



NEWSLETTER

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Development**

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Welcome to our January 2010 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.

The New Year

Here we are again about to make our first steps into a new year and the bottom line is that 'we've got another chance!' A chance to make a difference; to hold on one second longer; to go back and make your stance for change one more time. Bill Cosby once said, "I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody." Yes, there are decision makers that need to be convinced about a better way of doing things but the one person we simply must be true to is the athlete.

No matter what obstacles you face as you guide the athlete along their journey towards repeatable excellence, the key is for you, as the coach, to ensure that all you do is appropriate. Get the basics done first then carefully expose the athlete to greater complexity, speed, intensity, volume. Having the basics permanently embedded in their performance arsenal will allow them a less hazardous journey when things get tougher.

"Destiny is no matter of chance. It is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved." (William Jennings Bryan)

This achievement process is in your hands as a coach, teacher or administrator on behalf of the athlete. Don't let them down.

To start this New Year I thought it opportune to show some illustrations of competence through some age-groups. It seems that no matter what level of attainment we look at there are movement limitations appearing.

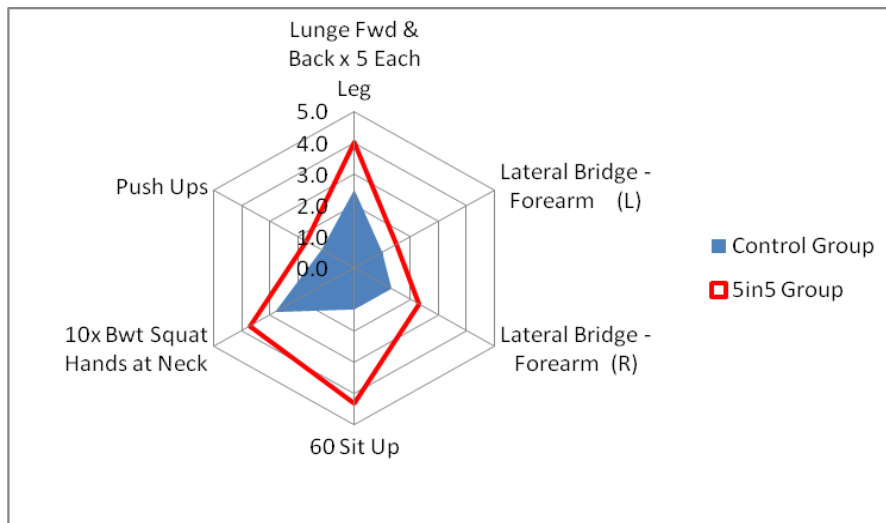
The first one is taken from a Primary School project in the UK where one class of 9 year-olds were exposed to the *Thompson / Myrland '5 in 5' workout* twice a week at the beginning of their normal PE lessons. For those who are not aware of this workout – Greg Thompson and Steve Myrland have designed a progressive series of simple exercises that can be done in just about any environment. Some schools are doing the 5 minute workout several times during the day in the classroom; others are finding brief periods of time to do the exercises as part of PE lessons. The simplicity of the exercises (multi-joint, multi-plane, multi-direction) mean that the students are exposed to elements of Squat, Lunge, Push, Pull, Brace, Rotate and Range.

The overall concept is one of 'guided discovery' where each student embarks upon a period of learning the movement to a rhythm. They may not be completely accurate in the movement to start with but nobody 'fails' – they simply do their best with the teacher encouraging them with some corrections to their early faults.

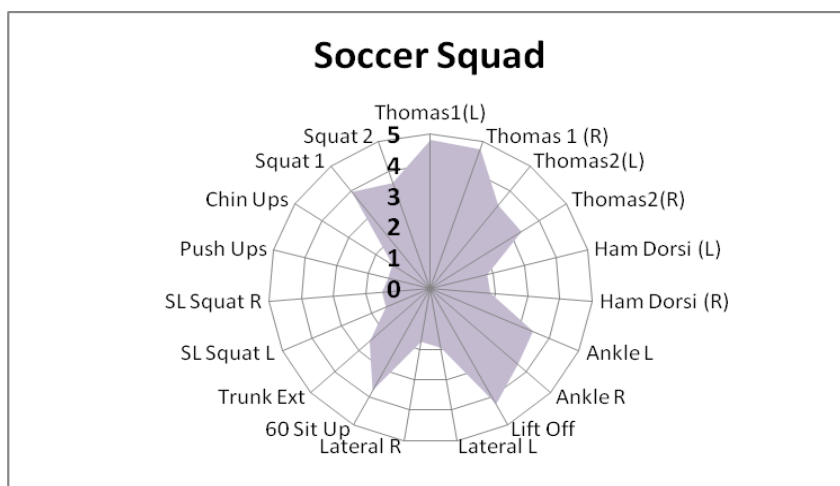
The first graph illustrates some results after a 3-month intervention and we also assessed another class of the same age who had not used the method but who had just done their normal PE lesson.



