

AGILITY and CO-ORDINATION (Latif Thomas: www.completespeedtraining.com)

(RP: Graphics added and minor alterations)

'Agility' is one of those words that covers a variety of skills. When people talk about agility, most often they are talking about an athlete's ability to make cuts and quickly change directions.

The way I see it, the primary component to improved agility is through the development of CO-ORDINATION.

Before you start putting athletes through complicated drills that have them going in ten different directions over the course of a 30 second time period, you must take a step back and address their level of coordination.

Even the best athletes have co-ordination problems.

The thing about co-ordination and agility is this:

The earlier you address it, the better the long term results.

If athletes don't begin developing their coordination until their mid-teens, they will be limited in the amount of progress they can make.

That's why I like to get kids started as early as possible, preferably before they hit puberty.

I'm not saying a 17 year old can't improve her agility and coordination to a significant degree, but the if she started when she was 8, she'd be much better off.

OK, here is what to do...

STEP 1: Improve your athletes' coordination

My favorite way to both expose an athlete's lack of coordination and also develop it is through the use of an **agility ladder**.

You can do an infinite number of drills that focus on single leg movement, double leg, linear, lateral, backward movement, change of direction - the list goes on and on.

All of these movements will help address the types of movement they may see in their competition.

As we get those down, we implement the traditional cone drills that allow for more instruction on movement patterns that are more applicable to game situations.

But like everything else, technique is the most important skill to both teach and learn.

As I've said before, I even use agility work with my track (straight ahead) athletes during the pre-season as well.

Why?

When athletes are uncoordinated, in order to maintain balance and keep the athlete from falling down or getting hurt, the brain has to work harder.

In order to compensate for all the extra math that the brain must do instantaneously and on the fly in order to coordinate the movements of all the active muscles in the body, the body must slow way down.

This is why athletes often look like they are stuck in the mud during agility drills.

Well, sprinting is a highly technical activity as well. So if athletes don't improve coordination and agility, their brains will have to slow the limbs down during sprinting to compensate.

So, like with flexibility, athletes aren't being held back because of some innate lack of ability, but simply because they are only operating at 50% of their true ability.

By applying these (and all the other skills we've gone over so far) they can operate at a much higher percentage of their true ability.

At your next practice, set up some cones or a few agility ladders and try these techniques out. I think you'll be surprised at how much difficulty even the most accomplished athletes have at performing these exercises correctly



Potential: is what you may be capable of doing; **Motivation:** directs what you do;

Attitude: determines how well you do.

STEP 2: Correct body position

One of the reasons that athletes have a tough time changing directions on the fly is simply because they are out of position.

So here are two things to teach your athletes when doing agility training, especially when doing cone-type drills:

1. Keep your balance.
2. Push away from the ground when planting.

Applying force in the opposite direction that you want to go is the best way to change directions quickly.

In your Complete Speed Training program, I show you exactly how to teach these skills and what errors athletes typically make.

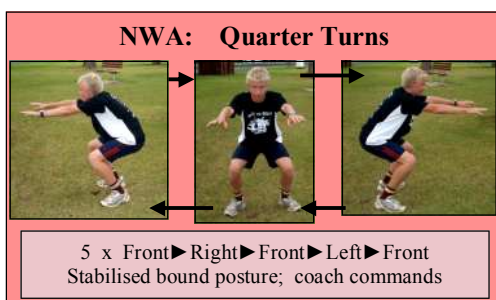
As with most things, it is much better shown on video/DVD than in written format.

STEP 3: Work both sides of the body equally

Athletes always prefer to start or focus on one leg over the other.

So, I always make sure I do an equal number of efforts starting with left leg or moving to the left as I do to the right.

We have to turn weaknesses into strengths and this is a glaring example of that fact.



Always start a drill or activity on your non-preferred side ... **why?** Think about it.

If your coach calls a halt to the drill,
you will at least have practiced each side equally,
perhaps more so on your non-preferred side.

Focus on improving your “weaknesses”, not just trying to enhance your strengths.

Quality is more important than quantity

The Mirror Test

All that matters is that you can look in your mirror,
and honestly tell the person you see there,
you have done your best.