

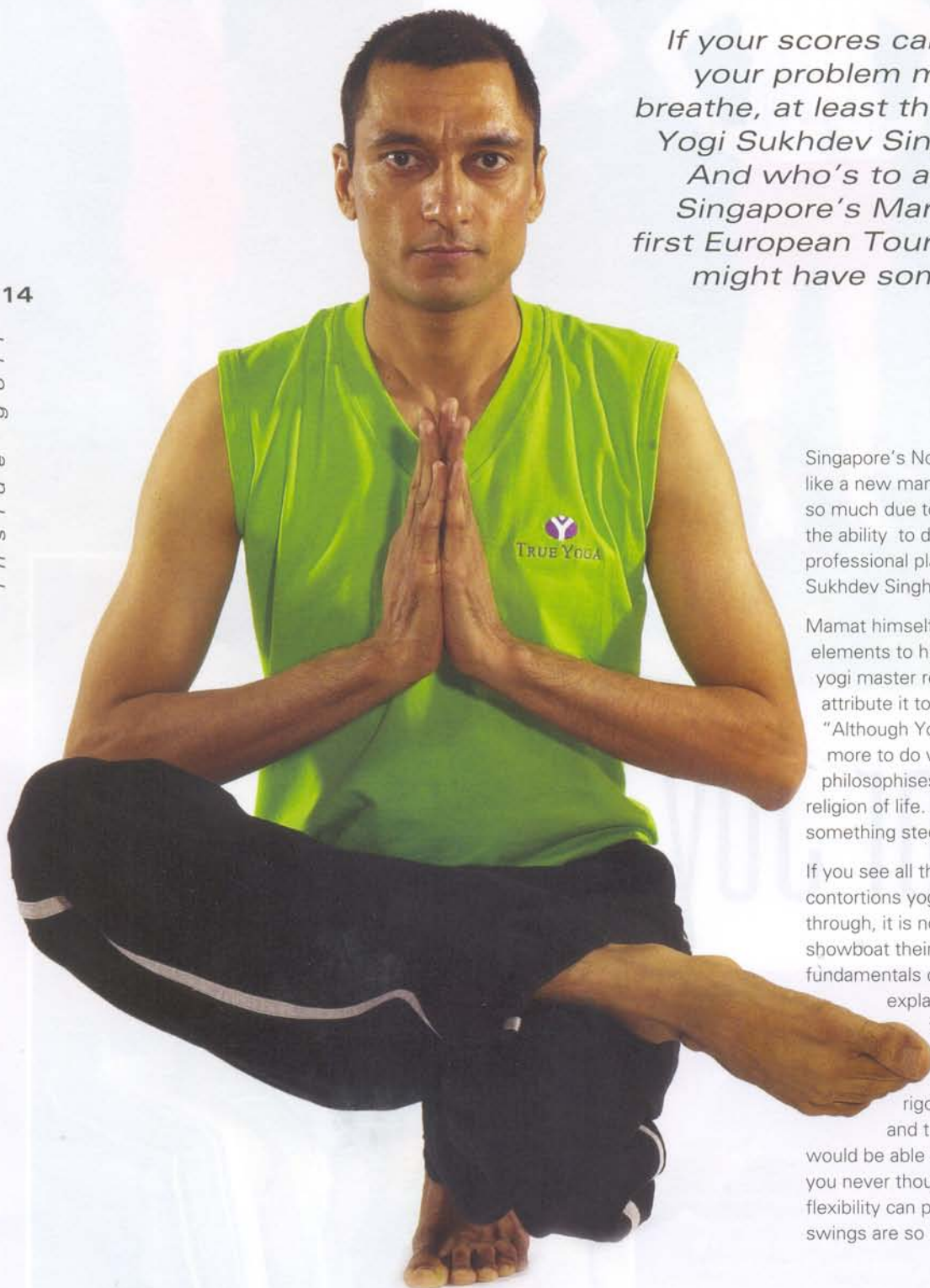
The Potential Yield of Yoga

If your scores can't get low enough, your problem might be in how you breathe, at least that's something that Yogi Sukhdev Singh might prescribe. And who's to argue? If he can help Singapore's Mardan Mamat win his first European Tour event, then he just might have something for you too.

