



TALENT FOR THE FUTURE

Taking Student-Athletes
From Grassroots To Elite





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About Sportz Village

Sportz Village is India's first and world's largest youth sports and sports education organisation that is on a mission to get 100 million children to play. Established in 2003, Sportz Village's philosophy is pillared on improving the health and fitness of children and getting everyone to experience the magic of sports. Sportz Village has four specialised verticals under its umbrella that cater as sports enabling platforms through the stages of a kid's development. Sportz Village designs, develops and executes sports education programs, grassroot sports programs, professional sports leagues, sport-focused brand activation and CSR programs in partnerships with schools, colleges, academies, brands, federations and corporates. Sportz Village has been engaging more than 1 million children and youth in sport every year covering 16000+ schools across 250+ locations over the past 19 years.

(www.sportzvillage.com)

Design

Team Sportz Village

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I consider it both an honour and a privilege to share my journey as an international para-badminton athlete with all of you.

In the early chapters of my life, I was incredibly fortunate to have access to excellent infrastructure that fostered my love for sports. Growing up, I was immersed in an environment with top-notch facilities that helped nurture co-curricular activities and the pursuit of excellence alongside academics. It was within these surroundings that I first discovered the joy of badminton and fell in love with the sport. My parents recognized the importance of a well-rounded upbringing and always encouraged me and my siblings to explore our passions.

My PE teachers played a transformative role in my life, going above and beyond their duty to instil a love for sports in all the students. Also, our school used to organize summer camps and ensured that students participated in at least one sport every year and that well-performing students received special coaching. I made it into badminton special coaching and that is precisely where my journey began. My coach's impact extended far

“

Manasi Joshi

Indian para-badminton player
& a changemaker



beyond physical fitness; he instilled in us a sense of discipline, teamwork, and the joy of competition. Additionally, I was fortunate to have local tournaments organized within my school as well as community. While studies were my focus, I kept playing the sport and eventually started representing my school and college at district level tournaments. I graduated from KJ Somaiya College of Engineering in 2010 and I secured a job with a corporate as a Software Engineer.

However, life took an unexpected turn when I met with a road accident in 2011. Prior to my accident, I had tasted the exhilaration of victory, winning a gold medal in an intra-corporate tournament organized by my company. Two years later, while I was in my rehabilitation I returned to the same tournament, competing against able-bodied individuals. To my astonishment, I emerged victorious once again. It was in that moment that I realized nothing had truly changed within me.

Yet, the turning point in my journey came when Mr. Neeraj George who was a part of FB amputee support group, crossed my path. After my accident, many compassionate souls reached out, urging me to join groups for people with disabilities. In one such group, I shared the news of my gold-winning achievement. Little did I know that my post would catch the attention of Mr. George, himself a para-athlete. His unwavering belief in my abilities and his encouragement to pursue badminton professionally changed the trajectory of my life forever.

As I reflect upon my incredible journey, one theme consistently emerges - the remarkable support that has appeared at precisely the right time. I cannot help but wonder how different my path would have been if not for the sport-friendly environment at home and in my school, or if any of these chance meetings or influential figures had not entered my life. Would I still have achieved what I have today? These musings compel me to advocate for a system that unearths and supports talented children seamlessly, regardless of chance encounters. Every child deserves the opportunity to pursue their dreams, and I hope that we can create a future where such opportunities are readily available.

Sportz Village has long been at the forefront of championing the cause of sports education and youth sports. I am happy to present this paper '**PathwayZ - Talent for the Future**' that delves into the critical aspects of nurturing and empowering our young athletes through a comprehensive framework to support students' journey from grassroots participation at school level to elite representation. Together, let us strive to create a world where all children can pursue their passion and reach their full potential, regardless of their circumstances.

Manasi Joshi

A software engineer by profession, Manasi started her sporting journey in 2015 and she is currently ranked world no.2 in women's singles and mixed doubles. An Arjuna Awardee, national award winner for best sports person with disability (female), Manasi has been celebrated by Mattel (an American toy company) by having a one-of-a-kind Barbie doll modelled after her. She has also been recognized as TIME Magazine's Next Generation Leader for being an advocate for rights for people with disabilities. From setting examples to breaking stereotypes, Manasi has been a trailblazer ever since she took up para-sport.

