings stem from?

F: The British Manor Spa has incorporated some of the world's leading recovery methods which have been used by Olympic athletes for many years. Being fortunate enough to have direct access to these elite services enables me to bring them into my spa and offer it to the wider public.

P: Can you share three ways other spas can help assist athletes in their training regimen?

F: By focusing on quality training and education for therapists performing recovery massage treatments, spas will be able to appeal more to athletes in need of specialized treatment. Other ways which spas can assist in an athletes' training regimen is to offer variety on different recovery treatments which can be customized to the individual and his or her specific needs at that time. Comfort and relaxation is crucial to athletes' overall training when in their downtime, so ensuring all these elements work well together will deliver an effective end-to-end recovery experience for athletes.

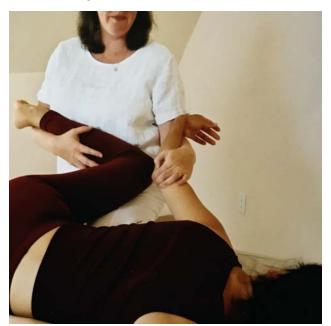
TANIA FARAH

and hydrotherapy. Even T'ui Na, the sports treatment of the east, has become popular in athletic circles. Some of these popular treatments don't require much additional investment. Existing facilities can easily be incorporated to suit your athletic clients' needs.

"The Restoration is our most popular treatment with our very athletic clientele," says Dickinson. "As soothing as it is energizing, this ultra-therapeutic experience of nature's healing elements combines the cleansing power of water with regenerative marine minerals to accelerate post-activity recovery. The Restoration also includes a guided meditation for mental strength and game-day focus."

Treatments like The Restoration at Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa that combine body restoration with mindful healing are perfect to market to athletes. It's important for athletes to

Therapist at CopperWynd Resort and Club performing an athlete-inspired stretch and massage treatment on a client.



FEATURED SOURCES

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"A diverse population of people can benefit from fitness and sports treatments."

— KARA THOMAS

unwind their muscles as well as their minds to get back in the game completely energized.

Think Local

If particular sports are popular in your area, try targeting treatments to the parts of the body that are under the most stress during those activities. Korpi, for example, has implemented a foot, leg and hand treatment into her menu that targets the strain skiers experience from their boots and poles.

"Here at Stillwater Spa and Salon, set on the north shore of beautiful Lake Tahoe, we take our sports seriously," says Korpi. "As a result, we've added treatments to our spa menu that both focus on athletic recovery and tie in with the spa's underlying principle to honor our natural environment and help guests feel connected to the region."

Any treatment that allows time to relax and destress can easily be marketed to athletes. Spas are already giving clients a chance to mentally recharge and physically relax, which are two principles coaches are constantly telling their athletes to adopt. "Being in a positive mental state is key for peak performance in sports, and the importance of mental as well as physical rejuvenation should never be underestimated," says Korpi.



WANT TO LEARN MORE about the sports treatment of the East? Click here to read Bayen's advice on implementing T'ui Na into your menu.