Why Drills?

Motivating – Rewarding Young Athletes

Program presented by

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Jonathan Livingston Seagull
No one can ever make you feel inferior .. without your consent

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Many (most) young people will never be the fastest .. the best .. a winner

But, while we can’t all be winners, We can all be champions.
From my experience, while the vast majority of young athletes will not reach “elite” performance levels .. ALL can drill efficiently, and, enjoy the self-esteem that skill acquisition offers.

Sure, some will take longer than others, but:

Only

Patience
Practice .. Perfect Practice
Produces
Professional Performance
Why Drills?

1. To practice **YOU** being in command of your intentions and reactions
Why Drills?

2. To stimulate interest, variety and fun.
3. To improve technique: including rhythm and co-ordination.
Why Drills?

4. To improve balance and flexibility
   (drill both sides of the body to equal efficiency)
5. To improve strength and power through ranges of motion specific to your sport(s).
Why Drills?

6. To focus on and understand aspects of your event; drills are the key to technique improvement and refinement; the establishment of a correct *dynamic stereotype*. 
• Identifying errors is relatively easy;
• Strategies to correct movements …… not so easy (establishing a correct dynamic stereotype)

• Drills can help
North West Athletics: Speed is the Key
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Hurdle Drills: SLO MO
Intermediate / Senior (Trail Leg)

Ratings

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| 5    | 5     | = Excellent; “lookin’ good” .. “real good”.
| 4    | 4     | = Very Good; Minor improvements in technique possible.
| 3    | 3     | = Good; Some fundamental technique elements need attention.
| 2    | 2     | = Fair; Improvement evident; more practice recommended.
| 1    | 1     | = Early days; Practice regularly, the improvement will come.

Russell Parsons / Noel Dillon    Date: ______________________

It is important to reward (acknowledge) skill progression
Never under-estimate the importance of recognising (rewarding) endeavour and progress.

Such tags can be instructional, can be reminders, can be rewards, …. 

Young athletes love to collect …

One of the greatest things is to learn, demonstrate and have acknowledged, a new accomplishment.
Why Drills?

7. To expand your confidence in your potential as an athlete, and as a person.

Self-esteem is developed through confronting challenges … and, developing skills to achieve positive outcomes.
So, what is a **drill**?

Simply - a drill is part of a movement

We are breaking down a movement into its sum of parts, e.g. clearance of a hurdle

Learning / practising the parts

Then, re-assembling the parts *Having-a-go*
There are many options to reward and encourage young athletes as they pursue new skills.

Not our focus now, but many examples are available.

Interested?
Muscle Memory and Skill Acquisition

When we learn a skill, it requires repeated and continuous practice before it becomes “automatic”.
An **automatic skill** is a movement we can do without thought.

**Walking** is the obvious example.

From our early years repeated practice day in, day out, result in our arms and legs eventually co-ordinating into an efficient walking action.

Think about the almost countless arm movement variations you can perform while walking.
**Simply:** your muscles develop a (correct)

“*muscle memory of walking*”.

Your (mind and) body is free to focus on other tasks, and, develop a muscle memory of those tasks.
Like walking, running / sprinting / hurdling (examples) are acquired skills that can become automatic when our body develops a “*muscle memory of running / sprinting / hurdling*”.

This takes time and is **strongly dependent** on **regular**, ever-improving practice.

*Modified from Forbes Carlisle, Aust. Swimming Coaching Legend*
“We are what we repeatedly do; excellence can become a habit”
Learning New Skills is FUN!!

But, “FUN” is NOT just allowing young people to do what they like; as coaches and/or teachers, our responsibility is to provide leadership.

For example, YOU allowing kids to choose what they would like to do (from a list approved and presented by you) is just another way of YOU being in control; YOU displaying leadership and initiative.
A few things to consider .. Fundamental Strategies
Many are sport focused, but broader applications can apply

Think about your sport (activity / interest)

• Each sport is a sum of movements..

• Each movement can form the basis of a drill..

• Drills can enhance movement skill / efficiency..
  speed, co-ordination .. confidence, self-esteem
There is a multiplier effect.

And, improved performance in a whole range of sports can be enhanced by improvements from drills.
The range of drills is almost endless, but pure fun and variety aside, drills should be specific to the movements you wish to enhance.

There are basic drills - but in each sport, a multitude of sport-specific drills.
• Drills should be precisely planned and perfectly executed … repeatedly.

Patience --- Precision --- Persistence

*Fast Claw* .. *Preparation* position

Any comments?

Positive?

Improvements?
• We learn incorrect responses as easily as correct movements ... so, learn correctly right from the start, and, **NEVER - NEVER** practice errors.

Research suggests that it takes about 50 repetitions to form a habit .. but, **It can take thousands of repetitions to change a habit**

Ask if you are unsure ..

"No, you can't hurdle them all at once!"
Also

Don’t over-practice

**Speed** is a **Key** element in most sports; don’t repeat activities such that you practice “slowness”.

**Quality** is more important than **Quantity**
• While in many instances, walking through a drill is a good basic starting point (i.e. teaching the mind and body what is expected), some drills are easier to do at a moderate tempo; e.g. A-Skip may be easier than A-Walk.

Always Remember !!
An **Eyeful** is
Better than
a **Mouthful**

Which?
Why? ..
Have a reason
Share the reason
There is no giant step that does it. It's a lot of little steps.
• Athletes should be encouraged to “feel” the movement, and, associate the correct feeling with the correct movement.

Remember: the coach can only see / (often) the athlete can only feel

Where appropriate, slow the movement down .. execute with eyes closed .. seek to feel what is right/best .. encourage the athlete to learn to “read” their body.

Every athlete is an experiment of one

Lots of positive, corrective feedback can help the athlete refine their feelings

Video / mirrors
• End each training unit with a successful outcome … e.g. a perfect drill execution and (perhaps)

include the drill into the complete movement pattern, or, a progressive and advanced level of the skill. .. always seek to link drills to the complete movement.

Potential is what you may be capable of doing
Motivation directs what you do
Attitude determines how well you do

The ONLY performance over which YOU have control is YOUR PERFORMANCE

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Have a flexible plan

Far better to have a (flexible) plan, than no plan at all

The plan may be in your head, it may be formalised on paper, but

HAVE A PLAN

Among your preparations ..

What is the outcome you wish to achieve?

then,

Your strategies (incl. variations) .. your plan to achieve that outcome

With experience you will learn to .. improvise .. react

but, in the early stages .. use / learn from the experiences of others
You can’t put in what God left out
(“Chariots of Fire”)

but

Drills offer an opportunity to refine and expand skills, and enhance self-esteem.

Don’t miss the opportunity

I have seen many, many swimmers and runners who are not and never will be the fastest … but, I have never encountered a resolute athlete who could not develop commendable drill mastery ..

We can’t all be winners, but we can all be champions
Potential is what you may be capable of doing

Motivation directs what you do

Attitude determines how well you do

www.nwaswimaths.com
Associated Handouts

- Presentation Details
- Various Drill Progressions .. Athletics / Swimming
  (sample motivational / skill awards)

Other Presentations

Sprint Hurdles .. An Analysis
Why Drills?
Learning New Skills is Fun .. Athletics
and others
There are many more issues raised by the presentation than are answered..

Knowledge accumulates quickly only in an open mind.