Words by **Foo Yong Han**
Pictures from **True Yoga**

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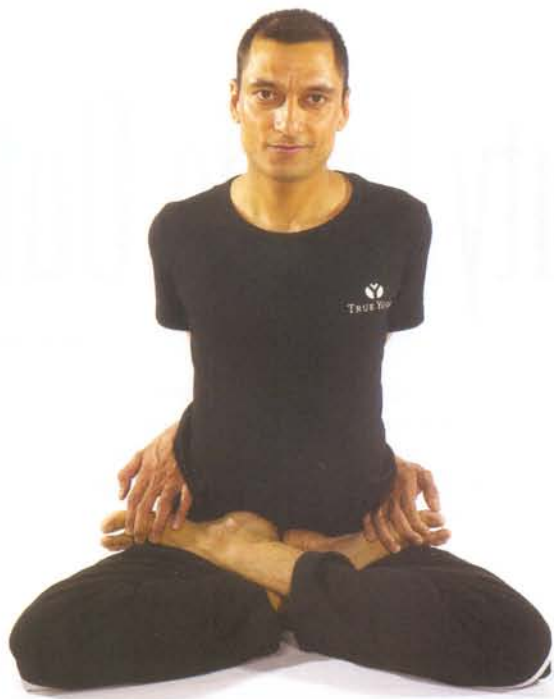
inside golf



Singapore's No.1 golfer Mardan Mamat is playing like a new man these days. And much of it is not so much due to the ability to fix his game, but also the ability to deal with the pressures of top-level professional play. For the latter, he has had Yogi Sukhdev Singh to thank.

Mamat himself proclaimed that one of the elements to his recent success is yoga and the yogi master responsible for that is not going to attribute it to purported mystical influences. "Although Yoga has its roots in Hinduism, it has more to do with science than religion," Sukhdev philosophises. "It is way of life rather than a religion of life. It is more ether than ethereal; something steeped in rationality than irrationality."

If you see all the almost masochistic bodily contortions yoga exponents put themselves through, it is not some ego-trip designed to showboat their athletic aptitude. "One of the fundamentals of yoga is flexibility," Sukhdev explains. "Tough these supposedly limb twisting and back breaking regimens may be; they are actually beneficial once you get accustomed to the rigours of yoga. If your body is at ease and the muscles and joints flexed, you would be able to execute feats of physical finesse you never thought was possible. Tiger Woods' flexibility can put some gymnasts to shame. His swings are so robust yet delicate, like a slight



breeze causing you to teeter. With a flexure body, your agility improves and so does your psychomotor, resulting in enhanced efficiency in your swings and the accuracy of your strokes."

Yoga starts with mental discipline. Without it, you might as well give up. "Yoga is not a simple skill to master. Like golf, you need to grasp the basics and work your way up. If you lack the mental toughness and concentration or are the impatient type, it is best you do not take up yoga at all," advises Sukhdev.

What still bothers Sukhdev is the general misconception people have of yoga being something spiritual and religious. "Yes, the teachings of yoga have groundings in religion but its purpose is to propound the well being of the body and mind. You can be a Christian or Buddhist, but that does not exclude you from acquiring the enlightenment of yoga. It is a lifestyle. Anyone can practise, from five- to 95-year-olds, anytime and anywhere, even in your toilet," he jests.

Breathing is also an integral part of yoga and played a part in aiding Mardan's victory in the OSIM Singapore Masters. "Mardan was apprehensive and under severe mental strain a week before the tournament. He was constantly thinking about winning. I told him to go easy and don't get too preoccupied about the competition. Otherwise, he might create unnecessarily tense situations for himself come the tournament proper. I brought him through a series of breathing routines purposefully meant for alleviating the psychological burden he was encountering and with the tender guidance, I managed to transit him to a relax mode.

