

# ELMS NEWSLETTER

Vol 1 October 2019

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## From the Editor's Desk

At ELMS Sports Foundation, we are committed to the promotion of physical literacy and high performance. Through our newsletter, we aim to reach out to all stakeholders of the sports ecosystem with the latest updates, new perspectives and ground action.

In our first issue, we have assembled a diverse group of articles that will provide something of interest to our varied readership. The Newsletter begins with a discussion between Vice-President Amit Malik and Chief National Badminton Coach Pullela Gopichand on the importance of Physical Literacy. Followed by it, our in-house expert on High-Performance Sports Leadership, Imran Nadaph writes about how enjoyment may kindle positive motivation during stressful competitions. Then we have a picture by our artist Ayushi Sharma depicting the Physical Literacy Journey. Next, Deepak Dennison, our guest columnist, shares an inspiring story of overcoming barriers and building a playground in a resource crunched scenario. Lastly, Sruthi Raju reflects back on our first workshop in Gujarat.

On behalf of the ELMS Sports Foundation's content team, I would like to thank our contributors for their efforts and hope our readers will find the newsletter useful and interesting. I encourage all our readers to consider submitting for the ELMS Newsletter. You can reach out to us at [newsletter@elmssportsfoundation.com](mailto:newsletter@elmssportsfoundation.com). We would be delighted to review your original article or consider an editorial or letter to the editor. We look forward to hear from you all.

Happy reading!

Suchetana Bauri  
Editor  
ELMS Newsletter

# Physical Literacy can Redefine Success in Sports

National Badminton Coach Shri Pullela Gopichand shares with Amit Malik on how India can become a sporting nation by adapting Physical Literacy.

**Amit Malik (AM):** What does a sporting nation look like?

**Pullela Gopichand (PG):** A sporting nation would be one where each and every individual looks at themselves and tries to improve their performance continuously. It is where every child is physically literate and the best of them get the opportunity to play sports professionally and win at the highest level. Rest of the others also continue to remain active throughout their lives.

It's a nation where sporting performances are looked on with pride. It's a nation where people are not only interested in world-level sports but also into community level sports or any other recreational activities which will help them to lead active and healthy lives. It is crucial to analyse and leverage the links between families, communities, localities and cities and how they engage in a variety of physical activities, including sports, to truly transform into a sporting nation.

**AM:** What connects you to Physical Literacy?

**PG:** The fact that many people drop-out of sports because it is very competitive and the reason for such drop-outs is not that these people stop enjoying a sport; rather, it's because a culture of referral excellence makes it difficult for them to participate in sports.

Physical Literacy for me is an individualistic concept - which is ultimately a competition of us against us, me against me, and you against you. It talks about the journey of leading a fit and active life throughout a lifetime. It is a concept which emphasises the connection between body and mind in taking responsibility for one's health and fitness all through life.

**AM:** How can Physical Literacy contribute to the making of a sporting nation? What should be a layman's understanding of Physical Literacy in the Indian context?

**PG:** We call the ability of a child to read and write the alphabets, words, sentences as alphabetic literacy, while being able to calculate using numbers is called numeric literacy. Similarly, the understanding and mastering of fundamental movements like crawling, walking, running,

“Physical Literacy is ultimately a competition of us against us, me against me, and you against you.”

- Pullela Gopichand

“Physical Literacy is also about everyone learning to enjoy, be confident and stay motivated enough to remain physically active”

- Pullela Gopichand



“Physical Literacy is beyond your professional career, it is beyond your competitors, it is about yourself”

- Pullela Gopichand

jumping will be called Physical Literacy. But, Physical Literacy is also about everyone learning to enjoy, be confident and stay motivated enough to remain physically active and take responsibility for their health. Mastering movement skills as children helps us engage in physical activity better as adults.

India, as an emerging nation, has made great strides in terms of alphabetic and numeric literacy, but has lost out on matters of physical literacy. And today there is a huge percentage of the population who can't perform even basic movements and that is detrimental to the development of the nation.

An individual who fails to explore the boundaries of their complete being, cannot be a visionary. From that perspective, it is very important for us to start looking at physical development as an important aspect of our overall development.

### **AM: Can Physical Literacy redefine success of children in sports?**

PG: Yes, Physical Literacy can redefine success in sports. The journey is an individual's journey - this statement is enough to say what Margaret Whitehead also supports in her philosophy about Physical Literacy. Physical Literacy is beyond your professional career, it is beyond your competitors, it is about yourself - it is a journey that continues from birth till death. Thus, success through Physical Literacy can be through personal excellence and not referential excellence. Thus, Physical Literacy covers much more than what sports talks about.

