



SIGNIFICANCE OF YOGA IN SPORTS MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT :

This paper aims to suggest that just a few years ago, if fitness enthusiasts wanted to try out a yoga class, they had few options. Today, yoga seems to be indispensable on the program schedules of most health clubs, personal training studios, YMCAs and corporate fitness centres. Apart from many other forms of training, the practice of yoga reveals over time to make obvious many layers of physical advantages and personal revelations. Now, more and more people are discovering the myriad ways that yoga can be used to improve athletic performance—from increasing mental concentration and ameliorating flexibility and balance to combat against common injuries and holding skills in a particular sport. Whether by creating an entire training program for elite athletes or by simply integrating a few yoga poses into an existing group fitness class, fitness professionals at all levels can use yoga as an effective cross-training tool for their own athlete clients.



KEYWORDS : Yoga, sports, sports management, sports performance, athletics,

INTRODUCTION :

In fact, the practice of yoga was first initiated and further developed in India and has undergone gradual evolution over thousands of years. Yoga disciples use poses, or *asanas*, to prepare their bodies for meditation practice—much as an athlete would prepare for a sports competition. The poses also serve as a means to change one's consciousness and mental emphasis in the spiritual search for "enlightenment." This spiritually transformative process is, in fact, the overriding purpose of the practice of hatha yoga. Essentially, yoga is conceptualized to bring body, mind and spirit into balance.

Through the practice of yoga, elite athletes and weekend warriors alike can benefit from this type of balance. This is especially true when athletes have pushed their bodies to the max, resulting in weakness or injury. Yoga can restore a weakened body and build it back up. Yoga postures breathe work and inner focus can help rebalance, strengthen and restore overtaxed muscles, joints and ligaments. Through this restoration process, athletes can increase their career longevity and develop an inner balance that will last a lifetime. Balancing the mind, body and spirit is a primary philosophical principle of yoga. It is considered the true way to honour the body.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) To state that The Eight Limbs of Yoga are essentially important in the sport performance as well as sports management.

2) To enable the performer to decide on the Right Yoga Style.

ATHLETES AND YOGA:

Athletes in all sports are becoming aware that conditions of yogas not only elongates tight, shortened, fatigued muscles but also brings calmness and clarity to the mind. Some athletes start the practice to rehabilitate an injury and to gain more flexibility, stability and strength. Others take it up to increase their powers of concentration and quiet the mind. And some do it because they don't want to miss out on what everybody else is raving about! The reasons are many, but the results are consistent.

The Eight Limbs of Yoga

Yoga is composed of many layers, all of which can enhance athletic performance. These layers are referred to as the eightfold discipline, or the eight "limbs" of yoga. These eight limbs form the main principles of yoga, as follows:

Yama refers to universal ethics.

Niyama refers to personal ethics.

Asana refers to posture.

Pranayama refers to breath.

Pratyahara refers to withdrawal or quieting of the senses.

Dharana refers to inner focus or concentration.

Dhyana refers to meditation, reflection or observation.

Samadhi refers to absorption with the whole being, or absolute enlightenment.

While athletes can benefit from all these principles, and they are all equally important to enhancing athletic performance, fitness professionals teaching yoga should focus on the limbs that fall within their area of expertise—for example, *asana* (posture), *pranayama* (breath), *dharana* (inner focus) and *dhyana* (meditation).

Athletes can benefit from these limbs just as they benefit from other tools they use to optimize their performance. For example, tennis player intent on making contact with the ball and returning it to an exact spot on his opponent's side of the court is exhibiting inner focus, or *dharana*. Now imagine that at the crucial moment of play, a gale-force gust of wind picks up, a fan screams words of encouragement and a car crashes in the parking lot. If the tennis player can completely withdraw his attention from these potential distractions and remain steadfast in play, he will be revealing *pratyahara*.

Injury Prevention

One of the best lessons athletes can learn from practicing yoga is how to respect their body's strengths and limitations. This knowledge is essential to preventing sports injuries. Yoga is powerful bio-feedback tools that can help athletes develop better body awareness. Listening to the body and responding to its messages is a way to honour the body and not push it over the edge.

Rebecca Browning is an amateur tri-athlete based in Boulder, Colorado, whose various sports-related injuries have been helped by practicing yoga. "Yoga not only stretches my body but also helps me with better balance and overall strength," she says. "At first, I thought yoga was a way to have a less strenuous workout, but now I find it is often harder than my competition training. After class, I feel much more focused and grounded, and this helps me in my training. If I'm tired, I can pull my senses inward and continue my practice without causing harm to my body. During competition, I can focus on the integration of small core muscles to give me better overall stability."

Deciding on the Right Yoga Style

Hatha yoga is the umbrella term for many different styles of yoga, such as Anusara, Ashtanga vinyasa (sometimes called "power yoga") and Iyengar. These styles are all powerful, dynamic, alignment-oriented types of yoga that are well suited for fitness and sport adaptation.

Depending on their goals and personalities, athletes may prefer one form of yoga over another. For example, some athletes may prefer a style of yoga that emphasizes holding postures for longer durations, while others may prefer a format that emphasizes optimal alignment. Certain individuals may gravitate toward a style that accentuates the spiritual aspects of yoga, whereas others may relate more to a style that emphasizes the physical component. Some will be seeking a gentler therapeutic yoga style that focuses on stretching poses, while others will want to increase their strength and stamina. Finally, some will be keen to touch on all of these elements in one class.

Here's a brief description of some of the more popular forms of hatha yoga:

Anusara. A modern style of yoga that focuses on optimal body alignment, this form is practiced by using the body's strength to keep the muscles engaged while stretching.