INTRODUCTION

Sports – The Past, Present & the Future

A decade ago, sports was considered a frivolous pursuit that diverted attention away from academic excellence. Additionally, aspiring athletes were often faced with limited opportunities for advancement, as the potential of sports as a viable career path was not fully recognized. However, the good news is that today, there has been a significant shift in the perception of sports as an enabler for a child's all-around development. India has made progress in enabling government and private support for elite talents in the regime of international sports.

Despite these promising developments, academic pressures can make it challenging for children to balance their time between academic responsibilities with athletic pursuits. It is a daunting task to accurately assess a child's potential and determine if they will have fair and sufficient opportunities to excel. Parents often perceive the risks of pursuing sports to outweigh the benefits. As a result, the journey from grassroots to elite still remains an arduous one.

Consider the awe-inspiring tales of triumph exhibited by PV Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Dipa Karmakar, Neeraj Chopra, and MS Dhoni. The journey of Neeraj Chopra, in particular, was not without its hurdles. At the tender age of 12-13, he was burdened with a weight of 80 kilograms. It was then that his uncle spurred him to join the prestigious gym at Panchkula Stadium in Panipat to shed those extra pounds. During his time at the gym, he would sit in the stadium, captivated by the sight of athletes in action. An unexpected encounter with Jaiveer, a celebrated javelin player, led him to try his hand at throwing the javelin, a decision that eventually shaped his illustrious career.

The narratives of these prodigious superstars unravel an undeniable truth - that without the proactive and selfless support of their parents, family members, or physical education coaches, they may not have reached the pinnacle of their potential. They are none other than the "Accidental Champions"



What if we can produce more
'System-Generated Champions'
& not just 'Accidental Champions'?

THE SYSTEMIC GAPS

In the last 10 years, India has made positive strides in terms of advocacy for sports at the grassroots level. The significance of sports in education is slowly increasingly recognized and also considered integral in education. Nowadays, government regulations mandate schools to allocate time for sports. Rising disposable incomes have led parents to encourage their children to take up sports recreationally. All these have led to the surging growth of sports clubs and academies. In some urban centers, there has been an increase in sports infrastructure in schools, residential complexes, and pay-to-play spaces.

STUDENT-ATHLETE JOURNEY FROM GRASSROOTS TO ELITE SPORTS



Yet, systemic gaps exist that limit the adoption of sports at the grassroots level. A review of sports infrastructure in our partner schools reveals that 32% of Government schools and 19% of Private schools do not have even a small playground. (Source: Sportz Village Network of Schools)

According to the "PUMA-Nielsen Sports Survey" conducted by sports brand PUMA India and analytics firm Nielsen Sports, Indian kids spend a mere 86 minutes per week on sports and fitness-related activities against the recommendation of the World Health Organization (WHO) of 420 minutes or more.

Time spent on sports & fitness-related activities	
Actual Time Spent by Indian kids	World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation
86 minutes per week	420 minutes or more

From our experience, we have also seen a lot of children not engaging in sports because their friends aren't playing. This is especially true for girls. For instance, 64% of girls indicated that they don't engage in cricket because their friends are not playing. 72% of them fear being made fun of, for lack of strength or skill.



Am I good enough?

Even if children who engage in sports and manage to access suitable opportunities, they may choose not to pursue a career in that field due to a lack of awareness regarding their standing, in comparison to their peers.

Will I have fair and enough opportunities to get scouted?
What if I don't make it big?
Do I have back up options?

Will it impact my academic performance?
What if I get injured?
Will it be a financial burden?



If you do advance to an elite level i.e. be a podium finisher at the national level, there are both private and government-enabled support systems to help you advance in your sports excellence journey. But, the ladder from Grassroot to Elite is still broken. There are multiple barriers that prevent kids from pursuing sports for excellence.

It is therefore not surprising that the talent pool in India is alarmingly low. For instance, in Table Tennis, India has only 40,000 players registered with the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI), as against 300,000+ registered table tennis players in Japan. The story is similar to a popular sport like Badminton as well.

