

STRESS RELATED PROBLEM IN SPORTS

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Introduction :

Modern life is stressful. Many events of our daily lives have been found to produce signs of stress. We experience stress when changing jobs, residence, duty, schedule etc. Psychologists, define Stress as the body reaction to anything that threatens to damage the organism. Stress can be caused by disease or germ and noise pollution or the physical danger faced by a sports man during training, coaching and competition periods. A sports man basically deals with Physiological and Psychological aspects that manifest as somatic complaints such as overloading, training and busy schedule which cause fatigue. Injuries pre or post tournament. Up to a certain level, the sportsman improves in performance, to a measurable extent, but there eventually comes a point when the training is too much. The sportsman becomes more and more tired and eventually breaks down. This breakdown is often seen in the form of body pain, irritation, loss of appetite, poor sleep pattern, accompanied by a susceptibility to infections. Conversely, the sportsman who has the right training load seems full of energy and is hardly ever ill.

What is stress?

Generally we use the word "stress" when we feel that everything seems to have become too much—we are overloaded and wonder whether we really can cope with the pres-

ures place upon us. Stress is caused by two things. Primarily it is down to whether you think situations around you are worthy of anxiety. And then it's down to how your body reacts to your thoughts process. This instinctive stress response to unexpected events is known as 'fight or flight'. Stress happens when we feel that we can't cope with pressure and this pressure comes in many shapes and forms, and triggers physiological responses. Anything that poses a challenge or a threat to our well being is a stress. Some stresses get us going and they are good for us- without any stress at many say our lives would be boring and would probably feel pointless.

Sports and Stress

Stress has been identified as crucial in sports, influencing performance as well as social functioning (Jones & Hardy, 1990). Increased anxiety and burn out are symptoms which have been associated with inability to manage stress in sports, as well as decreased self esteem and performance difficulties. As the study of stress in sports has continued to develop, research has primarily focused on the sportsman's experience. While a focus on the sportsman may be appropriate, it could be argued that there are other individuals who have to perform, such as the coach. In more recent times, it has been highlighted there are multiple roles that coaches must assume and there is no doubt that these higher number of demands will be associated with stress for the coach. Because of this, several researchers have devoted study into the stressful nature of sports coaching. As the technical, physical, organizational, and psychological challenges involved, coaches should be regarded as performers in their own light. Coaches' performances are often judged by the success of their athletes so it is therefore not surprising that coaches experience stress as a result of these growing demands. Take Manchester City FC Manager Roberto Mancini for example. Surely the ever going off the pitch antics and attitude

of former City striker Marino Ballotelli would have put numerous stressors on poorol' Roberto, such as selection issued and overall attitude on and off the pitch to get best out of Mario's potential.

Common signs of symptoms of stress

Under stressed condition, sympathetic component of autonomous nervous system is aroused though an impulse from the hypothalamus leading to the following body responses.

1. Breathing becomes faster to provide more oxygen to the body.
2. Heartbeat increases for blood circulation.
3. Blood vessels are dilated and blood pressure increased.
4. Sweating increases.
5. Skin resistances decreases
6. Muscle tightness and tension are increased.
7. Process of digestion shut down as blood is diverted away from stomach towards skeleton muscles.
8. Dilation of pupils occurs to allow more light into the eye.
9. Mouth dries up, because the salivary gland becomes dry.
10. Shaking of the limbs, because peripheral blood vessels are constricted.
11. Immune system becomes weak.

Effects of Stress on Performance and Behavior of Sportsmen

1. Become upset, irritated and impatient.
2. Become confused in tackling situations.
3. Lack of Concentration and memory weakling.
4. Anxiety increase.

Physical Signals of Stress

There are outward signs by which we can guess or judge that a person is in stress.

For Examples :- Biting nails, Clenching fists, Clenching Jaw, Finger tapping on chairs/table, Grinding teeth while sleeping, Wrinkles on fore-

head or tensed forehead, Frequently yawning, Tapping feet on the floor, Shaking legs while sitting on chair, Shallow Breathing or upper chest breathing. Loss of appetite. (Mc Even Bruce 2002)

Types of stress

There are three major types of stresses that sportsmen experience. Stress to most Sportsmen is challenges or problems in sports life such as during busy competition or training long hours, or missing family and friends, job or finance. Effects of stress on the body, is a normal physical response to events that make us feel threatened or upset. The stress response is the body's way of protecting us, when working properly; it helps us stay focused, active and alert.

