

Teaching Speed – Part I

In the ideal world, every one of our players would be blessed with exceptional speed. In the real world we get players who are only as fast as they are. All coaches should maximize their team's speed. We need our players to run faster and more effectively.

When should a coach start speed training?

Today! All coaches should fix any problems in his or her players running mechanics.

Is soccer a multiple sprint sport or an endurance sport?

The answer is not a simple either/or, but a complex combination of the two, depending on the position, style of play, and the level of development of the players.

Sport specific speed for soccer includes the ability to

- Start quickly from all different positions
- Accelerate to top speed in the shortest time possible
- Change direction and stop rapidly **under control**

There are three elements that constitute good sprint mechanics (PAL)

1. POSTURE
2. ARM ACTION
3. LEG ACTION

During the actual game, sprinting is defined as:

The highest movement speed attained.

Players sprint about 12.8 percent of the total distance covered in a match, but it is during this 12.8 percent sprint that the moment of truth, determining the eventual outcome of the game, occurs.

The First Step:

The first step is critical. Several simple mechanical principles must be followed to ensure good first-step quickness and effective starting ability.

Lateral speed and agility (LSA)

Exercises for a better first step passing.

So when do you do your speed work? At every practice!
When do you start speed training? At your next practice!

Teaching Speed – Part I

Posture – Arm Action – Leg Action (PAL)		
PAL Guide to Good Sprint Mechanics		
POSTURE	ARM ACTION	LEG ACTION
The alignment of the body. It is dynamic and dependent on the situation.	This refers to the amplitude or range of motion of the arms, an essential key to acceleration and control of the stride.	The action and orientation of the hips and legs relative to the torso and the ground.
ACCELERATION	ACCELERATION	ACCELERATION
More of a pronounced lean to overcome inertia.	Shorter, more piston like arm action.	For quick starts, it is extending the ankle, knee and hip to produce the greatest force possible against the ground. For quick stops it is bending the ankle, knee and hip to reduce force.
TOP SPEED	TOP SPEED	TOP SPEED
More erect posture.	Action should smooth out as top speed is achieved.	Instead of pushing against the ground you are running over the ground. Full extension of the knee does not occur.

Thanks to PERFORMANCE SOCCER CONDITIONING, the publishers of a newsletter dedicated to improving soccer players.
P.O. Box 6819, Lincoln, NE 68506-0819.