



EduSports
Holistic Education through Sports

INDIA'S NO. 1
 SCHOOL SPORTS ORGANIZATION



HOW WE GOT 500 SCHOOLS TO PLAY? THE INSIDE STORY



We wanted to get children to play. As simple as that. But it took us 6 years, multiple business models and burning Rs. 70 lacs, to finally develop an idea that worked – an idea called EduSports. Thank you for your support, as we could not have done this without you! But the journey has not been easy. And it started in 2003. 13 years ago....



Flashback 1

Broke, but not broken.

It is the year 2003, three of us are evaluating different business ideas, nothing clicks, until one of us laments about his son not playing enough and wishes that there were more playgrounds. This thought sparks an idea; a business is conceived and a company named SportzVillage is formed.

The vision is to make Sports an integral part of every child's education and upbringing.

The solution is a ground. SportzVillage. An open, multi-sport playground with cricket, football & basketball. A safe place where children can experience the magic of sports. Of multiple sports. Without the pressure of performance.

A marketing campaign is launched, wherein our advisor, Dr. George Selleck (renowned sports counselor, educator and an alumnus of Stanford University) has paid a visit to India to generate buzz around sports for kids. Posters are put up at apartment complexes and leaflets distributed to 800 apartments with approximately 300 kids. We expected 40-50 registrations on the day of the event.

Finally, the day arrives - August 31st, 2003! 9:30 am. A 40-seater bus is booked to take the children and parents to the venue, which is decorated with balloons and balls to play with. The bus keeps waiting outside the apartment complex as only one person shows up!! Only 5 children sign up for SportzVillage on Day 1. A grand disaster!

Q. Why did we get only 5 registrations on Day 1?

A. We don't really know! Based on our research with parents, we knew that this concept was definitely filling the gap of children not having space to play!

We got press coverage, we put posters, banners. Inserted leaflets in apartment complexes. We thought we'd get 50 sign-ups but didn't. We only got 5!

We learnt that the market is ready when it is ready. Not when your product/solution is ready however, smart you may think you are!

We also realized that, for a parent, the solution is one that covers all the aspects. In our case, the to-and-fro transportation & time was seen to be a part of the offering – and ended up stopping many people from registering.

Flashback 2: 2003-2008

We chose the game. We made the rules.

The ground model didn't work for us.

After our debacle with the SportzVillage play-ground model, we did not give up on our vision of making people play. There were a series of business we tried from 2003 - 2008: -

1. *Getting kids to play in apartment complexes*
2. *Getting kids to play in indoor play spaces*
3. *Getting kids to play after-school using school facilities.*
4. *Sports ticketing and tourism*
5. *Sports technology*
6. *Corporate Sports & Sports marketing*

All except the corporate sports & sports marketing failed.



Q. Why did we fail in the other businesses?

When we failed in the initial SportzVillage model, we had run out of our savings and the initial investment we had raised from friends and family.

So, we thought we will build another business in sports, make enough money and then get back to the business of getting children to play.

Each of the businesses we tried had some challenges with making it into a sustainable & scalable business. We learnt that building a business requires a product/service that is relevant throughout the year – and not a seasonal one.

What happened with Corporate sports and Sports marketing?

Circa 2004: We thought we would build a business around getting corporates to play and leverage sports for employee engagement. That helped us pay some of our bills, build a small team and extend into working with sponsors.

The corporate sports business and the sports marketing business has today evolved into SportzConsult – wherein we work with leading brands (like Jr. NBA, Nike, Coke, Hero Motocorp etc) as well as corporates like Kotak, Axis Bank, Petrofac, JP Morgan etc.

SportzConsult helps corporates and brands leverage the magic of sports for their business objectives. SportzConsult, in 2015, has helped 1 million people experience the magic of sport – including empowering 1.5 lakh girls in self-defence.



Flashback 3: 2009

We turned our scars into stars.

It has been five years since the SportzVillage journey started and we have been through many failures. We did not buckle under the direst of situations, nor take the more lucrative and easier path of conducting non-sporting corporate events, or start an NGO, or selling non-sports items like uniforms etc. Our vision was to get people to play! We had chosen to stay within the canvas of sports.

We march ahead, and are soon joined by many, who support us and believe in our vision. In 2009, we realized that the best way to make more children play was at schools, by aligning sports with education and also ensure that the business was scalable and viable. Thus, EduSports came into existence!

Q. Why did we choose to not become an NGO and how did we turn things around in 2009 with the vision of 'getting children to play' even though it didn't work out from 2003-2008?

A. Becoming an NGO would have meant depending on grants to get children to play. We wanted to build a sustainable and scalable model in sports. Not one that depends on grants.

We felt that if we felt that the medium of sport is so powerful, there must be some way of convincing people to see the power and pay for it. Not by subsidizing it with grants!

In 2008, we remembered that during our SportzVillage ground days (2003-2006), some schools in Bangalore used to bring their kids to our ground during school time.

So, we thought let's relook at schools and see if we can get children to play during the PE timetable.

In 2009, we started knocking on school doors with the idea of making sports an integral part of education. Out of 100 schools that we tried to reach, 90 threw us out saying "Parents don't want sports for their kids, they want their children to only learn math and science". But 10 of them said, "That is interesting. Tell us more". Of these 10, three said, "Where have you been all this while? I know my sports program is broken, but I don't know how to fix it!"

Some of the early schools trusted our sincerity and decided to give us a chance – but also challenged us on how we are going to actually execute the program throughout the year.

While we had originally planned to be a training & technology company, we recruited full-time sports and PE team members for conducting classes and took on the responsibility of actually implementing the program on the ground.

Thus, began the journey for EduSports from the idea of having children to play in a structured, inclusive and safe manner, along with their health and fitness tracking through technology.

Flashback 4: 2010 - 2016

Many fights, but we are scaling heights.

The earlier mishaps came handy and we definitely knew what not to do while we were still trying to build the business! The early investors and the VC firm invested in EduSports because they had seen the commitment to the model, as well as the scars from the previous years of trying various models.

Schools said they liked the EduSports "concept". But their parents would never accept it.

So, we asked them to let us present our solution to the parents – with the key focus on how their child (and not just the school sports team) would get the experience of sports for fitness and life-skills.

During the early days, before one such session in Raipur, the parents were very upset with the management. And after our session, they surrounded the Directors and told them that the EduSports program was the ONLY good thing they have done so far!

Our original focus was on getting children to play but we realized that we could get more children to play if we correctly addressed the expectations of the trustees, parents, school co-ordinators and the school PE. Hence the tools, systems, log-books, assessments, weekend leagues, training & supporting the school PE etc.

7 years of EduSports. 500 schools. 4 lakh children experiencing the magic of sport.

We could not have done this without your support.

On behalf of the EduSports team, I want to thank you for trusting us, for rapping us on the knuckles when we slipped up, for demanding the best for your children and for being patient with us as we worked hard to meet your expectations.

Together, we have created an industry (called Sports Education) that did not exist before 2009.

Together, we have made a big mark in the history of Sports in India.

Keep spreading the magic of sport.

Thank you!

