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Role of Yoga in Sports

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Abstract:

Today modern world has understood the importance of yoga in the life and it is again back in our society. Media plays an important role in highlighting yoga for everyone. Many saints and experts have taught its therapeutic effects. The yogic techniques have developed the inner strength of the individual which is world-wide accepted. In modern times, yoga is recognized for its fitness, meditative and therapeutic effects. Therefore the aim of this paper is to explain the Role of Yoga in Sports.



Keywords: Yoga, Fitness, Sports, Dhyan, Aasan, Pranayama, Mind, Soul..

Introduction

Yoga is originated in India thousands of years ago as a means of spiritual, mental and physical practice. With time, people have realized a number of health benefits offered by yoga. Yoga not only burn calories and give strength to muscles, in fact it is a workout of both body and mind. Yoga includes physical postures called Asanas, breathing techniques called Pranayams, concentration called Dhyan and much more to improve control over body and mind.

Sports can be defined as an activity which involves skill and physical exertion where a player or team competes against each other. Sport is competitive in nature. Sports require tremendous energy, spirit, focus and commitment to deliver. But the question arises that long hours of practice session could lead to physical stress, mental stress and injuries. So to overcome over these issues yoga is a better option. When sportsperson performs in front of audience, he goes through so much of mental stress which leads to anxiety but by the regular practice of yoga he enables himself to keep his mind calm and perform better by keeping all the distractions at bay.

When a sportsperson chooses a particular sport, he develops certain group of muscles whereas other muscles are being ignored. This process creates imbalances not only in the muscles and joints but also leads to overuse injuries. To overcome with this situation, yoga offers its benefits by helping the muscles, ligaments and tendons to move through a full range of motion which encourages the flexibility. Strength is required in almost every sport, therefore different methods are being adopted by sportsperson which increases strength as well as muscle mass but on the other hand it decreases flexibility. Decreased flexibility leads to injuries and injuries can be

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prevented if yogic asanas are performed regularly along with a combination of weight training exercises. Yoga increases flexibility and increases balance also.

2. How Yoga Plays an Important Role in Sports

Yoga aims at maintaining harmony between mind and body. To establish a healthy, lively and balanced approach to life yoga uses movements, breath, posture, relaxation and meditation in order. It plays an important role in sports. It improves near about all physical fitness and wellness components required by sportsman. Yoga helps the sportsperson by making them learn how to stay in present and helps in managing stressful situations with the breath. If any sportsperson add yoga to his training program he could be benefitted hugely. Through the physical form of yoga an athlete works on motor skills like endurance, balance, flexibility, agility, strength and offers other major benefits too which are described as follows:

2.1 Increases Strength

Holding up own body weight increases strength and improves lean muscle mass. Yoga gives strength to weak muscles of the body. It helps in toning that reduces the chances of frequent straining of the muscles.

2.2 Improves Flexibility

Yoga increases range of motion and thus makes the movement easy. It improves joint and muscular flexibility, reduces stiffness in joints and reduces soreness which is essential for the body's overall structural soundness. Sports like tennis, golf where swinging action is required gets more benefit if flexibility of upper limbs increases. In fact flexibility reduces the chances of injury.

2.3 Improves Balance

Through consistent practice of yoga one can improve his balance and coordination. Better balance and coordination means enhanced control which in turns leads to better technique and form.



2.4 Enhances Endurance

Breathing practice is a vital part of yoga. Pranayams lengthens inhalations which increases lung capacity. Therefore delivers more oxygen to the body and helps with overall performance and efficiency. Regular practice of yoga increases respiratory capacity of the athlete and thus stamina also increases

2.5 Develops Fitness

Yoga practices (Asana and Pranayam) develop high level of physical fitness especially endurance and flexibility. It also strengthens various joints and muscles which are very helpful during sports.

2.6 Relaxes Body

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As yogic asanas includes slow stretching. Thus it is very helpful to relax the body after strenuous activity. Yoga benefits sportspersons to recover easily. Hence, refreshes them back to normal level without fatigue after activity. They are also performed after activity as it cool-down the body and therefore also considered for limbering down.

2.8 Prevents from Injury

Regular stretching of muscles before and after practice reduces the chances of injury and knowing the effective ways to stretch them is obviously beneficial. By doing yoga not only muscles that are strengthened, joints of wrists and ankles also become stronger by performing yoga.

