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for 4th Edition of

HPCDP

By Dani Sports
Foundation



EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to this edition of the **High Performance Coach Development Program Newsletter by Dani Sports Foundation**. As the third cohort of our High Performance Coach Development Program concludes, we are proud to feature a series of thought-provoking articles by practitioners at the forefront of Indian sport. These pieces offer a closer look into how coaching philosophies are evolving, how science is being integrated into daily training, and how coaches themselves are adapting to meet the emotional and technical demands of their roles.

We begin with an editorial from **Mr. Imran Nadaph, Vice President for High Performance Sports** at the Dani Sports Foundation, who provides insights into how the evolution in high performance sports has required coaches to embrace athlete-centred methodologies, evidence-based practices, leadership skills, and interdisciplinary collaboration in addition to their core technical expertise.

From theory to practice, **Abhishek Malviya's (Alumni of HPCDP, 3rd Edition)** "High Performance Coaching in Boxing" provides grounded insights from his work at SAI NCOE Rohtak.

Through his experiences with young athletes, he illustrates how a blend of mental conditioning, data-driven planning, and empathetic leadership can reshape performance outcomes.

Next, in a deeply personal and necessary article, an **alumni of HPCDP Edition-3, Krishna Babawala** sheds light on the emotional toll coaching can take—especially in high-stakes contexts like the Olympics. Her piece, "Stress Management Strategies for Coaches," introduces practical approaches to help coaches build resilience and safeguard their own wellbeing.

Finally, Dr. Sukdeb Mahanta, **High Performance Director- SS, SAI, NCOE - Aurangabad** looks ahead. His article, "Virtual Reality Training: Revolutionising Athlete Preparation," explores how VR is not just an innovation but a necessity in modern sport. From injury prevention to immersive decision-making drills, he showcases how technology can expand the limits of what's possible in coaching.

Together, these contributions highlight the multi-dimensional nature of high performance coaching today. Whether you're a practitioner, educator, or program leader, we hope this edition serves as a valuable resource on your journey.

HIGH PERFORMANCE COACH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



The High Performance Coach Development Program (HPCDP) is a national level **online certification program for coaches and performance specialists** working with competitive athletes in India.

Jointly developed by **Dani Sports Foundation, the Abhinav Bindra Foundation, and Loughborough Sport**—the world's top-ranked university for sport—the program focuses on core coaching practices that drive high performance at both grassroots and elite levels.

What You'll Learn:

- Athlete-centered coaching methods
- Mental conditioning & stress management
- Leadership and communication
- Performance planning & review
- Use of technology and innovation in coaching

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Applications Close:

15 JULY, 2025

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Coaching for High Performance:

EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES FOR MODERN SUCCESS

By Imran Nadaph

Vice President for High Performance Sports at the Dani Sports Foundation,



From traditional **win-at-all-costs strategies** to more **holistic models that balance competitive success with athlete development**, wellbeing, and future preparation, the field of high performance coaching has seen substantial change.

In this editorial, **Mr. Imran Nadaph, Vice President for High Performance Sports at the Dani Sports Foundation**, provides insights into how this evolution has required coaches to embrace athlete-centered methodologies, evidence-based practices, leadership skills, and interdisciplinary collaboration in addition to technical expertise.

Coaching in India has traditionally been **characterized by authoritarian control and coach-directed instruction**. This approach endures even as demands for a more ethical, more inclusive and personalized athlete-centered learning experiences increases. Contemporary research however, indicates that today's high performance coaches are increasingly involving athletes in collaborative processes dividing leadership and decision-making roles.

This is consistent with what I have seen in leading our High Performance Leadership and Coach Development Programs over the years for the Dani Sports Foundation.



Collaboration (along with trust and shared outcome) rather than control are more likely to be necessary conditions for securing sustained outcomes.

At the top of this piece, then, I want to ask you a question: How often do you actually find out what your athletes need in order for them to achieve?



From “My Way” to “Our way”

The days where coaches could just teach or scream are long since gone. In today's culture, **ownership is something that our athletes desire greatly!** A common theme with our athletes (and something we see regularly, as research corroborates) is increased commitment when they are involved in the decision-making process for things like designing their training schedules and setting goals. I mean, think of it this way — if someone else was handling every last thing about your job would YOU still be motivated?

The turning point occurs when the Coach implements a **"Dual Management" strategy**, in which coaches and athletes meet once a week to divide leadership duties. It's simple to first oppose this shift by asking, **"What if they make mistakes?"** The fact is, though, that athletes do make errors. But so do we. Together, however, we can learn more quickly. The outcome? Improved accountability, increased trust, and unexpected performances.



Relationships: The Science of Trust

Coaching is about psychology as much as physiology. According to research, **athletes who have a good rapport** with their coaches are **40% more likely to stick to their training schedules**, even when things get tough.

The catch is that, according to a 2023 analysis, 65% of athletes say that their biggest grievance with coaches is "lack of communication."

How frequently do you provide the "why" behind your techniques? When athletes understand the purpose—whether it's injury prevention or skill refinement—they stop going through the motions and start pushing boundaries.

