

Ban the bounce – pectoral exercises are the one and only way to achieve perfect lift-off

So, it arrived courtesy of the wonderful people at Race Tech – the DVD of the Carlisle Living Maiden Footrace held during Carlisle Racecourse Ladies Night. The world's first of its kind. With toes curled (mine), we gathered round. Anticipating that it wouldn't be a pretty sight, I braced myself. It was with good fortune that I hadn't considered, for too long, the big screens and cameras homing in.

Watching the race, with not just toes curled but jaw ajar, something was drawing my eye. It wasn't just the other girls' looks of determination on what were beautiful faces. Competition can be ugly. It was the lack of movement in my chest. All 32DD of it. This might not have been surprising if we were all dressed in our supportive sports bras, but part of the entertainment was that we were dressed in our finery. Surely, I thought, Marie-Jo lingerie can only do so much even with the magic of the Turnbills ladies help. No, I preach it, and have done for a very long time, here was the evidence. Time spent investing in my pectorals has paid dividends. I lacked bounce.

So, with October being Breast Cancer Awareness month, there is no better month to take a keen interest in things up top. You may be giving support with your time to all things pink this month, and it is vital that you are breast-aware, but I doubt that much time will be spent giving what you are blessed with support of the exercise kind.

I am evangelical about pectoral exercises – they do work. Passionately against round shoulders, as they are ageing, I have expertise when it comes to 'shoulders back and down'. I wore maxi-dresses throughout the summer months – brightly coloured and easy to fling on. I received compliment after compliment in the streets of Carlisle and I thank those who made my day. I believe the dresses worked because of my daily exercises – my shoulders behave like coat hangers. Clothes hang correctly.

With enough time to act before the party



■ Carol Westmorland lives in the Eden Valley. She is a Cycling Time Trials national champion, clocking up 445 miles in 24 hours. She also teaches pilates. www.pilates-cumbria.co.uk

season I say 'let us have lift-off'. So, whether you have no chest to speak of, an impressive EE, are recovering from a mastectomy or are neat with AAs, it still doesn't do to sag.

Take position. Kneel with your knees directly under your hips and your hands slightly in front of your shoulders, fingers pointed forward. Keeping your elbows locked, extend your legs straight behind you so that you are supporting your body weight on your toes and hands. To keep yourself lengthened and strong, support yourself by drawing your navel to your spine and expect to quiver gently. Make sure you are not sinking in the middle or raising your hips to create a peak with your bottom in the air. This is your warm up. You should do a couple and hold each for around 30 seconds.

Now align your knees back under your hips. Make the most of the window of opportunity and try not to pause for too long before the main act. You have warmed your muscles up. With your fingers pointing slightly inward and thumbs touching, create a triangle shape, with your elbows out and slightly back to the sides. To feel that invisible support you may need to tweak the position until you have the right technique.

Remember that you are strengthening across your chest so make sure you can feel that. Slowly lower your elbows to the mat without quite touching and then slowly lift. The secret to getting this right is to keep your chin lifted, shoulders down and your chest high whilst looking straight ahead – in other words do not collapse your posture. Dropping your gaze down will not just look defeated, it will feel it too. Control the movement and use your bodyweight as a tool – lean your weight forward to get the maximum amount of resistance. It is not about counting repetitions, but getting the quality of movement right.

So, when I am defending my title in the Maiden Footrace next year, I expect to be able to marvel when the DVD arrives at what wonderful control we all have, and the only bounce is from our feet. 