



Special Issue on
Sports in
Education

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Please Note:

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“Learning Curve is a publication on education from Azim Premji University. It aims to reach out to teachers, teacher educators, school heads, education functionaries, parents and NGOs, on contextual and thematic issues that have an enduring relevance and value to help practitioners. It provides a platform for the expression of varied opinions, perspectives, encourages new and informed positions, thought-provoking points of view and stories of innovation. The approach is a balance between being an ‘academic’ and ‘practitioner’ oriented magazine.”

From the editor

Sports in the Indian schooling system is often 'good to have' in the primary years, 'nice to have' in the middle school years and 'can't afford to have' in the secondary schooling years. With attitudes of those in the government, school administration, and of teachers and parents reflecting this in some way or the other, students with sporting dreams find themselves navigating this rather obstructive belief system. Pursuing your sporting dream is thus like taking on 'the system' in most cases. While some argue that true sporting talent cannot be hidden for long, this notion is also up for debate. Is it always necessary to have 'true blue sporting talent' or the 'spark of brilliance' to dream of a career in sports? Or can ordinary sport-oriented students also train and realise their sporting potential? In short, how 'good' is 'good enough' to take up sports as a career?

Why do we demand this of those who wish to take up sports, and hardly ever take cognizance of, for example, the lack of Math aptitude in one who simply has to learn those important tables? Are sports an optional dessert on a menu that upholds academic subjects as the only worthwhile learning?

When the editorial team first brainstormed about topics for this issue, our playground was as vast as it was ambitious. We aspired to include multi-dimensional views to capture the essence of Sports in Education. Pretty soon, however, we hit our first road block – who will write? During almost every single encounter with a potential author, we were told how hesitant he/she was to write – 'sports people cannot write'. But the editorial team strongly felt that the (lack of?) writing ability could not determine whether or not the viewpoint would have a place in the Learning Curve ...and so it is that you will notice many 'as told to' articles in this issue. Sports persons, by their very nature, allowed this sort of 'out of the box' thinking.

The other huge roadblock was access to sports people. Most of them were celebrities in their

own right and so reaching them was a Herculean task. Here's where we found friends in 'Playright' (a Bangalore based Sports PR firm) – to whom this issue owes a huge vote of thanks.

Owing to the busy schedules and international commitments of sports people, the first thing that went for a toss – was our timeline. Games are fun, even if they are played late, and we hope this issue makes up for its late arrival in the bounty that it brings!

We are deeply indebted to the sports people who took time off to tell us of their journey prior to becoming a sports star, so as to reveal their bond with the sport they play. We are grateful to our authors for having fielded a multitude of topics – from the interpersonal and collaborative influences that sports have on students - to the skills it develops, from the harsh realities about why people don't take up sporting careers - to the challenges parents face while bringing up sporting kids, from questioning notions of competition in sports - to detailing the power of a sporting mind, from examining the contribution of the RTE - to revealing the NCF's take on sports education – the issue has thrown up issues, tackled a few challenges and offered a few solutions as well.

If you put down this issue with a few questions about sports education buzzing through your mind: we would deem our purpose as being fulfilled! And at the end of it, we would like you to ponder: do sports have a place in education, or is sports an education in itself? We hope you like the issue. As always, we are open to feedback, suggestions, critique and even interest in contributing to our upcoming issue.

The next Learning Curve is a special issue on 'Art in Education'. So roll up your sleeves, dip the paintbrushes of thought into your imaginative palettes and be sure to get in touch with us.

With every hope for a thought-provoking read on playful yet serious matters.



Nidhi Tiwari
Editor, Learning Curve

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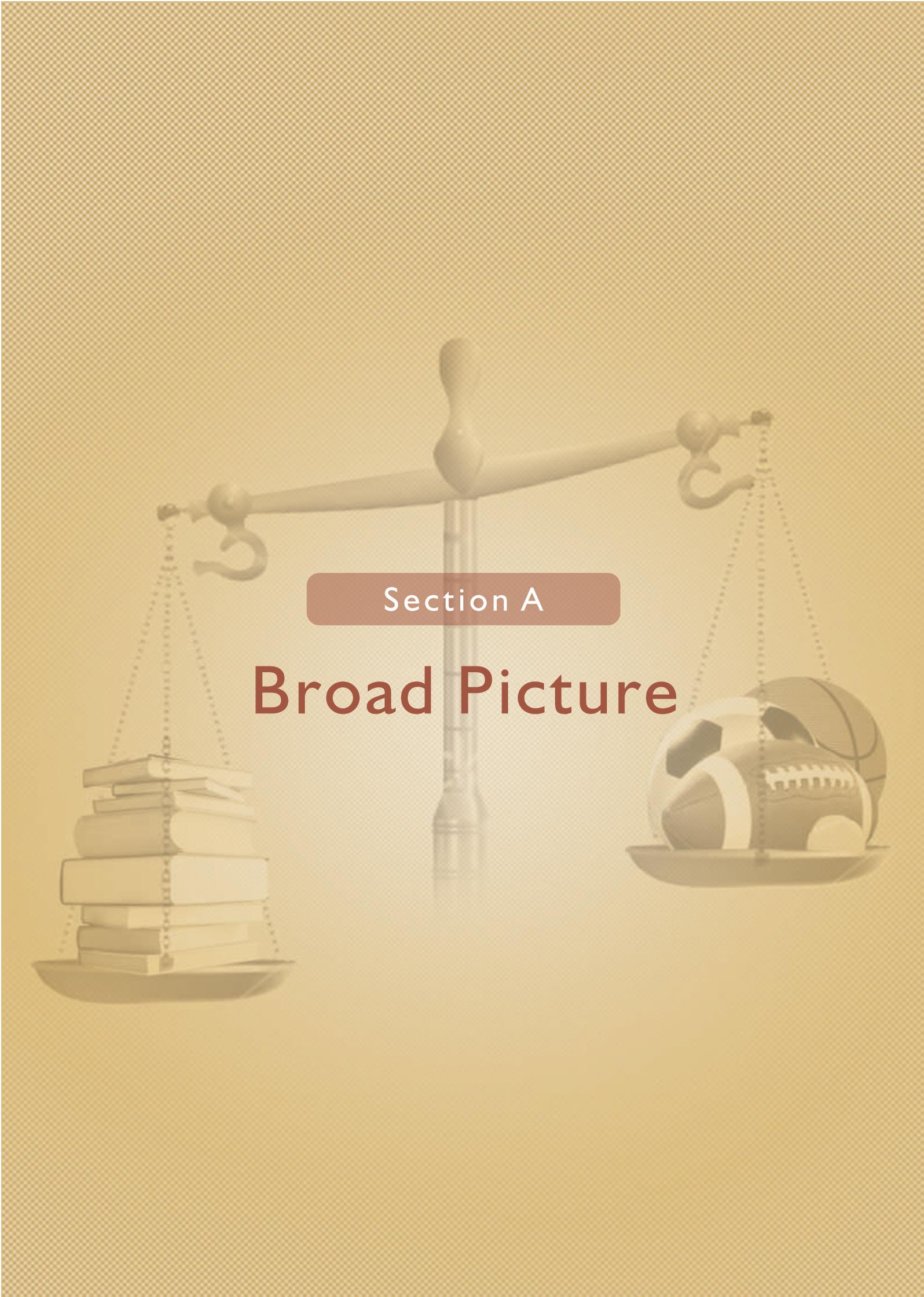
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A balance scale is centered in the image. The left pan is lower and contains a stack of approximately eight books. The right pan is higher and contains three sports balls: a soccer ball, an American football, and a basketball. The scale is balanced. The background is a light beige color with a fine, repeating pattern of small, dark, stylized human figures.

Section A

Broad Picture



Kalyan Ashok

Games and sports play a vital role in the development of the child.

To play is a natural instinct in a child and it has a universal character. And the world over, every child wants to play. Why should a child play? There are several interesting theories. One is the 'instinct theory'. It is through sheer instinct that a child loves to play; it is a natural physical action. There is another theory that suggests that a child has an excessive and expendable energy and the only way it can be spent is through playing.

Then there is a theory of expression. A child wants to express her feelings, which also comes through play. When they play, children express varied emotions: joy, cheerfulness, anger and disappointment. Through play, a child learns new things. A physical activity on the ground helps a child to develop certain physical attributes like a good posture, movement, anticipation, improving hand and eye coordination and so on. Basically, a child learns through doing. In the USA, they call it 'movement' education.

In India, the education is through repetition and imitation, where the child is taught to follow his or her peer or the teacher or the parent. The learning process for a child has to be informal and that can come only through play, where there is freedom for a child to follow the natural instinct. The stress on informal mode is due to the fact that the attention span of children is limited. When they are very young, they get distracted easily during formal learning processes. And hence the need to inject lot of informality in educating a child. That can be done only through play or sports, and its proper integration with formal education would make a solid bedrock for a sound educational system.

What a child learns in class is in a formal mode, and often there is no freedom for a child to indulge in any action, which she can call truly a self made process. Whereas in play, a child, though within certain rules, is able to initiate her own actions.

Games and sports play a vital role in the development of the child. The child learns the virtues of team work, imbibes the spirit of sportsmanship, learns as she grows, learns to face an adverse situation gamely; the child learns to focus better at the task on hand and the child also learns to enjoy the fruits of sharing, giving and helping. Playing or sports enables a child to emerge as a well rounded person.



There is a notion that one plays to win. But in a child's case, nothing can be farther than the truth. A child simply enjoys playing and loves being in the midst of a physical activity. A child doesn't really think about the consequences of winning or losing. The competitive spirit, as they grow, is injected into their system. But this doesn't come into play when they are very young and are learning the rudiments of a chosen sport. It is for the educationists to define how much should be the accent on the competitive factor. In the formative years, however, the child should be allowed to enjoy the sport and have fun - winning or losing simply doesn't matter.

True, one can claim that children should know a thing or two about winning and losing and some even cite

the examples of the Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union or China, where children are picked at an early age and put in sports schools and trained to be champions, through strict diet control, overload of training and drilling the 'killer instinct' into them. Such children do become medal winning machines, when they attain their teens or adulthood. But in the process of becoming a champion, they lose their entire childhood, which is a wonderful phase of one's life. Stories abound in such nations, about the physiological ill effects of heavy loads of training, food supplements and psychological problems these children develop when they grow up. No amount of counselling is going to bring back their lost childhood. It is only during pre- adolescent and adolescent period, that the child develops the maturity to take on the taxing loads of training. In India, it is a different case altogether. Parental and academic pressures hinder a child achieving her natural potential in sports. Every parent dreams that their child, just because he plays tennis or cricket and attends a reputed coaching clinic, will become another Leander Paes or Sachin Tendulkar. As a sports writer, I have covered many junior swimming, athletic and tennis events and have often watched parents cry hoarse, egging on their child to over reach herself. No harm in encouraging children, but they should avoid over expectations and allow the child to enjoy his game.

Indian educationists have under estimated the impact of play and sports on the child's well-being and growth. No wonder, sports is not a treated as a subject in the curriculum. Many schools do not have proper

The last thing I want to see is a sports person in my college cooped in a class room. I always tell them to go and practice, we will conduct special classes for you.

playing facilities or physical trainers to train them in sports. Even children, who excel in sports, fail to take it up as a career option because of lack of encouragement. Sports, has at best, become a tool for gaining admission in professional courses through the 'sports quota', at the collegiate level.

Several promising young swimmers, athletes, basket ball players and cricketers have virtually bid adieu to sports when they entered the realm of professional courses. A few do manage to balance both in a successful manner. Shikha Tandon, an Olympian swimmer from Bangalore, now pursuing hers Masters in Biotechnology in the United States, says: `` Balancing both is difficult but if you are determined, you can do it. I spent six hours in classrooms and labs and another six hours in the swimming pool, without losing focus on either my studies or swimming career''. Shikha was lucky as she studied in Shree Bhagwan Mahaveer Jain College, whose chairman Chenraj Jain is an avid sports enthusiast and the college sports persons get time off for training and for participating in events. "The last thing I want to see is a sports person in my college cooped in class room. I always tell them to go and practice, we will conduct special classes for you!", says Mr. Jain. "It is unrealistic to expect a player to pursue sports once he or she is in a professional course. Because they are studying to be doctors and engineers not a full time sportsman who wants to be a part time doctor," says Mr. L.R. Vaidyanathan, the former Dean of Bangalore University College of Physical Education.

"Sport should be made relevant to life like any other subject," observes Mr. Vaidyanathan. He is perfectly right because sports is yet to become a part of school curriculum in most states, barring a few like Karnataka, Punjab and Kerala.

A proper integration of sports into educational system would help the child to evolve as a better person and enhance his overall development. Play, recreation, games, sports, they all mean the same thing to the child, and takes a special connotation for the child as she grows and discovers the nuances.

The State's role in providing standard education with a proper staple of sports and play cannot be underestimated as most of the educational institutions are run by the Government. In a welcome move, Karnataka has initiated a move to teach sport as a subject from Standard IV to IX. After a break for SSLC in the 10th, sports is again a compulsory subject in the

11th and 12th (PUC). There is now a growing awareness among educationists to provide a good mix of sports and education to children. NCERT has come up with suggestions on making sports an integral part of academics. A UNESCO Declaration on the right of children to play is being worked out.

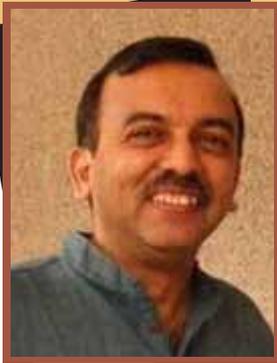
Various governmental committees, like the H.N. Kunzru Committee, Kothari Committee and Radhakrishnan Committee, have all recommended that sports and physical education be integrated with academics. Several institutions, have started the concept of pre-school sports at the Montessori level itself and an interesting example is the pioneering

work done by Mrs. Shirly Madhavan Kutty, who runs a highly reputed Montessori School called 'Magic Years' in Delhi.

Despite these initiatives, sports education does not figure very high on the list of priorities in our country. The Union Sports Ministry would rather see a clutch of champions than focus on giving a good sports education to a child and the same notion is reflected in society's outlook as well. This mind set needs to change as a sports conscious child not only becomes a happy and healthy child, but also grows up to be a model citizen, if not a great sportsman.



***Kalyan Ashok** is an award winning senior journalist who has worked with the Indian Express, the Deccan Herald and The Hindu. He was Sports-in-Charge of the Bangalore edition of The Hindu. He has covered major national and international sports events for The Hindu and its sister publication, Sportstar in cricket, tennis, badminton, athletics and aquatics. Besides sports, he also writes on politics, entertainment and other general subjects. He is now a freelance writer, based in Bangalore. He may be contacted at kalyanashok@gmail.com.*



02

Health & Physical Education in NCF

D.D. Karopady

The focus group of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) has recognised that the curriculum design for 'Health and Physical Education' is very challenging in terms of both content and evaluation and has rightly chosen to take a very comprehensive view of the subject. In the position paper, the group has tried to address the concerns related to health in all its dimensions, nutrition as also other social factors that contribute to the 'overall well being' of children at primary, secondary and senior secondary schools. There is a candid acceptance of the problems of under-nutrition, stunted growth and communicable diseases affecting children, not just during the schooling period but throughout their lives.

The group refers to the working definition on the subject set out by the Bhore Committee report way back in 1946 and suggests its adoption even today. According to it, the duties of a school health service are:

1. Preventive and curative health measures including detection and treatment of defects and creation and maintenance of hygienic environment in and around the school
2. Measures for promoting positive health which should include provision of supplementary food to improve nutrition levels and physical culture through games, sports and gymnastic exercises

The validity of these guidelines now, even after 65 years speaks volumes for our inability to implement these in our system. The government had set up a school health division in 1958 and efforts were made to integrate health education with school curriculum. The group laments that the integrated vision was lost both conceptually and in practice, perhaps because the school health programme was administratively under the Ministry of Health. The group has suggest-

ed that the various components of the school health programme must be an integral part of the 'Health and Physical Education' curriculum. The group also draws attention to the urgent need for coordination between various departments including health and family welfare, sports and youth affairs, women and child welfare, home and child education and so on.

Realising the importance of the mid-day meal programme (MDM), the committee has recommended that the MDM must become part of the curriculum. It has also included yoga as a part of the physical education for fitness and health of the children.

The group has unanimously recommended that this must be a compulsory subject up to class 10 and must be treated on par with other core subjects, allowing students to opt for it in lieu of one of the five subjects. The objectives and syllabi should reflect the four major themes:

- a. Personal health, physical and psycho-social development
- b. Movement concepts and motor skills
- c. Relationship with significant others
- d. Healthy communities and environments



To address these themes, the committee has formulated the following specific objectives to guide curriculum and syllabi planning:

1. To help children learn and become aware of health and develop a positive attitude towards it

2. To provide requisite services through the school health and nutritional programmes
3. To help children become aware of appropriate health needs at particular ages
4. To help children know and accept individual and collective responsibility for healthy living
5. To help children to be acquainted with nutritional requirements, personal & environmental hygiene, sanitation, pollution, common diseases and measures for their prevention and control
6. To help children know their status of health, identify health problems and take appropriate remedial measures
7. To create awareness about rules of safety in various hazardous situations to avoid accidents and injuries
8. To help children correct postural habits
9. To help children improve their neuro-muscular coordination through participation in a variety of physical activities
10. To help children understand the process of growing up during adolescence, HIV/AIDS
11. To provide skills for dealing with psycho-social issues in school, home
12. To help children grow up as responsible citizens by inculcating social and moral values through games, sports, NCC
13. To create interest among children for yogasanas and meditation
14. To address the physical and psycho-social needs of differently abled children

These objectives look very daunting to achieve and this has been recognised by the group. There is acceptance that the constraints faced by yoga and physical education are related to a number of factors that affect quality of school education in general. These include inadequate physical infrastructure, lighting, ventilation, water supply and transportation facilities. One other serious challenge highlighted is the absence of trained teachers on the subject in adequate numbers. In fact, this problem is traced back to the subject not being dealt adequately in the pre-service



and in-service training of the teachers at all levels. Thus, even when the subject is considered equivalent to other core subjects, in practical terms, it does not get the importance it deserves. Hence, a major recommendation of the group is to seriously address this matter of teacher preparation in yoga and physical education in general and the integrated approach with other subjects in particular.

Two other significant areas dealt with by the group relate to health needs of adolescents and a comprehensive mental health programme. The committee has emphasised the need to address the critical requirement of development of self identity during adolescence requiring careful and responsible handling of issues such as independence, intimacy, sexual health, HIV/ AIDS and drug abuse. On the matter of mental health, the committee has highlighted the need for equipping the children with mechanisms to cope with environmental stress and examination related stress. This is particularly relevant today in the context of the growing number of cases where the students attempt to take the extreme step in response to stresses of various kinds.

The issue of 'assessment' is perhaps not dealt with adequately. While it talks of a need for written test and practical test, the emphasis is still on 'conventional examination'. This could make this a typical subject like any other. Here the focus could have been on 'medical and physical examination' rather than on 'testing' the children. A couple of other aspects that seem to stick out are:

- a. The absence of even a single mention of the words ‘fun and enjoyment’ while talking about sports and games. Ask any child about sports and the first response would be ‘fun’. This aspect of ensuring that there needs to be fun in sports and physical education is completely missing. This could be because ‘sports’ is included as a part of health and physical education which is treated as a ‘subject’. Perhaps, schools should be encouraged to have a compulsory ‘sports and games’ period which is set aside for fun and enjoyment by children through a variety of individual as well as group games and sports.
- b. No mention of the mindset of a good physical education teacher. It may not be surprising to find in most schools that the PE teacher is among the most feared by children as the association is with punishment, physical pain and terror. This aspect should have been addressed in the part on PE teacher preparation.
- adoption of the comprehensive definition of the subject as spelt out by the Bhore committee report
 - inclusion of medical care, hygienic school environment, school lunch, nutrition, health, medical checkups and physical education in all its dimensions
 - making mid-day meals part of the curriculum
 - coordination of efforts of education and health departments
 - need for yoga and health education to have a minimum outdoor component
 - need for cross curricular planning and integration with science, social science, language and other relevant subjects
 - review of the curriculum for teacher training programmes for yoga, health and physical education and compulsory inclusion of this in all teacher preparations.

In sum however, the group has taken a fairly good and holistic view of the subject. Some of the key recommendations made include:

- make this subject compulsory upto class 10 and treat it on par with other core subjects

Throughout the position paper, there is a clear and strong feeling that this area has not received adequate attention and importance that it deserves. In this context, it is interesting to note that in the final NCF document, this subject gets ‘less than 2 pages’. That perhaps tells its own story.

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Ted Murray

Although there is widespread agreement on the need for physical education and sports in almost all countries across the world, in reality there are tremendous disparities in how various countries actually implement sports and physical education programmes in schools. I have been fortunate to have lived in a number of countries - in addition to my native USA - and would like to share some of my observations as to how physical education is approached in a number of countries.

Before we can effectively evaluate how countries approach sports in education, a couple of distinctions need to be made. The first distinction is that between physical education as part of the school curriculum - which focuses on broad participation in a variety of physical activities - and the focus on competitive sports. The second distinction is between standards that are mandated by law and the actual reality of the implementation (and enforcement) of these laws at the ground level.

Let us look first at the United States, since it is the country that seems to be most emulated here in India. When I grew up, we had Physical Education (PE) at least thrice a week. While there was some structure to it, it consisted mostly of games like dodge ball and kickball with hardly any emphasis on skill development. It was consequently very obvious who the athletes were and who were not. No attempt was made to encourage those who were not athletic. They were simply made to feel like failures and so, they tried to do anything to avoid the dreaded “gym class”. In fact, studies have shown that about half the people in the US say that their first memory of failure was in a physical education class!

Only one state in the US - Illinois - mandates daily

physical education. Most other states only require two hours of physical education (PE) per week. However, whether this actually takes place is another story. Especially in the past decade, the emphasis in US education has been on “No Child Left Behind”. The focus is thus completely on standardised test scores, and any subject that is not directly related to preparation for the test has been eliminated or ignored. Unfortunately, this includes physical education, which is the worst thing that could happen, especially with the unrelenting increase in childhood obesity in the US.

There are many innovations in PE that come from the US. Organisations like Spark have created age-appropriate curricula for developing movement and athletic skills, in a fun and engaging format. Many schools have adopted the Health Club model of offering classes like kickboxing, aerobics, and boot camp classes similar to those offered in health clubs. Many PE classes are now required to include health and nutrition instruction. This is good for the overall understanding of health, but detracts from the amount of time that is spent in true physical activity.

I see India currently being somewhere between China and Singapore. Like Singapore, the focus on academics creates a barrier for talented athletes to spend enough time training for their sport, so as to be able to compete on the world stage.

When it comes to organised competitive sports in schools, the US is undoubtedly the leader. They have well-structured competitive leagues in a wide variety of sports, and are very inclusive of females as well as males, something that is very rare in Asia. In fact, the law dictates that boys and girls must have equal opportunity and participation. Unfortunately, most of the focus is on competitive team sports and there is little emphasis on lifetime sports that help maintain lifelong fitness, such as running, cycling, and tennis. In addition, most of the participants at the school level cannot compete after they get to university, and

thus, most of them completely give up their sport and lose their level of fitness in the pressure-filled focus on academics, dating, and drinking.

Australia is another country that places a tremendous emphasis on sports participation but can boast of very little structured physical education mandates. They have recently passed laws to re-introduce daily physical education in schools; however, the reality is that it is the sports teams that are looked up to for leadership - instead of the physical education staff! New Zealand has a similar lack of respect and training for physical education professionals, with the result that a majority of their sporting culture takes place outside the school environment.

The UK has recently become proactive in trying to create a sense of partnership between physical education in schools and the sporting activities of clubs and other organizations. They have invested in the Physical Education School Sport Club Links (PESS-CL) programme, whose goal is to have every child between the ages of 5 and 16 years engage in four hours of sports per week. Two hours would be in Physical Education classes, with the additional hours provided by a combination of school, community, and club resources. Not enough time has elapsed for the effectiveness of this programme to be studied; however, it appears to be an intelligent attempt for the schools to work together with other agencies, so as to increase the overall participation in sports. Whether this is geared to creating widespread participation in a variety of sporting activities, or it simply focuses on



creating more opportunities for the superstar athletes to shine, is something that remains to be seen.