Combining Evidence-Based Practices with Sports Science

Integrating scientific research with real-world application is becoming more and more important in modern high performance coaching. In order to maximise athletic performance, sports science has developed into an interdisciplinary field that combines concepts from **biomechanics, psychology, physiology, and teaching methodologies.**

Another key component of modern coaching is **evidence-based practice (EBP)**, which involves making decisions based on the best available research as well as coach expertise and athlete-specific needs. This method increases the chances of success by using scientifically proven techniques.



Benefits of Evidence-Based Coaching

Research identifies several advantages to evidence-based coaching approaches:

- **Informed Decision-Making:** Coaches make well-informed decisions by using the most recent research to create training programs that are backed by actual data.
- **Personalised Training:** Coaches can create programs that optimise each athlete's potential by knowing how each person responds.
- **Injury Prevention:** Risk factors are identified and preventive measures are put into place with the aid of evidence-based strategies.
- **Performance Enhancement:** Measurable gains are achieved through the methodical application of tried-and-true strategies.

These advantages show that the game's changed. Coaches who want to win (and keep their athletes happy and in one piece) need to mix research with on-the-ground know-how.

Culture: The Quiet MVP Nobody Talks About

Oftentimes, **culture is that sneaky beast** in the locker room nobody really spots until things blow sideways. Forget all those TED Talk slides about “organizational values” and “collective excellence.” It is not just about coaches gaslighting athletes into working harder.



Real winning cultures are messy, weird, and shockingly human.

What separates successful sporting dynasties from hot messes? It's not just Xs, Os—it's the vibe. Are people allowed to talk honestly, or is everyone running around afraid the leadership will chuck them out of the team if they say “I need a nap”.



Let's be honest. If your athletes keep grinding 24/7 burnout is inevitable. Coaches and athletes can both turn into stressed out zombies, and nobody wins—not on the field, not in their heads, not anywhere.

So think about this: Is rest valued in your culture just as highly as effort? We now know that valuing recovery, encouraging candid communication, and occasionally saying, **"Take tomorrow off,"** are all essential components of sustainable success.



Balancing Performance and Development

One of the main issues in high performance coaching is the conflict between **"enhancement of future capacity versus current performance."**

How do you prepare athletes for life after sports and chase medals?



Athletes who participate in programs that only focus on short-term outcomes are 34% more likely to have an identity crisis after retirement.

According to research. However, research also indicates that dual-career strategies, in which athletes pursue careers or education in addition to sports, prolong athletic careers by **almost three years and lower burnout rates by 22%.**

Coaches can create long-lasting performance environments and promote athlete wellbeing by adopting dual career approaches.

Developing Critical Coaching Capabilities

Developing the skills that set great coaches apart, such as fostering athlete-centered environments, incorporating scientific data, fostering high-performance cultures, and managing interdisciplinary teams, is essential to effective coach development.

However, **coach education frequently resembles reading a manual to learn** how to swim. According to research, these skills can be methodically acquired through organised courses that blend academic understanding with real-world application.

Research indicates that **successful coach development strikes a balance between classroom instruction and real-world experience**, acknowledging that performance coaches tend to learn best through informal methods. Insights like this have informed the design of Dani Sports Foundation's High Performance Coach Development Program as it takes into account the real-world practice environments of coaches and offers evidence-based frameworks that improve their skills.

Final Thoughts: What Legacy Will You Build?

The old win-now model is crumbling under the weight of evidence. Today's research demands coaches who fuse science with humanity—who chase medals and mentor whole humans. If you aspire to be a successful High Performance Coach, ask yourself this question: **Will your athletes remember you for your trophies or their transformation?**

The data doesn't lie: the coaches who prioritize both don't just build careers—they build legacies.



Will your athletes remember you for your trophies or their transformation? The data doesn't lie: the coaches who prioritize both don't just build careers—they build legacies.

