

# Benefits of Yoga in Sports

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**Abstract – An ancient practice that originated in India. This practice integrates mind, body, and spirit to promote health and well-being. What is yoga is the question which comes to mind for anybody thinking of starting yoga. Yoga is an ancient system developed over the centuries by the Sages of India. Yoga is a system of training of mind, body and spirit for purification of soul and attaining oneness with the supreme consciousness. The goal of yoga is to calm the mind, ensure better co-ordination of mind and body so that we live a healthy life and experience spiritual growth. Regular practices of asana maintain the physical body in an optimum condition and promote health even in an unhealthy body. Through asana practice, the dormant energy potential is released and experienced as increased confidence in all areas of life, yogasana have in the development of the physical, mental, and spiritual personality, whereas pure exercise only has physical effect on muscles and bones Physical exercises are performed quickly and with a lot of heavy breathing, yogasana are performed slowly with relaxation and concentration. The benefits of various yoga techniques have been professed to improve body muscular strength, performance, stress reduction, attainment of inner peace and self-realization Schools are dynamic setting for promoting health and wellness through various or related areas such as physical education and sports.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Yoga is the art and science of maintaining physical and mental wellbeing that has its origin in India, is among the most ancient yet vibrant living traditions that is getting increasingly popular today. A potent stress buster, yoga is an instrument of self-evolvement and enlighten, through physical and mental well-being. Math-dimension it enhances the quality of our lives at so many levels. One aspect of yoga's benefits is to explore the bond between health and beauty. The word Yoga derived from Sanskrit word "YUJ" meaning to yoke, join or unite. This implies joining or integrating all aspects of the individual body with mind with soul- to achieve a happy, balanced and useful life, and spiritually, uniting the individual with the supreme, Physical exercise in any organised activity that involves continuous participation and effects on whole body. Exercise occupies a leading role in keeping a person fit. It will be quite difficult to adjunct one's life in terms on stress, diet, and sleep and so on without proper exercise. Regular practices of asana maintain the physical body in an optimum condition and promote health even in an unhealthy body.

## FITNESS AND YOGA IN SPORTS

### ◆ Improved Strength

Routine and consistent practice of the various yoga asanas has helped me build strength and improve lean muscle mass. Most notably with respect to several muscle groups under-utilized in my chosen athletic disciplines of swimming, cycling and running. These gains have enhanced core body stability and significantly impeded overuse injury by strengthening the supportive but otherwise under-developed muscles surrounding the more utilized muscles, creating a more balanced and optimally functional overall strength.

### ◆ Balance

As a swimmer, I have always been rather flexible. But my balance is historically horrible. But through a consistent yoga practice, my coordination and balance have improved immensely. Why is this important? Better balance and coordination mean enhanced control over how I move my body, which in turn leads to better technique and form -- the brass ring every athlete spends a career refining, whether your focus is a swim stroke, golf swing, running stride, and jump shot or wrestling move.

### ◆ Agility

The ability to quickly and accurately change the direction of the movement of the entire body in space. In game such as tennis, agility is important to reach the ball in time.

### ◆ Health and Yoga in Sports

Yoga has both preventive and therapeutic benefits. It has been shown to offer both physical and mental benefits to the body and the mind. The many physical benefits of hatha yoga are: it improves flexibility and muscle joint mobility; strengthens, tones, and builds muscles; corrects posture; strengthens the spine; eases back pain; improves muscular-skeletal conditions such as bad knees, tight shoulders and neck, swayback and scoliosis; increases stamina; creates balance and grace; stimulates the glands of the endocrine system; improves digestion and elimination; increases circulation; improves heart conditions; improves breathing disorders; boosts immune response; decreases cholesterol and blood sugar levels; and encourages weight loss. The mental benefits include: it increases body awareness; relieves chronic stress patterns in the body; refreshes the body by relieving

### ◆ Objectives of Yoga in Sports

Health, physical fitness and emotional stability are the objectives which bring yoga and physical education on a common platform for the benefit of the human individual. Health is a more general and comprehensive term conveying the 'feeling of well-being', while physical fitness is a more specific term. Physical fitness is the capacity of an individual to perform a given task at a particular time. Health and physical fitness are not static. They are always changing they follow the law can be maintained only by carefully selected physical activities which are called 'exercise'. The utility of the particular exercise program can be evaluated only in the forms of the effects that one obtained in promoting a particular factor of physical fitness. Trough constant practice of yoga, one can overcome all difficulties and eradicate all weakness pain can be transmitted in to 24bliss, sorrow in to joys, and failure into success and sickness in to perfect health. Determination, patience and persistence lead one to goal.