Singapore is one country where laws are certainly enforced, so adherence is not an issue there. They mandate two hours of PE every school week, except during examination seasons. They also have a compulsory fitness examination that is conducted in every school, once a year, to assess the levels of physical fitness of pupils. Not only are these scores used to grade their fitness, but those who score poorly are required to do an additional two months in the county's compulsory military service! As beneficial as this may sound, sport is not very well developed in Singapore due to the tremendous pressure for academics. They can afford the time for PE only because they have such long academic days, including full days on Saturday. This absolute focus on academics has stunted the ability of superior athletes to devote the time required to train at highest levels.

A country that is just the opposite in terms of size and focus on sports but shares a similar approach regarding government funding and mandates is China. Their outstanding results on the international sporting scene are primarily due to their government-funded talent identification and training process. If it is determined (usually at a very early age) that a child has a talent for a particular sport, that child is sent to national sports schools. Here, there is very little emphasis on academics, but they receive coaching and development training on a full-time basis. This can certainly help produce world champions in many sports, especially those that emphasize rote repetition such as gymnastics and diving. It is hard to say how many children get burnt out physically, mentally or both - in this process. This also creates a separation between the "athletes" and the "non-athletes".

However, even regular Chinese schools have mandated two hours of PE per week. They have created standardised tests, which are administered every two years, in order to judge overall fitness levels. The students must also achieve a certain level of proficiency in PE, in order to move to the next grade. They also place an emphasis on health knowledge and have a

very structured programme for training PE teachers. Only about 30% of the PE teachers in secondary schools have the equivalent of a college degree, while most of them have an associate degree, the equivalent of two to three years in a specialised programme for physical education.



I see India currently being somewhere between China and Singapore. Like Singapore, the focus on academics creates a barrier for talented athletes to spend enough time training for their sport, so as to be able to compete on the world stage. Like China, India has a tremendous population pool on which to draw from. I would love to see India strive to find the perfect balance between this focus on sports and academics, as well as a broad-based development of love for physical activity, with dedication to developing champion athletes.

My personal approach would be to try to select the best practices from each of the other countries. From the US, I would love to see an emphasis on age-appropriate skill development in an atmosphere of fun and games, with an intent to create a love of sport at an early age. Having a standardised testing protocol like

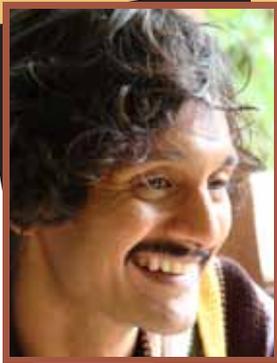
that in Singapore and China would be appropriate, but it should be focused on measuring one's own personal development over time, instead of comparing it with others. There should be a balance of a broad-based introduction to a variety of sports within a Physical Education context, while opportunities are provided for talented athletes (regardless of economic background) to have the financial support that will allow them to pursue a sport to school, state, national, and even the professional level.

It would be great to see educators and parents recognise the remarkable benefits of PE in developing a student's healthy habits over a lifetime, as well as the benefits of children choosing to train seriously for a sport that they are passionate about. The life skills that can be developed by one's dedication to pursue a dream of, say, becoming a tennis professional, can equip children to become successful in life, no matter which career they eventually pursue. It should not be considered a failure when one does not reach a professional level in sport, as the very pursuit of excellence would have developed a tremendous sense of discipline, time management, sportsmanship, the ability to take responsibility for results, and the trait of learning from defeats. They will most certainly emerge with a lifelong love of sport that will help them remain fit, healthy, and successful in all spheres of life, for an entire lifetime.

In my view, this should be our goal for all students in India: to realise that a healthy, active body will enhance their mental prowess and therefore, they should strive to maintain a healthy balance between body, mind and spirit.

***Ted Murray** has a 36 year career as one of the most innovative and versatile tennis coaches in the world. He has run programs at clubs, resorts, and academies in a number of countries while coaching players of all ages and ability levels, including Indian Grand Slam Winners Leander Paes and Olympic Medalist Gigi Fernandez.*

Ted has had a long and successful relationship with Tennis in India. In 1985 he was selected as the first coach of the Britannia-Amritraj Tennis Foundation (BAT) and worked tirelessly with the Amritraj family to train the next generation of Davis Cup players for India. And after a short stint in the USA, Ted moved with wife Shikha to Bangalore in 2008 to start a very successful summer junior tennis and yoga camp.



04

Sports in Education: Lack of Policy Level Focus and The Need for A Missionary Zeal

Rishikesh

There are two nations on this planet with a billion plus population. While one of them is a sporting power house the other is a 'leader' at the rear end! Both countries were at an interesting cusp in the middle of the 20th century; defining moments of 1949 and the end of the civil war established the People's Republic in China and in 1947 there was freedom from 200 years of British rule for India leading to the establishment of a Democratic Republic. Then China went the Maoist Communist way and India took the Democratic Socialist path. At this time, the two countries were more or less equal on various indices, sporting or otherwise; in fact, factsⁱ point out that India had the edge over China in many respects and given that China was 'closed' for the world they did not even have the exposure that India had in the international arena.

The contrast in international sports between these two countries could not be starker with India having participated in the Olympicsⁱⁱ continuously since 1920 and China participating in it continuously only since 1984, that is, just 25 years from the 2008 Games which it hosted. However, China has won a staggering 385 medals in nine games and India's tally is a mere 20 medals after participating in 23 games! In the 2008 games China won a 100 medals with 51 of them being Gold and in contrast India won 3 medals with one of them being the first time ever gold for an individual Indian sportsperson. China was placed 4th in the '96 games, 3rd in the 2000 games, 2nd in the '04 games and stood first in the games that it hosted in 2008. In contrast India's ranking has been 71st in '96 and 2000 Games, and 65 and 50 in the subsequent onesⁱⁱⁱ.

This comparison is not to be construed as an argument to establish the kind of system China has, be it in sports or in governance, but only to drive home the

point that two neighbours with similar population size and beginning a new chapter in their history around the same time have gone two different ways in their sporting achievement.

Given this reality it is necessary for us in India to introspect – because we have gone 'nowhere'



And for now I would like to put forward a simplistic argument to keep the Communist system versus a Democratic system argument out of this discussion by stating that role of the communist system will not explain the sporting success of capitalist democracies. India stands last among the 125 nations that have won at least one medal; so, ranked above the Socialist Democratic Republic of India are nations that are under communism, capitalism, theology, autocracy, monarchy and any other system thereby clearly indicating that the India versus China debate should not be viewed through the framework of the governance system that exists in the two countries.

Many explanations have been provided and numerous theories have been expounded on the reasons for India's failure in the international sporting arena. In 2008, two academics from the Duke University in the U.S. wrote in a research paper^v that 'Turkey, which has less than one-tenth of India's population, won 10 times as many medals in 2004; Thailand, with just 6% of India's people, managed eight times as many medals'. In that paper they went on to contend that the key success factor for a country in this regard is the aspect of 'social mobility'. However, they also go on to add that Cuba, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kenya and

Uzbekistan are countries not known for having high average incomes which have won many more medals than India. One could therefore say, there is some truth in many of the factors associated with India's dismal performance in sports - such as:

- poverty in the population (some estimates point out that nearly 80% of our population are poor^{vi})
- malnutrition (India ranks 2nd in the world in malnutrition^{vii})
- neglected infrastructure (the only individual gold medalist for India is Abhinav Bindra^{viii} whose father built a private shooting range for him speaks volumes of the public facilities that we have)
- the lack of sponsorship (Indian sprint queen P.T.Usha had a cash starved start to her athletics academy and continues to struggle to run it^{ix})
- political corruption (CWG scam^x) and institutional dis-organisation (the recent withdrawal of Champions Trophy Hockey tournament by IHF^{xi} due to the infighting within our hockey establishment)
- the predominance of cricket (reigning world champions in one of the formats of this game) and
- other cultural factors (we have a fat-heavy diet and even our sports persons are known to be less fit, leave alone the average citizen).

However, there is one factor that most analysis miss and that is the serious lack of 'Sports' in our formal education system - the role or lack of it that sports plays in our schools. It is this aspect that I would like to highlight in this article.

I would like to argue that the root of our problem of under achievement in sports is in not providing the required impetus for it from the elementary level of schooling thereby not contributing towards creation of a sport loving society. There are many schools in the country that focus on sports and strive to achieve a balance between academic achievements and sporting glory. However, at the policy level there is very little in this regard other than a weekly period designated

for 'physical education' (PE) which for a majority of students is an experience that is closer to military drills than of sporting enjoyment; while PE in a school involves all kinds of formal and planned physical activity including the morning assembly, sports is more about competitive games and other activities based on physical athleticism wherein one skill is pitted against another and the competitive spirit brings out the best in the participating individuals. In this article the focus is on the role of sports in the education system and how India has not done much in this regard. Given that sports is under the overarching umbrella of PE, the latter also forms part of the overall debate. It is common knowledge that what constitutes a PE period is decided by the PE teacher in our schools. The problem begins there because the PE teachers are on the job based on the certification (Diploma / Degree in Physical Education) that ails from similar if not identical ills of other teacher training programmes in the country which primarily are out of tune to the demands of the 21st century. These aspects reflect in the way the PE teachers go about their activities in the school setting.



With a cane stick in hand it is the PE teacher who monitors the punctuality of the students, their adherence to the uniform rules where applicable, standing in a straight line at the assembly, providing the 'attention', 'stand at ease' and 'disburse' commands at all school functions and every other discipline oriented aspect in the school. Hence, within a school environment the PE teacher is the most feared adult for the

students. This is completely contrary to what ideally a PE teacher should be for the students – the one who motivates them to excel, the one who urges the students to ‘push the limits’, the one who provides them with inspirational stories of sporting heroes thereby exciting them and encouraging them to the immense potential of the human body and surely the one whom the student’s can look up to^{xii}.

The country is not short on organisations that are supposed to deal with PE in schools or more specifically sports in the country, but they remain incognito because their work does not attract attention due to lack of progressiveness in their approach and thereby providing nothing fresh or ‘game-changing’. The designated body to look after the PE programmes in the country is the ‘All India Council of Physical Education’^{xiii} which is constituted by the Upper House of the Indian Parliament and of which very little is known. An example of an official document in this domain which does not come out with any progres-

The root of our problem of under achievement in sports is in not providing the required impetus for it from the elementary level of schooling thereby not contributing towards creation of a sport loving society.

sive ideas is the National Council for Teacher Education’s document titled ‘Framework for Quality Teacher Education’ which has one chapter devoted to ‘Education of Teachers for Physical Education’^{xiv}. Other than lack of progressive ideas, none of these documents provide the required focus on sports within the PE nor do they look at an integrated approach to PE in the overall scheme of ‘education’.

But, nearly 25 years ago in the context of preparations for the NPE, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, speaking on 31 March 1986 at the National Primary Education Conference, had declared:

“Mere book learning does not develop character. It is formed through different regulated activities, through sports and playing in a team or playing by oneself.”

However, our emphasis on sports in education if at all has remained only in ‘speeches’ and not even on ‘paper’! Some ideas that have made it to the ‘paper’ (documents) are without concrete plan of action that are implementable and truly integrative. One may find all schools adhering to the policy of having annual sports days, but the important missing link is to integrate it to daily learning within and without the classrooms thereby building a positive culture towards sports. The fact that during the exam time all sports periods are cancelled to fit in more academic sessions indicates the mindset that exists which are primal and invariably uninformed of most recent researches^{xv} which indicate a positive correlation between regular PE and learning achievement.

The 1986 National Policy of Education^{xvi}, in its’ section titled ‘Sports & PE’, emphasizes the importance of sports & PE in any learning process and suggests making it part of the performance evaluation process and also calls for nation-wide PE infrastructure as part of the education edifice. It also mentions about the need to encourage those students who are talented in sports. However, the focus on getting the students to strive for excellence and to make sports a passion is missing. Even in the NCF 05 which had a separate sub-group working on PE there is a lot to be desired; the focus is entirely on health related PE activities and not really about sports and games. If a progressive document such as the NCF 05 is missing the point it really means we have not taken cognizance of the fact that to be lying at the bottom of the rank ladder in international sports does harm the image of the country and its’ people.

The SSA report^{xvii} on the Right to Education Act 2009, one of the most recent official documents suggesting measures towards the future of education in the country, continues the ignorance to sports shown in the earlier documents; it does not provide any emphasis on sports related aspects. Though the report does mention the obstacles of a subject based approach that our system follows today and how this kind of an approach makes building awareness on critical issues in the society a difficult one, it does not even take sports

as an example to elaborate this point. In the chapter on Curriculum and Evaluation under the title ‘Systemic Obstacles’ the SSA report on RtE mentions various aspects such as ‘Infusion of environment related knowledge and work related attitude in all subjects and at all levels’, ‘Linkages between school knowledge in different subjects and children’s everyday experiences’, ‘Appropriateness of topics and themes for relevant stages of children’s development and continuity from one level to the next’, ‘Inter-disciplinary and thematic linkages between topics listed for different school subjects which fall under discrete disciplinary areas’, and even ‘Nurturing aesthetic sensibility and values by integrating the arts and India’s heritage of crafts in every aspect of the curriculum’, but there is not a single mention of any PE related aspect, leave alone sports and games.

One may think that it is too much to expect organisations within the domain of education to come out with progressive documents on sports or PE as there are a number of issues to deal within the sphere of education itself. However, a look at what organisations that are tasked with managing and promoting sports in our country are doing also shows that ideas remain staid and more importantly lack the sports focus that is required for the country.



For instance, the objective of the National Youth Policy 2003^{xviii} by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports appears to be to create law abiding citizens

who remain wedded to the ideals laid down in the constitution and contribute to service of the community with respect for our history and culture and be the docile peace seeking people – nothing wrong with this objective, but coming from a ministry that is to look at youth affairs and sports it is disconcerting that not even once does the word ‘sports’ appear in either the objectives or the thrust areas! ‘Sports’ gets bucketed into the Department of Sports within the Ministry and it has nothing to do with the policy for youth affairs!! If there is no integration between the two departments within the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, one can imagine what would exist between Department of Education (under Ministry of Human Resource Development) and the Department of Sports which I argue is critical to take the country out of the rut.

The National Sports Policy (NSP) 2001^{xx} has one short paragraph on integrating sports with education ; the section is neither elaborated upon nor does it provide any meaningful concept but only mentions a few aspirational statements. The NSP 2007^{xxi} does put forth some good ideas, but it continues to remain a draft document indicating the lack of importance the country is giving to sports overall, leave alone sports in education. In January 2011 the National Sports Development Code of India (NSCI 2011)^{xxii} was notified by the Government of India and came into effect immediately; a perusal of this 200 plus page document makes you realise that it is more to regulate sports and make sure that the various National Sports Federations^{xxiii}, Sports Authority of India and Government agencies do not trample over each other, than to encourage sports per se. Of course streamlining the activities of the various agencies and encouraging them to deliver on their objectives is critical and will aid in developing the country’s sports image, however, there is an urgent need for a bottom up approach, and initiatives such as the ‘Panchayat Yuva Krida and Khel Abhiyan’^{xxiv} are in the right direction, but for it to succeed, what programmes are chalked out and how the implementation is planned and delivered is crucial. It is important that the end objective of these initiatives should be to establish a sporting culture at our village level - starting at the

village school. Providing access to decent sporting infrastructure is a dire need as there is a long way to go in even establishing the basic hygiene for sports; the total population of those below the age of 35 in our country is around 77 crore of which only around five crore have access to organised games and sports facilities observes the Draft NSP 07 document. This is an indication of how poor our policy implementation is because this situation persists even though the first NSP in 1984 mentioned the dire need to improve our sports infrastructure and in spite of having continued support for it through all our five year plans. The NSP 07 makes interesting observations based on data from educational surveys – ‘between 1978 and 2002 the access to playfields has actually gone down by 7% in primary, 9% in upper primary and 5% in secondary and high secondary schools. The availability of other sports facilities like indoor halls, gymnasias and equipment is even less than the basic outdoor play fields’. Even casual observation of the small schools that are mushrooming in our urban centres shows the lack of importance our schools place on any sports activity because most of these schools function out of large houses without even a portico, leave alone a play ground. One critical step forward will be to integrate our education policy with our sports policy.

There are private organisations^{xxv} that have set shop to cater to the needs of schools and individuals indicating the demand in the country for sports in education. While such organisations aid our elite schools (to hopefully create a few more Bindras), a vast majority of our population will have to contend with resources trained on the methodologies of the yesteryears there by not alleviating the problem showcased by the Duke University academics^{xxvi} as to how in spite of a billion strong population with a large percentage of youth, those who have the potential for international level sports performance in India will remain very low. Hence, the need is not only a critical one, but an urgent one as well. It is time our National Sports Federations (we have 62 of them) are mandated to chalk out strategies to popularise and encourage their respective sports in a phased and planned manner across the country.

I would like to argue that a complete re-look at how we view sports in education is required. We need to integrate sports into education in such a way that it is considered as a part and parcel of the learning experience and not something that is ‘extra-curricular’. The need to bring the importance of sports into the national consciousness and then to motivate the young to strive for excellence needs to become a mission. This need not wait for India to host international events such as the Asian Games or CWG or the Olympics; instead we could begin with having sports related examples and topics in our curricular activities. It should form a crucial part of our syllabus at all levels. At this point of time we are almost on a clean slate in this regard – a simple check would be to see how many famous sportspersons figure in our text books!

If, as a nation, we want to achieve the sporting success that we are capable of, there are many little things that can be done along with the policy level interventions. The topics of sports can be brought to centre stage even by individual teachers thereby apportioning it the same degree of respect and pride as any other curricular subjects. A Math teacher using athlete Usain Bolt’s figures to teach decimals or a Social Science teacher using the weightlifter Kunjarani Devi as a link to our North-East or a Physics teacher connecting pole vaulter Bubka to the gravitational force theory are a few straight forward examples of how a sports culture is developed in the primary school classrooms. It is this kind of a missionary zeal that is required to lift us from slumber and push us towards the glory that China has achieved, without their factory set up.

If we search ‘sports in education’ in Google scholar, of the eight links on page one, five are links from China based journals. The NSP ’07^{xxvii} also devotes considerable space to what China has done in this domain. Though, this is not the space to discuss the means adopted by China towards the ‘gold medal goals’, the fact of the matter is that China is a sporting super power and India is a laggard; some are more generous in calling India a ‘sleeping giant’. The China comparison to end this article is to highlight our laggardness and at the same time remind ourselves of

the country's potential. I believe that India is a sleeping giant; hence it is important we do things right, right now, to enable the awakening of the human spirit of adventure and thrill of sports in the young Indians who then could gain the potential to make India a 'Sports Super Power'.

What is undeniable is that a strong beginning has to be made in school itself if a nation has to wear the jersey of a sports nation. The fact that benefits of planned physical activity in school is not limited to health related aspects, but positively correlates to academic achievement as well (endnote xxii) should remove any obstacle one may have for integrating sports in education.

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Harsha Bhogle

All over the world, and therefore in India too, there are two kinds of sports lovers; those that play and those that watch. Given the nature of urban societies around the world, it is inevitable that those that watch greatly outnumber those that play. But in urban India, with our congestion and consequent absence of open spaces, and the extraordinary importance attached to school-leaving marks, I would fear that the proportion of watchers outnumbers the proportion of players more significantly than in other parts of the world. It has implications for the style industry, for the number of those that want to look like sportspersons will also be larger than those that want to play!

But the relatively smaller number of urban sportspeople is something that fills me with disappointment for there is no better way to understand team work, or some might say its absence, than to have played a team sport. I see a little flicker of change occasionally as people young at heart become parents but very soon they get sucked into the cycle of classes and marks that is still the sole determinant of success in India. And so sport remains a spectacle to be seen from afar rather than an activity to be enjoyed more intimately.

There are two major limitations to sport in urban India. The absence of time and the absence of space. To play sport you need to fail, to learn and to succeed; to be neglected, to fight and to seize the opportunity. You need time. Urban India with its traffic jams and poor travel infrastructure makes playing sport far too time-consuming; it gives people an opportunity to leave sport. And of course there is no space left. In Mumbai we joke about the fact that if there were 22 yards available, let alone space for a football ground, a politician and a builder would build on it. It would suggest that the smaller towns, where space and time are not as cruelly dealt with, would allow sport to

thrive. And it comes as no surprise that the next generation of Indian sportsmen are coming from there. It wouldn't surprise me if the next generation of leaders emerges from there too.



Urban sport is reeling too from the onslaught of two traditional enemies: the 10th standard syndrome and the coaching class on one hand, and social media on the other. It is my hypothesis that our society, as represented by parents and school teachers, is fine with kids playing sport till they are twelve or thirteen (indeed they will spend fairly heavily on “coaching” and equipment) but not in the school leaving year. Then they must go to school by day and to the coaching class by dusk. I wonder sometimes that if schools taught, as they are meant to, they might free up the evenings that are increasingly spent in studying what schools don't teach. So, caught up in these two mandatory marks generating activities, there is sadly no time for sport. Indeed some schools seem to announce proudly that in the year ahead, children will have no time for anything else-- a kind of pedagogic jail? And so dreams die young in urban India, those that continue to pursue sport are condemned to lead a life of ‘low’ marks (and ‘low’ by itself is relative in a system where marks are like Diwali gifts). If exams were less eat-and-spit, or to use more socially acceptable nomenclature, read- and-reproduce, things might be different.

Hand in hand with that is the revolution in social media. Your friend is now a click away and the click is now available twenty four hours. Physical activity probably means transferring weight from one elbow to the other as young men and women sprawl in front of their laptops. Far easier then, to watch and talk about Tendulkar and Messi rather than sweat like them. Peculiarly though, with increasing social interaction and the need to look good, one activity is gaining ground. More young men and women are being seen in gyms and I do hope vanity, and the consequent need to look a certain way, is not the only reason!

It is however possible to be different if young men and women learn to compartmentalise their lives; to give a 100% to everything they do and not let one activity impinge into another. The really organised will not think of lessons when they are playing sport but equally will not think of sport when they are learning. Where time is at a premium, wasting it is a crime.

The school can play a part in promoting sport and indeed some do. Often the driver of adolescent minds is the teacher and that is a resource that schools must search to use better. If teachers understand the power of sport in developing young minds, they could inspire their wards to play. Sport can be wonderfully inventive and good teachers can either find space or learn to use what exists. Table tennis tables for example don't need much space and volleyball eliminates the need for expensive equipment too. It is a wonderful, exhilarating sport to play. Basketball is another requiring high levels of athleticism and team work. But they must be encouraged; maybe the star athlete and the maths whiz form a team; one gets the other to run and jump, the other helps him with trigonometry!

Developing a love for a team early in life is critical because it shapes the way you do everything else.

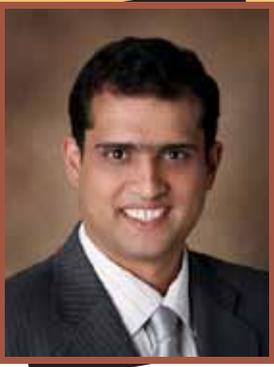
You pass one day and you score one day and both times you are the hero; or on another day you only make 5 not out but allow the better batsman to score a 50. Doing things for each other, becoming a team player, is something all of India is concerned about but our schools and the marking and "tuition" system promote selfishness. You hire a tuition teacher and tell nobody, find an interesting new text book and tell nobody, we rank everything and so the rush to be number one individually.

There are two major limitations to sport in urban India. The absence of time and the absence of space. To play sport you need to fail, to learn and to succeed.

All over the world it is the community that sows the seed for sport first. Public courts, tables and fields are the starting point and while it might be expecting too much to expect the state to do anything about it (the sports ministry is often seen as a punishment posting!) I am sure corporate houses can be tapped to contribute. We are seeing the first few examples of such grass roots involvement from corporate houses now and hopefully more will follow the IMG-Reliance model where the onus of marketing and seeding a sport rests with a corporate house rather than a department of the government. It might lead to a different form of governance, hopefully make it more inclusive.

But till such time as urban societies continue to deny its citizens time and space, till the obsession with marks as the sole determinant of ability continues, sport will remain a spectacle to be watched rather than an activity to be enjoyed. Playing sport opens a world of limitless riches and the school is the best time to be exposed to that.

Known as 'the voice of Indian cricket' Harsha is an alumnus of IIM-Ahmadabad and an Engineering graduate from Hyderabad. He is India's leading cricket commentator and columnist, loved for his insightful comments on the game. Besides writing for news papers and magazines, he has a few books to his credit as well. He now also undertakes corporate lectures, applying the wisdom of the game for developing business strategies.