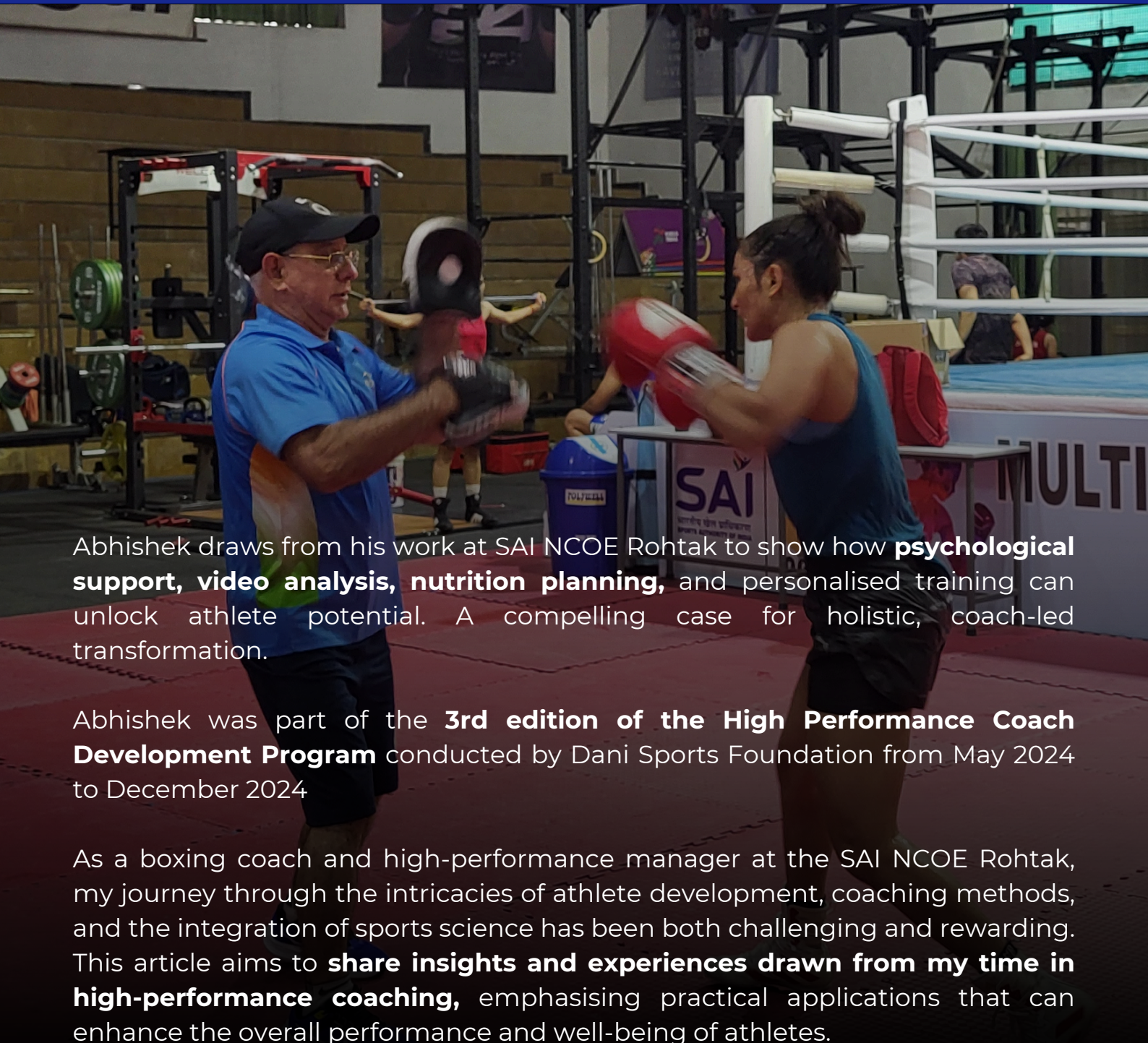


High Performance Coaching in Boxing:

LESSONS FROM THE RING

Mr Abhishek Malviya

Boxing coach & High Performance Manager at SAI NCOE Rohtak



Abhishek draws from his work at SAI NCOE Rohtak to show how **psychological support, video analysis, nutrition planning**, and personalised training can unlock athlete potential. A compelling case for holistic, coach-led transformation.

Abhishek was part of the **3rd edition of the High Performance Coach Development Program** conducted by Dani Sports Foundation from May 2024 to December 2024

As a boxing coach and high-performance manager at the SAI NCOE Rohtak, my journey through the intricacies of athlete development, coaching methods, and the integration of sports science has been both challenging and rewarding. This article aims to **share insights and experiences drawn from my time in high-performance coaching**, emphasising practical applications that can enhance the overall performance and well-being of athletes.

Module 1: Athlete Development

Athlete development is an ongoing process that requires a tailored approach to each individual. One of the most significant experiences I had was working with a young boxer who displayed immense talent but struggled with self-doubt and mental blocks during competitions.

To address these issues, I implemented a comprehensive development plan that included psychological support. **We integrated visualisation techniques into our training sessions.** Before sparring, I encouraged the athlete to close their eyes and visualise themselves executing their techniques flawlessly. This not only built confidence but also helped them understand their strengths and weaknesses better.

In addition, I emphasised the importance of physical conditioning, skill development, and nutritional education. We worked closely with a sports nutritionist to **design meal plans that optimised performance and recovery.** As a result, the athlete not only improved in competitions but also became a role model for other young boxers at the centre.

Module 2: Coaching Methods

Effective coaching methods are crucial for maximising athlete's potential. During my tenure, I adopted a blend of traditional and modern coaching techniques. One of the standout methods was the use of video analysis.

After training sessions, we would review footage of sparring bouts. **This allowed boxers to see their performance from a different perspective.** For example, one of my Boxers was struggling with head movement. By reviewing the video, he could see patterns in his opponent's attacks and adjust his defensive strategy accordingly. The immediate feedback loop created a more engaged learning environment and allowed for real-time corrections.

Additionally, I learned the importance of fostering a growth mindset among boxers. I encouraged them to view challenges as opportunities for improvement rather than as obstacles.



This shift in mentality not only improved performance but also boosted morale within the team.

Module 3: Integrating Sports Science in Coaching

Incorporating sports science into our coaching practices transformed how we approached training. One of the most impactful changes was the introduction of recovery protocols based on sports science research.

