

## High Jump

If you can arrive at take-off in the right position (all the time); and execute the right actions (all the time) then you can focus training on creating and using greater and faster forces in the right direction. That's the order of things.

Put another way – run well; run accurately; align the body parts in the right place at the right time; move the body parts in the right direction at the right time; produce high forces in the right direction at the right time.

What position and height you attain across the bar is determined by what you do at take-off. What you do at take-off is determined by what you do at 'plant'. What you do at 'plant' is determined by what you do in the latter stages of the approach run. What you do in the latter stages of the approach run is determined by how you start the approach run.

Direction, force and timing of knee-drive at take-off are determined by the posture and alignment of body parts at 'plant'. Alignment and actions at 'plant' are determined by the alignment and actions of body parts in the 3 strides beforehand.

## The Journey

It certainly doesn't start with a contest with a bar and tape measure.

Once the athlete has created an all-round movement vocabulary along the full continuum of mechanical (movement) and metabolic elements the more focused components of jumping / landing and landing / jumping can be developed.

Let the beginner experience the solving of a range of jumping movement puzzles – Two feet and one-footed versions (Two feet take-off to two feet landing; Two feet take-off to one-foot landing; One-foot take-off to one-foot landing. These puzzles include the 'landing' and 're-start' components in single and multiple jumping settings both vertically and horizontally. They should be encouraged towards experiencing all amplitudes of jumping and landing. Use 'slow to fast'; 'simple to complex'; multi-directional; changes in amplitude; as parts of the puzzle. The 'simple to complex' versions will see the re-arrangement of other body parts as the constraint e.g. jump and rotate, jump and overhead reach (one and two arms), skip and reach, etc.

These two early stages can be presented as fun, enjoyable challenges of a personal nature with each athlete negotiating their journey in their own unique way. While the athlete finds the answers to the movement puzzles being set the coach is inexorably guiding the outcomes to 'what is yet to come' in terms of event-specific opportunities. This process will not happen overnight so extend the 'general' development work as long as possible. For those athletes who turned up to be a 'high-jumper' after seeing the event in action then by all means keep that interest going in some benign way but keep on emphasising that they have to 'earn the right' to explore it specifically. Athlete first – high-jumper second.

Certainly add personal competition in these 'puzzles' along the way (hopping, skipping, bounding, landing challenges for example) as a means of stimulus; certainly focus towards sound technical models of these actions and postures; certainly demand high standards of attainment in everything they do, but don't solely focus on event or competition-specific elements. You are getting the foundations well set in their vocabulary (and you will be glad of them when your female High Jumper needs to jump 20+cm over their own standing height in the middle of the arena under pressure).

You can only progress so far if the athlete has to land on their feet all the time. It means that the 'Scissors' technique may be the only one you can choose if you want to cross a bar as part of the learning process. The use of the correct landing areas is a vital component of the journey.

As the journey approaches the event-specific requirements of the High Jump so the exercise prescription narrows. Short approach run (3-stride / 5-stride elements can be considered as a starting point). This allows the flight characteristics to be linked directly to 'what has gone before' e.g. pre-plant, plant and take-off. Becoming too much of an 'isolationist' (working on drills that are too far away from the 'connected' sequence of events) at this stage is not recommended. Try to maintain learning activities that expose the athlete to the full sequence of events rather than small isolated parts. It is possible to highlight certain specific actions and postures within this full sequence as part of the coaching guidance but best to maintain learning within the full sequence of the jump.

As these elements are consolidated so the shape and length of the approach run can be developed. The longer and faster the approach run the greater the forces are at plant and take-off so always consider this. If the forces take the athlete outside their ability to control postures and actions then stay at an optimum length and speed of the approach run.

August 2015  
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