### **AM: Who are the key stakeholders, who may impact Physical Literacy adaptation in India? What key roles do they need to play?**

PG: Parents, individuals, schools, education system and the Government are very important stakeholders. However, the key is that every individual citizen is important. Everyone should consider taking it up as an inward journey. But we need to be smart enough to consider the challenges of space, time and resources while planning our Physical Literacy journey. People who are building cities and schools should make available opportunities and space for physical exercise and physical activity. Physical movement should be inculcated as a daily practice at home, school and in the community for children and adults. Physical Literacy should not be limited to school, it should be part of home, community and workplace as well. A culture of being fit and active should prevail at all places.

### **AM: What is your message to the nation?**

PG: Each one of us should reinforce the fact that sports and Physical Literacy are important for everybody. And we should start acting upon our promises, make pledges, encourage people to be more active and help them understand that sports and Physical Literacy are particularly important for children. We need to collectively identify the gaps in our curriculum which, limits children's ability to engage in sports and physical activities to their fullest potential. The Parliament should debate about the future of sports in India. All lawmakers and policy makers should create ways and means to make sports accessible for everyone in our country.

About the Interviewer-

Dr. Amit Malik

Vice President - Strategy,

Knowledge Management & Partnership at

ELMS Sports Foundation.

# Finding Joy in Competition- The Key to Thrive Under Pressure

Imran Nadaph, Program Manager for High Performance at ELMS Sports Foundation and a Certified Executive and Life Coach, explores why having a positive experience while competing is probably the best way to succeed in sports.



“In their inability to cope with the intense pressure of competition, they often fail to enjoy the game.”

-Imran

Competitions can be more stressful than they are fun. However, if we are able to reframe our expectations about their outcomes and train accordingly, we will not only be able to improve our performances but also experience great joy in the process of competing.

“It’s your first competitive game! Don’t worry about the result, just go out there and enjoy the experience,” said the coach in his warm assuring voice.

The athlete Nikita (name changed), a talented 14-year old badminton player, smiled nervously as she looked at her opponent who seemed to be physically superior to her and one of the top players in their age-group. At this moment, Nikita could only think about the difficulty of the challenge in front of her and if this was going to be the end of the tournament for her.

When the game started, the opponent was quick to dominate the proceedings and establish her lead. Nikita tried to fight back but with every lost point, it became harder for her to ignore the scorecard and keep her focus on enjoying the game as per the coach’s instructions. By the end of the match, all Nikita could feel was a sense of utter frustration and disappointment which totally contradicted the intended purpose of her participation viz.- to enjoy the challenge of competing! Unfortunately, Nikita’s experience is rather the norm than an exception, especially in youth sports.

Despite having access to well-intentioned coaches and good training opportunities, for a lot of young athletes, enjoying competition is a skill and an attitude that doesn’t come naturally. In their inability to cope with the intense pressure of competition, they often fail to enjoy the game. If left unaddressed, it can lead to a lot of children and

youngsters dropping out of competitive sports during their teenage years. In many cases, such individuals may completely give up on being physically active as well. Understanding how to deal with competition and developing a positive attitude will help athletes look at competition as a way to improve themselves and this is something that coaches can definitely address.

So, are there better ways to help young athletes approach competition with the right mindset? To begin with, any approach that seeks to address this challenge must provide answers to the following key questions –

- 👉 Firstly, do athletes really understand what the goal truly is? In this case, merely asking them to enjoy the experience is not enough. Coaches need to probe whether the athletes ever have experienced the feeling of enjoyment during competitions.
- 👉 Secondly, can athletes prioritize and focus on things that are under their control in order to achieve the goal?

To address the first question, coaches must really get to know their athletes in order to be able to help them understand their true motivations. Over the course of several training sessions, coaches must observe and spend at least a couple of minutes discussing with the athletes what they enjoyed the most about the game. This will help athletes develop self-awareness about what truly matters to them in a game. Once that clarity is achieved, it becomes easier for athletes to recreate the same state of happiness or joy in an actual competition as they have a frame of reference to draw from their previous experiences. This, in turn, will help them look at their competition objectively and focus on enjoying the game instead. Now that the athletes are clear about their goal that of enjoying a competition, we are left to address the second question. Can the athletes actually put a plan of action in place to achieve the goal? Responses to this question will invariably revolve around athletes' abilities to shift their focus from external outcomes to internal achievements. In competitive sports, it is generally accepted that the way to deliver your best performance is to forget about the outcome (winning or losing) and stay "in the now" (by not critiquing your every action as good or bad). Those who are able to do this, not only are most likely to get the desired outcome, but also experience tremendous satisfaction. They are also able to maintain higher levels of concentration which leads to better performance and therefore increase in happiness. This is what makes competition exciting to athletes and allows them to enjoy their sport even in the toughest of situations.