We began using **heart rate monitors to track exertion levels** during training. This data enabled us to adjust training intensity based on individual athlete needs, ensuring they received the right balance of stress and recovery. For example, we noticed that one boxer consistently struggled with fatigue. By analysing the data, we modified their training regimen to include more recovery days and active rest periods, resulting in improved performance and reduced burnout.

Furthermore, collaborating with sports scientists helped us implement strength and conditioning programs tailored to the demands of boxing. We focused on explosive power and agility, **incorporating plyometric exercises that translated directly into better performance in the ring.**



Module 4: Self-Development & Leadership

As a coach, continuous self-development is vital for effective leadership. Attending workshops and engaging with fellow coaches have been instrumental in refining my coaching philosophy.

One significant lesson I learned was the importance of **empathy in leadership**. Understanding the personal challenges athletes face is crucial. For instance, I had a young boxer who was dealing with family issues, which affected their focus during training.



By taking the time to listen and offer support, I was able to create a safe space for them to express their concerns. This not only strengthened our coach-athlete relationship but also improved their performance as they felt more valued and understood.

Additionally, I adopted a more participative leadership style. I involved athletes in decision-making processes regarding training schedules and competition strategies. This empowerment **fostered a sense of ownership and accountability among the athletes**, resulting in a more cohesive team environment.

Module 5: Coach Mentoring

Mentoring fellow coaches is an essential aspect of high-performance coaching. **I have had the privilege of mentoring fellow coaches within our program**, sharing insights from my experiences while also learning from their fresh perspectives.

One notable experience involved a newly joined coach who was struggling with athlete engagement during training sessions. Through a series of mentoring sessions, we explored various strategies, including incorporating fun and competitive elements into drills. Over time, the athletes became more enthusiastic and engaged, leading to noticeable improvements in skill acquisition and team dynamics.

Furthermore, I emphasised the importance of creating an inclusive coaching environment. By fostering diversity and embracing different coaching styles, **we enriched our program and created a culture of continuous learning**.

Conclusion

The high-performance coaching program is a multifaceted endeavour that requires a deep understanding of athlete development, effective coaching methods, and the integration of sports science. My experiences at SAI NCOE Rohtak have reinforced the belief in me that:



Coaching is an art and science, requiring a commitment to growth in all areas—athletic development, innovative coaching methods, the application of sports science, leadership, and mentorship.

In essence, to improve overall performance and well-being, we must adopt a holistic and individualised approach, combine traditional methods with scientific insights, foster a positive team environment, and engage in continuous self-improvement. By doing so, we prepare not just champions in sport but **well-rounded individuals ready to take on challenges both inside and outside** the ring. Together, let us elevate our coaching practices to build a legacy of success in the world of boxing and beyond.



STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR COACHES

Ms Krishna Babawala

Alumni of 3rd Edition of High Performance Coach Development Program



Krishna explores the **emotional demands of coaching, particularly in Olympic settings**. She outlines **evidence-based coping strategies**—peer support, mindset reframing, and emotional recovery—that help coaches protect their mental health and lead with clarity.

Ms Krishna was **part of the 3rd edition of the High Performance Coach Development Program** conducted by Dani Sports Foundation from May 2024 to December 2024

It's a long journey and a heartfelt dedication of an athlete towards the Olympic path. A lifetime of training and four years of planning. **One moment for athletes to prove themselves to the world.**

Recently, at the Paris Olympics, elite athletes and their coaches put the finishing touches on four years of meticulous planning and training.