### ◆ Free Your Mind

The ability to create a stress-free mind is a significant benefit of yoga practice. The physical practice is used as a tool to enhance breath control, which helps improve focus and concentration, allowing clarity of thought and clear decision making. A valuable tool in any sporting arena. Mental practice in any sport will teach you how to gain control of your emotional states, so arousal levels and anxiety don't impede your performance.

### ◆ Meditation is a mental practice proven to

1. Reduce anxiety and stress
2. Reduce cortical levels and increase calming hormones Improve cognitive function
3. Reduce blood pressure and heart rate
4. Increase immune function

These benefits combine to allow for better rest, sleep and recovery, as well as provide the ability to think more clearly under pressure.

### Benefits of Yogic exercises

1. Stable autonomic nervous system equilibrium, with a tendency toward parasympathetic nervous system dominance rather than the usual stress – induced sympathetic nervous system dominance.
2. Pulse rate decreases.
3. Respiratory rate decreases
4. Blood pressure decreases (of special significance for hypo reactors)
5. Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) increases
6. EEG-alpha waves increase (theta, delta and beta waves also increase during various stages of meditation)
7. Cardiovascular efficiency increases
8. Respiratory efficiency increases (respiratory amplitude and smoothness increase, tidal volume increases, vital capacity increases, breath –holding time increases).
9. Gastrointestinal function normalizes
10. Endocrine function normalizes
11. Excretory functions improve
12. Muscular-skeletal flexibility and joint range of motion increases
13. Posture improves
14. Strength and resiliency increase
15. Endurance increase 16. Energy level increases

17. Weight normalizes
18. Sleep improves
19. Immunity increases
20. Pain decreases

### **Yoga Improves**

1. Strengthens deep connective tissue preventing or minimizing injury.
2. Creates an overall body flexibility. Increases range of motion and mobility.
3. Dramatically enhances physical balance by developing the athlete's awareness of his body's centre place, thus keeping their body balanced in action, moment by moment, giving the ability to recover from or prevent falls, while enhancing agility and maneuverability.
4. Improves circulation, massages internal organs and glands for optimum health.
5. The yoga breath circulates and detoxifies the LYMPH FLUID to speed up recovery time from training 15% faster, eliminating fatigue.
6. The yoga breath builds up increases one's life force energy.
7. Enhances sensory acuity, mental focus, concentration, mental clarity, will power, and determination.
8. Dissolves pre competition anxiety and stress. Helps to balance & manage emotions that could cloud focus, concentration & judgment.
9. Trains the athlete gets and stays in the mental zone.

### **CONCLUSION**

Yoga is able to mobilize joints, stretch tissues and ligaments, tone muscles, bring flexibility to the spine and strengthen internal organs. Yoga exercises are based on the formula of stretching, relaxation, deep breathing, increasing circulation and concentration. As such, yoga is beneficial to a professional athlete as it enables them to strengthen their concentration ability, foster a calm and relaxed mind, enhance the mind / body connection allowing an athlete to have greater muscle coordination and fluidity of movement. Yoga is also beneficial to a professional athlete as it positively contributes to the health and vitality of the body, strengthens internal organs such as the heart, lungs and liver and helps to maintain fitness and agility. Yoga also helps to reduce stress

and anxiety, cultivate self-confidence and self-belief. All of these elements are pivotal to sporting excellence and peak performance. Yoga can help a sportsperson to have evenness of mind and control of their thoughts even during stress and/or adversity. Yoga is able to help a person have control over their body through control of their mind. As such, Yoga can play a key role in cultivating mind control and concentration which helps a sportsperson to perform at their peak level.

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