

Youth Speed Training

Acceleration

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Athletes in any sport, need to be able to accelerate as quickly as possible to get to the ball or opponent first. As a coach you must be able to put your athletes in the best possible position to succeed. I'm sure you can tell stories of athletes that you've seen that haven't mastered body control and haven't even learned to skip correctly. Now, how are you supposed to teach these athletes proper sprinting mechanics?

Fake it until you make it!

This doesn't mean just have your athletes run until they get it right, because they won't get it right. You must teach them proper form even if you have to trick their bodies to get into it.

Partner Marching Drills

1).The first drill that needs to be taught is the Partner Marching Drill

Have the two partners face each other. The first person leans in at a 45 degree angle, while their partner is holding them in this position. Have your first athlete bring their right knee up, keeping the ankle behind the knee and the toe up towards the shin. This is triple flexion on the front side, the position your athlete would be in during acceleration. On the support leg (left leg), have your athlete in triple extension. That left leg will be in a straight line with the hips, spine and head. The ankle will be plantar flexed (pointed) and make sure that your athlete's left glute is firing. For now, both arms will be at the side.

From this position, the athlete on your command will be driving the right leg down and back with the foot landing behind the hips. Switch legs, hold the position and on your command, have the athlete drive the left leg down.

*After this drill is perfected, you can add the arms in. Drive the opposite elbow down and back. Keep the hands loose, but not open. Arms should remain at approximately 90 degrees from the elbow.

2).The next progression is to perform the same drill with the athlete in motion. The athlete's partner will be resisting slightly to keep the athlete at the desired 45 degree angle. The athlete is going to be marching for 10 steps, forcefully driving the front-side leg down and back. The forward movement will be short in distance with the focus on the driving motion. You want your athlete to be able to feel their feet behind them during these drills so it seems natural when it comes time to accelerate during games.

3). The final progression of the Partner Marching Drill isn't a march at all. This time you want your athlete to run. The object for your athlete is to make it to the cone (15 yards away) as quickly as possible while maintaining proper form. Their partner will be providing more resistance. A common mistake is for the athlete to bend or break at the hips. Make sure that there is a straight line from the support leg's ankle all the way to their head.

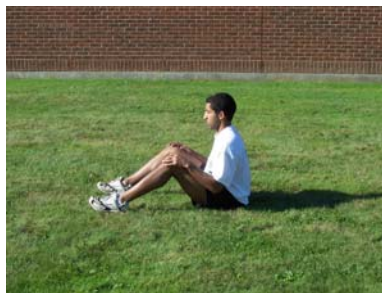
Here are a couple more drills to use once your athletes have mastered the Partner Marching Drills. Again you will be putting their bodies in the right position without them knowing it.



Pushup 'Down' Position



Pushup 'Up' Position



Seated (forward or backward)

The pictures were of the starting positions for each exercise. You will notice when your athletes are getting up and out of these positions that they are driving out at a 45 degree angle to the ground. They are stepping over the opposite knee and driving the foot down and back into the ground to create maximal force and the foot strike will be slightly behind the hips. Your athletes will also come up gradually in a proper acceleration pattern without trying to force themselves to stay low or to pop up too soon.

All of the drills shown are great for the youth athlete. Teaching their bodies to learn, feel and remember the correct pattern of proper mechanics will set them up to make huge improvements with their speed without having any set backs and keeping them a step ahead of the competition.

For questions or comments on this article or to learn more about Patrick checkout:
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