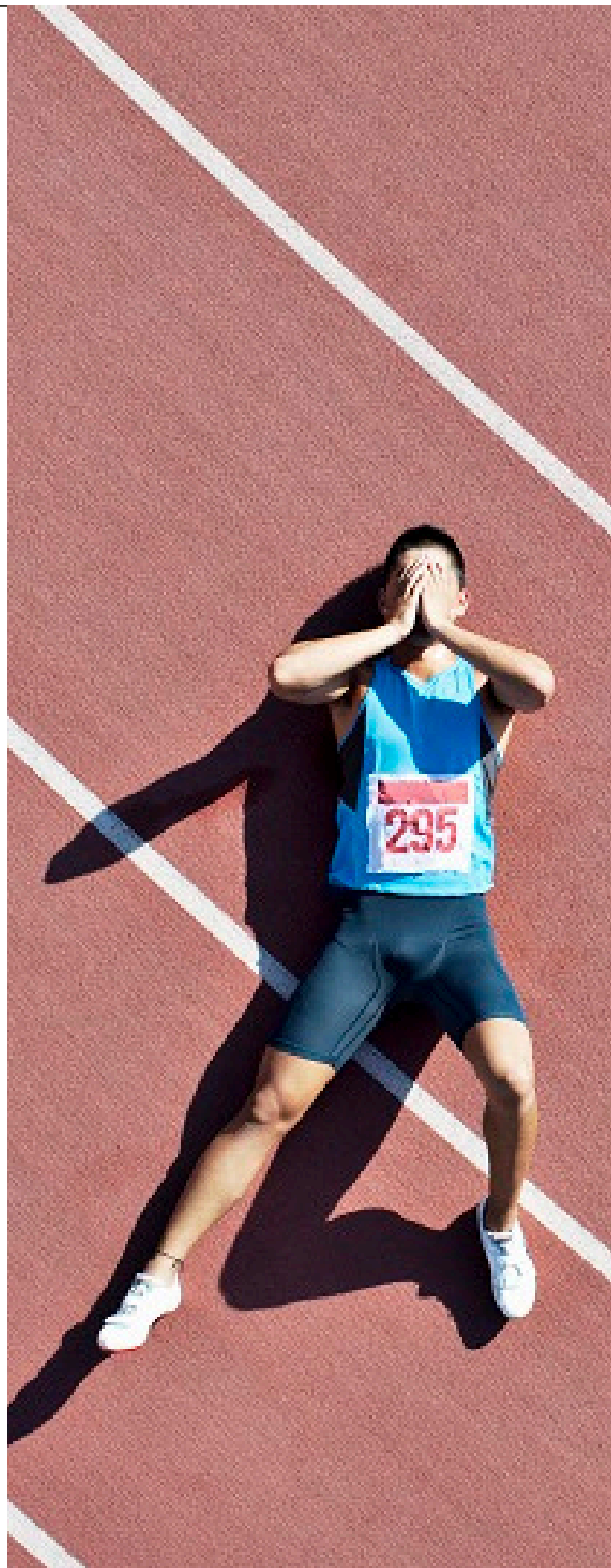


We tend to focus on athletes – their stories, sacrifices, triumphs and heartbreaks. But generally we neglect to pay attention to the people behind the athletes including coaches and support teams.

Just like fans, share the rollercoaster of highs and lows with athletes. But sometimes the situations may be worse, Things happen beyond our imagination. **And the flow of emotions is real, palpable, exciting and draining.**

Every week, elite coaches go through this stress. They make a plan and reflect on their coaching, then do the correction where needed, and some more reflection, will take shape in the sporting arena.

The highs and lows can be extreme.



The Olympics take things up a notch

The plus point of seasonal sports is the continuity of play. In each session, despite the result, athletes get another chance to improve on their past performance, but this scenario is different for the Olympics.

At the Olympics, an athlete's age, fitness, skills, and ability to handle pressure must all align for peak performance. Most Olympic athletes share a common goal: **striving for excellence and aiming for the top**. But not everyone can be a winner, for that reason there will be more disappointment than triumph.

After the Olympics, athletes and coaches may experience a phenomenon known as the "post-Olympic blues," characterised by feelings of low mood, loss of purpose, anxiety, media pressure, and overall poorer well-being after the games finish.

Unfortunately, **many coaches under-use or fail to use psychological support services**, perhaps not wanting to be seen as **vulnerable or weak, or uncomfortable** with not having all the answers or solutions.

The impact of stress

Stress is a well-explored concept, yet it is still largely misunderstood.

No matter the level, all coaches face common stressors in their role – **forming and handling relationships with athletes**, taking on responsibility for others, planning and dealing with the unexpected, a lack of support and of course the **disappointment of losing and the need to “bounce back”**.

Coaches have long, non-traditional, and irregular working times (e.g., morning and night practice, weekends) and extensive travel. Coaches also have to cope with challenging demands in consideration of the length of a competitive season. Accordingly, inadequate coping skills, insufficient recovery, unfavourable circumstances e.g., conflicts with athletes, management, or family and personal characteristics.

However, it is important to note that not all stress is bad. Some stress is necessary as **it can motivate us to plan, train, and perform to the best of our abilities**.

How can coaches of all levels cope with disappointment and stress?

Emotion-focused coping: It means managing stress involves techniques like relaxation, seeking social support, and reframing negative thoughts. Defeat can be viewed as a learning experience rather than a setback. Defeat doesn't necessarily have to be a negative experience; rather, athletes and coaches can reframe it as a learning experience. Coaches should emphasise development, effort, and improvement rather than outcomes. This mindset shift helps alleviate the pressure to achieve immediate success.

Problem-focused coping: It addresses the root cause of stress by developing plans and taking actions to solve the problem. As a coach, we cannot control the weather, the officials or the other critical circumstances which come to us instead, we can take back control by developing routines and preparation strategies, especially when things aren't going as we want.

Focusing on Improvements: A mastery-oriented mindset emphasises growth, problem-solving, and overcoming challenges, rather than solely focusing on performance outcomes. By concentrating on improvement and enjoyment, you can better cope with setbacks, while an overemphasis on results can make defeat feel more discouraging.

Peer Support Networks: Coaches can benefit from sharing experiences with peers. This can be through formal coaching associations or informal groups. Talking with other coaches who understand the unique pressures of the role can provide emotional relief and useful advice.

