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METROPLUS
Building mental strength

 **Kalyan Ashok** BENGALURU, DECEMBER 12, 2015 17:59 IST
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Mental toughness Key to success on the field Photo: K. Bhagya Prakash

Tennis Coach and trainer Krishna Kumar talks about the need for mental training for sportspersons.

In the highly competitive world of modern-day sports, sports psychologists or mental trainers have assumed a pivotal role. There is a clamour in every sports discipline for a mental trainer, as failure on the field is often attributed to a mental block or a lack of a killer instinct.

Arguably, the greatest rival for a sportsperson is not his opponent, but his own mind. How and why there is a need for a mental trainer, and in what can they enhance performance are the questions that are hotly debated. Metro Plus spoke to Krishna Kumar, a noted expert on the subject.

In a diverse and chequered career spanning three decades, Krishna Kumar has been a corporate executive, an entrepreneur, a tennis master coach, a B-school professor and a leadership/executive coach.

How relevant is sports psychology in modern day sports?

Sports psychology plays a critical part in modern day sports and everyone is realizing it. The other day, we had the Indian hockey team coach stressing on the need for a sports psychologist. Even former Test cricketers like Wasim Akram have suggested that the South Africans would do well to have mental toughness to counter Indian spin. When a player is in a pressure cooker situation, mental strength becomes an important component.

How different is your coaching methods as compared to others?

When I began coaching, I realised that teaching techniques, strokes and fitness alone is not enough, and one has to approach training in a more holistic way.

Taking a child and putting him through routine stuff like that is easy, but one needs to make him enjoy the game. I followed the Inner coaching methodology, which has three key elements - Exercise, Education and Entertainment. Exercise is about fitness training, education is what one learns as techniques and entertainment is enjoying what one is doing.

Are qualities like positive outlook and mental toughness inherent or do they needs to be taught?

Developing a positive outlook is only one part of mental training. Mental toughness needs to be worked on and learnt using a proper methodology.

We can't all be like Virender Sehwag, who calmed his mind by humming his favourite tune, before going on to smash the ball.

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