



## Book Review #40

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[Home](#)



### Self Massage for Athletes

By Rich Poley

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## Price \$19.95

According to the information inside the cover, this book is, "The Hands on Guide to Improve Your Athletic Performance, Relieve Your Aches and Pains, and Help You Feel Better, Fast." This could be just the book I was looking for to help me recover from the demands of not only paddling but a variety of other sports.

Most Friday evenings I play 5-a-side football (soccer) with great enthusiasm but very little skill and I generally suffer all weekend as a consequence. This week, with this book in my possession, I decided to try and prevent what was going to be the almost inevitable pain in the legs.

I skipped the technical background and was soon immersed in the vocabulary of "squeeze stroke, drum stroke and lower leg and knee massage routines". My first attempts were tentative and lacked confidence plus it proved difficult to keep switching between the pages as I followed the instructions. Gradually though my hands appeared to develop a confidence and direction of their own. I used a range of different techniques, as described in the book and followed the advice, "If it feels good, it's good; if it feels bad, it's bad."

The proof of the massage would become apparent over the weekend. After a hard game of football on a Friday, I generally find that my legs would be tight over the weekend but Saturday morning dawned ache free. Most of Saturday was spent sitting in a kayak but when I disembarked onto the slipway I discovered that my legs had seized up significantly. Remembering some of the self-massage techniques from the night before, I spent a few minutes in my car and immediately appreciated the benefits.

For the remainder of the weekend my legs remained pain free, walking upstairs was not the challenge that it normally is. So it worked for my legs, but they don't usually ache after a hard workout on the water - it's the turn of my arms and shoulders, so how might they benefit? I set aside time on Saturday evening to practice the appropriate techniques, working on my neck, shoulders and upper arms, even though they weren't aching at the time.

The results were immediately noticeable, the muscles felt relaxed and so I settled down to read the more technical aspects of the book. Clearly not everybody will be interested in biological and physiological reasons for the effectiveness of self massage. Many people will just be interested in the practical aspects of self massage and the benefits which result.

For those people who are interested in developing their massage techniques there is plenty of advice on how turn your bathroom into a spa, using a variety of massage tools, developing power breathing and meditation and suggestions on acupressure. Massage is just the beginning!

So is this a book worth considering? I would have to say yes, it is a bit like the classic "Stretching" by Bob Anderson. I bought my copy a few years ago and I reckon that I use something from that book on an almost daily basis. Since I have had my copy of Rich's book, I have started to use the massage techniques on a regular basis and have started to feel a difference already.

This book isn't going to turn you into a professional massage therapist but it is going to increase your awareness of your own body and techniques which are going to reduce the risk of injury and stress and this can only be a good thing regardless of the level at which you operate as a sea kayaker. It will be a valuable addition to any sports persons bookshelf.

Kevin Mansell

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