

Steve Backley Interview

I hung on every word and it made me think about everything I know about this event and the sport in general.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=jUuVZ6Hjuvs&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2QN_CeEFdXRIXs7d8K08rybqpV65JCBL7wBuGKiCHGkQxp3UH9XqRNeepY

I'm glad that I have the mindset to listen to others. As the years have unfolded I have learned so much by being open to listening to others describe their journeys. Sometimes, but seldom, some of the observations don't fit well with the paradigm I have allowed myself to be comfortable with. Often though I hear a word or a phrase in a certain context and it starts me asking questions of my own position on things. Sometimes it stimulates me to confirm a certain stance I have on something and other times it makes me question my assumptions.

Among other things, Steve mentioned 4 elements about the Javelin Throw – Rhythm, Range, Connection and Aggression and my reaction was to examine his words and let my mind dance around them. If I only see the four elements as simple words then I lose so much opportunity to learn. By working out what I think he means, what I think he doesn't mean, how the words might relate to each other collectively, what journey is sitting behind the word and what journey will follow the word, I create a journey of personal learning - priceless.

My immediate reaction was to the word 'connection' because it resonated with me about the movement journey that all athletes embark upon as they learn the events that appeal to them. It reminded me of how I view stability – "an ever-moving set of platforms" that assist all the forces to travel where they need to go while reducing 'energy leaks'. In Javelin throwing these forces start at ground contact; transfer in hundreds of directions along the kinetic chain in a set of sequences that transport the forces all the way to the hand at release. The rhythm and timing of this force transfer creates all sorts of outcomes that lead us to seeing things like 'withdrawal', 'cross over', 'landing', 'throwing stride', 'Bracing the left-hand side', 'making a bow', 'heel out', and so on.

The violence that pervades the entire action once both feet are in contact with the ground certainly puts the word 'aggression' into context – but it also raises the concept of mechanical resilience. If we ensure that a thrower journeys from mechanical efficiency to mechanical consistency and finally to mechanical resilience then the violence should be survivable. The event also announces that all the body parts have to often move multi-directionally and multi-planar, utilising all the forces along the force-time continuum – usually all at the same time. What a feat of control and efficiency that is!

So, what can we do long-term to optimise this journey for this event? I close my eyes and see foundation movements that offer direct and indirect exposure to these required movement patterns. Lunge and Reach, Lunge and Bend, Lunge and Rotate, Lunge Bend and Rotate, Lunge Reach and Rotate, etc, using 'fixed' and 'transfer' movements. Oops! – better translate that – I get athletes to explore movements where the hips and trunk/shoulders remain in alignment (fixed) (association) and then explore movements where the hips move in one plane and the trunk/shoulders in another (transfer) (dissociation). By exploring the latter you will sometimes see them create a 'torque' or 'stretch-shortening' cycle between some body parts (hips and trunk/shoulders in this case). This gives experiences in things like 'rhythm' and 'timing' in the throws.

By using the creation of a general movement vocabulary that opens the door to the above-mentioned 'related' patterns you will be creating a very worthwhile journey to the specifics of the chosen throwing event. As the athletes learn how to solve hundreds of these movement puzzles along the way they will be building up a reservoir of solutions to be called upon when they are deep in event specific learning.

PS – this type of movement journey works for Running and Jumping just the same.

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