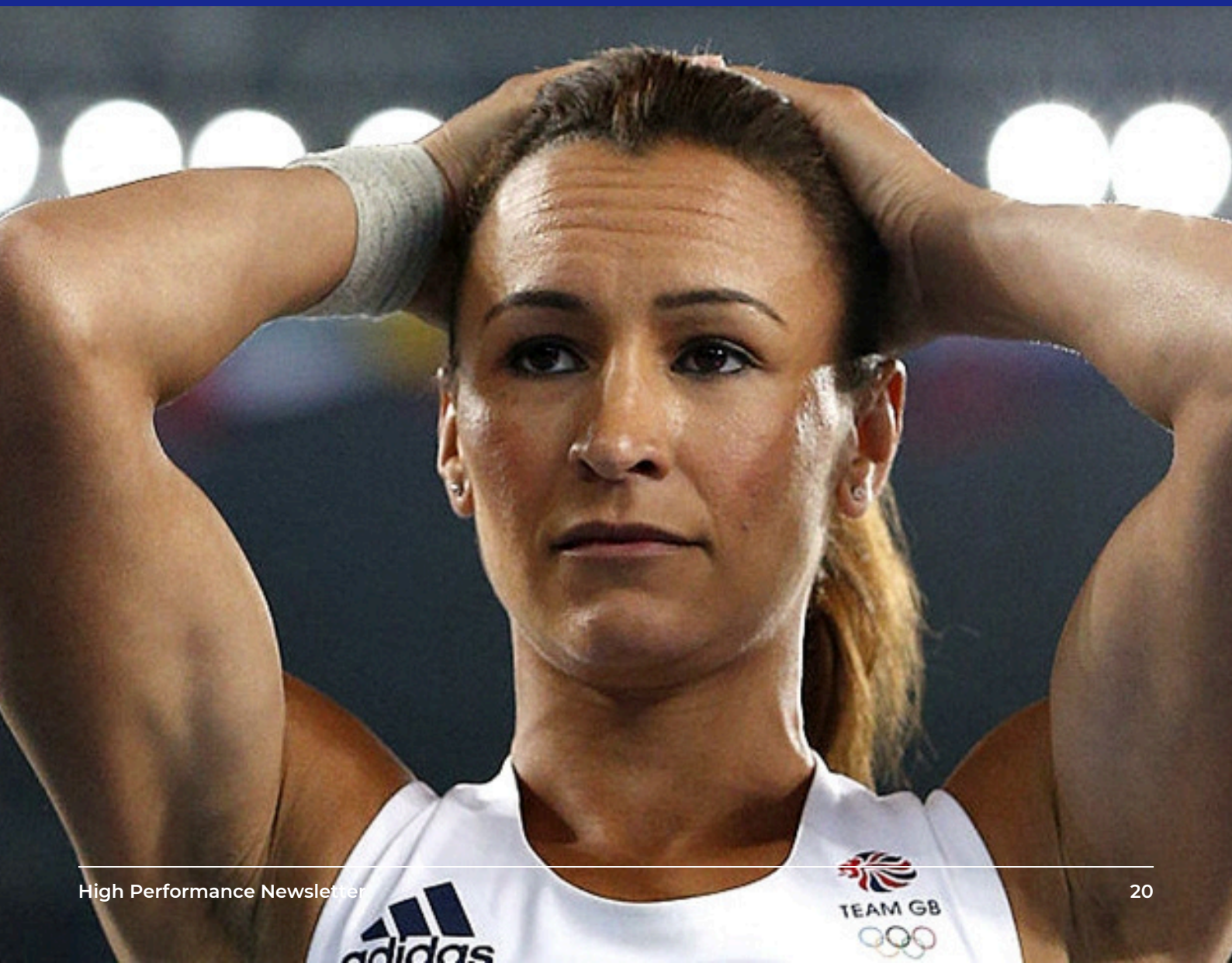
Try to avoid “counterfactual thinking”: This concept describes our tendency to focus on what could have been. An interesting example of this comes from the Olympics, when some studies have documented that bronze medal winners were happier than silver medal winners. Why? The bronze medal winners were happy just to get a medal, while the silver medal winners focused on “almost” winning gold.

Conclusion

In conclusion, if next time you are facing disappointment, try not to focus on what might have been. Instead, make a plan for next time, explore how you can think differently about what happened, enlist the support and advice of mentors, peers, friends and family, and try to remember why you are doing it. **Coping with stress is an essential skill for sports coaches.** By managing time effectively, taking care of their physical and emotional health, and building strong support networks, coaches can not only reduce stress but also enhance their overall performance.