NUMBER OF REGISTERED TABLE TENNIS PLAYERS

INDIA

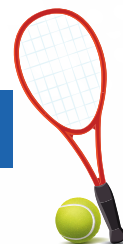
40,000

JAPAN

300,000+

Source - https://www.indianetzone.com/38/table_tennis_federation_india.htm

Source - <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1293226/japan-jtta-membership-numbers/>



“ Industry Speaks

"In India, talent identification at National level is difficult due to its wide geographic expanse and absence of any Pan India Platform. How do you then identify the talent from the length and breadth of India. Answer lies in first creating a Pan India Platform which focuses on two principles - fair chance to everyone & unbiased scientific data based selection process. This is not something which is only theoretical, India Khelo Football has worked in the last 2.5 years to create this for Football in India."

Hitesh Joshi,

Founding Member, India Khelo Football

POINT OF VIEW:

SCHOOLS: THE RIGHT CHANNEL TO ADDRESS SYSTEMIC GAPS

In order to address the gaps systematically and enable more and more talented student athletes to keep pursuing their journey towards sporting excellence, schools are our best bet. They offer multiple advantages:

Schools are a gathering place for all children, not just a select few.

Integration with the school timetable solves the otherwise logistical issues of transport, safety, etc., which make out-of-school initiatives tedious & expensive.

Schools provide safe and secure areas for children to play.

School programs are easily scalable with an in-built repeatability design.

Out-of-School

- Expensive
- Low Turnout



In-school

- Credible
- Safe
- Captive
- Audience
- Scalable
- Inclusive
- Long Term



Industry Speaks

There is enough and more evidence that Schools are the central platform for identifying and nurturing talent. We celebrate the success of the legendary cricketers like Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid, however we forget that they were products of structured sports programs in their respective schools in Mumbai & Bangalore respectively back in the 1980s.

Vijay Krishnamurthy,
Sports Research Scholar (Ph.D.), University of Mysore

CLOSING SYSTEMIC GAPS - THE **SPORTZ** VILLAGE WAY

Step 1

EduSports: Start by integrating sports as part of education!

To ensure that sports remain enjoyable for everyone, it is crucial for children to acquire fundamental skills that will enable them to excel in sports.

- Create a pool of trained teachers within the fabric of schools and communities
- Develop age-appropriate content that children can enjoy
- Implement structured, age-appropriate, inclusive sports & PE curriculum integrated with the school sports ecosystem

When it comes to football, kids in Brazil have played
over 10,000 hours by the age of 13
which pretty much means playing 22 hours a week from the age of 5!



Step 2

EduSports Partner League: Create inclusive & enjoyable match play experiences

- Provide a platform to kids that is enjoyable and that allows them to set achievable goals & experience a sense of accomplishment, motivating them to continue pursuing their passion for the sport.
- The competition starts right at the section level providing an opportunity for kids to play with and against peers of similar skill levels.





INDIA'S BIGGEST

INTRA-SCHOOL MULTI-SPORTS LEAGUE



25,000 Children

200 Schools

5,000+ Matches

India's largest youth sports organization, Sportz Village, brings an exciting sporting extravaganza for schools & children to showcase and nurture their sporting skills while making sports an integral part of their lifestyle. EPL is a multi-city and multi-sports intra-school property that offers children world-class sporting experiences within the safety of school premises.

EPL Season 2: Key Features

- Conducted in 200 Sportz Village partner schools across Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, & Pune
- Intra-school to Inter-school match play
- Sports: Football and Basketball
- End-to-End digitization with Live streaming, Match highlights, Player profiles, and Stats
- Talent identification & development as part of Sportz Village's PathwayZ program
- Participant demography - Grade 3 to 10, boys & girls
- Timelines: September 2023 onwards

“ Industry Speaks

When it comes to female athletes, it is not just athletic excellence that is important; they also need to maintain a menstrual cycle balance in order to have a long and healthy sporting career. Simple adjustments like personalised training loads, hydration and nutrition can have a visible impact on their mood and energy levels during menstruation. Most importantly, it is critical to create an open environment in which girls can feel at ease whether at home, school or in the training arena. We notice that younger girls are quite shy about discussing the topic and require both compassion and support at such a tender age.