Test selection varies according to the time available and other logistics but there is always the attempt to look at a variety of movements and ranges.



The next graph is a snapshot of a group of male 12 year-old Soccer players in a Soccer Academy. They have been in a coaching environment for about 3 years doing normal 'soccer stuff' e.g. "two laps around the field, touch your toes – now let's play"

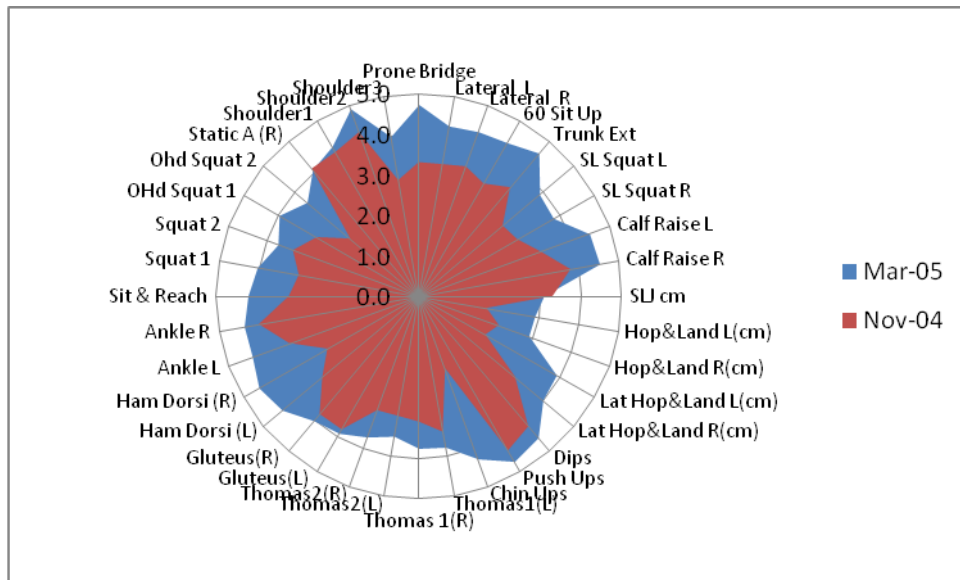


Next graph is from a National Squad for Rugby at the age of 14-15 years. These players were designated as being the 'best of the best' and have been selected through the Federation's Talent Identification system.

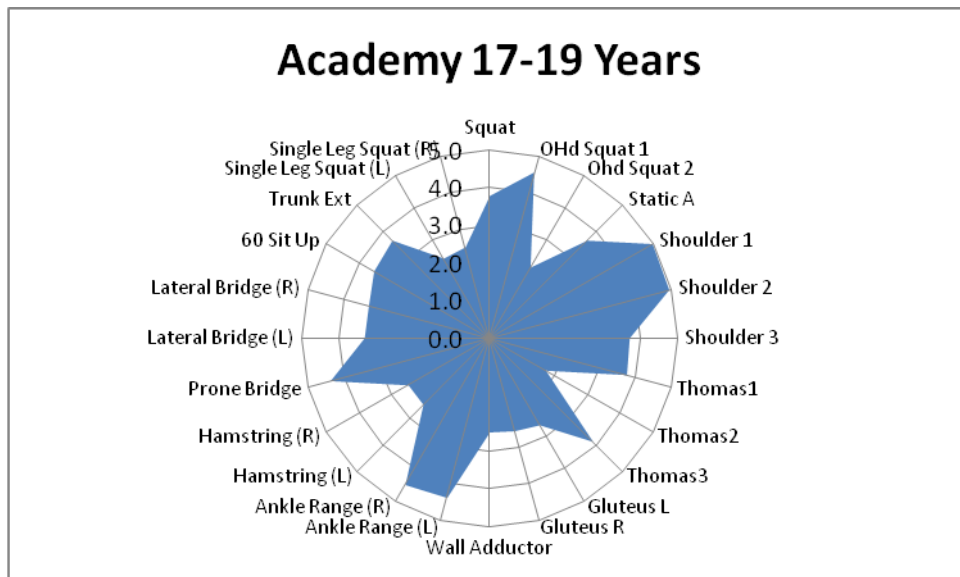
After much discussion and debate the training program for this squad took on a rhythm of 70% Athletic Development training and 30% Skill / Tactical training for the first year of the process. The foresight of the Skill coaches was the winning hand here. They recognised that Skill Acquisition (their 'raison d'être') would be enhanced if movement efficiency was improved. This was a brave step. They didn't try to hang on blindly to tradition. They had to ensure that the shorter time they had on fundamental Rugby Skills was optimised by better time management and planning.