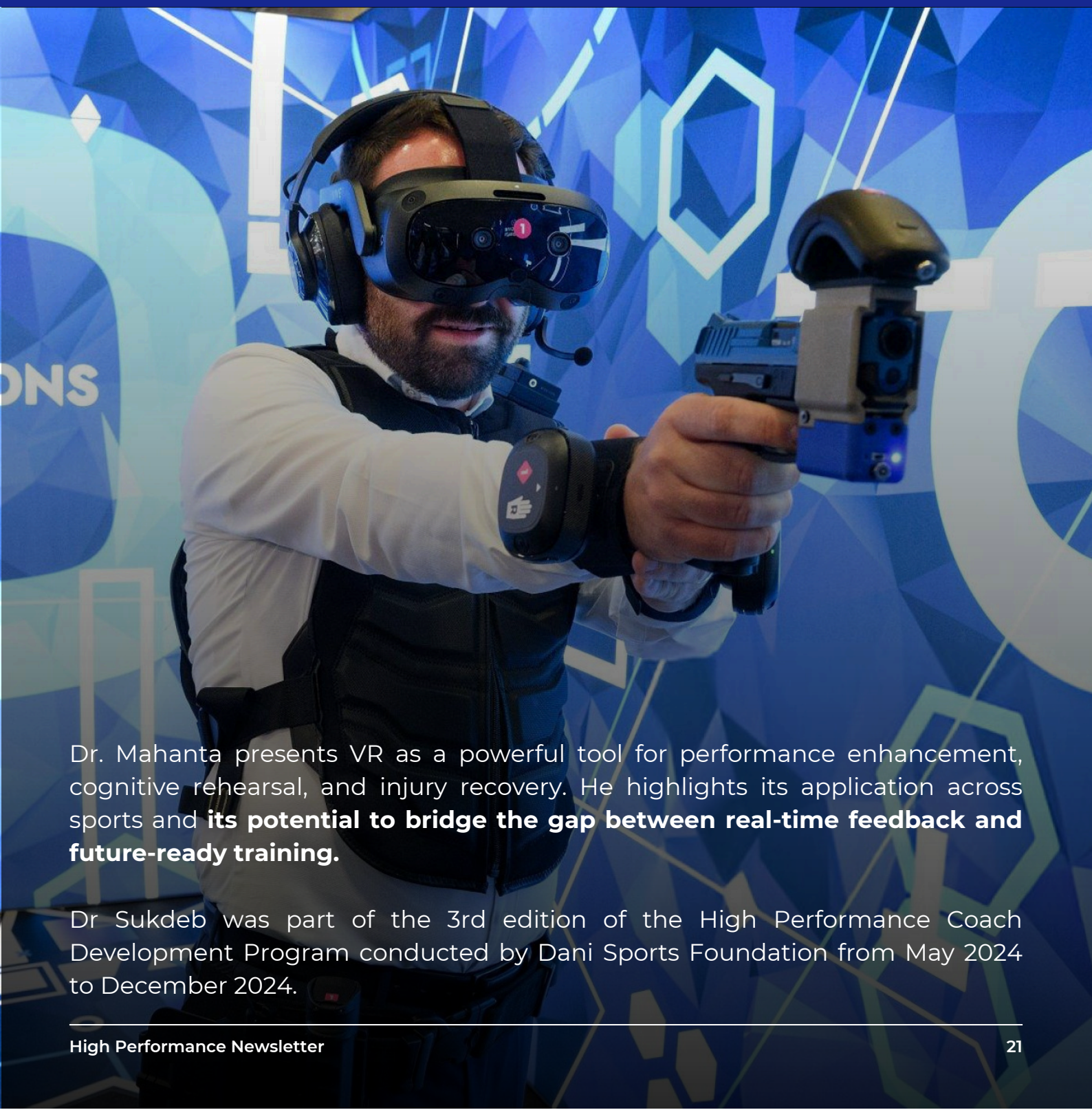
Stress, when managed well, can be a motivating force that pushes coaches and their teams to excel rather than becoming an overwhelming burden.



Virtual Reality Training: REVOLUTIONISING ATHLETE PREPARATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Dr. Sukdeb Mahanta

High Performance Director - SS, SAI, NCOE - Aurangabad



Dr. Mahanta presents VR as a powerful tool for performance enhancement, cognitive rehearsal, and injury recovery. He highlights its application across sports and **its potential to bridge the gap between real-time feedback and future-ready training.**

Dr Sukdeb was part of the 3rd edition of the High Performance Coach Development Program conducted by Dani Sports Foundation from May 2024 to December 2024.

Virtual Reality (VR) is rapidly transforming the landscape of sports training, offering athletes and coach's groundbreaking ways to enhance performance, prepare for competition, and minimize risk. As an expert in Sports Science with extensive experience in modern sports technologies, I aim to shed light on **how VR training is reshaping traditional paradigms and setting new benchmarks** for athletic development.



Virtual Reality Training involves using **immersive simulations to replicate real-world scenarios in a controlled, virtual environment.** With VR headsets, sensors, and interactive software, athletes can experience highly realistic situations, from game simulations to skill-specific drills, without the physical demands or risks associated with live practice.

This cutting-edge technology integrates **biomechanics, cognitive training, and sport-specific strategies,** offering tailored training solutions across various sports disciplines.

Key Applications of Virtual Reality in Sports Training

Virtual Reality (VR) has emerged as a transformative tool in sports training, offering a **highly sophisticated and immersive platform for enhancing athletic performance**. In skill development and tactical training, VR allows athletes to engage in hyper-realistic simulations, enabling football players to practice set-piece scenarios or analyze tactical plays, while basketball players refine shooting accuracy and decision-making under pressure.

On the cognitive front, **VR aids in mental preparation by fostering visualization techniques**, where athletes mentally rehearse optimal movements, while also simulating high-stress environments to improve stress management under competitive conditions. In the realm of injury rehabilitation and prevention, VR bridges the gap between **therapy and real-world play**, providing low-impact sport-specific exercises that promote recovery, and employing biomechanics analyses to identify movement inefficiencies that could lead to injuries, facilitating early intervention.