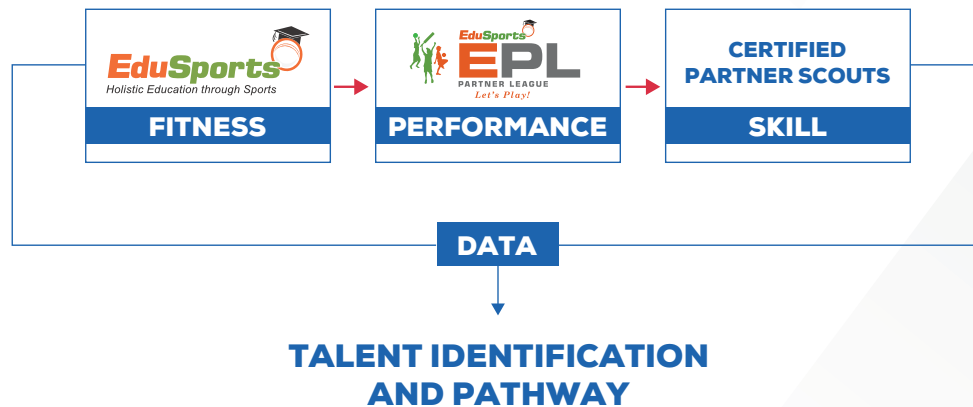
Dr Ragini Adhikari
Lead Exercise Physiologist, Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS)

Step 3

Talent Identification: Data driven approach at school Level

An assessment of every child's fitness and skill at the school level and his performance tracking can help:

- Create necessary benchmarks to grade and monitor a child's talent potential
- Reduce both the financial and physical strain on the students and their parents
- Democratised talent identification by ensuring that every child is included



“

There are so many trials being organized, with lofty promises of talent identification. We have been duped multiple times. We don't know whom to trust anymore.

-A Sports Parent



Step 4

PathwayZ: Provide personalized support to student athletes

The aim is to deliver tailored assistance to gifted student athletes based on their potential, interests, and needs.

Student Athlete Needs	Support Required
• Where and how can I get the right training?	• After-school academies • High-performance camps • Exposure Tours • Sports Science Support - Nutrition, Mental Fortitude, Strength & Conditioning, Sleep
• Will I have fair opportunities to get scouted?	• Local & national scouting partnerships
• Will it impact my academic performance? • What if I don't make it big? • Do I have backup options?	• Flexibility from schools w.r.to attendance & exam schedules • Sports school tie-ups • Sports scholarships for higher education • Bridge to non-athlete career options
• Will my parents support my decision to pursue sports? • Will it be a financial burden?	• Sports Parenting Webinars • Access to sponsorships/funding
• What if I get injured?	• Injury Management • Fitness Insurance

*A child may choose alternate careers in sports like being a coach, a commentator, a referee, a sports nutritionist, etc.



Industry Speaks

We have seen that the reasons for losing a match at the elite level are related to mental skills majority of the time. Mental skills training should begin early to build the athlete's mind muscles. It is required not just in times of stress or anxiety but also to develop self-discipline and overall personality. Top athletes like PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen are seeing the results of starting mental skill training early in their lives.

Vaibhav Tandon, Founder - All Is Well

THE IDEAL TOMORROW

Empowering System-Generated Champions



Why should I play sports,
I am not having fun?



**Structured Sports & PE programs
in Schools imparting fundamental skills**



Where do I find opportunities to play with
my friends or peers with equitable skills?



**Inclusive & enjoyable
match play experiences**



Am I good enough?

Data driven talent identification



Will it impact my academic performance?
Will I have fair & enough opportunities to get scouted?
What if I don't make it big? Do I have backup options?
What if I get injured?
Will it be a financial burden?



**Personalised support
for student- athletes**



Summary:

In order to create a vibrant funnel of System Generated Champions, an ideal tomorrow will need:

Sports to be an integral part of the education system, so that no child gets excluded.