2.9 Rehabilitation during Injury

Yogic techniques (Asanas) are very good to recover from injury. Thus, they are practiced for rehabilitation process to cure injury. During the mechanism of injured muscles healing, they become tight where scar tissue forms which reduces flexibility and restrict the movement in the area. Yoga practice promotes flexibility as the stretching poses encourage scar tissue to break down more gently with no inhibition movement as it heals. Gentle movement not only increases flow of blood to the injured area but also allows the elimination of toxins from the injury site which heals the injured area more effectively.

2.10 Controls Anxiety

During sports competition, a balanced form of stress and anxiety is required. Pranayams are very helpful in controlling the anxiety of the individual and thus performance is increased.

2.11 Improves Concentration



Meditation techniques of yoga help to increase concentration. It enhances clarity and focus. Thus they are practiced to improve concentration by which performance is increased. It is also mentioned by Maharishi Patanjali “Yoga chitti vritti nirodha” which means yoga minimizes the fluctuations in mind and keeps distracting or negative thoughts at bay. Practicing Yoga eliminates the emotional clutter out of the mind which enhances concentration power.

2.12 Helpful during Off-Season

During off-season (Transitional Period) sportsperson needs passive activities without loss of fitness. Thus yoga helps the sportspersons to maintain their fitness during off season.

2.13 Improves Various Systems

Yoga helps the sportsperson to improve various systems of the body and the improved efficiency of various systems increases the performance. The circulatory system is exercised by the postures of yoga resulting in an increased amount of blood flow to the different parts of the body. This increased blood flow improves tissue nourishment and therefore improved function of all of the systems of the body ranging from muscles to sensory organs, such as the ears and eyes. The

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respiratory system is strengthened by asanas and pranayams, therefore enhancing oxygen capacity in the lungs.

2.14 Glandular Functioning Improves

Practice of Yoga improves various glandular functioning. It helps the individual to remain active and hence efficiency is improved.

2.15 Increases Immunity

Yogic techniques improve the efficiency of digestive system and thus proper appetite of player. It regulates the diet of sportsperson which is the backbone of sports person.

2.16 Weight Control

Sportsperson often gains weight during off-season which is stigma to sportsperson and therefore it can be easily be prevented by practicing yoga. Thus, personality is improved.

3. Following Yogic Practices must be included by sports person in each practice session.

Standing Poses- Asanas like Tadasana , builds leg strength and brings flexibility in hips and hamstrings.

Balancing Poses- Asanas like Vrikshasana, Natrajasana, Garunasana increases body awareness, stability and proprioception. These asanas are the most effective ways to correct muscle imbalances and poor body mechanics.

Backward Bends and Forward Bends- Asanas like Ushtrasana, Dhanurasana, Bhujangasana, Chakrasana, Rajkapotasana, Adhomukh- swanasana makes the spine strong by increasing the strength and flexibility of the spine. By Practicing these asanas sportsperson can reduce the chances of getting backache.



Inversions- Asanas like Sarvangasana, Shirshasana increases the flow of blood to the brain. The increased blood flow to the pituitary gland situated in brain operates more efficiently which in turn tunes the entire endocrine system. Inverted asanas improve lymphatic drainage and the return of blood to the heart.

Arm Balances- Asanas like Mayurasana, Bakasana builds core and increases upper body strength. It improves body balance and body awareness.

Twists- Asanas like Ardhmastendrasana improves posture, shoulder mobility.It opens up tight obliques and lower backs. It makes nervous system healthy and reduces the stiffness in spine.

Pranayam- These are also called breathing techniques which not only increases lung capacity but boosts up energy and stamina. Brahmari Pranayam brings calmness to the mind which reduces the mental stress and relaxes the body and mind. Therefore it can be used before any sporting event.

Meditation and Breathwork- Meditation aspect is one of the most important part of yoga as it allows sportsperson to understand his own weaknesses, strengths, needs and ambitions. Huge

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part of the game is mental and yoga helps with the mental strength. Meditation stabilizes emotions, reduces stress and helps to focus.

Conclusion

For performing better in any sport, athlete require to have a flexible body, concentration and a free which can only be achieved by yoga. Regular yoga practise enhances performance of any sportsman. It makes an athlete a better and strong human being – both mentally and physically. Today yoga is considered as a mainstream form of exercise, relaxation, and spiritual growth. Professional athletes do yoga to support mobility and recovery training. Endurance athletes use it to prevent injury and correct imbalances and weight lifters & functional fitness athletes use it to restore flexibility and recover from their resistance training workouts. Yogic breathing techniques, meditation, visualizations, relaxation and introspection increases mental clarity and helps athlete to cope with the long and tiring practice sessions that athletes must get through. It improves immunity, balances hormone and improves stress management which are very much beneficial to sportsperson. Control over negative emotions during stress or adversity can only be done by the regular practice of yoga.

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