Nandan Kamath

For far too long, professional sports and the formal education system have been at odds. In an increasingly busy and competitive environment, it is time that these two worlds made peace, moved on from the mutual suspicion that has plagued both and built on the other's contributions.

In a land of limited opportunities, sport and education have historically been positioned as two distinct and parallel universes with little to offer each other. This positioning makes its way into both cultural attitudes and formal system design. In fact, the demands of each have been seen as an undesirable weight on the ability to fully achieve one's potential in the other. Now, with more resources available for holistic personal development and greater awareness and research, it is becoming increasingly obvious that these two complementary worlds must collide if we are to have a populace that allows its physical, mental and spiritual aptitudes to develop in parallel, both at the societal and the individual level. A broader view of education and personal growth can also enable our nation's professional athletes to better equip themselves with the many different skills necessary to perform, compete and win at the highest level.

From Sports or Studies to Sports and Studies

The average Indian child is sent clear cultural messages very early on that there are binary choices to be made if he or she is to remain competitive. One of these messages is that academics must be pursued with "seriousness".

To those children not in formal sport development programmes, sport is equated with play, fun and often, distraction from their personal intellectual and professional growth. Conventionally, few norms

have existed that make physical education a compulsory and necessary element of the primary and high school syllabus in India. This leaves educational institutions - and, in turn, parents - in a situation where discretionary 'play' is seen as a competitive disadvantage.

In-school and after-school academic demands leave children with little energy or time for sporting pursuits, even if only at the amateur or recreational level.

For those youngsters in formal training programmes, there are numerous challenges to overcome. There is a general lack of awareness among educators, administrators and some parents of the physical and mental demands of sport and of the valuable lessons that can be learnt on the sports field. This results in academic requirements, structures and institutions lacking flexibility and acting as constraints rather than anchors to talented sportsperson. Attendance requirements, heavy workloads and inflexible exam schedules leave little wiggle room, promote alienation and challenge the 'Sport For All' goals of encouraging more Indians to Start, Stay in and Succeed At (the three S's) sport at all levels.

The Formal Education Perspective

The Indian education system has focused primarily on literacy and numeracy, which are reasonable priorities for a nation historically saddled with over-population, unemployment, poverty and limited opportunity. Sport is often considered to be of peripheral and dispensable value only (regarded as extra-curricular, non-educational, non-productive use of time, treated as recreation/play time) and is not imposed as a compulsory 'foundation' subject. Given the lack of priority and/or prescriptive need, a majority of schools lack basic sporting facilities and knowledgeable coaching talent. Naturally, this results in a rickety, if any, sporting foundation for the average Indian child. The representative of the child – the parent – is very often also in on this bargain. But times are changing.

Recent research has turned this ‘either-or’ thought process on its head. Many significant child development studies postulate that those students that are enrolled in physical education and sporting activity not only have improved motor skills but also make more efficient use of their study time. They are able to concentrate better and consistently meet, if not exceed, the academic achievement of those that aren’t physically active.

This holistic notion of personal growth has, more recently, found recognition in the NCERT’s National Curriculum Framework of 2005, requiring compulsory curriculum design that “adopts a holistic definition of health within which physical education and yoga contribute to the physical, social, emotional and mental development of a child.” Further, it goes on to state, “In order to transact the curriculum effectively, it is essential to ensure that the minimum essential physical space and equipment are available in every school, and that doctors and medical personnel visit school regularly. Teacher preparation for this area needs well-planned and concerted efforts.”

As the Indian educational establishment implements change, focus must be on sports for all. Better school sports facilities, teacher training, parent counselling, early aptitude testing and skill enhancement will be key prerogatives. Alongside, rigid academic structures will have to make way for those that are more enlightened and mindful of sports’ contribution to learning and personal growth. These will also translate into demand-based push on educational institutions from the primary level to higher/professional educational institutions.

The Professional Sport Perspective

It is only in recent years that Indians have become competitive and successful at the international level across numerous sporting disciplines. Numerous theories have abounded regarding the reasons for our historical under-achievement – lack of a ‘sports culture’ and ‘physical attributes’ topping the list. That the sports and education systems have been ill-equipped to identify the best sporting talent and

to nurture what talent already bubbles to the top is without doubt a contributing, if not critical, element of this puzzle.

The high risks associated with sports careers, including that they often require abandonment of the formal education system, and limited support and rewards, mean that sportspersons do not see a potential upside commensurate to the risks that lie before them. Those who are talented at sport but have other options have chosen to pursue them and those that bravely pursue their sporting dreams have little to clutch on to other than public sector salaries and the prospect of uncertain government rewards. Consequently, it is unsurprising that we may not always be putting our best sporting talent on the field of play and that our best sportspersons continue to train and compete in environments that often keep them functionally disempowered and professionally insecure.

The lack of education among sportspersons has other negative knock-on effects – they have little negotiating power as against powerful sports administrators, have limited ability to insulate themselves from manipulation (including relating to doping and commercial opportunities) and limited post-retirement career prospects.

In a recent research study, the GoSports Foundation surveyed a number of former sportspersons who had ‘dropped-out’ from sporting careers before they felt they had reached their full potential. The study found that sportspersons attributed ‘non-viability of career’ and ‘educational and parental pressure’ as among the most prominent reasons for their premature withdrawal from competitive sport. Most drop-outs occurred between the ages of 18 and 22 when the sports-studies choice became a stark reality.

As professional administration plays an increasing role in the sports industry in India, and as the country grows economically and socially, much of this can change quickly. Today, cricket presents not just viable but very attractive careers to hundreds of players across the country. Parents can be convinced that their son should pursue a cricket career as much as

one as a doctor or lawyer. Change is inevitable in other sports as well with the huge gaps that exist between potential and reality. Educational institutions and the formal and informal education systems can play a significant role in talent identification, support and life-skills development of sporting talent.

A Blueprint for Convergence

Sport and education can no longer afford the divergence that characterises them, leaving both much the poorer. The transition towards convergence may not be immediate, but could take shape along the following lines:

- Global educational benchmarks, standards and competitiveness will push urban schools and colleges to use sports facilities, infrastructure and programmes as differentiating and competitive features. Rural schools will catch up gradually, even if their facilities might remain more rudimentary.
- National health concerns, including increasing childhood obesity, will drive the insertion of

compulsory physical education into primary and secondary school curricula.

- University sports and athletics programmes will take shape, offering talented sportspersons flexible yet meaningful professional education opportunities while continuing to pursue their sporting development.
- Better educated sportspersons will be far more secure, confident and capable of fulfilling their potential. More of them will find post-career opportunities and will create aspirations for and encourage and respect the role of education among newer batches of talent.

While the gaps will partially be bridged as a result of economics and the market, thoughtful policy design at the national and state level, education and sensitisation programmes and large investments (and some leaps of faith) are equally key elements. That the gap will be bridged is largely inevitable. How soon, how well and at what cost is very much in this generation's hands.



Nandan Kamath is a sports lawyer and Trustee at the GoSports Foundation. The GoSports Foundation is a non-profit organization that empowers Indian sporting excellence through crucial financial and non-financial support. More about the GoSports Foundation on www.gosportsfoundation.in.

A balance scale is centered in the image. The left pan is lower and contains a stack of seven books. The right pan is higher and contains a soccer ball, an American football, and a basketball. The scale is slightly tilted towards the left. The background is a light green with a fine grid pattern.

Section B

Some Perspectives



Ashwini Nachappa

I am a product of school games. Way back in the 80's, schools gave great importance and recognition to sports. Sport was an integral part of our education and a great vehicle for schools to exhibit their team's performance which instantly brought them into the lime-light. It wasn't only about the team that performed on the field, but the students, teachers and principals showed their interest by joining in to cheer. Unfortunately, over the years the intellect has overtaken all aspects of a child's development and in the extremely competitive, stressful lives that our children live, sports has been completely excluded from education.

Today's education system looks only at grades and not on developing or identifying and grooming talent in the child beyond academics. With the result, the 'average' child has no place in our present system. Our education system must therefore be inclusive of sports as 'Sports and Games'. This will allow children to make a choice and by participating the child is exposed to values such as fair play, respect for officials, respect for opponents, courage, honesty, perseverance, team building, fellowship, and appreciation of rewards, all of which lead to living a responsible life.

Inclusion of sports and games in the education curriculum means ensuring that we develop the child's



mind and body and we teach courage, dependability, honesty, perseverance and self-discipline. As is often said, "A sound mind is found in a sound body." Developing motor skills in kindergarten is as important as developing physical skills along with acquiring knowledge in later years. It also creates a platform for the many extremely talented sportspersons to attain competent sporting skills by the end of compulsory schooling. These may become the vehicle for higher level participation as well as life-long participation in leisure activities, which have health benefits.

I am certain that positive educational outcomes can be derived through participation in sports and games. Sports, when taught properly, provides important developmental experiences for children and youth, not only through increased competence in performance but also personal growth and responsibility. Sports provides the child an experience to taste defeat and success at the same wave length and also teaches us how to implement true "sports-for-all ethic". We need to educate students so that they are not only more knowledgeable game players, but are also stronger advocates for good sports practices in the larger sports culture and life in general.

Sports and education are complementary to each other. They must be in sync with each other. While knowledge is of great importance, sport teaches children how to work as a part of a team and cooperate with others, while at the same time improving physical condition. Unfortunately, teaching of sports in India has not been linked to a scientific basis to understand the same. The PE teachers at school need to plant the seeds of scientific enquiry in the minds of individuals:

- 1) Nutrition - how does it help?
- 2) How to check heart rates - what does it mean?
- 3) Haemoglobin - its meaning.
- 4) Training principles.

This is essential to build the sporting culture. contribution of parent in feeding the children, educator and so on.

Studies have shown that higher physical activity levels are associated with greater academic achievement among students. When our sports teams won medals at district and state level competitions, with their photographs splashed all over the dailies, they had instantly become heroes and were looked upon by fellow students with pride and envy. My mathematics teacher, Mr Sanil, came up to me and said, “These kids who have won laurels in sports have become more focused in their studies and have performed well in academics too.” Coming from a teacher of mathematics, a subject feared by many students, only goes to show that when sports get integrated with education, development and positive results take place simultaneously.

Not many of us realise the value of education, mainly because we take it for granted. We were blessed enough to be born into a good home with good parents and it was taken for granted that we would attend good schools and go on to graduate from good colleges. But for those who are less fortunate, education remains a distant dream, one that can be achieved through sports. Children from poor backgrounds who are talented in sports and games are offered a shot at school through scholarships and funding, and for them, education is the key that opens the door to a



totally different life from the one they know. They use sports as a ladder to climb up the rungs of education. Sport helps in furthering the cause of education.

In conclusion, sports, as we all know, is a natural stress buster. Any activity that we enjoy and that gives us a good workout releases feel-good endorphins which elevate the mood. A good mood is conducive to performing well in academics because there's peace of mind that allows greater concentration. Sport is a great outlet for frustrations of any kind. Our children need it!

Ashwini Nachappa brought accolades to Indian sports by participating and winning at both national and international level in the 100 meters, 200 meters and 400 meters in track and field. In 1991, after retiring from active competitive athletics, she joined Special Olympic program and remained associated with it for 12 years. The program provides year round sports training in different sports disciplines to the mentally challenged children and adults. In 2004, she along with her husband Datha Karaumbiah launched the Karuambiah's Academy for Learning and Sports (KALS), an ICSE affiliated school, built for sports people. www.kalschool.com

Currently, a state-of-the-art, sporting program – “Ashwini Nachappa Sports Foundation”, is being developed. She may be contacted at Ashwini.nachappa@gmail.com





S. Giridhar
V J Raghunath

We are both unabashed cricket romantics and believe that however much the external attributes of cricket may have changed, the quintessential qualities of courage and nobility remain forever entwined with the game. In this essay we will describe why courage and nobility in sport is such a moving emotion and ennobling aspect of the game.

We will begin with stories of courage where the sportsmen have transcended physical and emotional pain to create immortal heroics. Courage while batting evokes much vivid imagery. Batsmen hit on the face, spitting out blood to take guard again and so on. No story of Indian batsmen grievously injured is more poignant than that of Griffith felling Contractor in West Indies 50 years ago. Grainy photographs, black and white in our newspapers, showed that Worrell the West Indies captain, was the first in the queue at the hospital to donate blood for the emergency operation. Contractor never played for India again but both of us saw him bat with undiminished commitment for West Zone after recovering from the near fatal injury.

At Chennai in 1964, India ended the fourth day, in a precarious position, having lost four of their best batsmen. On the fifth morning, Manjrekar who had broken his thumb while fielding came out to bat with Hanumant Singh. Manjrekar had to cut off the thumb part of the glove since his swollen thumb could not go into any protective covering. Injured thumb exposed, wincing with pain every time he played the rampag-

ing fast bowler McKenzie, he played his heart out for almost the entire morning session, trying to save the match. Finally, at the stroke of lunch, Manjrekar was dismissed. As he walked back, victorious in defeat, the entire stadium rose to a man.

Of the montages of courage from the 1980s, there is one story much told, the other rarely told. Mohinder Amarnath, hit by Marshall, spat out teeth and blood and had to walk away to hospital. Returning to bat next day in the same blood splattered shirt he hit the first ball – a bouncer predictably greeted him – out of the ground. Never a backward step was his motto. Mohinder's courage is folklore. But two years earlier, in Australia, India's Sandip Patil was felled by a bouncer. Carried off, and groggy for the rest of the match, he had a captain who wanted Patil to bat again. Sick and wobbly, Patil came out, battled for a few balls and was duly dismissed. Gavaskar, his captain, applauded him all the way back. For what mattered was that by coming out to bat, Patil had exorcised fear and also communicated that he had done so.



There are many stirring stories of bowlers transcending injury and great pain to bowl unbelievable spells. Indians of course will never forget a lame Kapil Dev delivering them a victory at Melbourne in 1981. The most striking story in recent times is that of Anil Kumble on India's tour of the Caribbean Islands in 2002. Jaw fractured by Dillon, strapped up tight and scheduled to fly back for a surgery, Kumble came out to bowl as he always did – with fierce resolve and concentration; he got Lara with a gem and, arms raised, walked away. However often this vignette is played and replayed, the sheer power of the episode will never fade.

The most moving and compelling story for us is that of an injured Bert Sutcliffe and an emotionally shattered Bob Blair coming together to save the test for New Zealand against South Africa in December 1953. Badly injured by a bouncer, Sutcliffe returned from hospital with a heavily bandaged head and hit seven sixes in an unbelievable counter attack. If Sutcliffe battled physical injury it was even more poignant that Bob Blair, the man who partnered him in this effort had suffered even more grievously. News had just come that Blair's fiancée had been killed in a train accident. How Blair found the courage to keep his mind in a heroic tenth wicket stand with Sutcliffe will forever be one of the most amazing stories of fortitude. Finally Blair was dismissed and only then he let the tears come. As the pair walked back, arms draped over each other, weeping and emotionally drained, there was not a dry eye that day among the South Africans.

No essay on courage will be complete unless we salute Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi. Having lost one eye in a motoring accident in England in 1962, Pataudi played almost all his test cricket with one eye. That in itself has no parallel in cricket history. But at Melbourne, in 1967 – 68, Pataudi also had to bat on one leg because he had an injured hamstring. Pataudi was resplendent in a losing cause as he produced two of the most combative innings (75 and 85) in cricket history. Listening to Alan Mcgilvray over radio and reading Jack Fingleton in *The Hindu* next morning, it was clear that one was witnessing something truly heroic. That is not all. In 1975, his powers and reflexes gone, Pataudi was smashed on the jaw by Roberts at his fastest in Kolkata. Coming back to cheers from the crowd, with stitches on his chin, Pataudi turned the clock back and exploded with a cascade of boundaries. The blazing counter attack was brief, he made just 36 but as Pataudi walked off, the Kolkata crowd knowing that they would never see him bat again, stood up to give him an unforgettable farewell.

The next part of this essay will be about stories of great sportsmanship. There is something innate, something unique about how every person is wired that determines the sporting spirit quotient of an individual.

From the time we begin to play the game expectations are set – of upholding the spirit of the game, that spirit signifying integrity, uprightness, honesty, and keeping team interest above self-interest. In this essay we now describe some of the most moving incidents of warmth, generosity and nobility seen on the ground transcending times, cultures and geographies. Many of these wonderful sporting gestures extracted their price – the games turned in favour of the opponent; some of these players lost their places in the test team but none of these considerations ever entered their mind.

Whatever we may say, one plays to compete and win and nothing exemplifies this as much as the fierce rivalry between Australia and England and their battle for the Ashes. As England beat Australia by two runs in the Ashes test of 2005, Brett Lee the Australian batsman sank to his knees in utter despair. The English players embraced and celebrated but Flintoff, the hero of England's triumph, had already slipped away to Brett Lee, to console him. The picture of Flintoff putting his hands around the disconsolate Lee is probably the most memorable one of the year.

Such spirit is not restricted to players. Certain cricket grounds are blessed with a special bond with the spirit of the game. In December 1998, all of India was disappointed when India lost to Pakistan by just 12 runs and one of Tendulkar's greatest tons went in vain. The crowd at Chennai ought to have been the ones who were most devastated. Somehow, the 60,000 people at the stadium found the nobility to rise up and give the Pakistan team a standing ovation and the picture of the Pakistan team's victory lap around the Chepauk ground is etched in memory for ever.

Captains can set the tone for such uplifting behaviour. In the Jubilee Test (1982) at Mumbai, with England tottering on 85 for 5, Bob Taylor was given out caught behind. But India's captain for the test match Viswanath pleaded with the umpires to recall Taylor because he thought the batsman was not out. Taylor returned to forge a match winning partnership with Botham. Nothing of all this ever mattered to Viswanath, because he simply did not know any other way

Courage and Nobility in Sport – Anecdotes from Cricket

to play the game. Should batsmen walk when they are out or should they let the umpire decide, has always been a hot debate. To Viswanath it was no debate. How many times have we seen him simply tuck his bat and walk the minute he snicked the ball even before the fielders could appeal.

Among the bowlers who have been great ambassadors for the spirit of cricket, we cannot think of a better example than the West Indian Courtney Walsh. In



the 1987 World Cup match against Pakistan, Walsh earned eternal respect because in a needle situation he refused to run out the Pakistan batsman who was trying to gain extra yards by running out of the non-striker's crease before Walsh delivered the ball. Walsh re-

fused to run this batsman out and merely warned him. This sporting gesture cost West Indies the match (and they were knocked out of the tournament) but Walsh quite simply did not want to win any other way.

Sportsman spirit in cricket has usually been discussed in rather simplistic frameworks. There is a section of opinion which believes that when the game moved from amateur to professional status and then to the intense commercialisation of modern days, it lost the gentility associated with the game. The other section is of the view that because we see and hear everything on TV, we feel the spirit has deteriorated whereas it may not be really so. Both may be correct to an extent but there is much more to it. We hope that through this essay we have been able to bring out some evidence to show that magnanimous gestures have embellished modern times as much as the earlier times. In an ironic sense, perhaps modern day TV coverage might

well become the reason that the spirit of cricket is preserved, for no cricketer would want to be shown up as a boor or have his integrity questioned. From there to more voluntary acts of sportsmanship may not be such a big leap after all.

Foot Note:

This article is an abridged version of a two part article by the authors that was published in the [espnricinfo.com](http://blogs.espnricinfo.com) magazine in February and March 2010. Those interested in more such anecdotes can read the full version at:

http://blogs.espnricinfo.com/inbox/archives/2010/03/nobility_in_a_hard_game.php and

http://blogs.espnricinfo.com/inbox/archives/2010/02/courage_in_a_hard_game.php

Giri is Registrar and also the Head of the University Resource Centre at Azim Premji University. Raghu retired as CEO of Addison Paints and is a senior training consultant. Both share a great love for test cricket. While Raghunath has played alongside many of India's test cricketers in Mumbai and Chennai league in the 60s and 70s. Giri and Raghu came together in Carborundum Universal Chennai, and played together in the Hindu Trophy and other Chennai tournaments in the 1980s. Both have combined to write a number of articles on cricket drawing upon the game's rich history for their readers.

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Beedu

While many people are under the impression that physical education only means an hour or two of exercise, what they tend to forget are the benefits that sports and physical education bring especially to children. The experience of training or learning a new sport stays with them for the rest of their lives and provides opportunities for children and families to get together and have fun apart from helping them keep fit and develop health.

What makes physical education part of any holistic school curriculum is the fact that it trains children about timing, balance, coordination and concentration. It is also very essential for the psychological development of a child because it helps him/her accept rejection better and experience success and achievement almost immediately; apart from teaching children team work, communication, motivation and organisational abilities, leadership and interpersonal skills.

One of the main components of a complete education package is physical education; without it the package is incomplete. Sports is a science and it is necessary for physical educators to be trained and qualified. Ideally speaking a good PE teacher must have a good background of sports, must be interested in coaching students and must have good demonstration abilities besides being a good leader. An unskilled or unqualified PE teacher cannot do justice to the job. There are courses organised by most government or state run universities which train PE teachers, unfortunately the quality and standards are very low. Private colleges select the best PE Teachers and just like any other department they are encouraged to attend seminars; the management also keeps a check on them and they need to show progress. For example Bhagwan Mahaveer Jain College in Bangalore has a very good Physical Education Department, the teachers are well qualified and because of this many students opt for such colleges. In fact, such colleges have been very successful in producing some very good athletes, many who have represented the nation as well.

Back in 1960, when I was trained, the system was very good, because we had highly trained PE teachers. The quality has come down. I still appreciate the government for having taken so many measures to try and improve the present situation by organising refresher courses, orientation courses, and training courses. The UFC (full form ?) pay scales are very good. However, with no particular selection process in institutions, the standards have come down and some schools don't even have an allocated budget for the Physical Education Department. Some PE teachers are treated like attendants and in many schools there aren't any sports facilities. More often than not good athletes, who generally aim for professions related to their fields, are forced to choose other professions either because of the finance or because of the way most schools and colleges treat PE teachers. The vacuum created allows for unskilled, untrained people to take on the position of a PE teacher, and this is how quality deteriorates. The government should step in and try to rectify the situation.

In the west, Physical Education Credits for students are a must thereby assuring holistic development. Children have to learn swimming, basic gymnastics and athletic skills. We must also make it compulsory for children to learn these skills at least by 5th grade. It also helps children build stamina and better immunity. But to learn these skills the right environment is necessary. For which an allocated budget is most important. The government has provided a public stadium but it is up to the schools to make use of them. Facilities can be shared by schools, but they don't.

In India, every field has a very commercial aspect to it. For instance, the media covers more cricket as compared to any other sport. Cricket is much commercialised and at a school level does not provide the necessary fitness for children. I wish the media draws more attention towards the lack of physical education provided in schools. One cannot market or sell a sport but the media can change the way people view gymnastics, sports and athletics.

Also, there is a notion that sports is very expensive and that it is only for the rich, but this is not true. It does need money but it is not much. There are government facilities provided for practice, like the Kanteerva Stadium, and it is free. The Nike Run Club is a small budget initiative that coaches around 300 people and it is free.



Schools and colleges must ensure proper facilities; a physical education department should be a must, like any other department. Timings must be made convenient for this department because most of the training takes place before or after school or college hours. Students are harassed for attendance even when they are attending a sports meet or practice sessions. Students' performance on the field should also be evaluated and this will hopefully encourage talent. Most schools deny the PE hour for 9th and 10th standard students and this must not be done.

The situation in Government schools is worse; they have nothing more than a ground. Many government schools do not have training facilities nor do they have the budget or the initiative to take the students to government stadiums to use the facilities. Every gov-

ernment school must be ensured of a trained qualified physical education teacher. This is one advantage that elite private schools have over government schools. It is high time the system changed.

I would suggest that the Government provide more funding for government schools and have a body to monitor that and make sure that funds are not misused. More programmes can be organised to recognise the need for quality physical education. The qualification requirement that every physical instructor must be insisted upon in order to maintain good standards.

Some of the Bangalore institutions that have been maintaining a good physical education system are

St. Joseph's Indian Boy's High School, Cluny Convent, Mount Carmel College, and Bhagwan Mahaveer Jain College. These institutions have a separate physical education department which is well funded and run by trained and qualified faculty. They have produced many national level athletes. Some of the students presently studying there who plan to pursue sports are also very comfortable there because the Department makes sure they receive credit for their achievements, talent is recognised and nurtured. The activities conducted by the physical education department helps other students to learn new sports and develop an interest in sports.

