



NEWSLETTER

**Specialists in Athlete
Development**

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Welcome to our May 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.

Over the many years I have been involved in coaching, from the years as a teacher and lecturer through to the heights of Wembley Finals, World Championships and Olympic finals, I have regularly heard the voice of other coaches as they watch their charges compete.

Very often when things are appearing difficult you hear those cries of – "Lift your game", "Get involved", "Be tough", "Try harder", "Get stuck in" or "Concentrate", resounding around the stadium or workplace. These instructions do nothing for the participant and offer little in the way of assisting improvement. These phrases are but simple generalisations often born of excitement, frustration and / or lack of experience.

The key is to be specific. When faced with a problem consider the questions "HOW", "WHEN" and "HOW MUCH" as your solution rather than those tired old generalisations that mean nothing. For example if a cricket batsman continuously gets beaten by the ball it is of little value screaming to him to "CONCENTRATE". Being specific means: -

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| "HOW" | - watch the ball. |
| "WHEN" | - as the bowler arrives at the stumps and during flight. |
| "HOW MUCH" | - every delivery, right through to contact with the bat. |

The same applies to every exercise that we prescribe to an athlete / student. There are specific parts of the action that simply must take place for it to be executed efficiently, effectively and safely. In the early stages of learning the exercise I would recommend a 'guided discovery' process.

Give the athlete a picture (verbal, visual, demonstration), highlight any safety features....then let them have a go! Watch them try, fail, re-adjust, try again. Set the exercise out as a personal test, a challenge, a puzzle. Teaching and coaching interventions should be repeated while they are experimenting e.g. The Squat - 'Head Up', 'Chest Up', 'Butt Out', 'Back Straight', 'Feet Flat'. These cues are the 'HOW'.

PGA – Long Term Player Development – The Belfry March 4-5

Great to work with Michael Dalglish again. This course focused on the interaction between Bio-Mechanical Swing Analysis / Muscular-Skeletal Screening / Athletic Development with special reference to the many stages the developing player negotiates during their journey. The delegates embraced the process presented to them and many have embarked upon some early steps to developing athleticism with their players.

"What has gone before will determine what is yet to come."

It is of little value arriving at the critical period of a campaign and then looking for some magical 'quick-fix' or new formula to get you through. I remember the Championship years of the Brisbane Broncos in the mid and late 1990's when I was asked how we would prepare for the finals – the answer was easy: -

"We started our preparation for these finals 10 months ago. What we did over the last 40 weeks has been a repeated practice for just this occasion. The Board of Directors, the administration, the coaching staff, the support staff and the players have all delivered the program, consistently and formidably for just this situation. Our appearance in the finals is not an accident."

Regardless of the thorough preparation required for this 'peak' there will be a change of climate around you. This difference comes from the fact that the atmosphere now fills with EXPECTATION and minds fill with OUTCOMES.

**What will be the result of the contest?
What happens if I win?
What happens if I lose?
What will people think of me?
Will the result change my life?
Will I be better off?
Will I be worse off?**

Herein lay the traps for the unsuspecting participant. Dealing with outcomes is a futile exercise when the result of the contest is yet to be decided. All attention, all focus and all concentration must be targeted towards doing those things that are in the present. If you have been planning for success you will have a simple set of routines to repeat for the contest. If you have been planning for failure you will be overcome by outcomes and expectation. No successful campaigner introduces emergency measures at such a late date. New ideas and practices are not for this time.

Al Ain FC, Abu Dhabi

Just finished an operational review of S&C, Sports Medicine and Sports Science support services for the UAE Premier League Club, Al Ain FC. Recommendations for short medium and long term developments have been presented along with strategies to get them done. Lots of good people involved which makes it a delight to visit the city of Al Ain.

From the general S&C in Football there seems to be a constant desire for 'freshness' by then coaches for all their players. Problem is that if there are physical limitations they simply won't survive the mechanical load that all that work with the ball will bring.

Training must be balanced. No one system should predominate. The football player must be built from the ground up. For all the money, celebrity and hype in the game there is nothing that precludes this sport from the laws of training. If you want appropriate technical and tactical development you simply must have the physical qualities to do the work effectively.

Check out the injury frequency of these superstar players as their seasons come to an end.

Physical Competence Assessment – Some More Background

In answer to some questions on the GAIN Network I presented this brief overview of Physical Competence Assessment:

"OK Gang.....time to own up.

I put the PCA stuff together not to be any kind of 'predictor' at all. I started to look closely at movement efficiency in squat, lunge, push, pull, brace, rotate and range plus other exercise modalities - landing, jumping etc to simply allow me and my colleagues to prescribe a more accurate program for the athletes we were coaching. My choices were confirmed by some of the great sports medical practitioners in Australia as being appropriate. There was a nice link back to the typical muscular-skeletal screening they were doing in the clinic environment as a back-up.

The assessment was also put together for another 'strategic' reason - I needed some evidence that the 'basics' that were supposed to be being carried out at the earlier stages of the athlete's development simply weren't being done. Training at these early stages was mostly skill and tactical specific with a little bit of Olympic Weightlifting or 'madhouse' circuits being done. By showing the movement limitations (the radar graphs) to the coaches at the earlier stages I had some chance of getting them to change things.

'Prediction' stuff is daft - you can have all the evidence you like about an athlete and then tomorrow it all changes. I have some evidence that the more competent you are the less likelihood of suffering a 'controllable' injury you have. The assessment is used to 'ring warning bells' - e.g. can't squat - WATCH OUT!.....can't land a Hop & Stick - WATCH OUT! It makes us more aware of exercise selection and program construction once we know some limitations. The assessment is there to make us stop and think.

For some sports it has allowed some decision makers to track the athletic development of squad members nationwide which assists in the fight against sole tactical / technical development with the developing athlete so I guess there is another little use for it.

So...nothing clever at all in all this - certainly never created to be a panacea or another spell potion or gadget. Just a simple tool for a teacher / coach to make a smarter decision. Some people got interested so I wrote as much down as I could and took some pictures and made a manual for them. Got fed up with difficulties in measuring so worked out the Gauges on my kitchen table with by brother-in-law.

Don't overestimate its role - you've got to be able to coach / teach in the first place! I use it to get the basics right first - not as a 'new' approach. I just want to know 'where are they now?' before making training decisions - nothing flash at all."

The GAIN network is a specialist group of practitioners that meet through an online forum after gaining entry by attending the Apprentorship course each year. Hosted by Vern Gambetta and staffed by some of the very best practitioners this course and the subsequent network allows for ongoing discussion, debate and support on all matters to do with teaching, coaching and performance.