

Yoga to Manage Stress and Sports Performance

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ABSTRACT

Stress is an internal force. It is organic and psychological tending to produce wear and tear on the body. Stress on a system is varied by changing the load, temperature, vibration, etc. It is body's physical, mental and chemical reaction to circumstances that frighten, excite, confuse, surprise, anger, endanger or irritate; when confirmed with stressful situation; athlete react to stress in a wide variety of ways. Stress has a major influence upon sports performance. There are many sources of stress facing athlete. Athlete can adapt a wide range of environment changes. However, stress is the key to success. But excessive stress can hinder sports performances. For this the modern team managements depend on yoga to cope up the stress. The yoga provides a lot of physical and mental benefits if is practiced regularly. Many research findings proved that Yoga with asanas, pranayamas, meditation, kriyas, bandha are beneficial to manage the stress and to find out the maximum outcome.

Key Words : Stress, Sports performance, Yoga

INTRODUCTION

Stress attacks athletic performance and the teams from many different directions. Athletic contents, by their very nature, are stressful. More contests end with an easily identifiable winner and cover. In team sports athletes may be labeled as starters or substitutes. It is more stressful to have to make crucial coaching decision in the last moments of closely contested competition than it is to make one when the outcome is already decided. Athletes often experience unusually high level of stress when they encounter opponents against whom they have not previously completed or on whom there is no available scouting report. All athletes' experience the anxious thought that frequently occur or response to stress throughout the course of one's athletic career, however, the source of stress and the kinds of anxious thoughts experienced change. Coaches have vital control over athletes' success or failure. Coaches decide on who will start, who will substitute, and who will make the team. Coaches are the major source of praise and punishment;

they can encourage and fill the athletes with confidence. Stress gives athletes the 'kick' that makes competition so enjoyable and challenging it can also cause athletes to fall flat on their faces. Pressure filled performance situations can make coaches and athletes heroes or goats. In the modern day sports each team appoints a psychologist to get rid of from the unnecessary stress for the highest performance of an individual Athlete and the team players.

Observation:

It has seen that excessive stress has become the cause of fall as well the key of success in Athletic performance in the world of sports. In the early nineteen fifties sports psychologists investigated the effect of psyche stressor on the depth perception, steadiness, blood pressure, and simple eye-hand coordination of fresh college women. They found that there was an elevation in the blood pressure when the stressor was used. There were also changes in depth perception, steadiness and coordination. But these changes were not consistent in

direction. Other sports psychologists noted that all the different types of stress caused certain physiological adjustments to occur. The triad as they termed them includes adrenal-cortex enlargement shrinkage of the lymphatic structures, and the development of bleeding and ulcers in the stomach. During stress situations, the pituitary glands and adrenals react to return the body back to normal. Eosinophil count decreases considerably and respirations increase when a person in a state of stress. However, there are plenty evidences that yoga does a lot to prevent and control the stress in the right way so that the highest possible athletic performance has been possible. The other study was evaluated the emotional stress of varsity high school track performers immediately before all meets for the months of March and April. The degree of stress was determined by taking pulse and respiratory rates and measuring palm perspiration. The students also completed a checklist to give an indication of their confidence. A significant relationship was found between emotional stress and consistency of competitive performance. Poor competitions showed less emotional stress than did good performance. Stress beyond man's tolerance for them usually result in changes in performance, usually subjective feeling of discomfort will anticipate actual changes in performance, but this is not always the case. Changes in performance are magnified when the relevant information closely resembles the relevant information. Thus small amounts of extraneous conversation will cause larger changes in performance in tasks involving the use of words than will much more intense noise of a nonverbal kind. It is common for athletes to experience stress when they perform in front of spectators. This is particularly true for Athletes who lack confidence. However, when performance is going well the presence of an audience can be beneficial. Most athletes are more comfortable and confident when they compete in front of a friendly home crowd. The pressure of paying away contests before hostile and sometimes abusive crowds can be immense. If athletes are not skilled at handling such pressure, concentration may focus on the crowd rather on the sports task. Audience related distractions can lead to concern over audience evaluation of performance and abnormally aggressive play that may cause excessive penalties and inefficient performance. The pressure caused by expectations, the desire of setting records and the necessity to competing in front of fans contribute importantly to competitive stress. The sources of stress

are many and varied. Coaches must be aware of and sensitive to athletes needs as they attempt to deal with these sources of stress.

Discussion:

Many athletes claim that the mental aspect of training and compelling is crucial to how well they perform. Yet until recently athlete and coaches believed that skill such as the ability to relax and concentrate are simply personality traits. Although it is true that we have certain innate trait and limitation, it is well established that most people can train their bodies to perform a physical activity attributable to shifts in physical skills and conditioning. It is the mind that falls to perform well consistently. This is most evident in top athletes who are on par physically and recognize that their mental attitude can be 90 per cent responsible for the outcome of an event. However, the minds role is important for athlete at all skill levels in every competitive situation. Researchers have found that the more experienced a performer is the greater his or her ability to handle physiological stress. In fact trained athlete need higher levels of stress to perform well, whereas, beginners and moderately skilled athletes function most effectively when they are calm and minimally aroused. Meditation is one of the best ways to control over arousal in the form of relaxation. It is not a passive state of rest like relaxing on a sofa, but a unique mental state characterized by reduced anxiety and heightened awareness. Meditation is cited by many sports psychologists as essential elements of mental training programmes. The psychological effects of yoga and meditation are more subjective and difficult to measure than the physiological ones, but the results of several studies seem to confirm that yoga helps to reduce anxiety and resulting muscular tension. According to a three year study conducted in India, the combination of meditation and yoga can be useful for stress management. After a six month period of yogic training, research subjects have showed declines in nervous tension, respiratory problems, and drug and alcohol decency, among other ailments. Other studies have shown that meditation can result in reduced oxygen consumption, as well as lower serum cholesterol level and lower heart rate. Some findings reported that to reduce their oxygen consumption by as much as 20% which signals a substantial decrease in stress. Vigorous physical activity, like certain emotional circumstances, produces an aroused stressful state is accompanied by a number of specific physiological