Ashtanga Vinyasa. Sometimes referred to as "power yoga," this is probably the most physically demanding style of yoga. It emphasizes strength, flexibility and stamina by combining breath work with a series of poses often done in quick succession.

Iyengar. Considered one of the more therapeutic types of yoga, this style emphasizes alignment through the use of props such as chairs, blankets, blocks, straps and pillows. This style is especially good for novices.

Bikram. Bikram yoga is also referred to as "hot yoga." The focus here is on the repetition of 26 poses, each performed twice. It is typically done in a very hot room, to warm the joints for movement.

Kripalu. This gentle form of yoga focuses on the mind-body connection through the practice of meditation during poses.

Kundalini. Also well suited to beginners, this style merges stretching, breathing and meditation.

Viniyoga. This style is usually taught one-on-one. Students are encouraged to work at their own pace, integrating movement with breathing and awareness.

Starting Sports Yoga Conditioning

Mastering the physical and mental challenges of yoga can be a revelation for athletes accustomed to years of a different kind of training. Most athletes are used to conditioning in a particular way, usually by isolating specific muscle groups with the aim of increasing the intensity and frequency of the training regimen; this kind of conditioning focuses on isolating different parts of the body. Yoga, on the other hand, is based on the principle of *integrating* the body as a whole and shifts the emphasis to the *quality* of the movement. This new holistic approach can reveal weaknesses and imbalances that may never have been exposed before. As you might expect, this will come as a surprise to many athletes who think they are in tune with their bodies.

Yoga for Sports Management

RUNNING

Runners pound and hammer their bodies on different hard surfaces, resulting in injury or overuse to the muscles and tendons of the legs, feet, hips and low back. One of the best yoga poses for runners is *Eka Pada Rajakapotasana Prep* (pigeon pose prep) (see page 38), which stretches many muscles, including the hip flexors, the gluteals and the piriformis, psoas, low-back and groin muscles. Also good for runners are any lunging poses that lengthen the Achilles tendons and soleus muscles—for example, *Virabhadrasana 1* (warrior pose). To deeply stretch the hamstrings, the best choices are *Parsvottanasana* (extended sideways pose) and *Supta Padangusthasana Prep* (supine hand-to-big-toe pose prep), the last of which is described below. (Note: The photo shows the full pose, without the strap.)

GOLF

Golfers need to repeatedly twist their body in one direction to swing a golf club. Mastering the sport of golf requires tremendous strength in the entire torso. To strengthen and flex the spine, try *Utthita Trikonasana* (triangle pose) (shown on page 36) and *Bhujangasana* (cobra pose) (shown below). Golfers can

also gain strength, flexibility and stability by doing twisting poses, such as *Ardha Matsyendrasana* (pretzel pose), which is described below.

SKIING

Skiers often incur injuries in their low back and knees. Skiers also tend to have overdeveloped quadriceps and weak/tight hamstrings. These conditions can be improved by doing poses that strengthen the joints and muscles of the low back, knees and posterior legs. Examples to try with skiers include *Utthita Trikonasana* (triangle pose) (shown on page 36), *Modified Virabhadrasana 3* (modified warrior pose with hands on hips or bent 90 degrees at sides), *Paschimottanasana* (seated forward fold pose), *Supta Padangusthasana Prep* (supine hand-to-big-toe pose prep) (shown on page 36) and *Bhujangasana* (cobra pose), the last of which is described above.

TENNIS

Because of the demands of tennis, players often lose their suppleness in the back and torso and deplete the strength in their shoulders, elbows and wrists. *Prasarita Padottanasana* (legs spread wide, forward bend while standing) is excellent for opening the shoulders; it also deeply stretches the hamstrings and adductors. Other good choices for tennis players are *Utkatasana* (chair pose), which strengthens the abdominal muscles and stretches the Achilles tendons, calves and spinal column, and *Virabhadrasana 2* (warrior 2 pose), which builds strength and balance, especially in the lower body. Another excellent pose for strengthening and lengthening muscles of concern for tennis players is *Setubandha Sarvangasana* (bridge pose), which can be done with or without a strap; this pose is described below.

CYCLING

Due to the nature of their sport, cyclists tend to have very tight hips and hamstrings. Due to kyphosis of the low back, these athletes also need to stretch in ways that flex the spine; poses that address this spinal curvature help increase circulation around the lower vertebrae. Like swimmers, cyclists benefit most from poses that stretch the back and open the chest. Examples are *Bhujangasana* (cobra pose) (shown on page 37), *Dhanurasana Prep* (bow pose prep, with hands reaching toward the feet) and *Ustrasana Prep* (camel pose prep, with hands on the sacrum rather than reaching to the heels). An optimal pose to stretch tight hips and hamstrings is *Eka Pada Rajakapotasana Prep* (pigeon pose prep), which is described above.

CONCLUSIONS

- 1) Today, yoga seems to be indispensable on the program schedules of most health clubs, personal training studios, YMCAs and corporate fitness centres. Apart from many other forms of training, the practice of yoga reveals over time to make obvious many layers of physical advantages and personal revelations.
- 2) Yoga is conceptualized to bring body, mind and spirit into balance.
- 3) Yoga can restore a weakened body and build it back up. Yoga postures breathe work and inner focus can help rebalance, strengthen and restore overtaxed muscles, joints and ligaments.
- 4) Athletes in all sports are becoming aware that conditions of yogas not only elongates tight, shortened, fatigued muscles but also brings calmness and clarity to the mind.
- 5) Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi referred to as the eightfold discipline, or the eight "limbs" of yoga.
- 6) Mastering the physical and mental challenges of yoga can be a revelation for athletes accustomed to years of a different kind of training.

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