A large part of this success comes from the support of coaches and parents to the athletes. As much as it is the athlete's ability to deal with a stressful situation, it is also the responsibility of those supporting the athlete to create the right environment with the right training. So, as a coach or parent of a young athlete, if you can find ways to make competition enjoyable and more importantly incorporate some of the above-mentioned approaches into the training regime, athletes will not only be able to develop their sport-related skills but also develop the ability to thrive under pressure, a skill that will serve them well beyond sport.

“if you can find ways to make competition enjoyable, you would also develop the ability to thrive under pressure”

-Imran



# Let's Build a Playground

How to transform a dirt patch into a playground on a shoestring budget? Our guest columnist, Deepak Dennison, Assistant School Leader from Infant Jesus Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Kalpakkam shares his story.



Picture 1. The open space used as a playground by students

“Our students would indulge in risky play and run frantically in the empty space due to the lack of proper playing space”

-Deepak

## The Challenge

Our Infant Jesus Matriculation Higher Secondary School did not have a functional playground. Occasionally, our students would gather at an empty space adjacent to the school to simply run around and play. Sometimes the students used to indulge in risky play and run around frantically in that space (Picture1). Even though the students were enjoying, it was not completely safe for them to play in that area. This led us to see the importance of having a functional and safe playground for our students.

A few months ago, we began with the task of building a playground within our school. The idea was to design a child-friendly playground for students and with the help of students. We had a paltry budget of Rs. 25,000 for building the entire playground. We realized we couldn't afford any outside assistance from commercial organizations. So, we decided to do everything on our own.

## Every resource is Already Out There

There is no denying the fact that at first, it seemed daunting to design and build an entire playground from scratch. The task at hand began like any other DIY project would, i.e, with a Google search. Fortunately, we stumbled upon an amazing website called [playgroundideas.org](http://playgroundideas.org) which comprises over 150 free DIY designs and how-to handbooks for building a playground using local, low-cost, and recyclable materials such as used and waste vehicle tires. Besides, the website also hosts a 3-D playground designer using which anyone can design and model their playground. However, before starting with the 3-D model, we surveyed the area and identified problems of water stagnation and snakes. Then, we used the SketchUp application to model the 3-D design of our playground. With all the knowledge and resources available, we started with building the playground.

## Create Excitement and Engage all Stakeholders

When we first proposed the idea of building the playground using recycled tires, there weren't any takers among the school's stakeholders. However, their attitude changed

when we showed them the images of the 3-D model and photos of other playgrounds built using tires. Thus, we built excitement around the project to engage with the school management, teachers and students. Once we had their buy-in, we even invited them to participate in the playground building process. Our school community comprises around 1200 students who were all super excited about the project. Their infectious enthusiasm got the teachers as well as the parents involved in the project.

## The Building Process

Based on the 3-D model, we estimated that we would need around 150 tires. The number seemed impossible to procure, given the short time span we had. However, we were pleasantly surprised when several of our own students came forward and initiated a collection drive for tires from their neighbourhood. This gave them a sense of ownership and at the same time made the process easy.



Picture 2: Tires collected from their neighbourhood by our students

At one point, we had more tires than what we needed, but unfortunately, they were not exactly the type of tires we were looking for as per our designs (Picture 2). So, we went back to the drawing board and modified our designs to work with the available tires instead of giving up. From the start, we had a rule of thumb to not say 'No' to anything that we were getting for free (Picture 3).



Picture 3: Use everything and waste nothing - our motto

Just the idea of being open to situations and challenges throughout the process opened up so many unforeseen possibilities for us. We could eventually install six extra play structures such as the Hopper, Pyramid, Caterpillars, Climber, and two Motorbikes to the previously planned three (Tha Wha Car, Multipurpose Tire Court, and the Angled Climber) at literally zero additional cost. While we were building the structures, our students, along with 20 other volunteers from the Young India Fellowship, painted the playground (Picture 4).