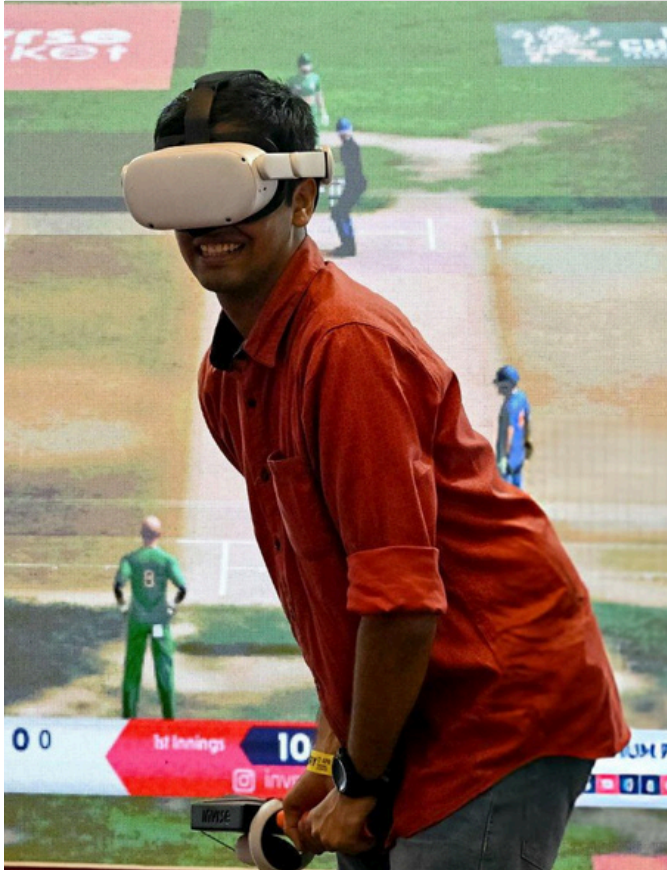
Empowering coaches with a granular understanding of an athlete's capabilities and areas for improvement.



When integrated with motion tracking and AI algorithms, VR enables **data-driven performance analysis, offering real-time insights into reaction times, decision-making precision, and biomechanical efficiency.**

Benefits of VR in Sports Training

Virtual Reality (VR) is revolutionizing sports training by offering athletes a host of dynamic benefits that go beyond traditional methods. By reducing physical fatigue and minimizing injury risks, VR allows athletes to hone their skills without the strain of repetitive drills, while safely simulating high-risk scenarios like sparring in combat sports. What's more, VR offers unparalleled customization, providing tailored feedback to athletes and enabling them to focus on specific areas for improvement. **This technology also boosts motivation and engagement**, particularly for younger athletes, by transforming training into a gamified experience that makes even the most repetitive drills enjoyable. With VR's flexibility, athletes can train almost anywhere, making high-quality coaching accessible to those in regions without elite sports infrastructure, ensuring no talent is left untapped.



Success Stories: VR Training in Action

Formula 1: Drivers use VR simulators to practice circuits and test race strategies without the expense of on-track sessions.

NFL Quarterbacks: VR helps quarterbacks review plays and defensive setups, improving their reading of the game.

Fencing and Boxing: Athletes engage in virtual bouts to practice timing, distancing, and tactics without the risk of injuries.

Future Directions in VR Sports Training

The future of VR in sports training holds vast potential, with ongoing innovations poised to enhance its effectiveness. The integration of Augmented Reality (AR) with VR promises to create blended experiences, allowing athletes to effortlessly transition between real-world and virtual training environments. Additionally, the synchronization of VR with **wearable technology can offer real-time physiological data, such as heart rate and muscle activity, further personalizing training sessions.** AI-driven VR platforms also hold promise, providing athletes with instant, data-backed insights and recommendations to fine-tune their performance. These advancements signal a new era of hyper-efficient, data-driven sports training that could revolutionize athlete development across disciplines.



Challenges & Limitations:

Despite its promising potential, the integration of Virtual Reality (VR) in sports training faces several challenges and limitations. **The high initial costs of VR equipment and software remain a significant barrier**, restricting its widespread adoption, especially in resource-constrained environments. Additionally, both athletes and coaches must undergo a learning curve to effectively use VR technology, which can slow down its implementation and uptake.

Another key limitation is the difficulty in fully replicating certain real-world dynamics, such as **tactile feedback and the nuanced physical sensations** that athletes experience during actual gameplay, which can **reduce the realism and immersive quality of VR simulations**. These factors, while surmountable, highlight the ongoing need for technological advancements and strategic investment to fully realize the potential of VR in sports.



Conclusion

Virtual Reality is more than just a novel technology—it **is a revolutionary tool poised to redefine how athletes train, strategize, and recover.**

By merging cognitive, physical, and tactical training into a single platform, VR offers a **holistic approach to athlete development**. As the technology continues to evolve, its integration into sports science promises to propel athletes to new heights, bridging the gap between imagination and execution.

As sports professionals, embracing VR isn't just an option—it's a necessity for staying ahead in an increasingly competitive landscape. **The future of sports training is here, and it's virtual.**

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You can reach out to us at:

highperformance@danisports.org

42/43/44A and 49, 4th Floor,
Jolly Maker Chamber II
Vinay K Shah Marg, Nariman Point,
Mumbai 400021

www.danisports.org