We find out why Harlequins are turning up the heat for their stretching workouts

Harlequins do weekly yoga sessions in a heated tent – or pod – brought to them by Hotpod Yoga. “The heat is good for getting the blood moving round the body,” says Nick Higgins, co-founder of Hotpod Yoga. “Rugby players are generally tight, so being warm helps them get into the postures.”

The 37-degree heat not only aids flexibility but makes the heart work harder. “This is the best pose to stretch the whole body – shoulders, back, hamstrings and calves,” says scrum-half Tito Tebaldi. It’s Quins’ number one pose and a great one to start with.

Rugby players can often get tight hips and a stiff lower back from doing weights – this pose is excellent for both. “For most people this is a relaxation posture,” says instructor Charlie Morgan. “For the rugby guys it’s more of a deep hip opener.”

Hip flexors get tight when you run, especially when the ground is heavy on a rainy day – this exercise addresses that tightness. “And reaching their arms up encourages the players to relax their shoulders, which are always tense,” says Morgan.

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1. **DOWNWARD DOG**
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2. **CHILD’S POSE**
   - Rugby players can often get tight hips and a stiff lower back from doing weights – this pose is excellent for both. “For most people this is a relaxation posture,” says instructor Charlie Morgan. “For the rugby guys it’s more of a deep hip opener.”

3. **HIGH LUNGE**
   - Hip flexors get tight when you run, especially when the ground is heavy on a rainy day – this exercise addresses that tightness. “And reaching their arms up encourages the players to relax their shoulders, which are always tense,” says Morgan.

4. **TRIANGLE POSE**
   - This stretches the obliques and sideline of the body, which tend to be neglected because we always go forwards or back.
   - Centre George Lowe says: “It’s good for my shoulders because it opens the little muscles which don’t often stretch out.”

5. **CROW POSE**
   - An arm balance that enhances strength. “It’s also a good hip-opener,” Morgan says. “And relieves tension across the neck area, because it draws their shoulders away from their ears.” Says Lowe: “We don’t do much with body weight so this is cool.”

6. **HEADSTAND**
   - “This gets your heart cycling in the other direction,” says Morgan. “It benefits your brain as it encourages blood to go to your head. It’s good if you have injuries – if there’s stagnant blood in the legs, it gets it flowing.”
   - Tebaldi adds: “I just like to know I can do it!”

**WHAT YOU COULD DO**

- **Charlie Morgan, Quins’ Yoga Instructor**
  - Dip your toe in. Most yoga studios have introductory offers, allowing you to attend any class for a month. It’s an affordable way to try different teachers and styles of yoga.
  - Do your homework. Buy a DVD or look at YouTube – there are lots of yoga workouts you can do for free.
  - Build your confidence by hiring an instructor for a one-to-one session. This can be expensive but you’ll get a good initial introduction.
  - If you’re worried about being the only guy in the class, try Moga – men-only yoga. It’s growing fast!
  - Hire an instructor to hold a team session after training. Hotpod Yoga will come to you – complete with the Hotpod!