

Hurdle Development

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by Tony Veney

With **hurdle training**, before you decide how fast you want your hurdler to run in 2014, you need to determine what is necessary in order to drop from 15.50 to 14.65, or 17.00 to 15.70. Look at your annual track schedule and decide how many races you expect your hurdler to run for the year. Let's say he/she is going to compete in 15 meets ranging from the first meet in March and ending with your May/June state meet. Fifteen meets could result in 35 to 65 races (who plan on racing their kid 65 times?).

In 37 years of coaching and conversations with men and women who have served as my mentors, I have learned there are 6 categories of **hurdle training** that I believe are critical to hurdle development.

Categories of Speed Development:

1. Speed development versus speed work. When you are trying to make your hurdler faster, you must stay within the rules of the seven second limit. From initial acceleration (for a 15.00 hurdler) to the 5th hurdle, you're training your hurdler to get as fast as they can. When you develop something, you stay close to what is specific to the task you're trying to develop. With that in mind, don't have your hurdler complete 5 starts over 5 hurdles runs, and because you don't think 5 starts over 50 meters was enough you decide to top off the day with a 350 at 90%. You will have ruined the training effect your hurdler gained from running fast over 5 hurdles. Anything you run past the seven second rule is not compatible with speed development and should be avoided if trying to make your hurdler faster is the

goal.

2. Speed development training should be done **all year**. This statement is the one I make that is met with the most resistance because I am misunderstood about how this is accomplished. I am not asking you to do nothing but run seven seconds or less every day. But some form of speed "development" must be done in order to get and stay faster than you were in 2013. Starts, sled pulls, hills, running in sand, running stairs, multi-throw, multi-jump, and plyometric exercises are all forms of speed development.
3. Speed development must be set up before you begin any type of endurance training. Speed is 25 times more difficult than endurance to develop. With that knowledge, you should set your training based on developing the hardest portion of your race first (being fast). There is nothing about running slow that positively impacts running fast (even though speed has a positive impact on endurance). However, the faster you are, the more likely you will be able to endure at a percentage of that speed.

Categories of Speed Endurance:1

1. The major question you have to ask yourself about endurance training is how much does my sprint-hurdler need (does my hurdler have to train like a distance runner to get better?)? You only have so many days to train, so you must decide how can I get my hurdler fast enough and strong enough to run the goal time?
2. General endurance is used to increase the size and O₂ saturation of the muscle's capillary beds. General endurance is used to assist in recovery from hard workouts. Finally, general endurance is also helpful in allowing the hurdler to recover from hard races while running qualifying rounds.
3. Specific Endurance is tied to performance and speed

support. Speed endurance and lactate training combined will give you the ability to run at the desired speed rhythm over and over again (at the race speeds needed to succeed)

Categories of Strength and Power:

1. "To weight room or not to weight room. " For the young hurdler, body weight exercises can serve just as important a training protocol as anything in the weight room. Hopping, jumping, skipping and gravity (depth jumps) routines can mimic the take-off and touchdown mechanics of hurdle run. Light bars, dumbbells and med-ball exercises can not only improve strength and power but can improve core and postural needs.
2. Olympic lifts such as cleans, snatch, bench press, etc. are critical to being able to run really faster. The development of sprint-hurdling strength also helps avoid high velocity injuries that come from trying to run faster but lacking coordination and postural integrity.

Categories of Mechanics:

1. Running drills that do more than just raise your heart rate are critical to the hurdler's improvement. Drills are a "teachable moment" (Boo Schexnayder) and should not be performed unsupervised.
2. Running mechanics are also helpful in teaching how to run under stressful conditions while still being able to stay relaxed (one of the most violated principles in our sport).
3. There is a technique to every part of the hurdle race and being skilled enough to run each zone correctly comes from mechanical expertise.

Categories of "Athleticism":

1. Anyone can run and jump over things, but only the most skilled can hurdle. If all you do with your hurdler is

hurdle, then you are keeping them from fulfilling their genetic potential.

2. Some of the best hurdlers have come from other sports, or have continued to remain multi-sport athletes. If they are not multi-sport then making sure they are more athletic by incorporating other sport activities into your training. It can keep your hurdlers fresh by introducing some fun activities that break up the training boredom (soccer, baseball, basketball, gymnastics, swimming, etc.).

Categories of Rest and Recovery:

1. Rest is a component of **hurdle training** and should not be a response to illness or injury, but should be programmed in to avoid illness and injury related to training.
2. Rest and recovery helps mightily in preparation to peak for the state meet since it's more difficult to run at your best while you're going through a stressful training cycle.
3. Good health and proper nutrition is so often ignored by coaches who never notice poor nutrition as long as their kids are running well. And the athletes never worry about it as long as they are running fast and their coach is happy.
4. Identify the stress markers since they exist as bee stings rather than falling off a cliff. But if you are stung by a bee over a long period of time, it will **Kill** you. More than anything else try not to be the source of your hurdler's greatest stress. Does what you say and do at practice and on meet day make them crazy?

Making sure you try injecting these categories of [hurdle development](#) into your daily **hurdle training** can ensure hurdle success. Good Hunting!

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