Data-driven approach to talent identification at the school level and beyond

Personalised support for talented student athletes to pursue their journey towards sporting excellence

Opportunities and pathways to careers in sports or otherwise, beyond being an athlete



CASE STUDIES: Pathway IN ACTION

1

HCL FOUNDATION SPORTS EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

Identifying and nurturing student-athletes across a cluster of schools in Noida & Lucknow

PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS

a. Sporting-Talent Pathway

Build a pathway for talented children to become elite athletes through a tested framework of advancing coaching inputs and competition intensity in Sports Development Centres & High- Performance Learning Centres

b. Skill Development

Building capacity of children/youth to become & 'sports trainers' for sustaining the program within the communities

PROGRAM GEOGRAPHY >> NOIDA AND LUCKNOW (UP)

PROGRAM DEMOGRAPHY SCHOOL >> 13 TO 21 YEARS STUDENTS (M & F) OF GOVT SCHOOLS

IMPACT

20 Schools

600+ Student-Athletes (Beneficiaries)

5 Sports Athletics | Football | Volleyball | Cricket | Kabaddi

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Student-athlete selection (till date):

450+
District

100+
State

30+
National

as on 1st May, 2023

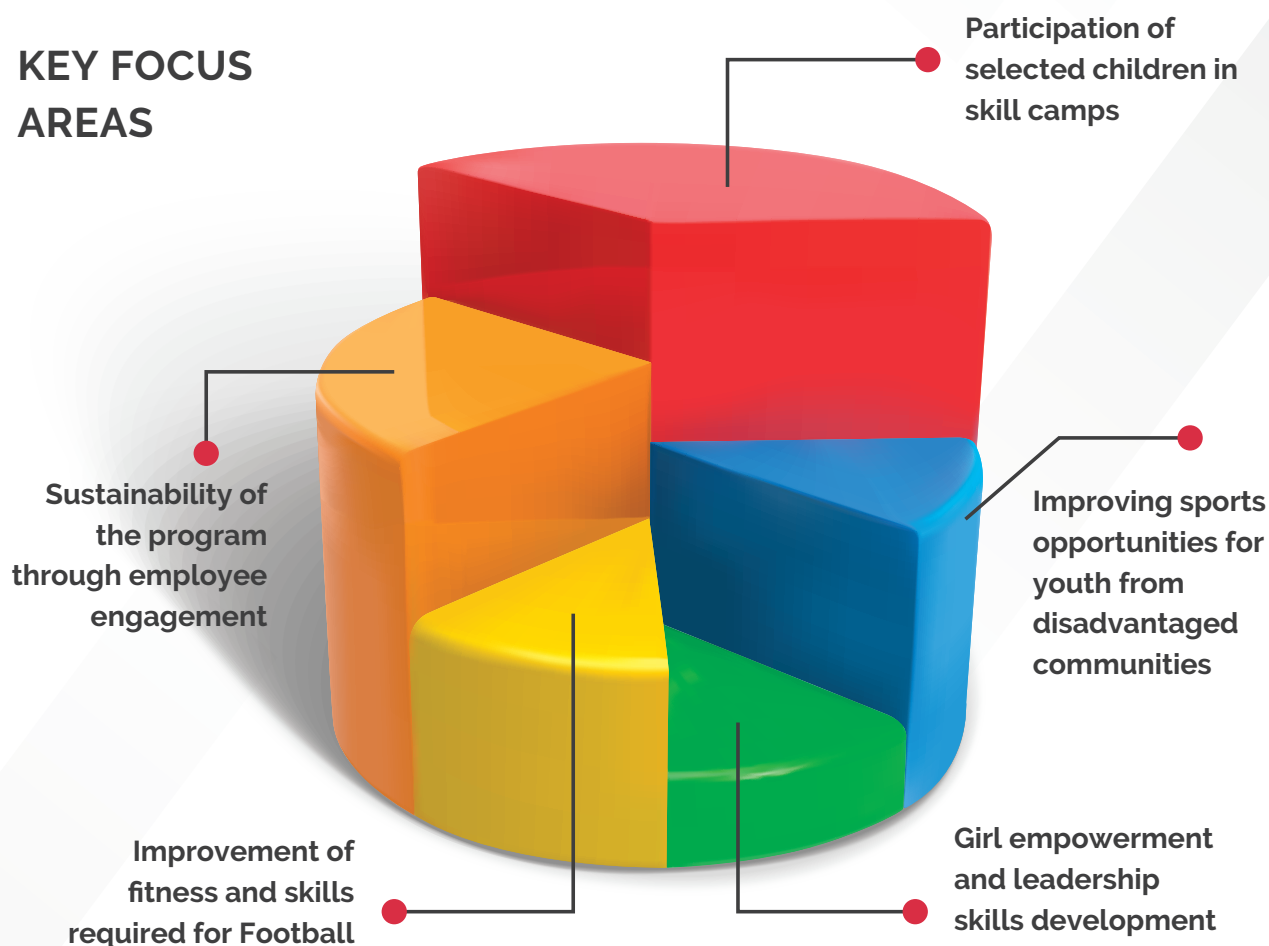


2

LATENTVIEW ANALYTICS SPORTS EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

One-of-a-kind structured sports training program for children across 30 schools in Chennai followed by Chennai Kaalpandhu League

KEY FOCUS AREAS



Industry Speaks

Sports is the most effective and fun way to help children develop life skills. This in specific helps kids in the lower economic strata, where in it aids kids in building self confidence, reduces stress and enhances their mood. LatentView was keen on doing a unique project on sports development with government school kids which provides a platform for these students from grassroots to elevate to the elite pathways . We chose football as it required minimum aids and also had high physical mobility and team play. We have successfully completed 2 seasons of Chennai Kaalpandhu League through which 7 kids are taking up training at renowned sports academies.

Poornima Shankar, Associate Director, LatentView Analytics

PROGRAM EXECUTION

PRE LEAGUE:

- Identifying/mobilising nascent talent (Under 13)
- Staffing and capacity building of trainers
- Identifying skill camp centres
- Conducting a 40-days structured training program

LEAGUE:

- Building separate leagues for Boys and Girls
- Talent scouting by experts
- Conducting the league matches including award ceremonies

