

# LACROSSE PERFORMANCE TRAINING ESSENTIALS

Four Edition Series

Edition # 1

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The high-paced, physically and mentally demanding game of Lacrosse make it one of the most comprehensive field sports played today. It combines all aspects of athletic and human performance. Power, speed, strength, stabilization, eye-hand coordination, aerobic power, endurance, reaction time, coordination and strategy are many of the facets needed to play at a high level.

Pure talent and skill together are not enough to take your game to an elite level. Proper comprehensive performance training is the essential ingredient that must be included in every elite lacrosse player's plan.

This four-part series will cover a complete comprehensive Lacrosse Performance Training Program. It will include the following:

- Part I – Warm-up & Speed Mechanics
- Part II – Linear / Straight Ahead & Lateral Speed / Change of Direction
- Part III - Reaction & Quickness Training
- Part IV - Strength Training & Flexibility / Mobility Training

Each component of the Lacrosse Performance Training Program must be included in the conditioning program of the lacrosse player, period! If you or your player is not currently incorporating each component listed above, it's time to start.

#### **“Alright team, let's warm-up!”**

First and foremost, let's address the pre-game or pre-training warm-up. A very underutilized and underappreciated aspect of sports performance training is the warm-up. Traditionally, a coach tells his/her athletes to run a few laps around the field or court, “stretch out”, and that's it. From there the athletes are expected to train and perform at a physically high level. That just doesn't cut it! We need to *optimize* our *warm-up* in order to *optimize* our *training* which, you guessed it, *optimizes* our *performance*. Plain and simple.

We have developed a Dynamic Warm-up that all of our athletes go through prior to their workout, practice, or game. In a nutshell, it's a multidimensional, multi-system, multi-blah-blah-blah! It's a routine that's designed to prepare your mind and body for physically and mentally demanding sport or workout!

“So how do we optimally warm-up?” Now we're talking'. Here we go.

We'll start with a light jog, maybe a 3 lap jog around the field or court. “Wait a second Kev, you just said that doesn't cut it!” Your right, I did. The jog *without* the next and most important facet of the warm-up does *not* cut it.

So, we've just jogged at a light to moderate pace and are ready for the DYNAMIC WARM-UP. Basically, the dynamic warm-up consists of an arsenal of exercises which prepare your body for the work it's about to endure. We need to get the blood flowing, increase tissue temperature, increase heart rate, blood pressure, central nervous system activity, increase respiration, mental

awareness, lubricate our body's joints, etc. etc. Bruce Kelly's article is a great example of a comprehensive Dynamic Warm-up, check it out.

The Dynamic Warm-Up (DWU) should contain three components:

- 1-Total-Body Preparation
- 2-Hip/Gluteal/Hamstring Firing
- 3-Speed/Agility Prep.

Here's how our warm-up looks:

- Medicine Ball or Lax Stick Chopper (3-dimensional total body movements)
- Multi-Directional Tube Walking
- Single-Leg Anterior Reach or Deadlift
- Multi-Directional Change-ups (mini-lunge emphasizing change of direction)
- Multi-Directional Single-Leg Hops

We then move onto our dynamic flexibility / mobilization routine:

- Knee Hugs
- Cross Over Reach Down Step
- Rotational Lunge
- Lateral Step and Squat
- Front touchdown and pike up – hamstring / calves
- Spiderman's
- Inchworms

Next, we move right into a few traditional movement prep drills to prepare for the high demands of the “meat & potatoes” of the workout. Forward runs, lateral shuffle, carioca, backpedal, and zig-zags are our most common drills we use during movement prep.

**Speed training** specifically consists of the following: straight ahead speed, change of direction, and reaction time. Think of these three as the legs of a 3-legged table. Without all three legs, the table will fall. Each component must be addressed in a lacrosse specific training program.

We must discuss a critical topic before jumping into anything else. **SPRINTING MECHANICS**. Teaching and enforcing proper sprinting / running mechanics and technique are imperative when training an athlete.

In general, many athletes are not taught how to run, just that they need to run. Well, if you really want to outrun your competition, you must include this section. If the athlete's mechanical issues are not addressed and corrected before anything else, the training program will yield lackluster results. Remember the old adage, “Crawl before you walk before you run.” It's true. Here are 8 highly effective drills designed to promote great sprinting / running technique.

Arm Drives (30 seconds x 4, 2 seated, 2 standing)



A-SERIES progression 10 yards 2-4 sets each

- A-March with Hands on Hips



- A-Skip with Hands on Hips
- A-March with Arms



- A-Skip with Arms



- A-Run with Arms

- FALLING STARTS 10 yards 2-4 sets



### **Linear Speed Workout**

- Dynamic Warm-up (refer to Bruce Kelly's article in this issue)
- Arm Drives Seated & Standing – 30 seconds with 10 second intervals of “sprinting”. The arm drives are performed in both the seated and standing position. The goal of the exercise is to engrain the chin-to-cheek technique. A great tool I use to help my athletes learn this position is a set of mini-bands. Position the band around the elbow and upright thumb. If the athletes elbow extends, the band flies off.
- A-March Hands on Hips – Start with your hands on hips. Step with left leg, driving knee up and over the right knee. Extend the right hip, knee and ankle (triple extension).
- A-Skip Hands on Hips- Perform the A-March and add a skip step, or ankle pop and the end of each step.
- A-March With Arm Drives – Same technique as A-March 1 with the inclusion of Arm Drives. Coordinate opposite arm and knee.

- A-Skip With Arm Drives – Same technique as A-Skip 1 with the inclusion of arm drives.
- A-Run With Arm Drives – This is the pinnacle of the A-series. Turn the A-skip into a close step run by dropping the ankle pop and go right into a close step run maintaining perfect form.
- Falling Starts – This is a great drill used to emphasize a forward lean and acceleration mechanics. Start by standing with your feet about hips width apart. Then go up on the balls of your feet and lean forward until you feel as though you are going to fall forward. Then, step over the opposite knee and drive down while driving your arms from chin to cheek. And repeat. Keep the first few steps short to make sure you are landing on the balls of your feet. If you land on your heels you're taking too long of a step. A great tool I use is a set of agility rings. Put two rings in front of each other, making sure they touch. Place a third ring about one half's length away, a fourth ring about 1 rings length away, and a fifth ring around 1 ½ rings length away. You may have to play around with these distances, but they're a great starting point.

### **COACHING QUES – TAKE HOME MESSAGE**

- Chin to Cheek
- Short incremental steps
- Run on the balls of your feet – sprinting shoes only have only in toes
- Step over the opposite knee and drive down – Beith & Thomas
- The first few steps are pushing steps, not pulling!

ALL DRILLS PERFORMED WITH PURPOSE!

Next Issue I will cover lateral speed & change of direction.  
Remember... DECIDE, COMMIT, & SUCCEED!