“Our own students came forward and initiated a collection drive for tires from their neighbourhood”

-Deepak



Picture 4: Students and volunteers paint the playground together

## Today We Celebrate!

We had a very fulfilling experience throughout the playground building process. Today, it's an absolute joy to see students play in a safe and stimulating environment. In addition to making students physically fit, the playground is also profoundly impacting their cognitive and behavioural skills development. It fills us with pride and hope to see students develop and design new games using the available structures in various ways which we hadn't even imagined.



Pyramid



Angled Climber



Tha Wah Car



Hopper



Climber



Happy building playgrounds

# Beginnings of an Extraordinary Journey

**Sruthi Raju, Curriculum Designer at ELMS Sports Foundation looks back at our First Workshop in Gujarat**

It was just four months since ELMS Sports Foundation's inception in December 2017. What started as the brainchild of Pullela Gopichand and Abhinav Bindra was just starting to take shape. The vision and mission were clear - making Physical Literacy for all a reality by empowering teachers, parents and communities with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The only question was - where should one start? No one had ever attempted something like this before in the country. To develop the first Physical Literacy training and advocacy program, we had to bring on board the most diverse team of experts and professionals from various fields. From conducting intensive research and consultation with experts, we could hit the ground running soon. Our small but passionate team was able to roll out our first workshop in Gujarat in April 2018.

It was an introductory workshop on "Physical Literacy and Sports Excellence" organized for Physical Education (PE) Teachers. Sports Authority of Gujarat (SAG), Swarnim Gujarat Sports University (SGSU) and the Gujarat State Government supported us in this endeavour. An enthusiastic group of 1000 PE teachers from government schools from different parts of Gujarat participated in the workshop. The attendees' from diverse backgrounds created a good atmosphere for mutual sharing of unique challenges faced by PE teachers at the grassroots .

Since, it was an introductory workshop, we had four main objectives:

- 👉 To Understand our audience and their needs,
- 👉 To Expand the scope of Physical Education
- 👉 To Explain the link between Physical Literacy and Physical Education.
- 👉 To Introduce various factors affecting child development aligning to the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) framework.



Picture 1. The Panel : Dr. Amit Malik and Pankaj Markandey (Physical Literacy and Long-Term Athlete Development), Nikhil Latey(Sports Scientist), Dr. Subodh Mor ( Sports Medicine), Dr. Kapil Bhardwaj (Physiotherapy Experts) and Janki Rajapurkar (Sports Psychologist)

“The vision and mission were clear - making Physical Literacy for all a reality by empowering teachers, parents and communities with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes.”

-Sruthi Raju

The interactive sessions were facilitated by a panel of national and international experts from diverse fields such as Sports Management, Sports Science, Sports Medicine, Physiotherapy, LTAD, and Sports Psychology.



Picture 2. Dr. Amit Malik interacting with Dr. Subodh Mor and Dr. Kapil Bhardwaj

The sessions on Sports Science and Sports Psychology which touched upon such as growth and development struck a chord with the participants as it gave them many useful tips to ensure proper training for students while identifying areas for their own improvement.

Overall, the workshop received mixed feedback with some experienced PE teachers resisting the idea of a new philosophy, some others eager to learn more about integrating Physical Literacy in their classes, and some who appreciated the concept, but wanted to see how it works practically. This was definitely a good place to start for us because shifting from a PE mindset which focuses purely on drills and performance to embracing meaningful interaction in diverse physical activity contexts is a long journey.

By the end of the three day workshop, we were fairly successful in helping our participants understand that Physical Literacy is neither an alternative nor a competition to Physical Education. It is simply the outcome of it. Just like alphabetic and numeric literacy, Physical Literacy is a critical component for holistic development of children. It is a lifelong journey, foundations for which are laid at home and school.

The workshop succeeded in establishing a connect with the audience over the three day interaction and to an extent, created an interest in Physical Literacy and Long-Term Athlete Development. The biggest takeaway from this workshop was that we realized the need for Physical Literacy to address the unique challenges of every state individually, providing sustainable, scalable solutions for schools and teachers to implement it. It was a great networking opportunity for participants and learning experience for us. We are more dedicated than ever to operationalising a program which aims to put every child on the path of Physical Literacy in the country. We knew that we had begun on an extraordinary journey from the beginning.

“Just like alphabetic and numeric literacy, physical literacy is a critical component of holistic development.”

-Sruthi Raju

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