POST LEAGUE:

- Shortlisting top 10-15 high potential talent
- Providing additional match play exposure
- Conducting a study to recommend pathway for identified talent
- Identifying & recommending potential high performance learning centres

*The league included a match between the Latent View employee volunteers and the children



IMPACT

30 Schools

6000 Students Engaged

5 Kids Selected For IKF Trials



PARTNER WITH US

Efforts are being made to address the gaps mentioned. Collaboration among various stakeholders is essential in cultivating a rich pool of talented student-athletes for the future. As the saying goes, 'It takes a village to raise a child', a well-structured pathway needs to be created that can guide them seamlessly towards success.

As Sportz Village, our goal is to foster an environment that enables children to reach their full potential in sports. Our PathwayZ program is designed to achieve this by utilising our widespread access to student athletes through the in-school EduSports program and providing match play opportunities through the EPL. With a data-driven approach and strategic partnerships, we strive to be the village that empowers children to excel in sports.

Partner with us to produce talent for the future!

With your support, we can help student-athletes bridge the gap between Grassroots and Elite. Assuming a 0.1% success rate, we can together produce more than 2000 Elite Players over the next 5 years. Furthermore, we will establish a sports ecosystem consisting of sports enthusiasts who could be amateur players, sports entrepreneurs, sports professionals, and at the very least, sports fans!

How to Partner?

Become an EduSports Partner

Showcase your brand's dedication towards children's health and well-being

Become an EduSports Partner League (EPL) Sponsor

Responsibly engage with kids and create a lasting impression among parents by creating fun match play opportunities for all school kids, not just the 2 out of 10 who play at inter-school level

Become a PathwayZ Partner

Support Top Student Athletes in their journey towards sports excellence

Become a Single Sport Evangelist

Support a complete pathway for your chosen sport from school curriculum integration to identifying and supporting talented athletes



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SPORTZ VILLAGE

born to play



Holistic Education through Sports

Structured Sports & PE Programs in Schools

Experiential Sports Marketing

Brand Activations | Sports IP | Sports Events

Sport for Change

CSR Programs for children & youth development

Academies

Programs to help children excel in sports

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