

Key Strategies and Implementation for Developing a Simple, Consistent, and Effective Approach in the Horizontal

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Why is the approach so important?

→ Sets the jumps in motion

- ◆ Each step is working toward maximum velocity at take-off.
- ◆ Proper practice and training significantly decreases chances of a foul mark.

→ Helps athlete build confidence in their jump

- ◆ More reps, more mastery of the approach.
- ◆ Improve meet day management of allocated warm up time.
- ◆ Relieves stress of the approach, can focus on jump.

What does an Effective Approach look like?

Picture this:

An athlete awaits the call from the official that they are cleared to approach. The flag is waved, the call is made, the athlete lowers into a crouched position and readies to start. Whatever pre-jump rituals are enacted, and at the moment of truth the athlete rocks back to gain momentum rolling into the initial drive step to start the approach, pushing hard off the ground below as they explode forward. Each of the next series of steps propel the athlete further down the runway, with each step building more and more momentum. The athlete's eyes come up and focus on the horizon as they hit a vertical position in their

Execution of an Effective Approach



When and how often should the approach be trained?

→ The approach should be introduced early in the season

- ◆ 1st week of practice most ideal, as you are breaking-down and explaining the event to new athletes.
- ◆ Getting a base approach distance is key for the season. This will be constantly tweaked throughout the season.
- ◆ During season the approach should be worked on a minimum of 3 practices a week, and ALWAYS the day before a meet. (before a jump session usually a perfect time to fit it in, 2-3 reps)

The Breakdown of the Approach

→ The approach should be broken down into 3 phases that seamlessly work together:

- ◆ The Drive Phase - 1st 3rd of the approach and most important, focus on powerful steps generating power which builds each successive one.
- ◆ The Transitional Phase - Harness the speed from the drive, position the body in a well aligned vertical position, emphasis on front side running mechanics.
- ◆ The Acceleration Phase - Focus on domination of the last 10m of the approach, acceleration should peak through penultimate/take-off.

→ 8 step breakdown (3 Drive-3 Transition-2 Acceleration)

→ 9 step breakdown (3 Drive-3 Transition-3 Acceleration)

How to introduce the Approach

- The approach should first be introduced away from the pit.
- Create a board in lane on the track
- During Run Backs, have athletes work to their 8 or 9 step approach (length will depend on athlete's ability to handle longer approach, and what length approach you want them working from during the season, can always be adjusted down the road)

Developing a Powerful Drive Phase

- The Drive Phase starts from the initial push of the front foot of the approach. (Cues: Big Push)
- During drive there should be a slightly greater forward lean, much like coming out of the blocks, during this time, eyes should be lowered.
- The next 6 steps (R-L-R-L-R-L or vice versa) build on each successive step, working the hips to a vertical position.
- Emphasis is on getting triple extension with each step getting maximum propulsion started down the runway.

Drills to develop a powerful Drive Phase

- Single Extension Sled Pulls
- Sled Pulls
- Resistance Band Partner Runs
- Tire Pulls
- “Drive-To” Mark Drill

Single Extension Sled Pulls

- This drill is one devised to focus on the importance being powerful with each step in an athlete's drive phase of their approach.
- Drill done over a span of 10-20m w/ athlete resetting in a loaded position after each explosive step.



Sled Pulls

- Athlete starts from a crouched position mimicking that of their position prior to the start of their approach.
- Each rep is initiated athlete, the focus is to recreate the start, so they build consistency and the neuromuscular connections associated with the Drive Phase.
- Distance: 10-30m

Restrictive Band Partner Runs

- The focal point of this drill is similar to that of sled pulls.
- serves as a nice alternative if you do not have access to sleds, or want to change the dynamic of your training.
- One athlete tows the other, restrictive band wrapped around their waist.

