Micro-Learning Club Coaching document #6

Week 6: 28 October 2026:

Junior Sprint and Hurdle Fundamentals:

Young athletes possess great potential, but developing it requires a thoughtful and age-appropriate training approach. Focusing to early on sport specific skills can lead to burnout or injury. The emphasis should be on developing fundamental movement patterns, strength, conditioning, and flexibility in a safe and progressive manner. This foundational work will improve athletic performance but also instills healthy habits and reduces the risk of long-term injury issues. Understanding the key components of effective young athlete training is vital for parents, coaches, and the athletes themselves.

- **Sprint Mechanics**: We need to instill proper sprint mechanics, including optimal stride length, stride frequency, and ground contact timing. This is crucial for creating speed during acceleration and maintaining speed during maximal velocity sprinting.

- **Positional Sprint drills:** Choose the appropriate drills to develop the positions required in full effort sprinting. Start with the basic "Mach" drills with marching, skipping then running drills. Another method is blended drills, where the athlete completes a drill then transfers into a run.

- **Maximal Velocity training**: Add in some variety when conducting your upright running repetitions. Complete runs at certain intensities (i.e. 80%) with build-ups, in and outs, sprint float sprints and runs without restraint. "Pure" speed development: Use the 7 second rule: Anything over 7 seconds in duration is moving into speed endurance training.

- **Age-appropriate Strength and Conditioning**: Strength training for young athletes should focus on proper technique and bodyweight exercises before introducing external resistance. The goal is to build a strong foundation, not to lift maximal weights. Conditioning should prioritise developing aerobic capacity and endurance through running, along with anaerobic work through interval running or specific drill sets. Programme design must consider the athletes biological age, not just chronological age, to prevent overloading of developing musculoskeletal systems.

- **Appropriate training frequency:** Design your training with appropriate work during the off season and careful planning for the competitive season. For beginning athletes, 2-3 sessions per week may be appropriate as most young people will have other sports or commitments. The older the athlete and more experienced can be introduced to more sessions in the training week.

- **Interview your Athletes**: At the beginning of training, always check in with your athletes to insure they are not unwell or to fatigued from previous sessions. Note: It is best to under train your athletes instead of over training them.

By focusing on the essential training components, young sprint and hurdle athletes can build a strong foundation that will help them achieve their goals and improve their performance on the track.

For more reading:

Read our drill card for more details on Junior Sprint and Hurdle Fundamentals in our Coaching resource section.

Yours in Athletics

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