Although the government has made it necessary for schools to include one hour of physical education everyday, the quality of the sports department must be up to the mark. Schools must ensure the establishment and management of a proper physical education department.

Beedu trained at YMCA Chennai, National Institute of Sports, Patiala, and studied his M.Sc in Physical Education in Germany. He specialises in training athletes and has coached many state and national level athletes. He is also the chief coach at the Nike Run Club, which trains marathon runners free of cost.



10

A Champion's Mother Speaks: Joys and Trials of Parenting a Sports Child

Devika Nadig

Having both relished and survived twelve years as a school head and fifteen as the mother of a champion in a difficult, solitary game like chess, it will not be an exaggeration to say I have experienced a lot, both of the competitive sport, and the world it encompasses.

I do not know what came first. My daughter Krutika's frequent absence from her school and the accompanying angst of spending endless hours waiting for leave letters at her principal's office - or my own positive stand as a school head, on allowing children to pursue a sport of their interest as a serious engagement. Perhaps one was born out of the other.

However, I staked out and steadfastly held on to my belief that pursuing sports in school despite all odds, including the pressure of coming up to speed with missed academic curriculum, is something worth doing. Therefore, the school I lead became a magnet for those aspiring to become sport stars. We quickly gained a reputation for being "considerate" towards such aspirants, cooperating with their hectic training and tournament schedules, and accommodating their tests and assessments whenever they were back in school. Ironically, while I did this for several students of my school, my own daughter had a hard time in her conventional school. There was no question of moving Krutika to my school as I wanted to spare her the differential treatment the principal's daughter was sure to receive.

In my attempts to support talent, I learnt that students, when given the freedom to pursue their passion, whether it was for sports or music or the other performing arts, usually displayed immense accountability to the teachers on their return to school, and were keen on catching up with all they had missed, which included bonding with friends, if any. There

was a quickening of the pace at which they absorbed everything around them, trying harder, living every moment in school in a highly energized state. That was a surprise. One would have imagined they'd be exhausted, and would have rapidly succumbed to lethargy. Whether this renewed energy was their own, or driven by a desire to please teachers and parents, and impress peers, was not clear.

The parents of these young sports stars of the school fluctuated dangerously from one emotion and aspiration to another. Some days, when their offspring would win laurels and return, they swore they would do anything to keep the game going, and laboured the point of how "just academics" was not a worthy goal. And on the return from a bad phase, it would be an endless lament about the unpredictability of the game, and whether the school could help in getting the child to stay focused on academics. This sort of a vacillation was less prevalent amongst the seasoned parents. As well as those, whose children were older, and clearer about what they wanted to pursue. Even if success was elusive.

I remember the mother of a tennis champ narrating how the boy would plead with her to "take up" his studies while he was bathing, at breakfast, on the school bus, and so on, to save time. I found an echo in such tales because my own daughter would have completed all her homework on the bus, so that she could be ready for chess practice on getting home. Such is the force of passion, if driven by a goal.

"There was a quickening of the pace at which they absorbed everything around them, trying harder, living every moment in school in a highly energized state. That was a surprise.."

As compared to this, several students who were not pursuing a serious sport / hobby would be whiling away a lot of their time by hanging out with friends. Perhaps the rest of their time was spent in tuition

classes. Or, maybe TV viewing. But I know for a fact that they were largely bored. And, therefore, disinterested. My takeaway from this was to help students set attainable goals for themselves. We encouraged all of them, to pick up at least one hobby or sport, beyond the scope of academics, which could give them end-



less joy throughout their lives. And the most desired situation for anyone would be if your sport or hobby could itself metamorphose into your profession!

Then there were the champions. They moved around the school campus like little Kings and Queens. Backs upright, heads held high, a smile playing on their lips. Oozing confidence and efficacy. This rubbed off on many other things they did. In school, I did not come across a single arrogant champion. They might exist in tournament halls. But here they displayed a strange humility. I believe it was because we saw them in many other dimensions and their game was just a small part of their person. Champions were also trendsetters for the aspiring players. The spirit got a boost and new dreams were born. And we supported all young dreams.

There is wisdom in playing a sport just for the sake of the sport as well.

For championships can be elusive. Whether they become stars or not, encouraging children to pursue a sport during their growing years has several advantages. Sports, like music, breaks all barriers erected by nationalities or culture. If you can choose a game which gives you the opportunity to travel, it gets you up close with others like you all across the world,

from different histories and cultures, and broadens your world view like no amount of reading does. This is a hands-on experience. Borders dissolve. There are friends in far-flung lands. The world becomes smaller, and closer.

In my role as a mother of an active player, I lead a life full of agony and ecstasy. But even in the most agonizing moments of tournament losses, there was eternal hope and aspiration of blissfully better results, through sheer effort, and renewed determination. In fact, it became an addiction of sorts. An addiction worth nurturing. I sometimes wonder if my craving for the game and tournaments was more intense than that of the chess champion at home!

The primary reason for schools not being terribly excited about students opting for sports as a serious pursuit can be found in their collective, unyielding thirst for academic marks and grades. This they feel, is the only way to build credibility for themselves. Clearly, this is fed by what society values, and schools, sharing a bizarre camaraderie with the parents on this count, begin to measure their worth in terms of how many rank holders and toppers they churn out every year - when they should be chasing the all-important school goal of good learning for every child, and supporting every child to discover her inner potential.

The bane of it all is of course the constant search for funding to support the game. Speaking of chess, the only things that come cheap are the board and pieces. There are phenomenal charges for coaching, if you want to engage a decent coach, and the tournament costs burn a hole as well. My guess is that this is a tough call for most parents, however supporting they may be.

A lot of my time and effort was spent on approaching sponsors, presenting our case, and then chasing through what seemed like the wildest goose on the run. After repeated attempts, some Good Samaritan would oblige, and that moved us one step closer to the dream goal.

However, we were fortunate in winning top championships, which brought funding from the government

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and the Sports Authority of India. The irony is that even if you deserve these on merit, you are never assured of being granted them, unless you sit on a dharna of sorts in the corridors of power in the capital.

As a result of this exposure, I was able to help some players in my school, whatever the sport, in reaching the right offices and tables in their search for funding. The battle was then theirs. The enormity of the en-

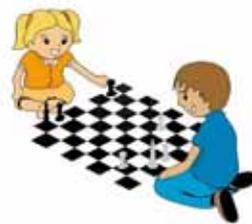
terprise therefore assumes the single minded commitment of at least one adult in the players' life.

"Sports-like Music-breaks all barriers erected by nationalities or cultures....This is a hands-on experience. Borders dissolve. There are friends in far-flung lands. The world becomes smaller, and closer"

Heartening though it is to see prominent TV channels taking up campaigns like "Marks for Sports", one needs to reflect on why we have come to such a pathetic pass.

The struggle to excel in sports, in spite of academics, continues. Often, alone.

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Shayamal Vallabjee

When I was asked to write an article on the business of sport, its impact on children and the importance of having it as part of school curricula, I immediately thought of one line – Not every child is born with a silver spoon. But having said that - as an exercise scientist and a perfectionist - I do subscribe wholeheartedly to the importance of practice and hard work above talent.

The last decade has witnessed the most exemplary transition in sport. From just a game for recreational purposes to a trillion-dollar industry, the sports industry has not only created job opportunities and careers, but has single handedly catapulted several individuals to overnight stardom. It is the fastest growing industry in the world and – questionably - one of the most economically rewarding, across a wide spectrum.

But the question that remains is whether this ‘dream come true’ is actually attainable by the masses or is just a figment of our imagination. And more importantly, what steps do we need to take to ensure that sport is in actual fact packaged with equal opportunity?

In 2007, I presented a paper on a model for “Long Term Athlete Development”, which addressed many key aspects of child development versus athletic skill



development. It questioned three fundamental areas that I believe are founding steps to any successful plan for athlete development.

Let’s start with these three simple questions:

- Are we interested in maximising one or two performances or encouraging a lifelong commitment to sport and exercise?
- Are we interested in enhancing training and recovery or normal biological development and maturation?
- Is the perfect athlete-centred development model recreational or competition-based?

It is important to remember that a well-planned and efficiently executed training regime will always ensure optimum development throughout an athlete’s career. Success is a process that results from a structured plan, designed to ensure long-term results and NOT short-term gratification.

Bottom line: There is no shortcut to success.

In Malcolm Gladwell’s book “Outliers”, he uses the 10,000-hour rule as a foreteller of excellence. He goes on to explain that world class performers strive for a target just out of their own reach, but with some vivid awareness and knowledge of how to bridge that gap. And, over time, through the process of constant repetition, this gap slowly disappears and new targets - sometimes beyond the comprehension of the normal individuals - are created.

The problem with Gladwell’s theory is that it doesn’t address the quality of practice, which in physiological terms is all-important to enhancement of performance. The truth is that champions have a specific purpose: progress. And they devote every second of every minute of every hour towards that single goal. The attainment of excellence is only achieved by pushing themselves beyond limits above their wildest comprehension; by challenging themselves to overcome adversities so grueling that they literally leave each training session a different, more evolved person.

So instead of Gladwell's 10,000 hours of practice, I hold that the attainment of excellence is in actual fact a by-product of 10,000 hours of purposeful practice. But like in most secret recipes, purposeful practice is only one ingredient. In order to truly achieve excellence, we need access to the right training system, which will provide the right conditions for optimum performance. And when the right conditions are in place, learning takes off, knowledge escalates and performance begins to soar.

With this in mind, we can address the most challenging of all questions: What is the perfect training system?

The Perfect Training System is a five-stage system that blends a child's mental capacity to learn and their motor skills development. Let's look at this model:

The three phases of growth and development are as follows:

- The Foundation Phases: Between 5 – 11 years
- The Preparatory Phase: Between 11 – 16 years
- The Performance Phase: 16+ years

These three phases can be broken up into five stages of learning:

- Stage 1: Fundamentals – 5 – 9 years

The emphasis in this stage is on the child's overall development, fundamental movement skills and the ABC's of athleticism (agility, balance, coordination and speed) all through games and drills.

- Stage 2: Learning to Train: 9 – 12 years

The emphasis in this stage is to create a fun environment that encourages experimentation and decision-making.

- Stage 3: Training to Train: 12 - 15 years

The emphasis in this stage is to expand the athlete's understanding of his/her sport and his/her technical proficiency. At this stage we start noticing distinct differences in the athlete's physical and mental make up. And we start to inculcate accountability for

decision-making.

- Stage 4: Training to Compete: 16 – 18 years

The emphasis in this stage is on technique and refining their skills. Stressing the importance of values like honesty, fair play, respect for rules, loyalty, and



sportsmanship are all important as well.

- Stage 5: Training to Win: 18+ years

The emphasis in this stage is on competition, preparation, and physical maintenance. Accountability and responsibility are equally important.

Now that we have covered the stages of learning, it is vitally important we delve into the components that make up the development of a complete professional sportsperson. Drawing out the prodigy from within the child requires a holistic approach towards the physical and mental development of the child. This approach is four-fold:

- Mental Strength
- Strategy and Awareness
- Technique and Physical Fitness
- Personal Growth

These are the four key fundamental pillars required to develop a complete professional sportsperson. These are the cornerstones of success but not the vital X Factor that will make the difference and mould a champion. That X Factor is something that's harder to nurture and even harder to quantify. It's HARD.



H.A.R.D is the glue that will forge together the pillars that will one day give birth to a champion. H.A.R.D is EVERYTHING.

H – Hunger
A – Attitude, Awareness & Accountability
R – Resilience
D – Discipline

“Everything you wish to achieve in life is just outside your comfort zone.”

HARD is my philosophy and the message I endeavour to impart to my players. It serves as a reminder that we are in control of our own destiny, and that our atti-

tude is everything. It is a message that re-iterates and reinforces a player’s willingness to want to overcome adversity. It tells us that the opportunities we so badly desire come disguised as hard work. It tells us that EVERYTHING you want, EVERYTHING you wish, and EVERYTHING you can achieve is JUST outside your comfort zone. It tells us to GO GET IT.

The Model for Developing a Complete Professional Sportsperson

There’s no greater force on earth than your own personal will. So if you want to do something, anything with all your will, find a way. If you don’t, you’ll find an excuse. - Pat Farmer

Sport has the power to unify a nation and alter its moral fibre. But above all, it has the power to motivate and inspire a nation to reach for a dream – a right that every individual possesses.

In my view, therefore, sport as a curriculum is a non-negotiable. It is a duty that every country owes to each of its children, because the power that it yields cannot be quantified in monetary terms.

Let’s give every child a sporting chance!

***Shayamal** is a sports scientist, entrepreneur and lecturer, having worked with some of the world’s best athletes. With over 10 years of experience in the industry, Shayamal has had the opportunity to work with the Davis Cup and Cricket Teams of India and South Africa. He currently works with a number of top players on the ATP Circuit. Shayamal is equipped with an amalgamation of knowledge and experience, including a degree in Sports Sciences, a postgraduate degree in Exercise Science and a diploma in Sports Management. He is director at Digi-Sports - an organisation geared towards the performance enhancement of athletes - and is an exercise consultant to the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls. Shayamal is also a self-published author having written two books on sports science and medicine in cricket. While not training elite athletes, Shayamal is an avid distance runner, having participated in nine marathons and winning a bronze medal at the Comrades Marathon in 2007.*





12

A Sporting Chance

Kajal Advani

When people ask me if I knew, ten years ago, that my son Pankaj Advani would become a world champion in snooker and billiards, my answer is, “No, I did not know he would, but I believed he could.”

Nobody knows what is going to happen tomorrow, let alone after a decade. But when a ten year old takes to a sport like Pankaj took to snooker, then you have to give him the freedom, the opportunity, the time, to pursue it. But first, let me delve further into the past to give you a clearer picture of what our lives were before snooker invaded our turf!

My husband Arjan, elder son Shree, Pankaj and I were happily settled in Kuwait till the 1990 Gulf War created mayhem in our lives. At the end of a vacation in the United States, we were unable to return to Kuwait because of the Iraqi invasion. So, we returned to our motherland and settled in Bangalore, certain that one day all would be well in Kuwait and we could go back and pick up the threads of our lives.

Kuwait did reopen. My husband did go back. But he was afflicted with what we believe was ‘the Gulf War Syndrome’ which may have been caused by the burning oil wells and the chemical warfare used in Kuwait. He came to Bangalore after three months and a month later, on March 10, 1992, he breathed his last.

Life had to go on. Shree was fourteen then and Pankaj not even seven. I decided to be a full-time house-mother (I was working in Kuwait earlier) because I knew that being a single parent to two growing young boys was not going to be easy. Lucky for me, my mother came and stayed with us. Our life was simple but comfortable. My husband’s Kuwaiti partner in Kuwait had swindled all the money from the business but thanks to some savings in India, we did okay.

When Pankaj was ten, he started following Shree to a snooker parlour down the road from our house. At first, he would just watch Shree play with his friends. Then, after a few weeks, he begged him to let him try hitting the balls. On his very first try, he potted the red ball. From that moment on began Pankaj’s love story with cue sports.

In these last seven years, Pankaj has won seven world titles, two Asian games gold medals, four Asian billiards titles and the Australian Open Billiards title. He has been conferred with the Arjuna, Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, and Padma Shri Awards by two successive Presidents of India. Not in my wildest imagination could I have visualised all this.

Initially I thought, “It’s just a sport and if he is happy playing it, so what? Let him be happy.” But I realised the extent of his passion when he started playing snooker at home on his carom-board, using marbles for balls and a chopstick for a cue. The turning point in Pankaj’s life I feel was when he was booked for his annual vacation to Mumbai but he did not go because there was a snooker and billiards coaching camp at the Karnataka State Billiards Association (KSBA) at that time. He enrolled for two consecutive camps which took up his entire six week long vacation. He would be at KSBA from morning till night – when I would go pick him up in an auto. He was totally consumed by the sport. I am really grateful to the management of KSBA which gave an Talent Category Membership to a eleven year old boy. This meant that he could play on the tables for as long as he wanted each day for a meager monthly payment of Rs.250/-. It was a big boon to us as my finances were being stretched because of his frequent snooker parlour trips!

I never stopped Pankaj from playing but I did take a promise from him that he would never neglect his studies. In this respect, I have to give a lot of credit to

The Frank Anthony Public School's principal – Mr. Browne – who supported Pankaj totally and assured me that sportspersons became better students because of their discipline and focus. Since a sportsperson knows that he has to give so much time to his sport, he gives unwavering attention in class so that he can absorb everything and not have to rack his brains later. (Pankaj went on to become the Head Boy of the school in his final year there following in the footsteps of his brother Shree who was Head Boy seven years earlier).

So, if your child is a good student and is shaping up to be a good sportsperson, why should you not let him follow his passion? At the age of 11 years 7 months, Pankaj won his first major State title, defeating his elder brother in the finals. In his first every interview to the press, when asked what he wanted to become, he said, "I would like to become a world champion one day."

It was said very innocently. Readers laughed at his naiveté. So did I. Pankaj forgot about the interview and continued with his life - going to school, finishing his homework, rushing to KSBA, coming home tired, but happy and fulfilled.

Then Mr. Arvind Savur came into Pankaj's life. He is the best snooker coach in the world and seeing the potential in Pankaj, he started coaching him at his home (where he has a snooker table) for free. Soon, Pankaj became a part of the Savur household, and Arvind became a father figure to him.

In Pankaj's case, destiny played a big part. His school and then college (Mahaveer Jain College) gave him ample support and scholarships. Mr Chenraj Jain, the Chairman of the Jain Group, would tell Pankaj whenever he saw him in college, "What are you doing here? Go practise!" Special classes were arranged for

the sportspersons a month before the exams. That's the only time Pankaj went to college.

Pankaj won his first Men's World Snooker title at the age of 18 in China. Nobody expected him to win it. Nobody except his coach and himself. I remembered then when Pankaj was just 14, I was thanking Mr. Savur when he told me, "A day will come soon when I will thank you for letting me coach your son because he is going to be a world champion someday."

In these last seven years, Pankaj has won seven world titles, two Asian games gold medals, four Asian billiards titles and the Australian Open Billiards title. He has been conferred with the Arjuna, Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, and Padma Shri Awards by two successive Presidents of India. Not in my wildest imagination could I have visualised all this.

However, parents have to be warned that things are not always hunky dory in a sportsperson's life, however successful he may be. First, there are the Mexican crabs in the circuit who revel in pulling one down. Then, there are comparisons with other sports – in India, read that as cricket. A sportsperson feels demoralised when in 10 years he doesn't earn as much as a cricketer does in a 45 day IPL. We have to keep our kids motivated no matter what we feel within. It's not only the money but also the media, the corporates, the public, who discriminate so much between cricket and "non-cricket sports".

Passion begins to wane but we have to keep on refueling it. I feel my son was born to play snooker and billiards. It would be a pity and a waste were he to give it up. And that's what I tell him.

I didn't care if he did not score in his 90's in exams. He got 80 in his ISC and 75 in his B.Com. That's great for me. I would have been happy with even less. I don't care if he doesn't earn in crores. Money is not



A Sporting Chance

the be-all and end-all of life. We have to prioritise. For a sportsperson, the game must always come first.

At 19, while still in college, Pankaj was appointed by ONGC as an HR executive. In five years he received three promotions because of his world titles. His is a non-reporting job so he has ample time to give to his sport.

My elder son Shree was a National level billiards player, but he chose to pursue his Masters degree in Australia. He loved it there but after six years he chose to return to Bangalore because he felt his brother needed him. Perhaps sport is in their system for Shree is now doing a Ph.D in psychology, specializing in sport psychology. He is already doing mind-coaching for many sportspersons and his favourite student is his li'l brother Pankaj.

Pankaj owes a large portion of his success to Shree's mentoring and to the fact that he is there for him 24/7.

Should parents allow their children to pursue their passion or should they have a more practical approach and make their children follow a path which will bring maximum material gain? We Indians are basically a very insecure people, which is why we look for a hundred percent security in any decision we take. We

No one can understand a child better than his parent. A mother or father can differentiate between interest and passion. If a child is passionate about a sport or anything like painting, or singing, let the child pursue it. Why do parents always feel that 'studies will suffer' if children want to pursue their passion?

need to be socially secure – go by the social norms (what people will say or think is of paramount importance to us), financially secure – aim for tried and tested lucrative careers (never mind if our hearts are not in it) and mentally secure – nobody should be allowed to reason with us once our minds are made up.

No one can understand a child better than his parent. A mother or father can differentiate between interest and passion. If a child is passionate about a sport or anything like painting, or singing, let the child pursue it. Why do parents always feel that 'studies will suffer' if children want to pursue their passion? Academics can be the backdrop; the child should be the main actor and the play should be about the child and his/her passion.

There are 24 hours in a day for everyone. Our Prime Minister has the same 24 hours. If he can rule a huge and diverse country like India, why can't our children manage two things – studies and sport? In fact, sport helps a lot in character-building, enhancing discipline, concentration and spirituality. One should look at sport not as something you play with a bat/racket/cue and ball but as a holistic package. This is what my sons have taught me and I feel blessed for having them.

Let us give our children the chance to live their dreams, not ours. Let them be the central character of the play of their life. We may or may not have been given a chance by our parents. If we have, then now is the time to pay it forward. If we haven't, then all the more reason for us to let them follow their passion. Let's help our children spread their wings and rejoice when they take to the skies!

Let's give them a sporting chance!

Kajal is the mother of the billiards champion Pankaj Advani.





Indumathi S

One of the objectives of sports education in India is to provide skills for dealing with psycho-social issues in the school, home and the community. What does this mean? Sports could influence personal and social competencies such as self-confidence, self-discipline, body awareness, accepting rules, fairness, dealing with emotions, learning mutual respect, winning, losing, teamwork and communicative skills. Thus sports plays an important role as a socialisation mechanism and for teaching values of the society. It helps build certain social skills. The former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, says sports is a universal language that can bring people together, support the work for peace and help to achieve the Millennium Develop-



ment Goals¹. Sports has this capacity to transcend boundaries. Can it then play a role to bridge class, caste, gender and bring inclusiveness in India?

The following are the situations which are common in schools: Girls sitting under a tree during the physical education period; physically challenged persons staying back in the classroom and writing notes; girls standing near the boundary and cheering groups of boys who are playing; overweight or differently-abled children taking the role of scorer or umpire,

deciding the boundary line. The above examples depict how sports is accessible to only a few.

A 14 year old girl says, “I like basket ball, I have represented my school team, but now I have stopped because practice requires staying back till 6 or 6.30 in the evening after school which my parents do not allow.” Similar was the case with another girl student. She was a very good athlete and participated in the state level under 13. She won many prizes but after her puberty she stopped because it involved practicing on weekends and after school hours with a male trainer and travelling to various districts along with trainer or a coach for competitions. For girls, participation in sports after a certain age is taboo and many parents do not see sports as a suitable career for girls. Their assumptions are based on the cultural beliefs regarding the role of women. In the school I was teaching we tried to create a mixed football team. The boys could not accept girls in their team; they felt that their team would be weak. Very few girls showed interest

in the field. It was common for girls to sit after 15 minutes of running. Slowly the team thinned to just one or two girls. The girl who played enthusiastically was considered tomboyish and she was not accepted by her girl friends.

Having touched issues on gender let us analyse another important factor - class. A boy from a poor family was very good at cricket. He represented the school team but he could not afford to buy shoes or a kit for himself. His mother felt that the time he spent in

cricket could be used to help her fetch drinking water for the house. This indicates that sports can come only after basic needs. Sports could be a costly affair for many people and spending time in sports can happen only if one can afford leisure time. Similar is the case with the differently-abled. Discriminatory attitudes and practices tend to perpetuate through sports. Students with disability are usually neglected in school sports. They are advised to sit back in their classrooms or they become the silent audience of the class's football or cricket game.

The above examples seem to indicate that while sports can provide equal opportunity for inclusion, it actually excludes many students in our schools.

Research also shows that class, race, and gender inequities all play a role in participation, as well as achievement, in sports. The challenges and limitations of bringing in inclusion are due to:

- a) Socio-economic/cultural barriers: Many sports are the exclusive privilege of upper class children who have time to spare for leisure and physical activity. Also the notion of women's role in production and reproduction limit them from activities outside the home. Girls are usually prevented from playing outside. Street games for boys and girls are advised to play indoor games.
- b) Safety concerns: Dangerous physical environments like construction near the ground, debris, uneven play ground, and barbed wires could be an important safety concern for children. Any mishap on the play ground could affect the life of children. The risk is higher among poor communities who cannot afford treatment.
- c) Infrastructure: Provision of clean and proper changing rooms, access to sports field from home, adequate lighting and provisions during rain or excessive heat are matter of concern for women as well as physically challenged. Most of the schools do not have a proper playground and even in public sports centres such facilities are inadequate.

