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“Yoga enhances sports performance”

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Abstract

Present study has been done to explore benefits of yoga in other sports. Every sport has its basic skills, which can be improved with training. But this is possible only if training is safe and injury less or injury free and focused. Yoga helps sports person to achieve his/her targets by reducing chances of injury and increasing focus, with the help of yogic asanas, pranayama, concentration and meditation. Various quality research papers on yoga and sports has been explored during the study and results are yes yoga enhances performance by reducing injury chances.

Keywords: Yoga, Pranayama, Mindfulness, flexibility, balance, coordination, injuries, strength

Introduction

Yoga is an age old practice done by Indian saints to bring harmony in mind and body. Pranayama strengthen body by bringing flexibility in joints to make skeletal muscles pliable and youthful. Yoga makes strong mind body connection, keeps mind released and focused, enhances self confidence, reduces stress and anxiety. A competitive sports need all these qualities in an athlete to make him an elite athlete.

Many international clubs uses this ancient technique of yoga for enhancing performance of their players by adding yoga in their weekly training schedule. Yoga is preventive as well as therapeutic in nature. It helps athletes to play safely and without injury.

In every sports certain specific group of muscle works. This results in overuse of that specific group of muscles, tendons, cartilage etc and results in injury to that specific part of body for example tennis elbow, stress fractures, shin splints, bursitis etc. Yoga benefits in reducing such injuries in sports persons. But one question comes in mind how yoga benefits from injuries, To answer this question first we have to understand what are the necessary requirements to play a sport rather to play safe sport.

It is well known fact that to play any sport whether it is athletics, football, cricket, Tennis, Badminton etc. Needs to develop basic skills and then to refine the skill by continuous practice. This refining of skill requires ample of time, commitment and enthusiasm along with focused and relaxed mind. If these requirements are not accomplished by an athlete, skill can't be refined and performance can't be increased and a player can't be elite.

Methodology: For the present study various national and international journals were searched for research papers related to yoga and sports For example International journal of Physical Education, Sports and health, Yoga point.

Results and discussion: After searching lots of research studies related to yoga and sports, results found that yoga helps in increasing performance and reducing injuries by making body strengthened and reducing stress and anxiety.

Strength and Flexibility: While performing yogic asanas there is stay in every asana this results isometric contractions of muscles. These contractions develop tension in skeletal muscles, during stay in asana this tension is being transferred to internal organs. This procedure helps in strengthening muscles, tendons, joints and then making internal organs healthy.

Enhanced muscular and joint flexibility results in greater range of motion. More flexibility and range of motion helps in reducing injuries in players during practice and then in competition. For example more range of motion of shoulder joint helps in pulling more water during

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swimming and reduces chances of overuse injuries (Polsgrove *et al.* 2016^[5], Sharma 2015^[1], Bal and Kaur 2009^[8], Ryba 2006)^[6].

Balance and coordination

Balanced and coordinated movements of body parts during any movement helps in enhancing performance. Balance and coordination are two important parameters which are mandatory to excel in any sports and reducing chances of injuries. Balance and coordination in movements during play can be increased by practicing yogic exercises i.e. asanas and pranayamas as yoga involves movement and balance of body with the coordination of mind. This improved balance and coordination helps in refining the technique of any sport (Iftekhhar and Rahman 2017, Umesh and Suresh 2018^[11], Biharee and Lehange 2017).

Calm and focused mind

Any sport cricket, athletic, swimming, football, hockey etc. requires focused mind of its players to develop better decision making capabilities which help sports person to take crucial decisions during the competition. Better and productive decisions can only be taken with calm and focused mind. If mind is restless or anxious decisions cannot be productive. To achieve calmness of mind yogic practices of pranayama, concentration and meditation is very helpful. This increases focus and concentration which results in clarity of mind to take productive decisions. Meditation reduces level of stress and anxiety in players before and during competition (Heckman 2018^[2], Colzato and Kibele 2017^[3], Woodyard 2011)^[13].

Conclusion

From the above discussion it has been found clear that yes yoga definitely helps in improving sports performance in different sports and reducing chances of injuries in players by making stronger muscles, more flexible joints and ligaments, focused concentrated and calm mind.

Yoga plays a pivotal role in cultivating stronger and healthier mind and body connection which helps the sports person in performing better than best in their respective sport. Thus yoga should be an important part of training schedule of a player.

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