Sri Lankan President on

METRO PLUS Winning ways



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Match pointThe court is an emotional minefield

The strength of a person's Emotional Intelligence is the key to their victory

After eight matches with just two points to their credit, Royal Challengers Bangalore found themselves in a tight spot in the recent game against Kolkata Knight Riders. Undeterred, by their spate of loses, they played on to score 213, with captain Virat Kohli scoring a century. KKR, though believed to be the stronger team, managed only 203 in response.

So what is it that leads one team to victory? And what is it that players lack at such a crucial moment? A poor finish caused by over anxiety or the absence of a killer instinct?

The 'X' factor that marred their performance at such crucial junctures may be directly linked to a dip in their Emotional Intelligence (EI). Sports psychologists acknowledge that building high levels of EI play a major role in sporting success. Players like Virat Kohli or Roger Federer, who apart from their awesome talent and technique, also exhibit amazing resilience under highly stressful situations due to their EI.

Bo Hanson, a four-time Olympian and athletics coach, says the key to a strong EI is the ability to understand one's own emotion state as well as that of others and work on ways to achieve peak performance. He adds that EI helps an athlete control his emotions and channelise

them in a positive way to ensure a winning performance.

Professor Mihaly Csikszent, one of the foremost authorities in the field of positive psychology, states: "When the body or mind is stretched to its limit in a voluntary effort to accomplish a difficult, but a worthwhile task, it is an optimal experience that we make happen." Indian sports and business coach, M. Krishna Kumar, a close associate of Mihaly, stresses the importance of EI. He says, "Performance on a sports field is related to stress. Too little stress could result in a player not giving their best, but a challenging encounter which produces optimal stress could see them triumph as their EI is functioning at the right level." Daniel Goleman, who has authored several books on Emotional Intelligence, has listed a few key elements that include self-awareness, social awareness, self-motivation and relationship management.

Krishna Kumar says being fully conscious of what one has been doing, and developing the will power to shut off distractions, is the way to embark on positive action. "By reflecting on the action and then continuing the actionreflection process, one reaches a state of becoming fully engaged in the activity and thereby optimal performance is met. It is the state that we commonly refer to as being in the zone, or a state of flow," he says.

Beyond being self aware, being socially aware might prove to be trickier. "How do you play a good friend and transcend the personal equation to beat them? Like the Williams sisters where only one can win.

Then, there are players whose behaviour on court can negatively affect you. John McEnroe's tantrums on court had an adverse impact on his rivals. It was for the opponent to be self-aware of the challenge, remain focused and produce their best. That's where emotion management comes into play," explains Krishna Kumar.

EI is an evolving subject in sports and while there are no short cuts to master it, adequate material has been penned by psychologists and sports trainers to shed light on it.

Everyone exhibits EI to varying degrees in different situations and it is for the sportsman and his coach to harness it effectively for the best results.

As one continues with the action-reflection process, optimal performance is eventually met

on-court chaos

John McEnroe is infamous for his temper tantrums on court. He is perhaps best known for shouting at an umpire during a match in 1981, yelling, "You can't be serious, man. That ball was on the line!"

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