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Difference between a General Eye Examination practices with Sportvision Practice

A Sportvision Optometrist deals those visual skills of the players and athletes where no coach or team manager works with the players. Vision is the intangible asset of an athlete and is the first step of information processing. The eyes send the information to the brain where it is integrated with other data which includes sensory perception, memory and conditioning. If the information at the initiation is unclear or incomplete or not perfect in any manner, the reaction is less than desirable. In track and field it generates timing problem, in golf it results in short putting, in cricket it results in shot missing, in football it results in poor passing, in car racing it results in late breaking, in tennis it results in poor returning , in shooting it results in missing the gold and so on. The Sportvision Optometrists try to understand these problems, work with the athletes and players and finally analyses whether his vision or visual processing system has anything to do with any of such non desirable traits. **Vision training can improve vision, coordination between two eyes, eye focusing and eye- hand coordination and thereby reduce reaction time to improve the sporting performance.**

In our general day to day life we see everything, but nothing in fine detail. We observe the world around by allowing our eyes to move through the visual field. We usually do not just look for one particular object only. The most common visual test for general day to day life measures the ability to see letters of various sizes in high contrast conditions in an environment of ideal lighting, static position and high visual stimulus. **The 6/6 or 20/20 on Snellens Eye Chart shows the static visual acuity only and does not reflect the extreme visual skills of the subject.** Most people think of vision as seeing 20/20 on the eye chart is all that so far as good visual

system is concerned. That's not correct, in fact that is only one important skill involved in maximum visual performance. This is where the general eye examination practice differs with a sportvision practice where other aspects of visual abilities like coordination, concentration, balance and accuracy are also assessed. The objective of the sportvision assessment not only includes examining the eyes for enhancement or treatment but also includes:

1. Preventive management
2. Refraction compensation with spectacles, or contact lenses or LASIK surgery
3. Assessment and remediation of various functions of visual efficiency
4. Sports specific visual ability assessment
5. Visual performance training. There is a myth that you born with the specific vision and therefore you cannot improve. Vision can be improved.

In addition, demonstration of the status of the visual system is the key so that the athlete or the player can perceive the same and then finally work with the sportvision optometrists to design suitable vision correction and visual training program for them. The process does not end with a medical prescription. In fact in clinic preliminary assessment report is used to discuss and analyze the condition of the visual system with the athletes based upon the visual needs of the specific sports and may be followed by on field observation by the optometrist. The whole process may need some sessions for in clinic assessment or on field observation or discussion with coaches.

A sportvision optometrist needs to look at all the sports with the eyes of optometrists. He must have thorough understanding of sports because his personal participation and observation of the athletes in the field is very critical in performance analysis. He must spend a part of his time on watching sporting events, training tapes and videos, interaction with coaches or trainers and reading sports magazines and books. He should also have a comprehensive knowledge about the athletes, his motivational level, and goal oriented mentality. He must establish rapport and connect with the athlete so that he can also work with the athlete as personal trainers.

The athletes who visit the sportvision optometrists are not the patient. They do not visit the sportvision optometrists for any immediate remedial treatment. Hence they do not like to hear the term "patient". They do not appreciate the term "deficiency" as most often their visual system is developed more than the normal person. Therefore, it is prudent to explain the vision assessment results to the athletes as "strengths" and "opportunities". Stronger aspects of vision are put into the category of "strengths" and weaker aspects are put into the category of "opportunities" which implies there is an scope for improvements.

A Sportvision Optometrist can interfere at three levels:

1. At the elite level when the athlete finds that he is making similar mistake repeatedly in spite of working on same with coach and otherwise.
2. At the competitors' level, guiding the athletes to prevent eyes and enhance his sporting career.
3. At the participant level, sportvision training may be taken together with sporting skill training.

Always remember that the MUSCLES OF THE EYES ARE LIKE THE OTHER MUSCLES OF THE BODY. AS THE BODY CAN BE CONDITIONED BY WORKING WITH THE MUSCLES WITH THE HELP OF PHYSICAL TRAINERS, THE EFFICIENCY OF THE VISUAL SYSTEM CAN ALSO BE IMPROVED BY WORKING WITH SPORTVISION SPECIALISTS.

Although the scope seems to be quite a big, the science could not gain the desired acceptance because of:

- Limitations of research
- Not many institutions provides education for sportvision
- Lack of standardization in service
- Primary focus on vision screening with very limited follow ups.
- No fixed recognized certification program
- Fragmented and low technological instruments. Athletes want to have an experience and hence they expect high technological instruments. However, if high technological instruments are available, they are very expensive.

The straight forward meaning is there is a need for intervention by sports authority to look at Sportvision Optometry as a potential opportunity for improving sporting skills. This is very important in today's highly competitive world where the difference between the first and second is hardly a fraction of second.