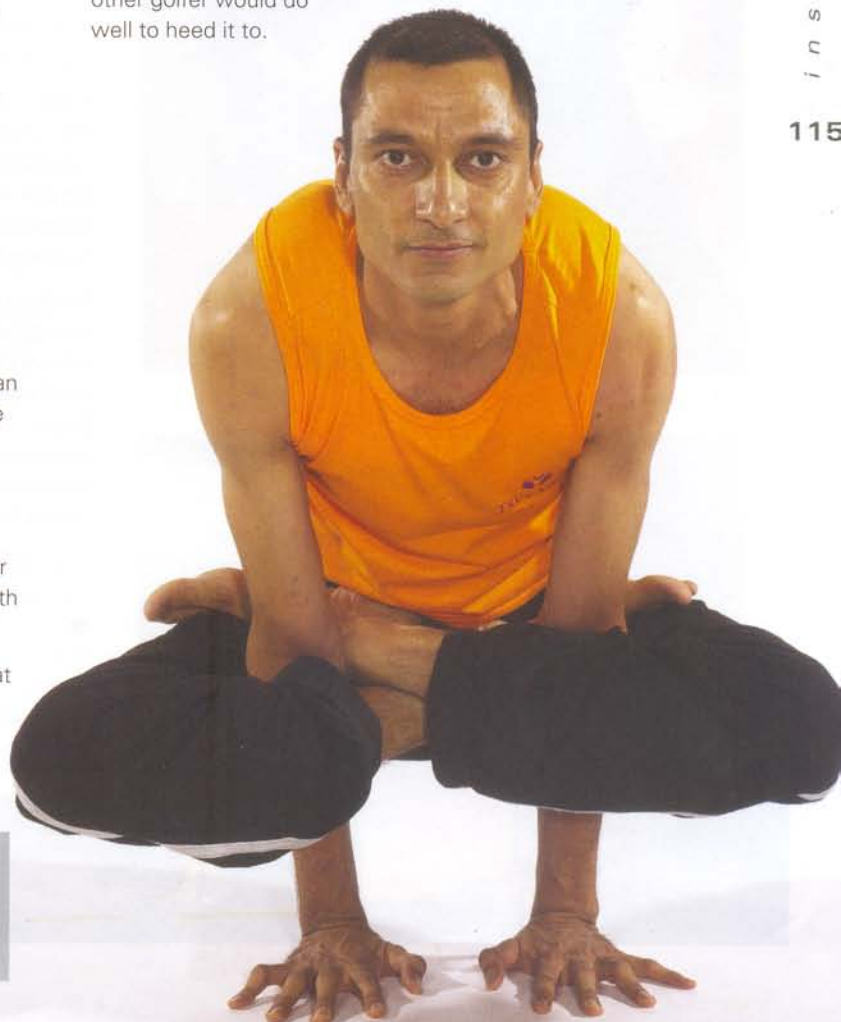
"Deep breathing assists clearing whatever negative thoughts that are interfering with your mental process. It is akin to clearing a clogged drain with a pressurised water hose. Once your mind is clear, you are able to think quickly and focus better and of

course, breathe easier," accents Sukhdev.

Sukhdev continues, "Psychological conditioning is just as important as improving your suppleness and breathing in yoga. I conduct motivational talk to inject confidence in my students. One technique I emphasise on is the liberation of the conscious mind. As we all know, our sub-conscious is very powerful as the skills and information we absorbed from the people around us and our surroundings are stored in that area. Our conscious mind, on the other hand, carries out the actions of the subconscious. Hence, if your conscious mind is impeded with redundant thoughts, it will not be able to execute the commands of the subconscious mind effective and promptly.

"The key to freeing the mind is to simply lose the mind, completely erasing whatever thoughts and emotions that are having a hold over you and let the subconscious take over. Once that is done, there will be less distraction and we can flawlessly implement your subconscious course of actions; be it chipping over a bunker or connecting a cross with a volley into goal."

Looking at Sukhdev's lean and muscular physique, one would be surprised that hardly any weight training was involved. "I do callisthenics (push ups and sit-ups), light dumbbells and jogging. In yoga, all you need is stretching, breathing and psychology to attain complete wellness. Nutritional wise, I take a balanced diet of proteins, carbohydrates and fats; more proteins in fact," says Sukhdev. His advice has already helped Mamat to his first European Tour victory. Any other golfer would do well to heed it to.



Yogi Sukhdev Singh teaches at True Yoga in Singapore. True Yoga is located at Pacific Plaza and Ocean Towers in Singapore, www.trueyoga.com.sg