- d) Lack of role model: The coach or trainers are usually men and there is very little representation by women and physically challenged. The schools may be sensitive to physically challenged students but may not have a trainer who is disabled or a physically challenged teacher.
- e) Sports education: With the tendency of teachers to complete syllabus and prepare students for examination, physical education becomes the last priority. Sports are considered as an extracurricular activity. The resources for sports are usually minimal in the schools. The purpose of sports or its objective is completely forgotten and students just tend to play with the ball without any coach. Briefing about the game, its history, its rules, what it tends to achieve are seldom discussed with students.

The challenges and limitations in bringing in inclusion are due to socioeconomic/ cultural barriers, lack of role models, poor sports facilities and infrastructure, treating sports in isolation or as extracurricular activity instead of integrating with other subjects.

Though there are many limitations, I think it is possible to make sports more inclusive and to use the instrument of sport for a meaningful purpose.

Integration of Sport:

Physical education needs to be integrated with other disciplines. This integrated approach will not leave sports in isolation, it will be more holistic and the students will feel the need to participate; teachers may also have to find ways to make it inclusive as everybody needs to participate and learn. Instead of treating it as an extracurricular activity, which requires practising after school hours, integration within other disciplines would help find its place within the curriculum.

Pedagogical Approach to Sports Education:

The coach or trainer can help break the stereotypes

on the role of women and purposefully create mixed teams. He/she could also educate both boys and girls about equal participation and discuss the prevailing myth on gender roles. Sports which is inclusive in nature needs to be identified. Traditional sports which are context specific can be identified and used with a little variation. Making variations in sports and games can make it inclusive. For example, in western countries sitting volleyball has been tried to help disabled participate. The schools can help students play all kinds of sports instead of specialising in popular games. They can identify a sport for a term and keep rotating and inventing new ones so that all students get to participate in all games and identify their interest.

Holistic Approach:

Involvement of sports needs support from the family. Hence involving the community and parents and proper communication about their wards' participation would help. Information campaign and education to community regarding the myth about participations of girls in sports can be planned.

Infrastructure and Incentives:

Schools can be a common place for identifying talent and training. Sports scholarships, incentives for dis-

advantaged, and travel grants during district or state level representation may help in bringing children of all class, caste, gender or race on a common platform. Also it could be a place for access to all sports resources. Schools need to make conscious efforts to develop necessary infrastructure.

Research in Sports:

Research on participation and achievement in sports, effectiveness of integrated sports curriculum and many such areas can be identified. Any intervention like mixed school team can be studied and evaluated. Such studies may help in planning for sports education and show the path to move ahead for inclusiveness. Documentation and biographies of life of sports persons can serve as examples for aspiring students. Publishing books on women in sports and para-olympics achievers may help to motivate students to participate.

Many interventions to bring equity (through sports) have been tried in western countries, which have been successful. Systemic support could definitely help sports transcend boundaries and instrumental in bringing students of all class, caste, race, ability and gender together.

Reference:

¹ Kofi Annan, says "sports is a universal language that can bring people together, support the work for peace and help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals". Sports has this capacity to transcend boundaries. Can it then play a role to bridge class, caste, gender and bring inclusiveness in India?

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Dominic Vijay

A woman achieving high in a sport that requires physical strength, or a man winning in an aesthetic sport, very often come as a surprise. We also differentiate between sporting abilities on the basis of region. For example, an individual of north eastern origin is most often picked for a football team even if his interests lie in another sport. Similarly, a short person is very unlikely to be picked for a basketball team. But it is important to note that while some stereotypes have credibility, others don't. A tall person might play better basketball but we cannot and should not discount the possibility of excellent display skills by a short player. If the process of elimination, during the formation of a team or while playing, is stereotypical some talented and skilled players lose out on the opportunity to achieve.

The need to be accepted and become part of a group, which is a traditional socialisation process, is one of the reasons why young children follow a sport that is 'gender specific.' Most often, it has been noticed, that a young boy fears ridicule and being mocked at if he's seen playing with a skipping rope, which in my opinion is an integral exercise to develop football skills.

Stereotypes are also born out of the general lack of awareness amongst educators as they unconsciously promote stereotypical views of sport and physical education. To get rid of this, it is imperative that every school and its physical education teachers have teams and fitness sessions that are 'all inclusive.' If administrators make sport and fitness compulsory for all, children from varied backgrounds and of different skill levels would get an equal chance to develop a love for the game of their choice. No child will be routed into participation in a narrow range of physical activities. But boosting a child's morale to participate in all sports activities is not enough. We have to take

steps to go beyond that.

While working towards countering gender stereotypes, activities like jumping rope and skipping must be made compulsory for both boys and girls to develop skills in sports. Mixed teams ensure participation of every child; hence a girl on the football team

The need to be accepted and become part of a group, which is a traditional socialisation process, is one of the reasons why young children follow a sport that is 'gender specific.'

is a parity and not a disadvantage. A prime example of disputing gender stereotypes is that of Mary Kom – India's leading woman boxer. Her achievements have soared beyond everyone's imagination and as she continues to dominate the boxing arena, it is commendable to note her determined journey to reach the heights of success.

In my opinion, a long term approach to dispose stereotypes based on body type is an expensive process in terms of time, money and effort. However, this should not be neglected altogether. Through a systematic selection process - with right opportunities, appropriate sports facilities and technical support, every eager student will be given a fair and equal chance to take up a sport of his or her choice. I wonder what Allen Iverson would have done with his talent had he not been selected for the NBA only based on his short stature!

A 'multiple-tier approach' could be put in place to achieve the short term goal of disposing stereotypes. A simple activity would help to categorize the participants into various pools of talent, which eases the selection process. Begin by forming 10 pairs of participants and then demonstrate any skill that they all have to achieve to go one step further into the advanced skills category- for example, the skill of passing a ball to the person on your left with one touch,

only in a circular formation. With every successful pass, the participant moves to the right and continues the activity with the others who are also moving. At the end of such an activity, you have a collective pool of ranges of talent and each child is given an opportunity to participate!

Eradicating all forms of stereotypes or at least attempting to do so may reap cultural and social benefits for all of us. High achieving athletes, who tread on unknown paths, become inspirational role models to follow. They set the benchmark for young sports enthusiasts who look forward to pursuing a sport they love. These athletes become leaders in their field and icons of their time. This will lead to more young children following a sport they love; thereby, receiving encouragement from their caregivers to help them achieve their dreams. Champions are only created through a deep desire that they have in them to achieve the impossible. The next generation of winners will give rise to more like them and a nation will only progress towards higher development.

While there is an evolution in the stereotyping attitudes of society, there is still a long way to go. We cannot discourage an individual from enjoying the benefits that come along with sports and physical education, because our perceptions are distorted. Encompassing the basic and universally recognised cultural, economic, and social rights as a by-product of countering stereotypes should be our bigger picture. To achieve this we should attempt to make a change from the top of a spectrum and not just begin from the bottom down because increased participation will only diversify our talent pool.

Sport helps promote equality objectives like rights and empowerment. Access to spaces where sporting activities can take place will assist students to develop new skills together, gain support and enjoy freedom of expression and movement. It can promote education and leadership, all of which are essential for the development of any society or culture.

Let's work together to guarantee a successful India!



***Dominic Vijay** has a post graduate diploma in General Management from IIM-K and a diploma in 'Service Strategy' from Wharton. With over 13 years of experience in the field of People Management, Operations, Business Development, Marketing and Sales, Dominic has a vision to become part of a process that creates channels for every individual to excel. It is this vision and his passion for sports and fitness that led him to be a part of LeapStart as Operations Director.*



15

Outdoor Education – Exploring A New Paradigm

Nidhi Tiwari

As a team of adolescents braved the winds and chilly weather to scramble up a rock phase, the winds whistled through a narrow chimney in the rocky backcountry of the Himalayas. As they belayed each other on the rock phase, emotions ran high and so did the adrenalin. One of the climbers screamed “TENSION!” meaning “Hold me tight, I can potentially fall!” and the whole team rallied behind the belayer. Lips pursed inward, bodies turned numb and faces flushed. The next five minutes elapsed in pin drop silence as the climber made a daring move up the ledge. Instantly, the team broke into a cheer, exuding relief and overflowing jubilation. The storm within had passed. Their class mate was now secure and, surprisingly, they were celebrating a ‘joint’ victory. I overheard one of the girls standing behind me comment to her friend, “Strange, isn’t it - I felt relieved to see Shashank (the climber) reach that ledge. Before this trip, he wasn’t somebody I could handle in the same space as me. But now, it felt so good to see him safe.”

This reminded me of Kurt Hahn’s words: “The experience of helping a fellow man in danger, or even of training in a realistic manner to be ready to give this help, tends to change the balance of power in a youth’s inner life with the result that compassion can become the master motive.” How true this was!

Isn’t this true education - in the outdoors?

What is Outdoor Education?

Ask a bunch of people what outdoor education is and you can rest assured that you will receive a bunch of answers moderately dissimilar from each other. Do you wonder why? Because that’s the DNA of this discerning field! Perhaps the only agreement in defining it is that outdoor education impacts the individual and

the way the individual relates with the environment. Irrespective of where these definitions come from, they can be loosely grouped into those which come from a psycho-social origin (about the individual and learning) and those with an environment origin (self and nature context).

I choose to define Outdoor Education as organized learning that takes place in the outdoors. It is never an end product but often consists of intended (and often hidden) learning disguised with an overt physical activity, meticulously put together with careful planning to achieve the end in mind. Some of the most common principles with which outdoor education programmes are put together include self reliance, compassion, diversity, leadership, environment stewardship, safety, courage, craftsmanship and mastery. Often, these are the intended qualities that outdoor education programmes build through intense engagement with the elements of Nature and fellow explorers.

In India, however, we have unfortunately not moved beyond using the outdoors as a purely adrenalin-based medium. Often, the term ‘outdoor education’ is limitedly understood as ‘adventure sports’. This is far from encompassing all that can be achieved by using this medium. But this notion is fast changing; with increasing international exposure and deeper thought that is being invested in the education process, schools are slowly dabbling with outdoor education programmes and appreciating their eye-opening benefits to students.

However, in the West, outdoor education programmes have been a part of the public school curriculum for over 25 years now. With the setting up of Outward Bound in the late 1940’s triggering the trend and Project Adventure in the 1970’s sealing it, outdoor education programmes (typically adventure based) are an integral part of the middle school and high school curricula in USA, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. These countries have also invested heavily in researching and building theory into commonly held field notions about the benefits (or the lack of them) of outdoor programmes.

Outdoor Education: Theory and Practice

Most of outdoor education philosophy can be traced to Greek origin; they were perhaps the first people who exposed citizens to participation in modern forms of outdoor adventures for the sake of ‘character’ growth. It is intriguing to note that even Alexander the Great was accompanied by scholars as he sailed to conquer the world. The reason for this is even more fascinating; rumour has it that he wanted to build the character of his men by taking them on long adventures, and his scholars on board guided this learning process.

Nature philosophers such as John Muir and Henry David Thoreau laid important foundations for outdoor education, particularly in North America. However, it is the psychological philosopher, William James and another educational philosopher, John Dewey who established education as an exploration in an outdoor experience. Dewey believed that experiential learning formed the basis of any knowledge gaining process. Taking these views further was Kurt Hahn, (an inspiring German high school teacher who first spoke of ‘train by, through and for the sea’) who has, over



the years, emerged as the biggest contributor to the field of outdoor education. Kurt Hahn formed Outward Bound as a moral equivalent of war. He propagated critical pedagogy and stated that “education must enable young people to effect what they have recognized to be right, despite hardships, despite dangers, despite inner skepticism, despite boredom, and despite mockery from the world.”

Given the variations and different ways in which the medium of outdoors has been used by educators, and based extensively on psychosocial theories of

enquiry and pursuit, outdoor education programmes attract explanations from a multitude of theories concerned with the individual self and learning. Loosely grouped, the field draws inspiration from the following:

1. Environmental theory: The inherent belief that Nature is good and that natural environments teach directly or indirectly; also, the fact that human beings were, after all, animals to begin with, hence, a huge sense of home-coming is associated with the outdoors. Also, that Nature gives us unambiguous feedback about ourselves, thus helping us build coping strategies rather than relying on defense mechanisms.
2. Experiential theory: Informed heavily by John Dewey’s Theory of Experience, outdoor education provides guided education experiences for students which Dewey termed as the foremost task of education. The Spirals of Learning, as Dewey called them, are very relevant to outdoor trips – planning/ negotiating–experiencing–reviewing–transferring learning. This is an ongoing process and often the crux of outdoor education programmes.
3. Psycho-social theory: Kurt Hahn propagated the idea of training the mind through the body. He spoke of the Outward Bound process to be a double-edged sword: first the cut, and then, the stronger healing that takes place. Also known as Dunk and Dry Model of training, outdoor education programmes often expose students to crisis and adversity, wherein they are forced to develop coping strategies. The theory of optimal arousal (Duffy 1057), theory of competence – effectance (White, 1959), Bandura’s theory of self efficacy (1986) and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs have brought credence to most outdoor education programmes around the globe.
4. Multi-element: Many outdoor groups (such as The Outdoor School , for example) have developed their own course design. With the basis often being the spiral of experiential education, it is acknowledged that learning

is non-linear and multi-layered, and their programmes integrate multiple domains of learning such as psychomotor, cognitive and human relationships.

Outdoor Education and Academic Curriculum – where do they meet?

In countries such as USA, New Zealand and Australia, outdoor learning has been integrated as a key component in the science, social science, math, environment education, physical and health education curriculum. The Health (H) and Physical Education (PE) curricular statement in New Zealand states that “through learning in health and physical education, students will develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and motivation to make informed decisions and to act in ways that contribute to their personal well-being, the well-being of other people, and that of society as a whole” (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 11). Similarly, in the United States of America, a revolutionary programme called “Project Adventure” started in 1971 helped reinvent and redefine their curriculum for physical education in public schools. Project Adventure is now a household name and has over 1000 schools adopting their adventure education curriculum from K1-K12. There is plenty of research evidence published in the last 15 years that have shown beyond doubt that project adventure programmes have positively impacted the school environment, helped students bring learning into the classroom, community and neighborhood thus equipping them with skills for life. What started as a physical education module has now been adopted for behaviour management, embracing diversity and interdisciplinary learning.

For example, let us consider the experience of rock climbing and see how it affects many curricular areas.

- **Geology and Geography** - climbers often need to understand the structure and strength of the rocks.
- **Math and Physics** - climbers rely on the strength of the equipment being used. The breaking strength of ropes, carabineers and other belay equipment plays a huge role in the way they are

used. The breaking strength of each of these, the actual act of belaying and the wear and tear of hard gear is indeed a lot of science.

- **Human relationships** - the equation between the climber and the belayer brings out a quintessential human dynamic of trust portraying the importance of the nature and strength of the human relationship. It is also about the skill and understanding of the entire system (rocks, belay, belayer, rope etc.), which plays on the mind of the climber.

Hence on outdoor education programmes students could potentially learn about the rock formations and strength of the rock (which guides how they hold and use the rock), different equipment being used (the hard gear, its breaking strength etc.), knots to tie into the harness, belay system and finally, achieve a level of mastery where they belay each other on the climb. This kind of interdisciplinary learning is what we must attempt to bring about through adventure-based outdoor programmes.





Outdoor Education: Indian Context

In India, unfortunately, most schools perceive ‘Sports’ or physical education as limited to competitive sports and team games. There has been a very small section of schools (almost miniscule) experimenting with adventure sports and an even smaller number who have attempted to understand (or experiment with) adventure-sport-based education or environment-based field modules. This can be attributed to a number of reasons, the primary reason being the status of physical education programmes in schools. Most schools use these avenues as coaching centres for competitive sports or free periods for extra academic work, without deliberating upon why the physical education programme needs to be carefully structured. It has been found beneficial to include adventure based programmes as part of the physical education course. Activities such as sport climbing, rock climbing, trekking and camp craft, water sports such as canoeing, kayaking, and rafting, orienteering (map and compass navigation), cycling, ropes courses can be typical inclusions in the physical education curriculum. In fact, the International Baccalaureate (IB) course recognises outdoor and adventure activities as a specialisation for students as part of the diploma in physical education.

Also, given that Life Skills are such an important requirement as students grow into young adults, it is bewildering that our education system appears to have assumed that these skills can simply be picked up and learnt. Or worse, with the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) now making life skills compulsory and assessment based, schools have resorted to employing teachers for life skills - so that they are

expected to take classes on life skills. I would like to argue that most life skills such as problem solving, communication, goal setting, empathy, and decision making need to be learnt hands on. Students need to be provided with an active, live medium to experiment, make mistakes and learn from them to understand the importance or relevance of these life skills - lest they, too, become lessons that are rote learnt and later forgotten. Here’s where an outdoor or adventure based education programme can be effortlessly integrated, as the medium serves the purpose aptly.

Similarly, expeditionary learning has great value for older students who are young adults waiting to chart their career paths. One notable reference here is the KFI schools (Krishnamurthy Foundation of India) who have - for over twenty years - taken older students on expeditions to the Himalayas. Perhaps the single most important value of such trips is the journey within one’s own self – building resilience, courage, leadership, self reliance, adaptability and tolerance to adversity in their students.

Walking up a mountain with the path seeming endless, your backpack tearing into your shoulders, sweat trickling down your nose, and only Nature for company – your lens for life is defined in a very personal and self-defined fashion. You know the edge of your tolerance almost instantly, you feel for those shepherds who live in these hostile conditions (building empathy), you pitch in for team tasks, wait for the storm to pass over (patience), believe tomorrow will be better weather (optimism), and just soak up to natural beauty. Aren’t the mountains teaching students key skills to survive as adults?

Schools must be encouraged to plan expeditions with their senior students to experience all of these emotions and more – in real time. They contribute to character building in ways one cannot even imagine.

Also, as part of their PT period, schools can introduce many challenges and initiatives which require no special equipment - only a skilled teacher who can help facilitate some of the learning that comes out of it. These days, some schools are exploring the idea



of setting up sports walls and ropes courses within the school premises. While these are steps in the right direction, we must not forget that interactions with Nature and wilderness has been at the heart of any outdoor education programme – nevertheless, students must be encouraged to head out of their school premises on outdoor programmes.

The Skepticism and Beyond

When I meet heads of schools or colleges and speak of outdoor education, I almost always sense an undercurrent of fear about how safe these programmes are. A lot of times, we as outdoor educators are told “this is too risky” and hence, schools become apprehensive about engaging in such activities. While it is true that outdoor travel brings with it inherent risks, most of these can be managed with prior training, prudent leadership, and the use of certified equipment. Here, I want to argue at two levels.

Firstly, don't we believe that risk management is a key lesson for students to learn? At a philosophical level, or even literally for that matter - isn't life full of risks anyway? How is it that we expect students to navigate life, make the right decisions and manage risks as adults, when we choose to make our education system (teachers, school management included) so risk averse? Instead of shying away from taking

risks, shouldn't we be teaching students how to identify and analyse risk and, therefore, develop strategies to manage the risk? Teaching risk management must be central to outdoor education programmes, as it is a key life skill that students must have exposure to. Given how critical a life skill risk management is - and (on a lighter note) how even walking on Bangalore's roads can be risky - isn't it important for schools to shy away from being risk averse and in fact explore risk management as a core concept? And what better 'real' medium to teach this than the great outdoors?

Secondly, assuming that schools do not have the competence to take students on outdoor learning trips and are most often outsourcing this to an outside agency, schools must focus on managing the risk of outdoor travel by verifying the credentials (of the outdoor company/organization), the certification of equipment being used, the level of training (both skill-based and first-aid) received by the staff and lastly, their conceptual rooting in the idea of outdoor education. If the latter is ignored, schools may end up with pure adventure, fun and thrill trips where learning is not structurally ingrained.

Learning and moving forward

Given the benefits of outdoor learning trips, schools must explore designing and integrating experiential

modules to make learning more hands on. It is up to school leadership to make the most of such an easily accessible medium. After all, in our quest to make education more fun and interactive, real and contextual, outdoor education provides ample opportunity to explore not just what lies around us (the environment, Nature, people, etc) but also what fibre we as people are made up of (within). Kurt Hahn always believed that there is more in us than we really think. Isn't edu-

cation about exploring this potential? If you think it is, then read on what this humble outdoor educator (Kurt Hahn) summed up as the essence of education – **“I regard it as the foremost task of education to ensure the survival of these qualities: an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for sensible self-denial, and above all, compassion.”**

Footnotes

- i) Belaying is a technique used in climbing to exert friction on a climbing rope to secure a falling climber so that he/she does not fall very far – essentially a system of rope safety.
- ii) Belayer - the person belaying and establishing safety for the climber.
- iii) Outward Bound - Outward Bound is an innovative educational idea put forth by Kurt Hahn in the 1930's. It symbolized a ship leaving its safe shores and heading into the open sea metaphorical with youth who were heading out to war leaving the comfort of their homes in the World War era. Now, more than sixty years later and with schools in over 40 countries on six continents and with a wide-variety of programs, Outward Bound is arguably the world's oldest Outdoor Education School.

The Outdoor School is an outdoor learning school, which believes that learning is about creating and engaging with experiences that are exciting, challenging, growth oriented and transformational. Based in Bangalore, it works towards integrating experiential learning as part of the curriculum. www.theoutdoorschool.in

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Nidhi Tiwari is an outdoor educator who has been associated with the domain of outdoor education for over a decade now. She is a passionate outdoors person and has trained with the North Carolina Outward Bound School as a leader. Her dream of starting an outdoor school came alive in January 2010 when she started The Outdoor School (www.theoutdoorschool.in). She now works with schools, colleges and universities to design and lead learning based courses using the medium of outdoors.

Besides her outdoorsy inclination, she has also been associated with Azim Premji Foundation for the last 2 years and worked on the Learning Curve in particular. She enjoys putting together the Learning Curve. She can be reached at nidhitiwariblr@gmail.com or nidhi@azimpremjifoundation.org



Saisudha Sugavannam

“It does not matter how many times you get knocked down, but how many times you get up” – Vince Lombardi, famous American football coach

Sports aficionados in India have a recurring set of questions:

- Why did it take over 28 years to win back the cricket World Cup?
- Why did it take 108 years for an Indian to win the first ever Individual Olympic gold medal?
- Why is it that a Singles Grand Slam title is so elusive?
- With eight Olympic gold medals in the past, why didn't the men's hockey team even qualify for the Olympics in 2008?

As the second most populous nation in the world, it's only fair to assume that raw talent is not lacking.

What, then, is the Problem?

There are several - often inter-connected - causes like the following—

- lack of sporting infrastructure
- apathetic governing bodies
- a traditional apprehension towards careers in sports
- talent being allowed to drop off before it reaches its prime

To be fair, not all of these are without justification – for a nation faced with decades of slow growth, the predictability of a ‘regular’ job did have – and continues to have – a strong appeal.

Times, however, have changed, and a younger, more energetic India is seeking answers.

In a study conducted by Nidhi Gupta and Aditi Kini of GoSports Foundation, a sports-based NGO based in Bangalore, it emerged that a key factor for India's modest successes at the international stage is that high-performing and well-deserving sportspersons who set out to make their careers in sports, drop out even before they reach the peak of their careers.

“There is no lack of sporting talent in India; the only problem is that if there are a 1000 players in a particular sport, only 100 may have the talent required, but only one out of that 100 might be able to defy the norm and succeed - and the rest dropout,” opines Abhijeet Kulkarni, sports journalist with the Hindustan Times.



This article explores this phenomenon of ‘dropouts’, and highlights some of the causes for athletes calling it quits prematurely. The full text of the study is available with GoSports Foundation.

Top Reasons for Sportspersons to Drop Out Prematurely:

A sample population of 47 people (that included 14 sports journalists and 33 sportspersons - three of whom are currently coaches) was surveyed. The following emerged as the top reasons for sports dropouts (figures in brackets indicate percentage of population that ranked the reason as #1):

- Non viability of career (34.04%)
- Systemic factors (27.66%)
- Physical factors (12.77%)
- Performance related factors (10.64%)
- Economic factors (8.51%)
- External factors (6.38%)

A Sports Career: Why Not ?

