

Hurdling on the Bend (400H and 300H) .. Russell Woodbridge

Should we give consideration to hurdling on the bend?

Is it worth the time and effort to develop a method, which, in actual clearance time does not appear to have any advantage?

I believe it is !! Any method which enables a hurdler to come “off a hurdle” running fluently, rhythmically and with minimal speed loss is worth pursuing.

An all too common fault with 300 / 400 hurdlers is an easily seen hesitation, and effort to recover balance coming off a hurdle, particularly on a bend.

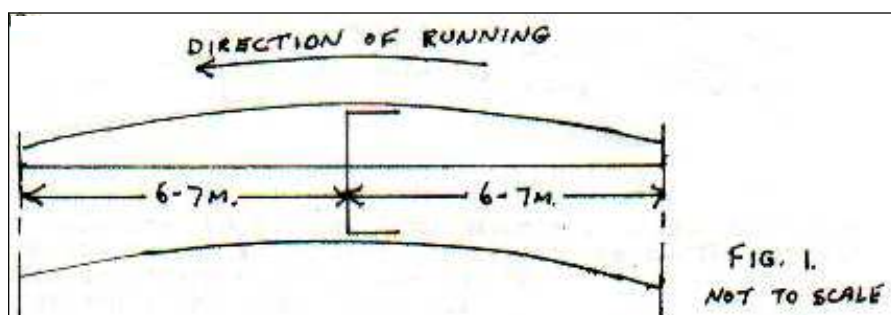
It is well known that leading with the **left leg** is a decided advantage on the bend, as the hurdler can stay closer to the inside of the lane.

The **right leg** hurdler obviously must stay far enough over in the lane to avoid having any part of the trail leg outside or below the top of the hurdle. But, it is still worthwhile using a clearance method similar to the left leg hurdler.

The rule governing hurdle clearance mentions “below” hurdle height, but without photographic evidence how could you dispute a decision by a track judge? So, it is wise to keep the leg and foot within the width of the hurdle.

1. **Many hurdlers use the same method for both straight and bend hurdling.** On the bends there are several disadvantages, as at least two strides “off the hurdle” will be in a straight line, and thus a change of direction is necessary to get back “on the bend”. This can result in momentary balance problems, interrupting the rhythm. This means speed loss, requiring unnecessary energy to overcome that loss.

2. Another method, is **straight line running-hurdling.** With this method, the hurdler moves to a position towards the outside of the lane, which will enable a straight run of 6-7 metres to the hurdle, and a similar distance after the hurdle (Fig. 1).

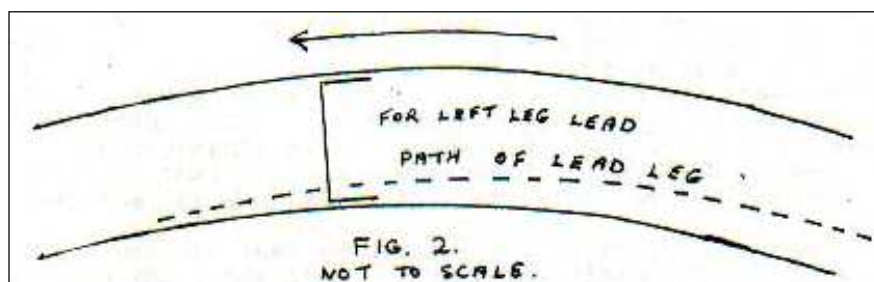


The disadvantages of moving towards the outside of the lane, and the direction change at the end of the straight line are said to be outweighed by the supposed speed gain from running and hurdling in a straight line.

3. A 3rd method, requiring a good level of hurdle technique, is to run the bend (curve) as for a 200m or 400m, i.e. close to the lane line, and “**leaning on the curve**” .. then, making the clearance with a similar “lean in”. This method is NOT recommended, as infringement of the rule previously outlined is highly likely, even with the most highly skilled hurdlers. It has only been presented here to warn of its problems.

4. **The recommended method:** The **left leg lead hurdler** runs normally on the bend, “leaning in” close to the inside lane line to a point 5 or 6 strides from take-off. From this point, the hurdler will “drift” slightly wide of the inside line. This drift only needs to be a quarter of the lane width.

At take-off, the clearance flight path will aim for a touchdown of the lead leg close to the inside line (Fig. 2).



Trail leg movement needs to be technically correct; an “under the arm pit” to an “in front of the hip” position is important.

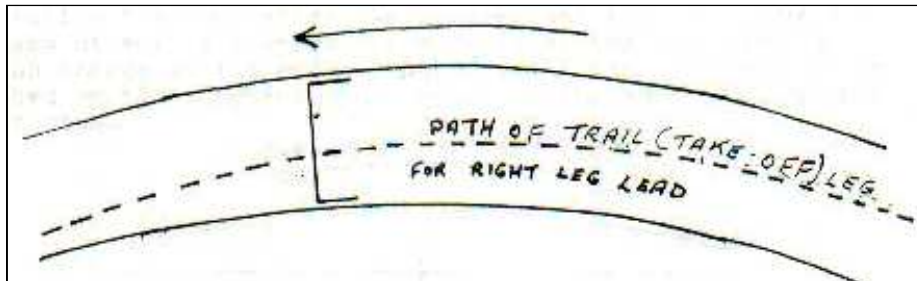
Strong use of the simultaneously moving trail arm is also necessary.

Photo: comments?

The **right lead leg** hurdler can gain from using a similar method. Obviously, the take-off point will be further towards the outside of the lane.

The clearance flight path needs to be the same. The take-off point in relation to the lane width needs to be determined by trial and error ... just far enough across the lane to avoid any clearance infringement.

The trail leg to in front of the hip position is not as critical as for the left leg lead, nevertheless, good technique should always be the aim.



The touchdown will see the hurdler land, balanced, in the direction of running (on the curve), and able to “run off” the hurdle without any hesitation or interruption to the rhythm ... a principal advantage of this method.

Russell Woodbridge was a **very** highly regarded Hurdles Coach Specialist (ATFCA, Level 3 .. before the current level categories were introduced) .. he made many contributions to coaches and athletes personally and as Hurdles Squad Co-ordinator for Athletics Victoria.



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Assuming an elite hurdler clears H1 after the 8th stride (M110—W100H), and takes 6 steps **after** the final hurdle to the finish, how many strides does the hurdler take in the race? (not including the clearance stride)

- A 41
- B 55
- C 49
- D lots

◀**Note!** This question is about sprint hurdles, but is offered as an example ... coaches and athletes should challenge their focus on the event.

110H .. 10 hurdles
100H .. 10 hurdles

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Google: Hurdles ... see what I mean? Variations .. explore