changes. These changes are linked to the body's autonomic nervous system, which governs such functions as heart rate, sweating and digestion. The autonomic nervous system adjusts these functions continuously in order to meet the changing environment. The autonomic is actually composed of two quite separate systems: the sympathetic and parasympathetic. It is these systems that regulate body's responses to stress. During calm, balanced emotional states, the parasympathetic system controls automatic bodily functions. Under stress, the sympathetic system comes into play preparing the body to meet the challenge by increasing the heart rate, respiration, muscular tension and nutrient energy supply. These sympathetic changes together are known as the 'light and light' response, occur rapidly and are normal, necessary element of reaching an optimal level of arousal for peak performance. But the sympathetic system must be controlled otherwise stress turns into anxiety and performance will deteriorate. Such activities as meditation, yoga, self-talk, progressive relaxation and visualization work to engage the parasympathetic system again in order to balance the body's two autonomic systems. By learning to control stress, performance can be improved. For this, the pre-requisite is to skillfully recognize the symptoms of stress. Once identified, stress can be managed in many different ways. Sports psychologists use different techniques of stress management. Some of the techniques are progressive relaxation, systematic desensitization, biofeedback, stress inoculation, massage, listening to music, yoga, autogenic training, visualization and transcendental meditation. In sports most often it is the negative thoughts which precede arousal resulting in stress. Hence cognitive techniques may be more effective. What is important to a sport psychologist is to convince the sportsman that the stress management technique adopted for him will be beneficial in the long run achieve his set target. It is equally important to know if the sportsman has any technique of his own for stress management and if so, efforts should be focused to build on it by incorporating necessary modifications in a systematic way. This would ensure better results than super imposing a new stress management technique for which the sportsman has no regard or conviction. However, new techniques should be introduced only when a sportsman reacts to it favourably. The simplest method can be initially introduced, followed by more complex techniques. Emphasis should be on creating the right attitude about learning the techniques. Trying very hard

to control stress may itself create stress. Managing stress is just exercising control than giving it up. It is vital that our sportsman enjoys, managing stress rather than viewing it as a routing whereby interest level diminishes. In the internal competition where the competitive conditions can be extremely stressful, especially with narrow winning margins, stress management is of crucial importance for peak performance. In highly stressful situation is a skill which can be acquired through appropriate practice and experience. The aim of acquiring stress management skill should be the dominant response in stressful competitive sport situation. Stress management technique is useful in competitive sorts because it reduces the negative self thoughts and accompanying unpleasant emotional feeling and reactions which may otherwise hamper performance. However, Yoga seems to work even better than some other mind-body techniques. One key way yoga alleviates stress is by decreasing levels of the damaging stress hormone cortisol-stress hormone. Yoga modulates the stress response by slowing down rapid breathing and heart rates, lowering high blood pressure, and increasing heart rate variability. All forms of yoga, with their varying levels of intensity, involve the combination of physical postures i.e. asanas with focused and controlled breathing pranayama. Pranayama usually involves deepening, lengthening or holding the breath, which all help to regulate the flow of energy i.e. prana. Prana is our life-force: when it is flowing freely we feel in balance mentally, physically and spiritually. The deep and long breaths we take in pranayama slow heart rate and lower blood pressure, creating a feeling of calm and relaxation. The breathing exercises of pranayam give extra energy to the heart and lungs. Therefore, regular practice of pranayam keeps away from the stress to those organs. In Yogic exercises, there is a harmonious development of all the muscles of the body, internal organs, nerves and frame. Yogasana helps secretion of hormone from different glands in balanced condition, it regulates the blood circulation properly, it forms antibody to prevent diseases thus Yogasana make the body strong. Hence the body does not get weak with the effect of stress. Therefore, regular practice of asanas and pranayam keep away from the stress. Besides, pranayam, meditation also helps to keep away the stress. Meditation of Yogasana calms our mind and body and helps to increase concentration level through uttering of 'Om' 'Om' for rushing of more blood in the brain. Therefore, to prevent excessive stress and to maintain the sports

performance the psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians yoga experts say that the regularly practice of Yoga which is very much essential. However, all types of yoga help to calm the mind and body, but restorative, hatha yoga is particularly relaxing, as is the related practices of meditation and mindfulness. There is also yoga therapy, which is a more clinical application of yoga that can be effective for a variety of mental and physical health problems. Moreover a series of new studies brings yoga one step closer to becoming a recommended treatment for stress, after finding that the practice can help to reduce symptoms of the condition. According the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, around 13 Million US adults have practiced yoga in the past 12 months. Of these adults, 58 per cent report practicing yoga to help maintain their health and well-being

Conclusion:

Stress is common to all. Athletes are not beyond of it. Stress is the key of success as well as of fall. Excessive stress damage sports performance. However, Stress can be managed through the different ways such as progressive relaxation, systematic desensitization, biofeedback, stress inoculation, massage, listening to music, autogenic training, visualization, transcendental meditation and yoga. According to the many researchers Yoga is the best to prevent, maintain and control the excessive stress for better sports performance. All forms of yoga, with their varying levels of intensity, involve the combination of physical postures *i.e.* asanas with focused and controlled breathing pranayamas, meditation, bandhas are beneficial.

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