

## **KEEPING IT SIMPLE IN THE HIGH, LONG, AND TRIPLE JUMPS**

**When I first started coaching at the NCAA 2 level there was only one coach. This article is geared toward those programs that have less chance to have enough event coaches. The key in these situations is to be organized enough to give at least a little bit of one on one event coaching. Keeping things simple always worked for me. I think these thoughts can be beneficial to high school programs also. Getting the athletes out, and making it reasonably fun is critical. For most athletes track will not be a lifetime thing and for many it is their second or third sport. At the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade levels it is important just to try and get them to like the sport and want to come out. Later if they are “hooked” and develop a love for the sport or develop enough to consider going on with it in college, then more can be demanded and more expected. I think you have different demands and expectations at the different levels from elementary, junior high, high school, Div. 2, and Div.1. If you have a great athlete that has a great love for the sport, then you do more things with that athlete and expect/demand more.**

**In each of the jumps the approach may be the most critical thing. All of the approaches require a smooth consistent run that is fast, but at a speed that the strength level of the athlete can handle. In the long jump speed is more important than in the triple or the high jump. In all three jumps the last two steps make up what I call the takeoff. A lowering of the center of mass happens in all of them. Most in the high jump, less in the long jump, and the least in the triple jump.**

**One day a week can be established to work on the technique of the jump. Combining all three is possible, but if the athlete does all three I would suggest combining 2 on one day and then adding another day for the other event. I think you can get a lot out of getting basketball players to come out for 1 day a week and do a high jump technique workout and then of course go to the meets. The rest of the week they could play or practice basketball and that would be good for the high jump. I once knew a collegiate jumper from a rival school that set an American record and he followed this pattern, working out for the HJ one day a week, playing basketball all afternoon the rest of the week and then jumping in competition on weekends. I believe there are a lot of points left on the table by high school coaches not taking the time to teach the long jump to their sprinters. Not all sprinters can jump, but most can and this does not take away from their sprinting. When you are doing approaches you are doing 40 meter accelerations and most sprint programs involve 40 meter accelerations. A sprinter does not have to jump much in practice. Just get the steps down, accurate and comfortable and do only a minimum of short approach jumps in practice. Make the meet the time they do the most jumping. Triple jumping can be taught as a power drill first, and then, if an athlete shows talent, that can become an additional event. The triple jump does put more pressure or stress on the legs and I would be less likely to add this as a secondary event for my better athletes. I had success in Division 2 with taking a sprinter who would not make the relay and trying to make this a secondary event.**

**Here are some simple things I would do with each of the jumps if I were still coaching alone:**

**High Jump:** As I said, I would make a concerted effort to attract my basketball players out for the team. I would only have one day per week to workout, plus actual meet jumping, and then of course they would be held accountable to being on time and not missing meets. I would teach an 8-10 stride “J” approach. I would be about 12-14 feet out from the nearest standard. The first 5 or 6 strides are straight and then the bend occurs. There are proponents of beginning the curve on the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> stride and I would see which seemed easiest for each athlete. I would do a lot of approaches with a run through continuing on around (U idea) to teach them to lean into the run. On a left leg takeoff the right shoulder should be slightly ahead of the left shoulder. The takeoff is 2 steps; not just the last step! The most common mistake is to forget to carry the speed of the approach through the takeoff. I believe it is a good idea to think of the “jump” taking place 2 steps from the bar to emphasize the importance of the last two steps as well as the idea of carrying the speed through the takeoff. On a left leg takeoff you will allow the next to last step to float a little longer and will land on a flat foot that will immediately push onto and through the actual lift off. The drive of the right knee is critical and must happen very fast. The only other thing I would actively coach is over the bar to make sure you press the hips up and the shoulders down. The shoulder must be below the hips for proper clearance. If an athlete only did High Jump this would be a sample workout: Warmup; 6 x stand on box and do back arch over a bar; 10 “U” approaches; 5 x 5 stride approach and jump at low height working on last two strides with particular emphasis on the drive of the non-takeoff knee; 8 x full approach jumps moving the bar up or down an inch based on miss or make. For athletes that are not on the basketball plan, then they would do hurdle workouts, or sprint workouts on off days. I still would not jump a young jumper more than twice a week, once in practice and the other in a meet. This event requires very little of what I call “gut” conditioning. Being fresh and confident is more important here.

**Long Jump:** Again I would try and use sprinters for this event. It is a speed event as much as a jumping event. The majority of time in practice would be establishing a 16-18 stride approach. Count takeoff leg only and consider it an 8-9 stride approach, i.e. 9 lefts if the athlete takes off from his/her left leg. By counting the athlete can “know” when to jump---1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-and-jump would be the cadence for an 9 stride jump. I put the ‘and jump’ in there instead of just the 9 for a point. The only time you count anything but the takeoff leg is at the end and then you count 8 on the left, “and” on the right foot, and jump for the 9<sup>th</sup> stride. The last two strides are quicker and saying “and jump” seems to speed up the sequence and let them get the cadence in their head. A workout would be 6-8 full approaches using the count method and the 6 x 6 stride short approach jumps working on running onto and through the takeoff. This sequence is a modified version of what was mentioned for the high jump takeoff, except there is absolutely no float on the next to last stride—just running onto and through the takeoff with the “off” leg driving through as fast/quickly as possible. I would not worry about in-air technique until

they go over 23 feet consistently. They could finish the workout with 1-2 hard 150's for 200 runners, or 1 hard 300 if they run the "mile" relay.

**Triple Jump; Most of the work is done on a grass field. Start off with standing hop-step-jump. The feet need to stay cocked (toes up—dorsi flexed if you are the scientist type) and the landing is a flat foot actively pawing back motion. The foot must land in an active manner directly under the center of mass. Motion is horizontal and not up and down. Once this is mastered, then move to a jog into this same hop-step-jump sequence. Another grass drill we use is to isolate one phase and do it on the grass. The first phase we call hops, and the second is called bounds. Just do repeated hops with active landings over and over until you've gone 30-40-50 yards. I would rather do a few correctly than a lot incorrectly. These must be watched and critiqued. When we do work on the jump runway we do approaches like in the long jump, but for most young athletes the approach will be shorter, more like 6-7 takeoff counts. It is hard to carry full speed into a triple jump so at the start of their TJ career they need to hold back some on the speed. We do a drill from a stand where we do 2 hops, 2 steps, and a jump into the pit. Emphasize pushing horizontal and not up and down. This is how I print it on workout: H-H-S-S-J. Active landings!! We also do some short approach actual triple jumps. When doing triple jump workouts in practice we always do them in flats and not spikes. You can long jump okay in regular sprint spikes, but it is advisable to buy actual triple jump spikes. If this can't be done, wear heel cups as it is easy to bruise the heels if the jumper does not do the active, pawing back landing properly. For an athlete that does this as a secondary event such as a sprinter or hurdler, it can come at the end of a normal running workout and take the place of weights or strength work in the program.**