Tire Pulls

- Lightweight option to add some resistance to the athlete while working their approach.
- Harness is put on athlete which is attached to lightweight tire.
- Drill should be done on track with created board to replicate runways.
- 2-6 reps on training days where emphasis is approach, reps should lessen the deeper you get in season.

“Drive-To” Mark Drill

- Drill recreates the start of approach.
- 2 markers are placed outside the lane, on twice the distance of the other.
- The athlete is to drive their 1st step to the closest marker, and their 2nd step to the next marker, before finishing through a 10m zone.
- Markers are placed just further than athlete's stride length (Boy's - 7-8', Girl's 6-7)
- Should be transitioned into being drilled/ran with full approach.

Teaching the Transition Phase and Body

Positioning

- As the athlete enters the transitional phase, body positioning is key. Should feel a natural increase of speed as they hit a vertical position and stored energy in the hips is released.
- Hips should be in a neutral position under the body, front side running mechanics become the focal point, removing lag time from turnover.
- Cycle should mimic riding a bike, pushing down from the quads (think upper leg hammer, lower leg nail, drive it straight down)

Drills to teach and train the Transitional Phase

→ Flying 20's/30's

→ Cone to Hurdle Transitions

Flying 20's and 30's

- Used to help athletes understand how to maintain velocity/work on running mechanics.
- Athletes have a 10-30m build up range, when they hit marker starting the “Flying 20/30” they maintain that velocity the duration of the distance.

Cone to Hurdle Transitions

- Transition from running (6) over to 6" hurdles (6).
- Cones set between 5-6' apart, 1st cone being 2'6"-3' from start point. Hurdles follow cones at 5-6' apart as well.
- Athlete mimics approach start, driving off front foot. Hurdles force athlete to get knees up/drive the leg back down
- Should eventually be drilled/ran w approach

Application of Acceleration Phase for Max Velocity

- The Acceleration Phase of the approach should have a “Domination Mentality” meaning that final push is applied to drive the jump home.
- As the athlete enters this phase of the approach, a gear is “shifted” and there is an increased application of force in each step.
- Acceleration should peak at take-off through the board.

Drills for Acceleration Phase Development

→ In's and Out's

→ Decline Accelerations

→ Overspeed Bands

In's and Out's

- Drill which teaches athletes what it feels like to “Shift Gears.”
- Zones set up where athletes accelerate, hold, then accelerate or vice versa.
- Range between 60-90m increments.

Decline Accelerations

- Series of acceleration drills down a shallow decline.
- A good option for coaches without access to overspeed bands.
- Range in sprints between 30-60m.

Overspeed Bands

- Utilized by having athlete execute approach while overspeed band increases their speed down runway.
- Should be implemented on mock runway on track, then transitioned to pit.

Helpful Coaching Strategies for the

Athlete and Coach

- Visual Aids early in training to indicate general area of zone break down
 - ◆ Can be cones, tape, shoes, etc.
 - ◆ Should ultimately be removed so athletes do not become dependent on them.
- Dribbling Goggles to break peeking at board habits
 - ◆ Peeking at board can throw off rhythm of approach or lead to scratch.
 - ◆ By teaching athletes to look out above the horizon, using dribbling goggles will cut the board out of their field of vision, and they will have to noticeably look down at. Building a trust in the step is vital.
 - ◆ Not that much used but has been used in training and has been successful

Checking The Mid-Point

- Mid-Point used to check athlete's position in approach 4-strides out from take-off
- Looking for placement of take-off foot
- Mid-point based off athlete's stride length
 - ◆ Boy's Range: 27'6"-29'6"
 - ◆ Girl's Range: 26'6"-28'6"

Meet Day Tips to Increase Runway Efficiency

- Athlete's should be warmed up prior to the check in time (build ups included)/Get on runway soon as pit opens.
- Athlete should know the distance of their/mark it on the runway right away.
- Only 1 to 2 run throughs should be necessary, rest of warm up time should be allotted to jump specific drills.
- Run throughs should be done LRC (least restrictive clothing)