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Recruiting some very smart S&C coaches and committing to Athletic Development in this first period of the player's 10+ years of development saw the following picture after 4 months of training.



During the same period a group of Academy Rugby players (17-19 years of age) were subjected to Physical Competence Assessment. This group of players had been in the 'talent development' process for up to 4 years of conventional Rugby Training e.g. 75% Skill and tactical development plus 25% Olympic Weightlifting plus long endurance runs.



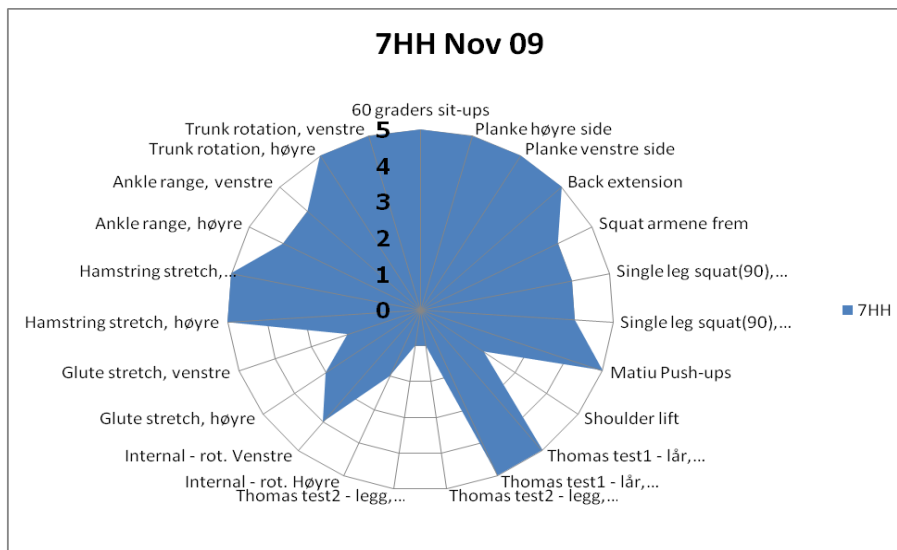
Here they were, just a few months / years from the senior team, having been subjected to the 'best' coaching and they were still physically incompetent.

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So now we arrive at the senior end of the performance continuum. The following graph is one taken from a Premier League Soccer squad in Europe.

Worldwide Football has grown to be a sport of near continuous competition with many players being exposed to 3 games in 7 days for long periods of the year. Driven by the financial aspects of modern sport this frequency of competition offers little in the way of repeatable excellence. It has been left to the game itself to provide the 'fitness' for performance and less and less time is given over to the basic structural requirements of sports specific movement efficiency.

'Athlete Development', 'Strength and Conditioning', 'Football Fitness', call it what you may, is bereft of 'best practice' in this sport. It is all a compromise; a state of damage control, and this aspect of a practitioner's delivery arsenal, the ability to compromise, is the greatest ability they must possess.



It takes little imagination to see that the limitations illustrated above will become a powerful negative factor when the players are placed under fatigue and pressure. Rather than suffer the damage control environments seen so often in the professional leagues worldwide, surely some common sense can prevail and a little more time and effort be directed towards some appropriate adaptation periods that focus on structural strength, structural stability and structural flexibility in a multi-plane, multi-joint, multi-directional setting.

Coaches.....these players are all you have got, they are your primary resources. Give them the appropriate tools to do the job consistently and continuously. It is only a very few Clubs that can afford to have a playing roster 2 to 3 deep in every position to accommodate the rigours of the sacrificial levels of competition the sport has allowed itself to grow to.

Finally, don't get too tangled up with all the statistical mumbo-jumbo. The Physical Competence assessment is just coaching, nothing more and nothing less. Start with 'guided discovery', progress to correcting faults and then apply to sports specific movements and other requirements. With this type of journey you will be able to enjoy the final high performance aspects of speed, power, strength and endurance within the advanced 'arena' skills environment with more continuity and with greater consistency.