



NEWSLETTER

**Specialists in Athlete
Development**

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Welcome to our July 2009 newsletter. The aim of our newsletter is to not only keep people informed of recent developments at Movement Dynamics UK, but to continue to provide information to those individuals responsible for the 'practical' implementation of Athlete Development.

Recent Courses

Our most recent Physical Competence Assessment and Development Course (PCA) took place at the Biggleswade Rugby Union Club in Bedfordshire. The delegates represented Physiotherapy, S&C Coaching, Teaching and Coaching environments and brought valuable experiences to the gathering.



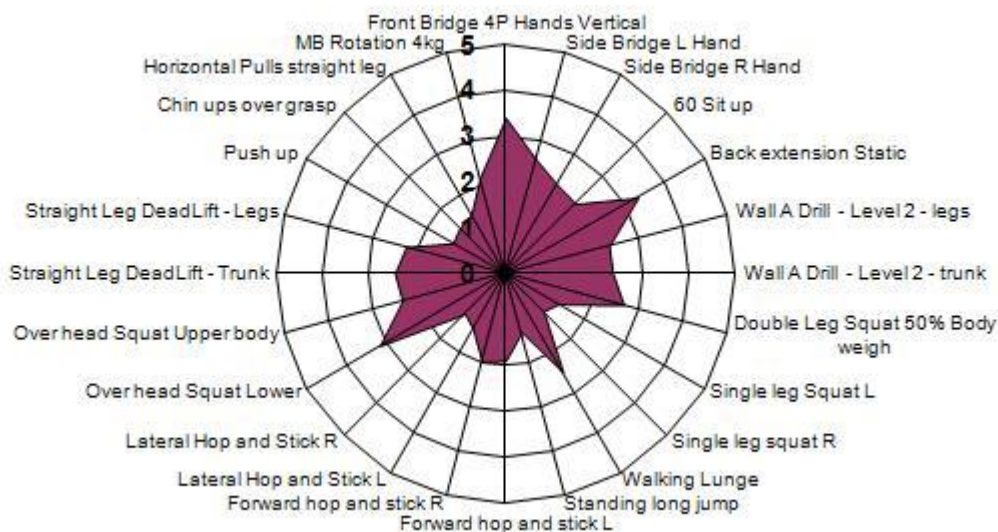
Recent Visits

Congratulations to all the staff at the Leicester Tigers for their superlative season. Although results are the clearest indication of the quality of performance enhancement there are other mechanisms that deserve some comment. Alex Martin and his staff have had to juggle the critical balance between performance enhancement and freshness for competition and have done it admirably. Never an easy challenge, the ability to maintain and improve physical qualities throughout the season and arrive at play-off time with the tanks full is a demanding exercise. Perhaps the biggest positive is the clear, strong relationship between coaching and athletic development staff.

It was good to meet with the LTA S&C department at the National Tennis Centre, Roehampton, London for a couple of days in early May. Karl Cooke, Performance Manager at the LTA, was instrumental in organising this and there can be no doubt that the practitioners there are as committed and hard working as any other unit I have met. Work will start soon on assembling a strategy for the long term delivery of the required athletic development pathway. With 20 High Performance Centres nationwide there is a need for a strategy that embraces sports specific Tennis components and Athletic Development.

More Results

These are from Australia illustrating a group average from a Talent Squad (14-16 years of age). For those who cringe at the inclusion of the Straight Leg Deadlift – fear not! This triple flexion / extension movement is in the program at the simplest of levels. The bar is sufficient to gain some small resistance (Heavy broomstick / Bar to 5kg) thus allowing the athlete to 'feel' the posture throughout the movement. With the Clean and its hybrids (Clean Pull, Dumbbell High Pull, etc) playing a very useful role in more advanced training it is wise to begin the technical development of this movement early in the scheme of things.



Mental Toughness

Vern Gambetta's Blog (www.gambetta.com) recently discussed the area of mental toughness so I thought I would throw in my thoughts. Without doubt the very best athletes display a certain 'something' that stands them apart from the rest.

- *Mental toughness is learned, not inherited.*
- *The ultimate measure of mental toughness is consistency.*
- *Mental toughness demands control.*
- *When things occur that you cannot control you must focus on controlling your reaction to them.*
- *Mental toughness is having the ability to handle criticism, analyse it and turn the problem around.*
- *Mental toughness is seeking help and advice when you know you need it.*
- *Mental toughness is not a sometime thing. It must be practiced every day and in everything you do.*

Can you consistently answer "yes" to the following questions following the day's efforts?

1. ***I GAVE 100% OF MY BEST EFFORT THROUGHOUT THE CONTEST, REGARDLESS OF THE RESULT.***

In other words you did not play it safe emotionally. You could not have done any better and you could not have tried any harder.

2. ***I KEPT MY ENERGY AND ATTITUDE POSITIVE DURING THE ASSIGNMENT, MOST IMPORTANTLY, DURING CRISIS AND ADVERSITY.***

You did not turn negative and sour as the problems mounted. Your attitude was to get challenged, inspired, and more determined in response to the problems.

3. ***I PROJECTED A STRONG AND POWERFUL PHYSICAL PRESENCE DURING THE ASSIGNMENT, MOST IMPORTANTLY DURING CRISIS.***

You looked like a winner regardless of the outcome. You looked the way you wanted to feel.

4. ***I OFFERED NO EXCUSES.***

You never used a problem as an excuse. You were totally responsible.

Finally.....Be Specific

If (and hopefully, when) you have created a journey for your athlete that has allowed them to be in total control of all movements, in all planes and directions and to have acquired a range of fundamental sports skills (running, jumping, throwing, kicking, catching and striking) it is time to focus these qualities towards sports specific work. By creating this all-round athletic journey the athlete will have assembled appropriate levels of strength, balance, coordination and agility at a variety of speeds. At this point these threads of performance can be woven into a training fabric that is focused on improvement in a more formal competitive environment.

What to do next?

Start with understanding the actual requirements of the sport. In most field and court sports the actions are explosive and frequent but often occur in bunches of activity followed by a period of active recovery. Being 'fit' for the specific sport is not a matter of turning to the 'Beep Test' for guidance or to develop the cardiovascular system solely by long, slow distance work. One can describe most field and court sports as 'endured agility'; the ability to repeat multi-directional accelerations and decelerations in reaction to different external stimuli e.g. the ball, the opposition, etc.

For these explosive and frequent actions to be executed well the program should ensure that the mechanical load is developed. Training is not all about sprint mechanics or endurance development. To be able to jump, kick, dive, accelerate, strike, tackle, fall or gain your feet the requirement is mechanical and the body will have to be able to produce, reduce and stabilise force in these multi-joint, multi-plane and multi-directional environments.

The developing athlete with 6 to 8 years of foundation work (6 to 14 years of age) can now safely experience training with some form of progressive resistance. Triple flexion and extension activities (Squat, Clean, Deadlift hybrids; Squat and Pushing / Throwing, Squat and Pulling, Squat and Rotating activities; Vertical and Horizontal Jumping) can now be trained with maximal strength and power in mind. This strength /power complex is vital to understand. Neither should get the upper hand in training exposure, they work together allowing both strength and speed of movement to be developed together. Get a little stronger then apply it! Apply in generically and then apply it specifically into the sports specific actions. This cycle can be repeated throughout the athlete's entire journey.