

National Sports Day 2020: Mind the Mindset

India celebrates National Sports Day today. In the field of sports, and in life, challenges and obstacles are inevitable. We're living in a time where the world faces several challenges in the form of climate change, poverty, education inequity, social inequalities – to name a few. Added to that, the whole world has come to a standstill with the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is the way out? To begin with perhaps, the right mindset.

A similar phenomenon applies to the field of sports, as even the best athletes in the world can make a difference when they're uncomfortable, sore, injured, but do not let that come in the way of giving their best shot. The sole difference lies in the kind of mindset a sports person holds. What actions display the right mindset that a sports person holds? The way they approach obstacles and turn their challenges into opportunities.

One such example is that of the record-breaking star striker and winner of the Premier League's golden boot (2018) – Mohamed Salah – who emerged as a role model when he was able to achieve his dreams at a very young age, in spite of all the obstacles in his way. He's the fourth highest-paid footballer in the world today.

Hailing from a small village in Egypt, Salah used to change at least 5 buses every day to train in Cairo – where he was spotted by Swiss Club Basel – which kickstarted his football career. This Chelsea reject not only transformed Liverpool into champions but also gave a new definition to the game in Egypt. He pushed every Egyptian aspiring to become a soccer champion to not focus on the whys and instead focus on – why not?

Why not be the best player in the country? Why not be the best player in the premier league? Why not be the best player in the world?

This is the kind of thinking that uplifts society and pushes the human race forward.

Kerri Strug – a two time Olympian and gold medalist, was only 18 when she got an opportunity to showcase her talent at 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. Being the last one up on the vault, Kerri injured her ankle on her first vault – which left the spectators shocked. But this is not where the story ended. She buckled up, managed to stick the landing on her second vault and secured Gold for her country, before collapsing in pain. It was her passion for gymnastics and her mindset to put her best foot forward, even with an injury on the biggest day of her life – that helped her ace the event.

Another example of a powerful mindset is Anandan Gunasekaran. He was an able-bodied athlete but while serving at the LOC in Jammu and Kashmir, he suffered an injury following a mine blast (in 2008) which resulted in a below-the-knee amputation. Life came to a standstill for him, but he came out stronger than before – and took up parasports in 2012. His promising performances won accolades around the globe and he went on to represent India in the 2017 IPC World Para Athletics Championship in London.

Even in the corporate sector, the journey will not always be a bed of roses. There would be deadlines, pressures or even uncertainties when least expected – but what defines and determines the success of any team/ organization – is the way in which they respond to a situation or a challenge. And that response is determined by the thinking and mindset which the people in the organization hold. These uncertainties and pressures are not meant to stop your journey.

As Sachin Tendulkar said, “When people throw stones at you, turn them into milestones!”