Non Viability of Career: Sportspersons in India often believe that while they were active in sports, there was no structured career path for their sport that would give them the financial security during (and after) their sports career. The individual's desire to pursue higher education or a different career was also subsumed under this factor - due to the opportunity cost involved in pursuing sport. "At the time, a select few were able to make a viable career in cricket. Given that selection processes were neither transparent nor always meritocratic, pursuing a cricket career seemed an untenable risk. Presented with the opportunity to pursue a career in law, I opted to undertake a professional course in law, which I thought would give me greater control over my future," confesses Nandan Kamath, former captain of Karnataka state Under-16 cricket team.

Systemic Factors: These included a lack of government support, limited access to infrastructure, coaches and medical facilities. From beneath the surface also emerged certain sub-factors like conflicts within the sporting environment, and the lack of platforms for sportspersons to showcase their talent and compete with their contemporaries. "There is no lack of talent, commitment or passion in India. It's the system that fails them," feels Anasuya Mathur, Journalist, NDTV.

"There are associations in every state but most of them are not run by sports people themselves, they are not professional and tend to be highly influenced by politics in the area," opines B Vijay Murty, journalist, Hindustan Times.



Physical Factors: These included injuries sustained during the period preceding dropout. They also included the sportspersons' physical limitation to take it to the next level. "No sportsperson in India gives

their 100% while in training camps, as they are always afraid that if they get injured, they will never get to play again. (This is) because there is no guarantee that they would receive appropriate medical attention," said Rajiv Mishra, whose stupendous Golden Goal clinched the trophy for India in the 1997 Junior World Cup hockey tournament. He was one who had to drop out due to an injury that was not given proper medical attention.

Performance-related Factors: These included the lack of success or improvement in the athlete's performance (in turn leading to a lack of motivation and drive, and subsequent burnout).

Says former India cricketer, L Sivaramakrishnan: "When they don't get selected for the 'under 16' or 'under 19' team, they get dejected and then concentrate on studies. This lack of self-confidence is one of the main reasons for athletes to drop out of sports."

Economic Factors: These included primarily the lack of financial means (either through personal means or sponsorships) for the sportsperson to be able to continue his/her sport. After a certain point in their careers, athletes need to spend considerable money for equipment, training, and travelling to international tournaments. Naturally, this makes it that much more difficult for people from modest backgrounds.

External Factors: These included mainly pressures that were social, parental and peer pressure of different kinds, plus a mindset that made parents encourage more predictable careers for their children. They also took into account the fact that sportspersons may choose to drop out once 'intermediate' objectives have been fulfilled (such as using sports to get admission into prestigious colleges or to get a government job).

At What Age do Athletes Drop Out?

The survey revealed that the average age at which sportspersons drop out is 21 years and 3 months (in the fields of swimming, cricket and tennis). Interestingly, there appeared to be two age brackets where dropping out was most common – the age groups

of 21-22, and 18-19. That these brackets correspond to the typical age group when one begins to think of a traditional career (at 21-22 years of age, immediately after an undergraduate degree) and at 18 years, when one is faced with crucial 12th standard examinations, is probably no coincidence. These data points again to the trend that when faced with an option between a 'traditional' career and a career in sports, more often than not, the former gets the nod.

Conclusion

From the study, it can be inferred that most sportspersons in India do not see a viable career for themselves in sport.

When asked if there was anything that could have been done to have ensured their continued participation, a majority of sportspersons replied that if funds were more readily available (for travelling in particular, due to lack of tournaments and international exposure domestically) or if the earning potential of their respective sport was higher, they might have considered taking up sports as a career. The journalists were also of the view that government-allotted funds should be easily accessible to sportspersons and that a system should be put in place which ensures that these funds reach the right people. Moreover, they believed that there was a need for a better system of progress for each sport within the country and better management and handling of the Indian sportspersons.

However, while such specific interventions in the area of funding might alleviate the problem, it is unlikely to create a broad ranging impact. This is because the reasons for sportspeople dropping out (the ones highlighted earlier in this article) are not independent of each other, and in some cases, one reason even leads to the other.

Given this, intervention steps to correct the situation might also not be as straight forward as one might hope. Rather, it would possibly mean several interventions by multiple stakeholders, key among them



being the athletes and their immediate support system (family, educational institutes), government sports administrative bodies, the media, corporate bodies who see investment potential and, at a broader level, society at large, in the way it appreciates and encourages sport. Going by recent results in mega sporting events (the 2011 cricket World Cup victory, best-ever outings in the most recent editions of the Olympics and Commonwealth games), some of these steps have been taken, and are bearing fruit. The Indian sports fan hopes that sustained and broad ranging efforts will help polish more raw diamonds that are waiting to shine.

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About GoSports Foundation

The GoSports Foundation is a non-profit organisation that works with some of India's best athletes. The athletes are supported by the Foundation through a variety of monetary and non-monetary aid. Through sustained support, athletes supported by GoSports Foundation have achieved immense success and made the nation proud. The Foundation is funded purely by donations, and welcomes interested individuals and corporate bodies to contribute.





Shree Advani

You are 30-40 and 3-5 in the deciding set of a crucial tennis match. The sweat on your palms isn't the result of physical exertion alone. The heart is racing and thoughts are flooding your head. The pressure from your parents to win weighs down heavily on your mind.

Not the ideal situation to be in - yet, all sportspersons, in their respective sport, WILL find themselves in such predicaments. Such is the nature of sports.

The effort that goes into preparation is enormous. The myriad sacrifices made by the sportsperson are commendable. That's because this is what they really want to do. But just like with everything else, proper guidance is required.

In our culture, we believe that hard work is the only solution to success. The longer the hours in the playing arena, the better one becomes. After all, "practice makes perfect", right?

Not entirely!

You could swim in a particular way and while the stroke may not be technically sound, it can be perfected. In a way, yes, practice does make perfect. But what an athlete - or for that matter, a student of any field - needs to be guided in is to ensure that *perfect practice makes perfect*.

And for that, one needs a coach. In fact, one needs many coaches – a team

of specialists. A CEO of a corporate organisation has his team of specialists in his VPs and HODs of various verticals like Marketing, Finance, HR, and Operations.. For the smooth running of his company, he has to ensure that he has the best people to aid in accomplishing his goal. A sportsperson needs a team of coaches to ensure that he gets effective guidance to help reach the goal in the same way.

Just having a sports coach isn't enough these days. You see pros travelling with their entire team to every tournament. A sports coach is there to help you with the technicalities and strategies of the chosen sport. But professionals are also required for helping you with your nutrition, fitness and your mind.

My particular area of interest is the entity residing upstairs, which controls every thought and action in our lives – the mind.

Going back to the myth of hard work guaranteeing success, that limited approach towards improvement neglects one of the most critical aspects – our minds. Being unaware of our thought patterns and response mechanisms to anxiety levels, tough drills -even to certain individuals - could delay their progress. And, since today sports is no longer restricted to only being

a hobby but can actually turn into a viable career option, more intensive coaching and direction is sought at the very foundation of one's sports journey.

Doubtless, ability plays a key role in determining performance in any field. But that is the displayed skill set called realised ability. The hidden potential that needs to be tapped into for greater performance is the unrealised ability. This is where Sports Psychology comes in handy.



To better understand the role of Sports Psychology, let's use the analogy of a computer. If our mind is a computer, then, every thought we feed it is the input. Our senses – touch, sight, smell, hearing and taste – are the graphic user interfaces through which information is entered. The response to the input is the output (our emotions and actions). The quality of our input will determine the quality of our output. Strong, positive thoughts and beliefs will lead to strong, positive performance, and vice-versa. We are all extremely cautious by installing an anti-virus in our computers and laptops. We also need an anti-virus for our neck-tops! It's important to keep doing a check-up from the neck up!

Sport is a spiritual experience. In the situation stated at the start of the article, for instance, one has to dig deep within to pull out reserves from our innermost being to supersede our own level of play and then, that of our opponent. Greater self-awareness can be brought about through the right coaching media, allowing athletes to discover more about themselves on a daily basis.

Our minds process around 50,000 thoughts a day. And over 49,900 of them won't be entirely positive. What does this tell you about our mental health? Our internal dialogue with ourselves is probably more damaging than productive, discouraging than encouraging. We wake up to negative news, carry forward stress from the previous day and project worries about the day ahead. Sportspeople have a massive requirement to remain positive, light and focused on their goals. There is no room for negativity. The latter is, however, part and parcel of our existence. But with mind coaching, one can be helped in rewiring the brain and its established patterns. Our thoughts lead to forming our beliefs, which in turn establish our ability, thereby producing commensurate action and

ultimately yielding its result. Therefore thought is our starting point that determines our outcome.

Think about what you think and then think!

We utilise only 5%, if that, of our entire potential. The only way to become more of us is to be led by a coach who can enhance one's behavioural flexibility.

How often have we looked at a task and said: "No, I cannot do it. That's not me."? And then - we actually accomplish it! What stopped us, in the first place? Our limiting beliefs? Past experience? How do we recognise that such thought processes are hampering our movement

to the next level? And how do we overcome it? Sports mind coaching makes you a Mind Captain – the leader of your own mind to create your success story! Only when we do something outside our comfort zone, will we gain improvement. Anything done within the zone is already known to us. To grow, we need to operate outside the comfort zone – in the effort zone.

By the age of around 10 – 12 years, almost 90% of our adult behaviour is established. This goes to show the significance of the role of parenting. As a sports psychologist, I include parent coaching as an important part of the sports mind coaching intervention with the athlete. The parents actually need greater assistance with their role of a sports parent (a bigger responsibility than that of a normal parent). What they say and what they do, as well as what they don't say and what they don't do, will directly impact the child's mind. Parents fall in the direct circle of influence of their child. Their words and deeds will be reflected in the child at some point, in some way, some day.

I remember coaching a junior state cricketer a couple of years ago, who had a series of single digit scores. He is a dynamic opening batsman but just couldn't find his form. On consulting him, it was discovered

"Sports mind coaching makes you a Mind Captain – the leader of your own mind to create your success story! To grow, we need to operate outside the comfort zone – in the effort zone."

that his father was actually the main culprit. His excessive enthusiasm in his child's sport was becoming overbearing and suffocating. I therefore ended up coaching the parent more than the child, in this particular case. Immediate changes were made. In a fortnight, the same batsman scored a 70, 80 and two centuries - all in a single tournament.

Tiger Woods had many other pro golfers play with him and when observed closely, they realised that his technique wasn't any superior to theirs. But what they did admire was the mental strengthening his Sports Psychologist brought about in his ability to quieten his mind and think clearly, even in tough situations. His moderately aggressive approach enabled him to face competition with toughness and also made him refrain from playing safe. India's own sporting genius Pankaj Advani, seven-time World Champion in billiards and snooker, is considered most dangerous by his opponents, from all over the world, when he is trailing. They say: "When the chips are down, Pankaj is up!" I have had the privilege to work with Pankaj for many years and have seen up close how he has grown mentally tougher by the day.

Roger Federer plays tennis in a state of Zen. His meditative demeanor on court proves how sports can be an amazing way to improve concentration, focus and a platform to achieve overall excellence. Pankaj is known as the 'smiling assassin'. He is calm on the outside but extremely aggressive within, sparing no opponent when it is his turn to play. Sport is character-building and sports psychology with its methodologies can make life-changing improvements to a sportsperson's career.

Sports Psychology consulting involves both on-court/field/table (playing arena) as well as sit-down, conversational formats. While playing, mental strategies and techniques are imparted for better performance, concentration and confidence. And while coaching face-to-face when not playing, deeper issues are addressed and specific psychological and emotional areas are worked on, these being directly or indirectly related to their sport. Whatever goes on in a sportsperson's life will affect their sport and performance. Therefore, all concerns must be overcome.

Handling loss is never easy. Neither for the athlete and nor for the people around the athlete – parents and coaches.. I have seen parents publicly tell the child off about their performance, instead of showing support. There can be no better way to damage the confidence and future performances of the child. The best option for a parent to handle their child's defeat is to keep quiet. Speak only when spoken to. The sportsperson will discuss the match with the coaches. All they seek from parents are comfort and non-judgment. We must understand that a loss is actually essential for the growth of an athlete. As ace cueist Pankaj often says: "Winning takes you one step ahead. Losing takes you ten." No one likes losing but when it does happen, it is an opportunity for growth and learning.

The mind is an incredible being. It can be your best friend or your worst enemy. In sports, a well-trained mind has a higher chance of delivering success. This reminds me of Nelson Mandela's words, "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure." And powerful we are!

Shree Advani has recently submitted his Ph.D thesis on Sports Psychology and is the Chief Mind Coach of Mind Captain Consulting – a coaching firm dealing with sports, corporate, actors, teachers. He has been a sports mind coach to Pankaj Advani, Robin Uthappa, Sheetal Goutham, Sushil Kumar and many budding sportspeople. Shree is also a Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) Practitioner.



Rekha Badsiwal

All policy documents on education invariably mention the indispensable role of health and physical education. National Curriculum Framework 2005 advocates that “a basic understanding of the health concerns is necessary, but the more important dimension is that of experience and development of health, skills and physical well- being through practical engagement with play, exercise, sports and practices of personal and community hygiene”. The outlook on sports has now widened to include and emphasise its integration with other subject content in order to promote understanding of health, hygiene and physical education¹. This ambition can be attained only by well-coordinated efforts of the education policy, adequate infrastructure provided by administrators and teachers, good facilities and opportunities. The position paper also notes that health and physical education has been reduced to ‘games and sports period’ in its implementation in schools. This essay attempts to discuss the purpose, provisions and practices with respect to ‘games and sports’ period in schools. It utilises the information gathered through informal interaction with children, parents, teachers, physical education teachers and principals on the issue.

Purpose

All schools have games and sports as a part of their school curriculum and it is reflected in their school time-table. All the stakeholders agreed that it is necessary to devote time to games and sports in school in order to promote physical fitness among children. The administrators added that it is essential for over all development of children as it releases children from hesitation, fear and stress and helps them become more social as they learn to interact with

strangers. Two school principals added that ideally “Sports should get the same time as other subjects, perhaps even a little more” as it is very important for the personality development of the child which affects the learning in all other subject areas. They said that children learn discipline, rules and regulation and punctuality through play.

A more prominent reason which topped everyone’s list was that it brings freshness to the mind of child which becomes dull due to continuous subject study in the school. Children emphasised that without sports period school will become very dull and boring. All the parents emphasised that it is an act of recreation for children and there should be games and sports periods in the school in between subject periods so that students can concentrate on studies with an active mind. Two of the parents also pointed out that having sports activities encourages students to regularly attend the schools and they start enjoying school.

Provisions for Sports in Schools: Time and Facilities

With “all-round development of the child” being the catch line of schools to attract parents, a lot of emphasis is being placed on providing good sports facilities in the form of infrastructure as well as in the form of human resources for guidance, especially by the private schools. Schools with sophisticated sports facilities cater to the elite and upper middle class strata of the society. In the private schools which cater to the middle class these facilities are made available on demand. Majority of private schools have provisions for paid clubs and houses wherein children can opt (if the parents can afford) to pursue their interests apart from the general games and sports period. Children attending the government schools have to remain content with the provision of a games and sports period alone as the equipment are generally kept away from children except on special occasions such as “Sports Day”.

Most of the private schools are equipped with the required play material for different sports events

but specialised courts and grounds are available only in few schools. In most of the schools these are prepared only when required, as during the Intra and Inter-school Tournaments. Children said that they carry their personal equipment like badminton and tennis racket, or cricket bat to the school on the days of sports classes. They also added that those who forget may be issued equipment from the school during the sports period. As children carry their own play material to school and specialised courts are unavailable at school or at home, factors like friends' group automatically acquire more importance while choosing the favourite play place.

Majority of students (9/15) stated that they like playing at home more than in school. The reasons mentioned were availability of friends with whom they enjoy playing and flexibility of time of play. One of the girls mentioned that since her class has been reshuffled with other sections and her friend circle is unavailable she now likes to play at home with her few friends. Children who enjoyed playing in school than at home (3/15) clearly stated that they like playing in school as they have friends there and the others (3/15) preferred playing at school because it had better play facilities.

Most of the schools have provision for 2-4 periods per week depending on the school policy and grade. The number of periods officially allocated to games and sports decreases as children move to higher grades. The focus shifts from games such as dog and the bone and koklachi-paakiji in primary classes to organised sports like basketball, cricket and badminton as children reach middle schools and higher grades. The shift is an indicator of increase in children's physical and cognitive capabilities along with social and moral development.

The play time of children along with the number of periods as mentioned above gets reduced with increase in age. It is partly due to the load of studies and partly because of one's interests which are influenced by social factors. In school, the sports period is often used as an extra period for other subjects. The frequency of this sort of utilisation increases in the last term of

the academic year. The covert message received by children is that games and sports are insignificant and incomparable to academics. At home, parents also ensure that their ward gets help at home in the form of tuitions. Consequently no time is left for sports activities. This practice contradicts with the opinion expressed by parents on the purpose and importance of games and sports in schools.

"The covert message received by children is that games and sports are insignificant and incomparable to academics."

The role of socialisation is clearly visible from the participation of girls and boys during lunch break and on holidays. Amongst children who spent time playing in the morning hours on holidays, majority were boys (5/8). Also more boys (6/9) were reported to make an effort to play during lunch as compared to girls (3/9). Even before children make sense of the world, the environment is conditioned by the gender expectations of the adults around them. Gender role socialisation is strengthened in home and school by encouraging and discouraging certain behaviour. So girls are expected to remain calm and composed and not to indulge in acts of aggression which affects their choice of play and also the frequency and time of play.

A look into the way of general games and sports period is conducted provides a window to understand more about the facilities, opportunities and encouragement for sports in schools.

Modes of Conducting Sports Period

In most of the schools (16/25), students are allowed to choose and play the game which they like without any interference from the sports teacher. Students are free to form play groups on their own using any criteria they like. Students reported that they generally played with their friends which comprised of same sex peers. In some schools (6/25) the entire class plays together a particular game chosen by students. Here, the entire class plays as a group without any segregation on the

basis of sex. In both the cases, the sports teacher does not participate either as player or as supervisor.

In few schools (3/25) students are allowed to play on their own and some selected students are trained in a particular game by the sports teacher. One of the sports teachers of these three schools mentioned that their specialisation is only in a particular sport and hence they tried to train 'required' students in it to form a good team for the school. While training, the sports teacher engages in the process of close observation, and gives feedback to the trainee student.

These modes are not particular to any school. Occurrence of these modes is dependent on various factors like school policy on the activities in sports period if any, availability and orientation of the sports teacher and the specific time on the school calendar. So, there is a possibility that the same students/class may get to experience all these modes on different occasions in the same academic year.

There is "no" or very "limited" interaction between the students and the sports teacher when children are playing the sport of their own choice with their peer group which is the dominant mode of conducting games and sports classes. So, a majority of students do not have the opportunity to learn technicalities of the game, and to improve skills and performance under the guidance of the sports teacher. It is important to note here that for a majority of students in India school is the only place where they may learn and participate in organised sports activities.

Beyond the Routine: Dramatisation of Routine

All the schools organised Intra-school Sports Tournaments and also participated in inter-school

"It is evident that only a handful of students who are considered useful and valuable for representing the school are trained or provided with opportunities for learning (sports)."

sports events. Teachers and principals emphasised that it is ensured by the school that every student of primary classes participates in at least one event. In middle school and secondary school level no such efforts are made. It was found that sports competitions are organised for interested and selected students. Students also shared that they like to participate and they do participate but most of the times they get eliminated in the preliminary rounds. This is bound to happen due to lack of understanding of the technique and skills of the game which requires guidance from an expert.

Children said that selection for participation in the inter-school tournament of students is done by the sports teacher on the basis of his/her observation of students during sports period or sports day. Sports teachers argued that since they have seen most of the students play throughout the year, selection does not pose any problem. It seems that a child's natural abilities and physical advantages like height gain utmost importance in the selection process in the absence of any efforts by the teacher to understand and know the potential and passion of students which need a process of continuous observation and feedback.

Students selected for participation in inter-school tournaments undergo special training sessions in the school. These are conducted either early in the morning or after school or during the zero period. Principals mentioned that for the inter-school training, expert coaches are hired as guests to help students improve their game. It is evident that only a handful of students who are considered useful and valuable for representing the school are trained or provided with opportunities for learning.

Concluding remarks

It is evident that access to the sports facilities is dependent upon the school that children attend. This choice of school is affected by the socio-economic position of their parents. Schools catering to children of higher socio-economic strata seem to be more conscious and considerate of their policies on sports and health. In this scenario the 'masses' are left on

their own without any intervention from any social agency.

The mode of conducting games and sports periods and the process of selection of students seems to convey that sportspersons are born and not made, neglecting the role of training and development. It suggests

that schools are being led by the narrow vision of achievements at the inter-school level ignoring the interests and needs of the average student. Such practices also discourage children and parents to consider sports as a career choice.

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**Usha Mukunda
nee Iyengar**

“Do you know what my favourite part of the game is? The opportunity to play.”

- Mike Singletary,
American football star and now coach

The crowd roared with glee and within seconds, a tall, bespectacled man dejectedly elbowed his way out of the steamy hall. “The king is dead, long live the king,” I heard him mutter as he pushed past our curious stares. I was 12 years old and had turned up at the YMCA, in Calcutta, for my very first Table Tennis match. The man was Kalyan Jayant, reigning champion of Bengal for many years who had just been dethroned by the teenager, E. Solomon. I did not take in the implications of his statement then, but as I progressed in the game and in my ranking, that moment came back to me over and over again. Why? I think it epitomised so many things. The ephemeral nature of success and of failure too, though we do not always see failure that way. The fact that success and fame in sports is so heady and ego-building, that it is very hard to accept that it will not last. And finally, *what is the relationship we have to the game which will endure when the steady supply of laurels is over?*

Enjoyment in Physical Activities and Games:

I cannot think of any young child who does not run like the wind when given the chance. It is a spontaneous, joyful outburst and celebration of the body. But as the child grows older and goes to school, structure and filtering comes in. There are teams and matches and winning and losing which becomes all-important. Medals, prizes, positions and fame start rearing their heads and too soon, there are those who can and those who can't. The annual races and contests in school are almost always fraught with tension. Parents vie with one another to see whose child gets the medals.

So I feel that enjoyment both for the victor and for the vanquished begins to be tinted with other shades! Too often, schools relegate and restrict this activity to after school hours and only for those who are especially good at it. The right thing to do, I feel, is to ensure that games and sports are woven into the curriculum and are totally participative and celebratory. So games are played by all, teachers and students, irrespective of their prowess at it. The attempt is to convey the sheer joy of physical movement, energy, exuberance and special skills inherent in each game. So there are keenly fought games, played with great intensity, but no ill-will or deliberate rough play.

“The atmosphere is one of fun, camaraderie and sweat! Is this an improbable dream? It is a happy talent to know how to play”.

R.W. Emerson (Journals. 1834)

It is possible that for some children, acquiring skills in particular games does not come easily. At times, allowing them the flexibility to try out different games, helps them discover an arena of enjoyment. An excellent physical fitness programme would give them another angle to be in harmony with their bodies. Different kinds of sports and games can emanate from the physical well-being of the body. So a balanced mix of all these ideas would have the best impact on the child. This is the approach that Centre for Learning, Bangalore, has been happily wedded to right from the start of a young child's life in the school, which has resulted in every child and young person being physically active and looking forward to the games hour with joy.

Competition and How it Plays Itself Out in The Sports Arena:

There is a notion among many, even those who abhor competition generally, that it has its place in sports and games. Many strongly feel that a child will push towards excellence when faced with strong opposition. There is a different way to look at that. When we play with a person who is that much better, there is an instinctive urge to push oneself to play to that level

and in table tennis and probably other racket sports, it would be right to say that a lesser player benefits from playing with a better player. But it is more about reaching out for that impossible shot, taking care to shape a stroke which will score, or pausing to think what best strategy to use. So playing for points may well achieve this desired state BUT it is important for the coach or teacher to be wary of this becoming the only reason to play the game. Many times, I am asked by a student tongue-in-cheek, “You say you don’t support competition, but how come you are fighting for every point and trying so hard to win?” Any takers for that question? To me, it would be unthinkable to go out to that table and play casually or in a lackadaisical manner. *When I am at the table, I play my best, give all my attention to the ball, the rallies and my strokes. Each point is vital. I owe that to my relationship to the game.* But if every victory or defeat hangs on me and shadows all that I do, then something is rotten in the state of that relationship!!

