

Observation – what to expect when you look.

Every stride, jump, throw, kick, catch, strike, bend, rotation, squat, lunge, landing, pull, push, brace, hinge, reach and pivot that you observe during your coaching session is part of the mosaic of the movement vocabulary that makes up the technical journey the athlete is on. These elements form the basis, the infrastructure, the DNA of the technical model you are seeking.

With each athlete arriving at training with uniquely different anatomical, physiological and neurological components alongside their different learning, adaptation and recovery rate; all coupled with their unique maturation stage compared to the person next to them, it is clear that they will interpret your sought after technical model differently to the person next to them.

If this is the reality of the coaching session then surely the technical model you are seeking should be one that displays variability both in its existence and in comparison with other athletes. Movement variability is as important an issue as everything else in the coaching toolbox. There is no one single technical model that “fits all”. It is no use chasing a movement pattern that does not display some variability (a) as it is being executed (b) in comparison to the previous attempt (c) in comparison to another athlete.

It will never be perfect but it must be excellent in the light of the required components of the technical model. Incessantly chasing a movement pattern for perfection is a waste of time. Chasing a movement pattern for repeatable excellence is a different matter. Different elements will work differently for each athlete so variability should be seen as a useful entity during the journey. You will see little symmetry in the human body so don’t expect to see it in a movement pattern.

For those of you who have a form of OCD about the technique you are seeking, try to embrace movement variability. As time goes by you will realise that some variability is OK to accept as it is a fact of life.

Obviously, you can never accept something that is negatively affecting mechanical efficiency, consistency and resilience but you must ensure that you know what to keep working on and what to leave alone. Remember there is never only one way of doing anything. The athlete’s answer to the technical puzzle you have set them may well look very different to what you might have expected, especially when comparing to the technical model of world-leading athletes. If their interpretation gets the job done and satisfies the fundamentals, then there is a decent chance that you are seeing their unique interpretation which is as valid as anything else.

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