1. **Emotional stress :-** This is something a sportsman can rarely control, but he or she can adjust other aspects of their lives so as to diminish the total stress load. During times of great stress, one should use training as a form of therapy. As Rudyard said, 'if you can fill the unforgiving minute with 60 seconds worth of distance run...' I would have recommended 40 minutes worth, myself. One should avoid serious competition when under great stress, though non-serious competition is fine. Most of the time recreational games are the best reliever of emotional stress. Gossip, Singing, Joking, Dancing or watching movie etc. can also help.
2. **Training or Coaching Stress :-** Training must be progressive, and very gradually progressive at that. The increase in volume and the introduction of new training methods must all be done gradually, with one phase merging into the next. There must be regular pauses to make sure that the body can adapt to the extra load before increasing it further. Each hard session must be followed with recovery time before the next one is attempted. It is a mistake to try to improve quality and quantity at the same time. Train first for the distance, and then improve the quality. Sometimes suddenly changing a

coach or coaching pattern may increase stress for the sports person.

3. **Competition stress** :- Since competition is at the heart of sport, one would never say 'avoid competition', but I would say 'select competition', and the selection must take into account the other stress in your life. One can train to cope with competition stress and the thinking athlete or the thinking coach- will plan out a competitive series in which the challenge gradually increases. As each challenge is successfully met, the athlete confidence grows, until he is ready for the highest level. One must realize that going into this level carries with it the strong possibility of failure- something which the up and coming young athlete may never have met. Being able to handle failure and come back again is the most valuable lesson sport can teach you.

The concept we have to bear in mind is the Total Stress Load. For the athlete the formula is: Lifestyle Stress + Emotional Stress + Training Stress + Competition Stress = Total Stress Load

Stress Management Techniques in Sports

There are a few simple guidelines when sportsmen is stress increase.

1. Competition stress should be avoided, and training should take the form of therapy hard or easy, according to how you feel.

2. Need of regular physical exercise – However great the pressure on sportsmen, some time should be set aside every day for physical exercise. Thirty minutes a day, five days a week, is the minimum.

3. Diet and Rest – Even when not taking part in sport, a sportsman should monitor himself His/her eating and sleeping pattern should be as regular as possible. A daily check on sportsman's resting pulse and a weekly check on weight will tell if anything is going wrong.

4. Aerobic activity- All it takes is 20 minutes worth of exercise, six to seven days a week. Twenty minutes won't carve a big chunk out of

your day, but it will improve your ability to control stress significantly.

5. Yoga and Meditation – In Yoga and meditation activities, sportsmen relax as their body increase the amount of muscular work. Recent studies have shown that when large muscle groups repeatedly contract and relax, the brain receives a signal to release specific neurotransmitters, which in turn make him/her feel relax and more alert.

6. Recreation sports like – Boxing, volleyball, football, and any game which we do not play as serious sport, is termed as recreational sports. These games require the kind of various activity that rids your body of stress-causing adrenaline and other hormones.

7. Performance psychologists – It's branch of psychology that studies factors that allow individuals, communities and societies of flourish. Recently, performance psychology has included the study of the psychological skills and knowledge necessary to facilitate and develop peak performance into best practice for sports, business, fitness and the performing arts.

Conclusion:

Sport and games relieve us from stress. People who watch as spectators also benefit from it. So Participating in a sport can be a helpful way of reducing stress levels and increasing feelings of physical and mental well being. One might feel like one is simply too busy or too stressed to join an organized activity, but engaging in a solitary sport can also provide stress relieving benefits. Regular exercise should be a part of everyone's regular stress management routine due to its numerous physical and mental rewards. Physical Education, Fitness trainer and Coaches are constantly experimenting on their sportsmen, whether consciously or unconsciously, by seeing how much training they can take. Time to time sports men can contact their coach or psychotherapist or sports medicine physician or stress management advisor for