“As a sportsman, I accept being beaten. Everybody likes to be a winner, but only one will win. It’s fun to win! But I don’t find unhappiness if I lose.” Kipchoge Keino. Two-time Olympic athletics gold medallist from Kenya

Role of Parents, Teachers, and Coaches in The Playing of Sports and Games:

We have seen any number of parents who push themselves and their children to harsh schedules and privations. Coaches too become obsessive about achieving success for their trainees. Is this inevitable, and do we feel it is all worthwhile when an euphoric Djokovic chews the grass at Wimbledon? Somewhere there is a disconnect, I feel. *Talent in a particular game or sport begins with a genuine passion for the game. As the young person goes deeper and deeper into the caves of competition, does this love survive?* I recollect Andre Agassi revealing his state of mind when tennis began to seem like a monster. Is there a point where love turns to hate?!

Speaking for myself, I began with a strong love for the game. There was something natural to my body to

hold that racket and juggle the ball. There was joy and there was never weariness or boredom though there was physical exhaustion. Now that the hurly-burly’s done, I feel that my relationship with the game has deepened. When I play there is a wonderful feeling of well-being. So can we look for that when a child begins to play a game? How? Since I have informally interacted with children and Table Tennis for many years, I can recognise a player who is out to score and looks at his or her prowess as a tool of superiority. Such a child is bored to help a weaker player and wants to ‘get on’ with his/her game. Almost as soon as a few rallies are done, he/she wants to keep score. Then there are those who constantly wish to challenge others to a match! I am not decrying these children. A sensitive teacher can guide them to the right way to play both in skills and in attitudes. Many do respond but for some who can only look at laurels in the present, I feel that years later they may not really be too interested in the game. There is no enduring relationship.

In our play we reveal what kind of people we are. Ovid. (The art of love)

The sports arena offers tremendous opportunities to discover in what frame of mind young people play a game. The child who is consistently angry, violent or dejected when faced with defeat can be helped by an adult who can bring a perspective to the situation. It is important here to differentiate between a ‘lecture’ on sportsmanship and a dialogue to uncover what is going on in the child’s mind. The latter has more scope for true learning. Similarly, if in other aspects of school life, a student is dysfunctional, but shines in the games field, this is a window to reach the child and talk together in a very different atmosphere. When I had trouble communicating with a child, suddenly in the Table Tennis room, I found myself in perfect harmony with him/her!

My Reflections on Coaching:

As someone who has coached children at more than one school, my focus is on their learning about the intricacies of the game and getting a glimpse of the



beauty in it. At the same time, I try to help them learn the basics and perhaps show how they might grow in their skills by being aware of the role their whole body plays in this growth, being attentive to the ball and the opponent's movements. I have the hope that very soon they will feel a body-mind connect with the game and feel a sense of joy in playing. For me that is

what it is. Pure joy! As the years rush by, I may not be able to make all the daring and breathtaking strokes I used to, but I can still do them in my imagination and that is what I aim at. The actual strokes and accuracy may have diminished but the exhilaration I still feel has not! So my intent is to convey a flavour of that to every child who plays the game with me. I clearly recollect that my introduction to Table Tennis was exploratory, unbroken and immensely leisurely. I discovered a table tucked away in a corner of the family club and played for hours contentedly with Niruwa, a tennis ballboy of my age. In a school setting, that is not always an option, but is it still possible to convey a whiff of that to the children who play? *Whatever the 'talent' quotient, can every child relate to games in this way? Can sports and games in schools be excellent, enjoyable and inclusive?* For those schools or group of educators who are clear that they wish to bring in these elements, there is good news. It can be done!

Reading suggestions:

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Hriday Kant Dewan
Preeti Misra

In the last couple of decades, there has been a surge in interest about the place of sports in our schools. Cricket, football and hockey have always been popular sports but more and more people are becoming aware of other international sports due to satellite television. The recent Commonwealth games in India have also added to this interest. Until quite recently, only a few sportspersons benefitted from their talent because it allowed them to use the sports quota for admission to higher education institutes or in finding jobs. With a growing number of sportspersons acquiring celebrity status, sports is also being recognised as a respectable, lucrative career option. This in turn has led to a growth in the avenues for learning skills associated with sports and numerous private sports coaching academies and camps for students have been set up

1. In recent years, the government has become relatively more conscious of the need to have good sportspersons
2. It has promoted many sports institutions and set up special schools to train children in specific sports.

A small section of parents are prepared to spend money to ensure that their children get the best coaching and opportunity to practise. In some ways, the motivation for this is not unlike that for providing children extra tutoring in school subjects. The impetus of all these activities is the desire and hope to be eventually considered capable of being selected for playing at the international level.

However, in the minds of students, teachers and parents, sports still has low impact. The fact is that by and large we still look for occupations that are considered secure and long term. Occupations in sport require

more in terms of initiative, practice and performance and are thus seen as less attractive. Options of such safe occupations are limited and require getting into higher academics. The anxiety to see their wards in 'good, safe, white-collared' jobs makes many parents think that time spent on sport is a waste. The bulk of parents and teachers still consider sports a major impediment to children doing well in academics. Not many schools make the effort to involve all students in sports and instead focus on producing individuals, a team or teams that can win matches and win tournaments. Providing opportunity for all children to participate in sports is not considered necessary. Sports is not seen as a part of the development of the personality of the child. Instead, many of those who do participate in sports see it as a means to get into a secondary occupation.

Government Policies and Programmes

From National Policy on Education 1968

(15) Games and Sports: Games and sports should be developed on a large scale with the object of improving the physical fitness and sportsmanship of the average student as well as of those who excel in this department. Where playing field and other facilities for developing a nation-wide programme of physical education do not exist, these should be provided on a priority basis.

Similarly, the NPE 1986 spoke about development of comprehensive capabilities and the value of physical activity. As an outcome, under Operation Blackboard, schools were provided a football and some other assorted sports materials. While all this suggests a recognition of the importance of sports, the implementation was superficial. The sports equipment, much like the equipment for music and for reading, was of



Changing the Face of Sports in Education/Schools

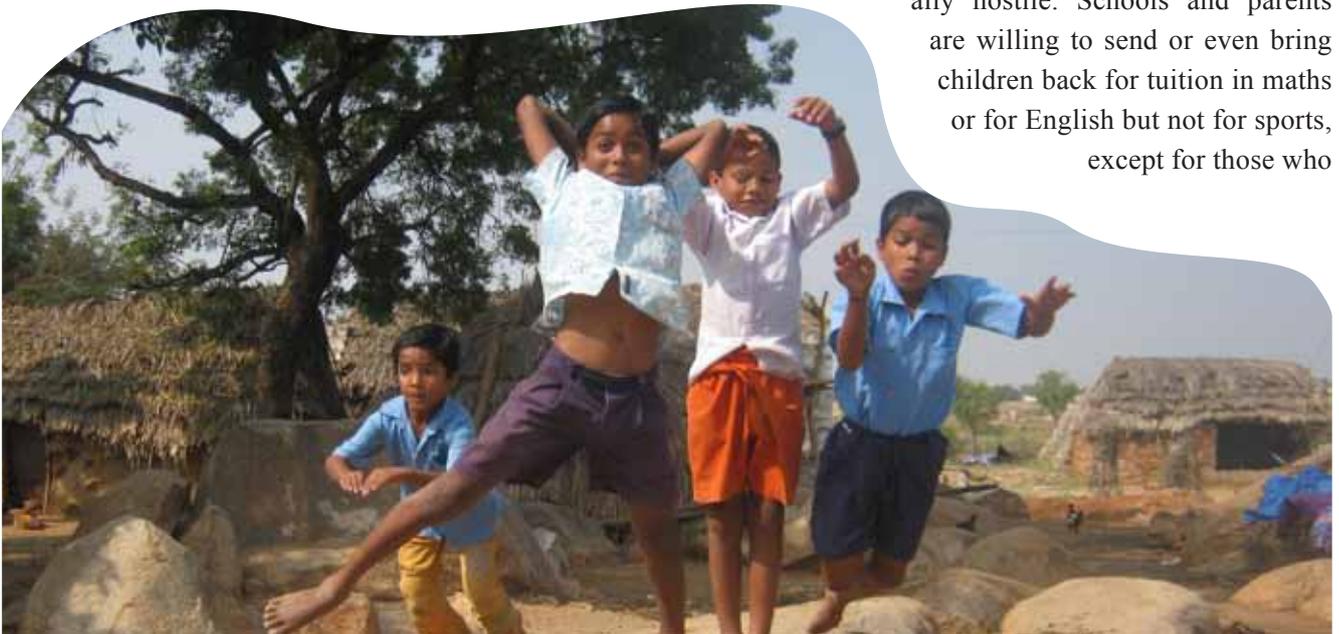
poor quality and did not reach the schools in a usable shape. The rules made for the stock entry and preservation of the material were such that no person could feel confident of using it. It was only much later that some of these stock entry rules were relaxed but no further sports materials was provided to the schools. However, neither the educational community nor the parents perceived this as a serious concern.

For example, the alternative for education, the Nai Talim movement was conscious of developing many values in the child. The key points included cooperation, participation in the economic and social life of the local community, respecting oneself and all other human beings, and being sensitive towards the environment. In spite of emphasis on head, heart and hand, Nai Talim did not have any element of sports in it. It included creative work, included responsible craft work, doing manual activity to recognise its worth but no sports. It tried to make working with hands respectable and valuable. The joy of creating and being socially useful added to the flavour. But it did not include another kind of 'H' and that is health. More recently, nutrition has been included as a component for younger children but it does not have much else. We must keep in mind that Nai Talim's principles would demand that the programme of health has to be a part of the complete whole. It has to develop the

health of the child but cannot stand separate from the rest as an add-on. There is another concern as well. This programme of health development has also to have some happiness in it.

While we speak about the goal of all round development and the slogan 'healthy mind in a healthy body', there is no one in the controlling system, or among the users, or in the schools, who is convinced about the relevance and importance of these. Sports is not an agenda of vital importance for most educators and therefore no concrete and clear plans have been formulated for making sports possible for all children in a school programme. Attempts at revitalising the elementary education in the country through the DPEP and the SSA, and the more recent attempts to revitalise secondary education have not included sports as an important component.

In the Indian context this is extremely important because the common view about education is that it is distinct from 'play'. Education is supposed to be a serious engagement that requires an element of forcible discipline as well. It is only recently that we have started talking about engaging classrooms that permit children to shift, move and actively participate in the classrooms. In this scenario the attitude to sports, which is considered to be a pastime, is not just of mere indifference but is actually hostile. Schools and parents are willing to send or even bring children back for tuition in maths or for English but not for sports, except for those who



would form the district or the state teams and are looking at sports as a profession.

The extensive exercise of developing a National Curriculum Framework of Education in 2005 noted the need for physical education. In recent years, the importance of physical development during early schooling has gained ground. The recognition that nutrition forms an important part of the physical development led to the mid-day-meal scheme. It is now a national programme and was perhaps also started to keep children at school longer and even to attract them to school.

In the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) development exercise, a position paper on health and physical education was also drafted. It is notable that this paper does not refer to sports at all.

Physical Education As Opposed To Sports

In order to reflect upon the need and the possibilities of having sports as a part of the school programme, it would be useful to identify key aspects of a sport. Physical training (P.T.) programme that schools currently have may include regular physical exercises and in some cases even regular yoga classes. They may also have a nutrition and health programme. This in some sense also completes the requirements as laid out in the NCF-05. We need to, however, ask if this is enough. Is there any difference between this kind of training for physical development and attempting the same through participation in sports?

We may argue that physical exercises are more organised and have a more predictable outcome. The programme can have a calendar as well as trackable outcomes. This however, does not help develop the joy of co-operating, competing 'without stakes' and learning to try one's best. A good organised sport would also have its routine of exercise but much more. Sport has a framework of spontaneity and provides a variation of experience. The lessons that sports can teach are many. In contrast, for many children physical exercises are repetitive, dull and only add to the routine of the academic programme.

P.T. exercise gives no desire for strategising, planning and attempting to stretch one's self in order to achieve a goal. Team sports offer a possibility of building leadership, cooperation, planning and strategy. The choices available and decision making required in sports exercises the mind as well as the body. P.T. and yoga have exercises that also help the mind to discipline itself, and in this respect they resemble regular academic studies more than sports.

The focus of P.T. programme also becomes evident from the other functions that the instructor performs. In all schools, one of the most important roles of the P.T. instructor is to maintain discipline. He is often delegated to punish children and one form of punishment is to make children to do some physical exer-

Physical exercises are more organized and have a more predictable outcome. The programme can have a calendar as well as trackable outcomes. This however, does not help develop the joy of co-operating, competing 'without stakes' and learning to try one's best. A good organised sport would also have its routine of exercise but much more.

cise. It is not surprising therefore, that children look at the P.T. period as a punishment and being with the physical education teacher an unpleasant interaction. The instructor is also trapped in his role, and is often feared by students even if he is pleasant-mannered and cheerful. Sports on the other hand provides a situation where teachers can participate with children and interact naturally. They can express joy and frustration like the other players and break the barriers of distance and form.

For elementary schools some amount of P.T. is helpful to organise and discipline children's mind but they also require opportunity to relax and freely express their energy, which sports can help them do. As children grow, the engagement in the school requires effort and concentration and there is a need to break that routine with something that is important but is not in

the same genre. These can be games, sports or creative craft activities.

Games Vs Sports

Games act as a pastime and an engagement that refreshes the mind and breaks the routine of formal abstract learning. Games such as 'buzz', 'mathsie' and antakshri, can be a part of the maths, language, EVS or any other programme. In fact many of the activities for different subjects can be created in a format that resembles a game. There are other games like chess, ludo, carom which develop strategising and motor skills and help develop a sense of chance as well. These, however, are generally individual and do not involve working in a group. They also do not have much physical activity. There is a rich variety of games both at home and in school and they can be modified to serve many purposes but cannot serve the same purpose as sports.

Sports in Schools

For a long time in Indian school education, activities such as crafts, arts, music, and theatre were a part of the school programme but treated as extra curricular. Subsequent to the New Education Policy 1986, the concept of socially useful productive work (SUPW) became a part of educational parlance. All schools were expected to have regular space in the timetable for SUPW but even here sports were denied any space.

While there may have been a softening in the attitude of parents towards sports due to an increasing awareness of the job opportunities, the educational institutions themselves fail to mirror this attitude, even with the increasing use of the term all round development. This is largely due to two independent factors. The prominent role of schools is seen to function as sieves for higher education, particularly for professional education. The fear



of being excluded from this professional club implies that only a few students devote their energy to being good in sports.

The second factor is that organising sports of reasonable quality requires infrastructure as well as expenses in terms of coaches and teachers. It also requires space in the timetable. It is no surprise, therefore, that few schools have sports programmes that involve a larger number of children. Some schools have infrastructure and equipment but they restrict themselves to working with a few students who are good in sports. The energy is spent on attempting to make these children excel and become part of the district, state or national teams.

What Kind of Sports

It is also important to consider what can be the nature of sports given the limitations of the school. There are sports that require a lot of time and others that are brisk and of short durations. There are some that require a lot of preparation and equipment and others that are not so elaborate. In some, only a few children can participate at given point while in others many can be simultaneous participants. While all of us are free to choose our own options, these have to be managed within the school programme and have to include all children. These two requirements eliminate sports that require elaborate preparation.

If a lot of equipment is required or long drawn ground preparation is needed, it cannot be sports for all. Watching a cricket match can be very relaxing and enjoyable but the spectators can't be considered as participants. Cricket particularly is also not suitable as a school sport in terms of the time, field and equipment requirements. It may be better to avoid sports which can only engage a few children at a time. It would turn most of the other children into spectators.

Even with limited resources, if the

children are allowed free time and given some material they can innovate and create their own games and in fact that is what all children do and have been doing. So why at all have any manner of organised sports? The improvisations in such games do not give children many elements that sports can and it is precisely this reason that we need to recognise. It is important to guide them to organise their sports so that they learn to play better. The school must make an attempt to ensure that everyone is playing and it is not only the best that play and form the team.

It is perhaps also important to consider whether sports that we have in schools should be with a sense of competition or should be without that entirely. There can be a lot of tension among players in sports and situations of individual competition. However, since it is also true that exerting to win is an important part of self-development, we cannot separate playing to win and struggling for it.

Sports has an important role to play in the lives of girls. The idea of fun and time to play may not be something that is as easily accepted for girls as is for boys. For girls the reluctance to jostle and physically push and pull even each other may be socially and culturally ingrained. Improving the status of sports in schools may provide the impetus necessary for break-

ing some of these taboos in the minds of girls and their parents. Any policy formulated and programmes designed must ensure the participation of girls as well as boys.

Conclusion

Sports is a refreshing activity that engages the whole person and develops the person in a natural process. It is not only about the intellect, the strategy, the appreciation of change, but also the physical movement and coordination. Sports makes one strive to excel at every step.

It is important to have diversity in choices of sports which match the culture, experience and temperament of the children. We need to think about robust team sports that do not require much materials or preparation and can also fit the school time table: sports such as kho-kho and volleyball that involve most of the students and do not require big fields or elaborate equipment. Sports teams in school should have shifting members and the emphasis must be on doing the best rather than merely winning. This will include helping children to understand ethics of sports, its implications for life and help them in relating to each other as well. This can and must bring together teachers and children in an informal setting as equals.

Notes and Reference:

1. A simple Google search for “Sports academies in India” sends up the names of several private sports academies many of which have been set up in the last two decades.
2. Indian Railways to set up 5 Sports Academies in India <http://www.breakingnewsonline.net/sports/954-indian-railways-to-set-up-5-sports-academies-in-india.html> accessed on 09-09-2011
3. <http://education.nic.in/policy/npe-1968.pdf> accessed on 09-09-2011

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Saumil Majumdar

This note takes a look at the hard reality of school sports across the country and recommends the interventions needed to ensure schools develop a generation of healthier, fitter and physically active children. This comes at a time when data from a study on sports skills and fitness assessments covering 19,797 children in 73 schools across 39 cities throws light on the shockingly low level of sports skills and fitness levels among children.

The starting premise: Shockingly low levels of skills and fitness among children

- 61% of Indian school-going children are growing up without the right fundamental skills needed to engage in sports. This covers locomotor skills (to run and hop), manipulative skills (to throw and catch), non-manipulative skills (balancing) and spatial awareness (awareness of self-space and boundaries)
- 43% of the children have less than ideal levels of physical fitness (identified with unhealthy BMI)
- The poor skill and fitness levels are seen consistently across the country with no significant difference between metros and non-metros.



Snapshot of an Assessment Session in Progress

These findings are drawn from a comprehensive assessment tool implemented by EduSports as part of its structured sports/PE curriculum in schools. The tool helped measure progress towards the goals of the curriculum, led to diagnosis, identified remedial action and further led to enhancement of learning.

Almost half the group (48%) was not fully proficient in running, 64% were not proficient at hopping, and a whopping 71% of children were unable to throw or catch properly. These are only a few of a large group of skills, classified as locomotor, manipulative, non-manipulative (or balancing) and spatial awareness skills that are fundamental to any physical activity or sport. The inability of the children to perform these basic skills well, coupled with the low levels of fitness, puts these children at a risk of not enjoying physical activity/sports and over the long run becoming inactive as adolescents/adults.

It was also found that 56% of the children are not fully aware about their self-space and general space or boundaries that exist around them. This translates into them being unable to interact seamlessly with the people or objects in their environment. At an aggregate level, 28% of children showed a shockingly low level of proficiency across different skills and needed significant interventions to reach acceptable levels of proficiency in these skills. This can be delivered through an age-appropriate and inclusive physical education programme in schools. No significant difference was noted between boys and girls when it came to locomotor and body management skills. However, boys came up a notch higher when compared to girls on manipulative skills such as dribbling balls and striking different objects.

The fitness parameters counted for the study included aerobic capacity (or endurance-recorded by making children run/walk for 600 metres) and anaerobic capacities (measured by making children cover 30 metres in a sprint), body/muscular strength (measured by sit and reach activity, sit-ups, standing, long jump), flexibility and body mass index (identifies children as underweight/healthy/over-weight and obese).

43% of the children assessed had unhealthy body composition (with scores above or below the healthy BMI scores). Among the entire group of children, 24% recorded higher than normal BMI scores indicating signs of over-weight/obesity. Coupled with poor flexibility scores (again, 57% recorded average to poor scores) this group of children are probably at a risk of suffering from problems related to their back as they grow up.

Thus combined together, poor levels of skill development and low levels of physical fitness are a potent combination to deter children away from physical activity and play as they grow up. All this coupled with unhealthy eating habits (junk and processed foods) and the lure of sedentary options available for children to entertain themselves (television, internet and video games) puts an entire generation of children at risk of growing up to be inactive and unhealthy adults.

It is indeed disheartening to see that skills like running or throwing, which we took for granted a couple of decades ago, are now deficient among today's children. It is only natural for anyone to move away from an activity that they do not possess the skill for. Logically, more children opt to play less and spend more time indoors because they are unable to play. While building skills for sport is important, one cannot ignore the low physical fitness levels of children. If kids are unable to run or jump for long, they will be happy to settle on the sofa. Together, parents and school authorities must work to change this.

Focus on Fun and Engagement- The Paradigm Shift needed in School Sports

The realisation that children play to have fun and not for anything else comes at a time when parents are getting increasingly concerned over their children's health and fitness and society is seeing an increasing level of child obesity and associated physical and psychological ailments. While physical activity is a great remedy to overcome these ailments, it is important to figure out the right way to ensure all the children in school are fully engaged in regular

physical activity.

The design of a remedy should start with understanding what a child's body and mind are 'designed' for. A lot of health and fitness programmes start with the adult context - and thereby miss out on the key elements that will work with children. Kids, for example, should not be going to gyms. Their bodies are not designed for such highly structured, repetitive activities as well as weights. They should not diet. While there is a certain balance necessary for any person, diet as a means of weight control for children is inappropriate, given that the child's body is developing. Children are designed to play. And this is how nature ensures that children stay healthy and fit! Having figured out that play is the natural thing to do, the next challenge is to figure out how to ensure no child is left out. School



sports programmes generally are unstructured and are focused on supporting talented children/the school team. In this process, a large number of children who do not make the cut get excluded or do not have fun while playing. So, how can we ensure that they are having fun?

Some of the key elements are:

1. **Age-appropriate play equipment:** For each age, there is a certain level to which a child can manage particular equipment. In basketball for example, taking an adult level basketball for small kids will ruin their technique for life. Children will start throwing the basketball like a shot-put!

2. **Inclusion:** The activity should ensure that all the children are included - and is not designed for those children who already have a sporting ability. This ensures that all children stay interested in the playing experience - and don't switch off from sports. Having the right number of equipment and running a structured plan in every session that has specific objectives/outcomes covering each child ensures all the children are involved while playing and no child is excluded.
3. **Introduction to fundamental skills:** It is important that some time is spent on ensuring that children learn the fundamentals before engaging in game-play. In the absence of the foundation, the sporty kids will outperform the rest - and the remaining kids will not enjoy the experience.
4. **Rewarding small wins:** In addition to helping children with the skills via inclusive and age-appropriate tools, it is important to record the progress seen and reward even the smallest of improvements seen (need not be competitive at all!). This encourages children to set the bar higher and constantly improve.

