

How to find high jumpers!

HOW TO FIND HIGH JUMPERS

by [Mike Rosenbaum](#) . Updated May 09, 2017

If you coach [younger athletes](#), one of your key challenges is to place them in the right events. Sometimes it's easy. You're not going to make the 250-pound football lineman a sprinter, or the 100-pound whippet a shot-putter. Selecting high jumpers isn't quite that simple, but certain physical characteristics make an athlete more likely to succeed in the [high jump](#). The following recommendations are based on a February 2013 presentation by 6-time All-American high jumper Holly Thompson, who spoke at the Michigan Interscholastic Track Coaches Association's annual clinic.

What Body Type Do You Look for in a High Jumper?

Someone that's fairly tall, fairly high center of gravity, real long legs. You look for someone that is willing to try new things, that's not scared – kind of fearless. Someone that has good kinesthetic awareness. For example, if you had a gymnast who got too tall to do gymnastics anymore, they're really good high jumpers, because they know how to maneuver their body in the air. In (Florida) we have a lot of divers – divers are good high jumpers as well because they can maneuver their body in the air. Maybe figure skaters, you might run into that some time. Athletes that have good kinesthetic awareness, meaning they can get spun around in the air and not lose their body position. Or they have the ability to slightly move their body in the air, which is hard to do.

There are two types of jumpers. One type is a speed jumper – tall, long legs, fast runner, not so muscular.

Someone that uses their speed to jump off the ground.

Typically, their flight pattern is up over the middle of the bar and down, slight lowering of the hips. Then there's the power jumper, a more muscular, powerful person, that tends to get a little bit lower at takeoff because they have the strength to get back up.

They tend to run a little bit closer to the standard, and they tend to jump up and down. What's the best method? There's no best method. The best is a combination of both. Having a speed jumper who comes in fast and yet jumps up and down is a great combination.

Exceptions to the Rule

I high jumped against a woman named Yolanda Henry. She was 5-6 tall and jumped 6-6. So you have some athletes that just have huge 'ups,' and sometimes you run into that, and they take off and do really well. You also might have a tall girl, for example – you see this many times – a tall girl that's 6-foot tall and they come out to high jump and they just can't get off the ground, because they're bigger girls. A lot of volleyball girls, basketball girls tend to be very big-boned individuals. So what you're looking for in a high jumper is someone that has a very lean, lean body mass. Because you have to remember the objective in the high jump is to take all of this body weight that you have, up and over the bar. All of this horizontal speed, and take it vertically in a split moment.

Which Athletes Make Strong High Jumpers?

We want to look for some pretty decent athletes. You want to look for your 400-meter runner, how they look when they're running down the backstretch – head tall, bouncy, active – 300-meter hurdlers, 400-meter runners, some 200-meter runners, those are your high jump types.

High jump and long jump, even though they are both jumps and they both have penultimate steps, they're really not related

at all. They're a completely different thing. There's no real relationship there.

At the same time, you get a lot of boys that come out, they want to high jump, a lot of basketball players. Basketball season ends and they want to high jump. Those guys tend to be real tall, thin guys. There's a fine line between being awkwardly kind of goofy running, and being a legit athlete, as far as strength is concerned in the high jump.