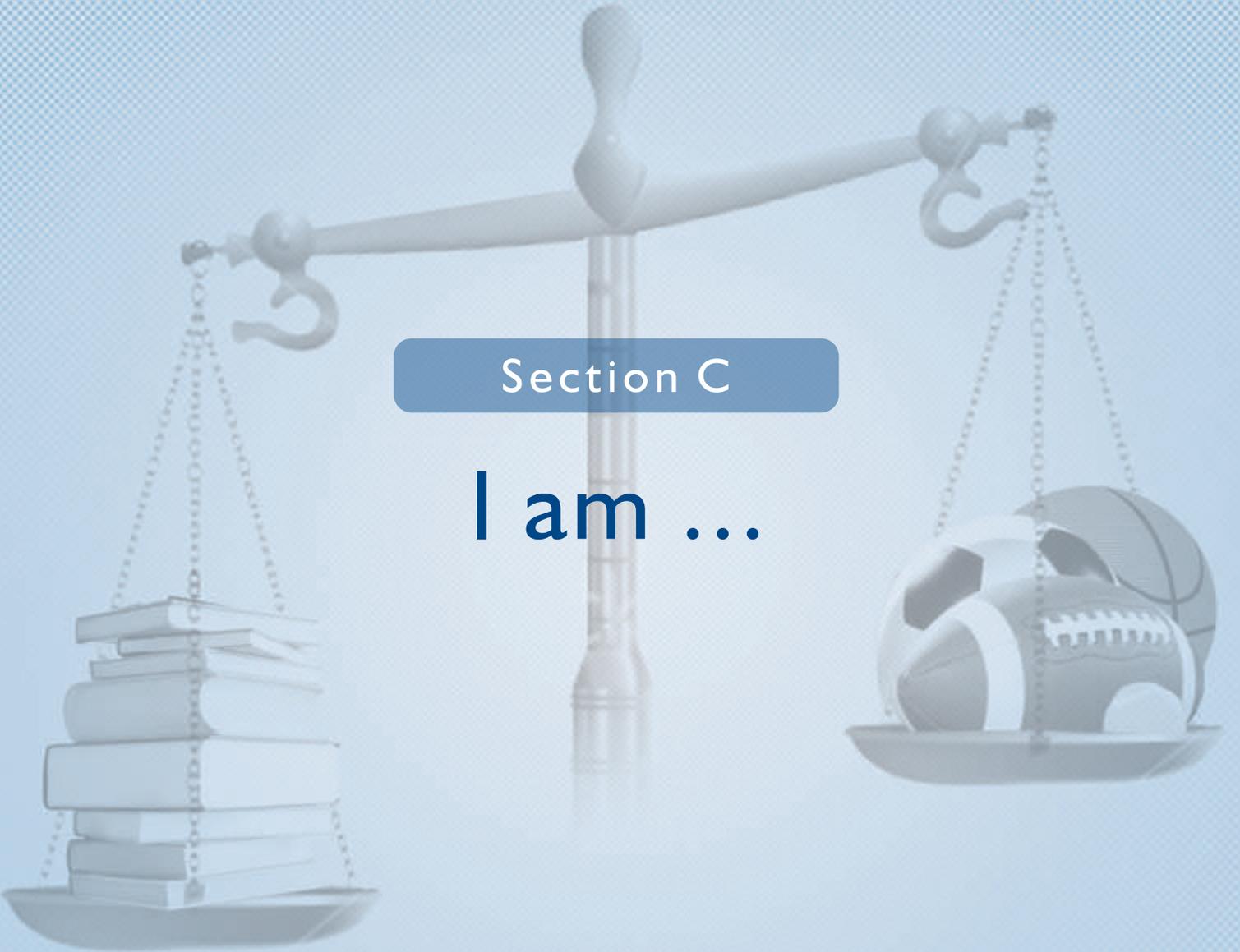
Conclusions

As adults (parents/school leaders), the next time we see a child not getting excited about physical activity and sports, we need to take a moment and analyse the nature of the sports experience provided to the child. There might be some simple, yet startling answers there!

Saumil is the Co-Founder and CEO of EduSports, India's first and largest school sports education enterprise. He believes that schools are the ideal partners for developing a generation of healthier and fitter children equipped with key life-skills – through the magic of sport. Saumil is also the Founder-Director of SportzVillage and was the Founder-CEO of QSupport (one of India's first remote tech support companies) after his stint at Wipro.

He holds a B-Tech degree from IIT-Bombay and an MBA degree from IIM-Bangalore. In addition to conducting workshops in many leading schools in India, he has also been a guest lecturer at IIM Bangalore, ISB Hyderabad, Laxmibai National College of Physical Education, Trivandrum and TiE (The Indus Entrepreneurs). Saumil holds a Basic Mountaineering Degree from Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (Uttarkashi). Saumil was in the Maharashtra badminton team and in the IIT Bombay football team.





Section C

I am ...



Kruttika Nadig

Professional sports and schooling rarely rub shoulders in the Indian context. Most schools are happy to see their students bring back inter-school shields and trophies but the enthusiasm generally wanes there. One can hardly expect much more from a marks-oriented system where extra-curriculars are dispensable embellishments on one's CV.

My experience as a fledgling chess player was not very different. I picked up the game at the age of eight and became a regular tournament player a few years later. I went to a school that had a formidable reputation for producing board exam toppers with brisk efficiency. Each leave application was accompanied by repeated requests to the principal to let me travel and play.

It's not that schools don't appreciate sporting talent. It is just too low on their priority list. Unless the player's exploits are splashed all over the newspapers, there is little hope of being taken seriously. Consequently a player gets very little support and encouragement before his first break, which can take years.

There is no sure way to convince a school management that your child, who doesn't have a championship to his name, is promising enough to play tournaments outside of town. And yet anybody with a shadow of a sports background would know that exposure to challenging national and international events is one of the key factors in producing a champion.

Having said that, there are enough ways to get around a rigid school system for the strong-willed. My mother's persistent visits to the school authorities, armed with a new press clipping or tournament circular each time, eventually paid off and my attendance requirement was relaxed.

There was no question of special classes or re-exams however. I would return from a one-month circuit tour and find myself floundering in a pile of notes while the class had raced ahead. Joining tuitions was impractical given my erratic schedule, and it was only in the last few months of class 10 that I stayed put at home and engaged a private mathematics tutor.

Learning from experience, my parents admitted me to a progressive international school in class 11, far away from the yoke of the central board. Lesson plans were fluid and each class threw up discussions which did not always link to a previous class - a setup that suited me perfectly.

My new school, headed by a very understanding man who waived my annual fees along with the attendance requirement, had evolved from the dark ages and gave me the option of emailing assignments to stay in the loop while on the move. While I had complete freedom to play I was also accountable to some excellent teachers who expected equal effort from me in studies as well.

A common perception about chess players is that they must be very intelligent – though I have friends who would beg to differ – and as a result we cannot get away with playing the dumb jock. The game builds enough qualities to help players cope with their academics. It may or may not have a direct correlation to mathematics but it certainly improves a child's concentration, memory and logic tenfold.

I am not sure how physical sports would impact academic performance, but I believe that any sporting activity contributes to an all-round personality which would go much further in the world than a mere 90%. The exposure gained from being a part of a global community that meets in different locales to play a game it collectively loves, cannot be quantified.

If nothing else, children should at least take up sports as a stress-buster which can teach them that there is life beyond exams. Those who make it beyond the amateur level also learn how to take highs and lows

in their stride while in a competitive environment - something no academic curriculum addresses.

Meanwhile, many of my chess-playing friends had dropped out of school to devote their days to the study of the game. I stuck to the system as a good education was non-negotiable in my family. There was a price to be paid of course as I could never completely be in one place.

One of the major impacts of my itinerant lifestyle was the time voids it punched into my personal relationships. Classes 7 to 12 are the years when one often makes lifelong friends, and I largely skipped that episode of school life. Had I been a basketball or hockey player I would have doubtless found companionship in my teammates, but chess was very different.

Individual games are essentially lonely. One can form strong bonds with other players whom one travels and trains with but it's impossible to let your guard fully down. There is a rival in each friend, and few feelings are as twisted as losing a championship to your best friend or winning it from her.



Being an individual sportsperson in a school can be either limiting or liberating depending on how you look at it. Unlike a school football or basketball team, individual sportspeople have to try harder to get the necessary permissions. Hardly any school offers free coaching for games such as chess, which is far more resource-intensive than you'd imagine. But at the end of the day the individual player gets to claim his achievements and future opportunities all for himself.

The nature of a player's sport also shapes his trajectory after school. I find that I prefer to work alone and take on the entire responsibility as well as the risk, while team players might work better in coordination with their colleagues. Which of these approaches succeed depend on whether one's workplace is more conducive to teamwork or to individual creativity.

I am glad that my family didn't let me give up on an education despite all the juggling I had to do. I know players who have achieved tremendous success in their game but cannot have a conversation outside of it. People make choices according to their priorities but life, by my books, is too rich and full of possibilities to be confined to one dimension.

In retrospect, I don't think there is much more that my school could have done to support my chess career. Not all institutions have the means to set up a fund for talented sportspeople though that would be the dream. I did not play a game which required top-class grounds or facilities for practice in the school campus. All I needed was the occasional pep talk from a teacher, the smiles on faces which saw me after long gaps, and the curious questions about my exotic tours. Which I got, mostly.

Kruttika Nadig is a Woman's Grandmaster, and the National Champion in Sub- Junior, Junior and Senior women categories. She is also an Asian Zonal Champion in the Senior women category, and has represented India in several international events, the last being World Women's Championship 2010, in Antakya, Turkey.



Chikkarangappa

If anyone ever told me about eight years ago that I would be the best junior golfer in the country I would have laughed. Having been born and brought up in a village (Rangegowdanna Doddi) near Bangalore to a family that did not have much, being a professional golfer was far from a dream.

My first introduction to golf was at The Eagleton Golf Resort near our village. I thought that this game was hockey with a lot less running around. When I asked friends what the game was all about they tried to share with me what they knew of the game, though never forgetting to add the disclaimer “it is not a game for poor people”. Yet, the game intrigued me and I always wanted to know more.

Intrigue perhaps is the best form of currency, because my curiosity led me to a job at the Gold Course as a ball boy. Spending hours on the course I overheard lots of instructions and tips, though none of it made sense, as I did not understand the language. Slowly but surely progressing up the ladder, I started to work as a caddie on the course. And that is when things started to change.

Observing the form and style of all the players, I began playing at the sides of the ranges. I practised during weekdays with a wooden golf club that I hand crafted, in the fields of my village. One day, while hitting a few balls on the range, my current coach Vijay Divecha saw me play and mentioned that he noticed my good swing and that I should consider the sport seriously. His suggestion while it was sincere was impossible to take up because I knew that this was a ‘rich man’s sport’. I had to stay away only because I could not afford it. But surprisingly that was not an excuse that Vijay Sir wanted to hear, he gathered that I was interested and then persuaded the committee at

the Eagleton Golf Resort, to help me explore golf at a professional level. I was ten-and-a-half years old then, a poor boy with a great swing and an angel of a mentor on a playground called the Eagleton Golf Resort.

The Eagleton Golf Resort has ever since been a big influence in my life. The people here have supported me since I was ‘a boy from the village with a wooden club’, never once treating me differently because I was just a caddie or didn’t know the language.

Recognising the talent I had, Vijay Sir suggested I become a professional golfer. I did not know how to react to that - happiness at the prospect of doing something I loved and apprehension at the thought that my family may not react very encouragingly. According to my family, I was working at the golf course to earn money that would support my studies. Playing golf was a far-fetched dream for them. So when I came home to tell my mother that I had been given an opportunity to play and possibly look at playing professionally, she very adamantly asked me to forget about it. She was so mad at me even thinking about it, that she refused to speak to me. So, I went back to the resort and told them I couldn’t play anymore because my family was just not open to the idea. But as I continued working, I couldn’t stop myself from trying to play golf on the sly. With my mother having no clue that I was playing golf at the range, I continued to slowly and surely practise every day. And then I was caught – an uncle of mine had seen me playing when he knew it was not allowed and had gone and sneaked to my mother that I was disrespecting her orders. She was furious! She yelled her heart out, reiterating the fact that the sport was for the rich man and that my duty was to study and get a degree. In between the tears and the fighting, I begged for a year off from my studies to just concentrate on the sport. I also laid down the ultimatum - that if I did not achieve anything significant in that year, I would forget about the sport for the rest of my life and only concentrate on studying and working. I don’t know if it was the ultimatum or the continuous persistence that changed my

mother's mind, but she finally relented and agreed to the year off. That day I felt like 'the king of the world.' My family's support and acceptance means a lot to me. If my mother had continued to stop me from playing, today I wouldn't be the champion that I am.

During my first tournament in Ooty, I came second. That win surprised everyone. Then, I thought to myself that maybe I was really good at golf and I would be able to achieve something in the future. When I was competing in my second tournament, I was playing against some of the best players in India. I won that tournament, defeating Khalin Joshi, one of the best golfers in the country then and a close friend today. Everyone was shocked and surprised that I had the talent to defeat the best player. It was that confidence that helped me in the following tournaments.

At the end of my first season, after each tournament I would sit and read through my diary where I had made notes about my wins. And I would be absolutely amazed - it all did feel like a dream! The biggest dream was playing against Khalin and defeating him. After this I realised that I should try my hand at national level tournaments and competing at a higher level.

I played my first national tournament in Mumbai. This was a time when I did not understand English or Hindi, which was a huge disadvantage. It was impossible for me to even understand the caddies who were trying to tell me something about the game. Apart from the language barriers, I was extremely shy and frightened during practice because this was a national tournament – some of the best players of Indian Golf were participating on the same course as me – it was intimidating – extremely intimidating. I won that tournament! Yes, I did, and apart from being my



first national title, the win helped my confidence immensely. That is the day I told myself that, 'no matter what happens, I want to be the top player in the world.'

The victories also helped my parents appreciate the sport. From not knowing anything about the sport they were now advising me on how to 'work hard, have faith and practise harder'. After seeing me in the top three at various tournaments, they were happy to be part of my achievements. They would feel extremely proud of me when they would see my name in the headlines or my picture in the newspapers. Relatives and other people in the

village would come home to congratulate my family and they would be glad to know that I had achieved a lot of success. Which makes me very happy as well, because now I see how proud my parents are of my achievements.

There are so many talented children who do not come from privileged households. Yet, they become great personalities. Take for example, my idol Sachin Tendulkar, who has not completed his education and is the world's best cricketer. Even Praveen Kumar and Vinay Kumar do not come from well-to-do families, yet they have made a mark for themselves in cricket. Children who show an interest in sport, not necessarily golf only, should be allowed to do whatever they want to. Now that I am at point of my career that I can progress further, I am on the lookout for talented children in my village. I want to train and help sincere and interested people. While they do not have a coach, I like to at least teach them the basics of golf with the ultimate aim of creating a player who is better than me!

Playing golf has changed my life drastically. I have now become a 'gentleman' and learned how to behave in public. I have developed social manners. Now

I know how to dress appropriately. I have developed language skills and can speak in Hindi and English. My outlook towards every aspect of life has become positive. I feel myself getting mentally and physically stronger.

Sport has also taught me a lot of values. During my game in the earlier days, I used to be an angry player, a sore loser, not appreciating anyone's victories but upset that they had defeated me. I just could not accept any sort of defeat. Eventually, my coach and family explained to me that losing is a part of sport. So the most important value that sport has given me is to be humble and accept victories or losses in the same manner.

Sport has also given me an opportunity to develop bonds of friendships and to be a humble human being.

I believe in working hard so that you can enjoy your life while you're smiling, all the time!



*As a rising amateur golfer of India, **Bangalore's Chikkarangappa** has not only dominated the Junior Golf circuit but also gone on to carve a niche for himself as a talented amateur golfer. He is the youngest player to win the All-India Amateur Golf Championship in 2010. He has also won the All-India Junior title, becoming the only proud owner of both - the junior and senior titles. With his excellent stroke play and humility, Chikka is on the rise to sports stardom.*





Aditi Mutatkar

Badminton is not just my game, it's what defines me. It makes me who I am.

I started playing in Mumbai when I was nine years old. My dad was an active player in our colony and would play outdoor badminton with his friends. It was he who introduced me to the game. After I started beating him and his friends at the games, he let me participate in my first ever school tournament - where I secured third place. The following summer, I joined a summer coaching camp under Santosh Kshatriya and, in exactly two months, I won my first 'under 10' state tournament. My romance with badminton began then and is still going very strong.

I believe that playing a sport is a great leveller. In this, you are only as good as your form on the given day. It's a very tough life. You work harder than ever before and there is still no guarantee that you will get the desired result. You might still lose. The only thing you have to do is get up the next day and stretch your limit to work hard.

And the same logic applies to your victories. Even if you are the champion, you have to work twice as hard as your opponents to stay there. Everyone out there wants to beat you and you have to be strong enough to defend the champion tag. My sport has made me a very tough person. In all of my 14 years spent on the court, I have done everything short of killing myself to achieve my goals. I have achieved a little and am trying to achieve the rest.

A badminton player leads a life of discipline. Literally, my life has become a time table. I get up at 6.30 in the morning, meditate, have milk and fruits, head to the court to train for three hours, get back home, write my journal, have lunch, then take a nap for an hour, get

ready for my next session, train again for another two hours, come back and have dinner, write my journal, have milk and sleep by 10.30. I do this day in and day out, six days a week. On Sundays, I get to watch a movie, or meet my friends. I have never seen this lifestyle as a sacrifice. For me, this is the only life I know and I have no complaints. The court is my place of peace.

For me, sports is not about winning and losing. It is a way of life. I have had my share of victories and losses and, after years of experience in the sport, I have learnt to deal with these. What I find tough to handle are the injuries. India is not a sports-oriented country. But we are slowly getting there. We still don't have professional centres to deal with injuries. Sports injuries are totally different from the normal injuries and so they have to be dealt with differently. The diagnosis and the operations may be the same but the rehabilitation and treatment are totally different. Awareness of sports rehabilitation facilities is still lacking. It is very difficult to find personal trainers with specific knowledge about sports injuries. The very few that we have are either very difficult to spot or extremely expensive - especially for a middle-class girl like myself.

So when I had my first major fall six years ago, and broke my right knee (to be specific, I had an anterior cruciate ligament tear and a completely ruptured cartilage), it was a major setback. I was 17 years old then. I think my parents were the ones who suffered more than I did. At that point I was not sure if I would ever compete again. But I was determined not to let the injuries stop me from achieving my dream of being the best in the sport. I made my plans for treatment and found a good doctor (Dr. Sundresh from the Ramaiah Hospital in Bangalore). I still remember our first meeting. He looked at my knee and sat down on his chair. I had gone to meet him with my friend's mother, as my parents were in Pune. The first thing he said was that it was pretty bad and would need to be operated upon. I asked him when I would play again and he replied that it would take me at least a year to

get back on the courts. I wasn't expecting a wait of as long as a year and so, I was silent for a while. He said, "If you really want to be back to normal, a year is nothing." I looked at him and I told myself, I just need to believe him.

I was operated the next day. My rehabilitation started after a week. I got my programme from him and the doctors helped me till I could walk without my crutches. The real test started from then on. I got back to Pune and I had no idea about my rehab. So I started gathering information from the doctors I knew and from the Internet. I also spoke to senior players who had faced similar problems. I tried to find personal trainers but I couldn't find anyone, and people I did find were too expensive. I couldn't really burden my parents with that kind of expense; neither did I have any sponsors. It was very clear that I had to find a way out on my own.

Even though, as an outsider, this period of my life could be seen as unfortunate, it was in reality a blessing in disguise. It made me independent; it pushed my limits and showed me what I am capable of. It made me understand how important this game was to me, and made me humble enough to realise the importance of living life in each and every moment. My greatest good fortune was having the right people around me. My coaches never gave up or showed any sympathy. They never consoled me, nor did they question my future. They told me that self pity and sympathy would not help me. "The only things you have to ask for are solutions. You find your solutions and start working on the problems with the belief that anything done with honesty will always take you towards your goal," said one of my coaches.

I followed my path and came out with flying colours. I achieved my goals of becoming the national champion in all the age groups and being the world No. 27 in 2008 (presently I am 102) and never used my injuries as an excuse. My game has taught me that if you believe in something, then you just go ahead and get it. Nothing is impossible if you really want it.

A player gets to travel around a lot. At 23 years of

age, I have seen nearly 40 nations. I travel alone often, without a team or my parents. I feel privileged to have explored numerous countries, experienced their cultures, food, and languages. I have always loved travelling and my game helps me do that. Today, if I am more confident and better equipped than most



girls my age, my game is solely responsible for that. I know that I can live in any condition and survive, even in foreign lands amidst strangers.

Throughout my journey, the greatest gift that my game has given me are the people I have met. I have worked under Prakash Padukone, Vimal Kumar, Hemant Hardikarand and many others. I have seen them live their lives with extreme humility and integrity. They have never let their achievements change the people they are. They have taught me to play the game for the love of it, not just for the money or the fame. They have dedicated their lives to the game and continue to do so even today. People like them have always raised the bar for me, not just on the court, but off it too. They have had a very humbling effect on me.

I have infinite reasons to thank badminton. I think every child in India should get an opportunity to pursue a sport. Sport should be as important as academics. It builds your character, it teaches you to lose as gracefully as when you win. It makes you



independent and helps you believe in your abilities.

Today, in India, we have thousands of engineers and doctors but we don't see those numbers in sports. We still tend to follow the easier path and follow the crowd. I am hoping that I have given some good reasons to pick a sport as one's career.

If being good in studies gives you a good salary, being a sportsperson gets you the salary, and in addition, strengthens you to face life with all its drawbacks and sorrows. Let us help our children choose the path less travelled and bring glory to our nation.

Aditi Mutatkar has been the national champion in all age groups, the under-13, U-16, U-19, and also the national badminton champion of India. On the international circuit, she has reached the finals of the Bitburger Grand Prix 2008. She was also the semi-finalist in the Bulgarian Grand Prix and the Dutch Grand Prix 2008. She has also won a Commonwealth Silver Medal at the Commonwealth Games 2010, held at NewDelhi.





Rohan Bopanna

To feel a sense of pride and self confidence, to be able to represent India at the Davis Cup, to hear the pride in my parents' voice, to experience a sense of personal contentment and to have the ability to give back to the people and sport that have formed an integral component of my being—these are priceless for me, Rohan Bopanna, a professional tennis player.

My father, a sports enthusiast encouraged me to start playing tennis when I was eleven. Having played various field-based sports at school, tennis seemed like another exciting option to spend time out in the field. With an innate talent for the sport and with a strength that was a boost to my game, I started to consider formally training in the sport, moving to Bangalore and then to Pune to learn my game. My academic learning was always in parallel to my learning of the sport. However, academic choices were made based on the flexibility of the institution in allowing me to practice my passion, tennis.

Being a professional tennis player, and more importantly the journey to become one, has been an educational experience that has made me the person I am today. I have consciously chosen the medium of sport to educate myself in the ways of the world. Tennis and the training that goes with it have taught me a sense of personal independence and confidence. It has given me the ability to set standards, making me goal oriented and focused.



Some people learn to sustain the volleys that constitute their lives in school and college followed by a desk job that ensures them a source of survival and livelihood. I considered the possibility of playing a sport outdoors as a means to sustain myself and live a healthy lifestyle.

I understand education to mean learning from the experienced and translating that learning into my day to day existence on and off the court. I find the matches always seem more challenging than the practice games. My aim is to ensure that my serve is strong enough to get the ball across the net and to persist, capitalising on my strengths as I go along.

Sport is an education when it is actively encouraged and when there is genuine interest in a person. I started out as a reserved young child, but sport has made me more interactive and receptive to my surroundings. I am able to adapt to people and situations and have learnt to appreciate my surroundings. Tennis has given me the opportunity to be a global citizen, travelling across the globe and allowing me to meet a diverse group of people in the process. To be there in person and experience the diversity and share one's experiences is an overwhelming and fulfilling experience. I remember my match against Roger Federer in 2006 began with me very nervous but as I immersed myself in the match, it emerged as a game that was both challenging and interesting.

Sport as part of an academic curriculum would be a great balancing factor in helping a person grow and focus more on one's strengths.

A sports career versus a career driven by academia is one that should be based on a conscious



decision taken by a person. Both careers require a need to set standards and goals for oneself. But I decided I would rather wake up every day to a healthy and wholesome existence that ensured I saw the light of day and the outdoors.

A wholesome regime, driven entirely by internal strength and focus towards the game, has aided my growth as a person. Playing doubles tennis which requires the meeting of minds and an understanding with another player helps create understanding and bonding. The essential need for both players on the team to perform in harmony makes for great team building.

Tennis is my passion and conviction and I play the sport, marking each day, enjoying each milestone and setting a further goal to wake up to every day.

***Rohan Bopanna** entered the professional tennis world in 2003 as a big-serving 23-year-old who promised to change the face of Indian tennis. After seven years of competing in prestigious tournaments (both national and international), he has cemented his position as a major force to reckon with, particularly in the international doubles circuit and in the singles in the Davis Cup.*

In the year 2010, Rohan Bopanna reaffirmed his place in the tennis circuit as a finalist at the US Open 2010 and a quarter-finalist at Wimbledon. Rohan is a member of the Indian Davis Cup team and was instrumental in their memorable victory in the Davis Cup tie of 2010 against Brazil.





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**Azim Premji
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A publication from
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