

## ***The 400 Intermediate Hurdles***

### ***by Ron Corson - Hurling Specialist***

This event as you know is a very challenging event. It requires stamina, courage, speed and intestinal fortitude. Convince your hurdler he is quite capable of doing well. They must be ideal shape for max performance. Include sprint and strength. However it may also require a very flexible attitude on the part of the coach. There is no one type of athlete that makes the perfect 400 m hurdler on the HS level. Height, speed and lack of flexibility can be overcome. We will try to develop that concept. I will use ideas that I have learned from others and what I have gleaned from my athletes over the years.

II. Identify the intermediate hurdler- may be among 400 and 800 runners already. As I mentioned previously there should be no disqualifying factor. The point of which is advantageous as the lead leg- right or left. Most important is what the runner is comfortable with.

III. One of the drills I use that I picked up from Wilbur Ross (The Hurdlers Bible) is a frequently used warm up drill and can be intergraded into your regular workout but may also identify who might have someone who has basic hurdling skills already. Often they can be taught since the technique is not as critical in the intermediate race. Left or right leg lead should be determined.

- A) The Attack Drill: hurdles should be put out around the track placed on hurdle marks or at random. The warm up jog should be done very slow and tall on the tip toes. The last three steps to the hurdle should be very aggressive with the idea of "attack".
- B) The runner will immediately slow down going back to a tip toe and tall position,
- C) Hurdles maybe set at the lower level 30"-33". How long you make this will depend on your athletes and how you read them...800 to 1600m is not unreasonable.
- D) Have the entire team do this in early spring! You never know!

III. Your hurdlers training should be the basic skills you are using for the hurdlers Getting down quick over the hurdle oriented High Knee, quick strike, A-skip, B-Skip, and c-skips.

IV. Running the intermediates- counting steps! My experience has been that this is not most efficient. Count becomes time consuming and takes away from concentration. It also will not be the same for all runners. This is due to length of stride, the athleticism, strength and height of hurdler running style also changes this. Weather and track will also require an adjustment,

Use of "touch down" time between hurdles this also will change but hurdler and you will become aware of the optimal time for each runner.

Male may be 6.9 to first then repeated 4.8 until the 6<sup>th</sup> hurdle and will probably go into the 5 second turn and then hopefully maintain it in the straight to finish. It will slow as hurdler tires the key of course is to maintain to maintain to the end. Females will be slower and again you will have to know your hurdler. Too fast at the start may be bad. Too slow may cause missteps and not set up for race as aggressively as needed.

V. Close hurdle drill: set hurdles close. Have hurdlers step over hurdles. Change the format.

Step every hurdle, step hurdle and extend trail leg through the next one.

- Step using lead leg than trail leg over the next hurdle and continue thru 6<sup>th</sup> hurdle-ideally spacing should be three feet but bar on the most HS hurdles makes it difficult.
- Go forward 2 than back over 1 and continue. This will aid in hurdle dexterity, understanding and may help in developing the ability to switch legs.
- You may do your own variations or configurations of this drill.
- Use watch instead of counting steps

You can switch legs at the start position making it an even or odd number to the first hurdle. As needed (runner becomes stronger as season goes on, adjust the start by lengthening the stance or switching legs. Every practice start should be aggressive and run hard. You will get a starting time for your runners individually and get to know what the optimum time the athletes may run. Use of touch down times: Watch hit at landing of lead leg. You can often program a runner in the range they will run. Have hurdler start under watch through 5 hurdles time should be called out to manager and other athletes. The mid race over the 5<sup>th</sup> hurdle will vary for each hurdler. It should be consistent probably will get faster through the 3<sup>rd</sup> intervals. Know the hurdlers capacity.

Depending on the day and what is planned for the rest of the week and your goals. Hurdles may be replaced with a cone or stick or lowered purpose is to increase your speed. You may leave out one or more hurdles.

**5<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> hurdle:** the turn is probably the most difficult point in determining the race results. The turn emphasizes being aggressive keeping the stride open. There are several ways to practice this. It may be practiced separately or as part of a 600. The 600 will begin at the 200m mark. Over 4 hurdle on the turn. The first time the runner goes over them you must emphasize control, holding back or maintaining even stride. After the turn, when the hurdle is completed the runner will go half speed (thus will depend on the athlete) then will go into the attack of the last set completing the 600 to the finish line.

You can do this workout infrequently but it should be included somewhere. It is a confidence builder. I would add a shorter workout of flat running to finish work. Note that as few as 2 and as many as 4 reps over the hurdles. Know your hurdlers. Do not wear them out. Touch down time will indicate how they are doing. (28-34 sec.) Male.

**Hurdles 8-10:** The key here of course is stamina- emphasize lead leg and drive. Hurdlers will often attempt to adjust and "hurdle" the final hurdles. The lifting or ugly hurdle steps are often pictured. The hurdler should understand he must attack the hurdle. Lift and "attack" or drive at the hurdle. Concentrate to the finish line. Do not overlook the last hurdle for the finish line.

**For success there are certain things to look for constantly-if you are able to split the hurdlers touch down times it will tell both of you the weakness of the race.**

- 1.) **No Chop Step**: runner should be able to estimate distance and adjust by controlling steps. Shortening or lengthening stride. This is a major point in part of the attack skills.
- 2.) **Difficulty on the turns**: You can work on turn drills alone. You should start from start line. The key is that the runner will be tired at that point. Just run the turn or as part of 600.
- 3.) **Missteps at the beginning of the race**: adjust start. Weak finish – runner must be in excellent shape and be confident of ability to finish race.
- 4.) **Ability to switch legs over the Hurdles or maintaining even steps (same leg)**

**Hurdle workouts**: can be mixed in to set up with the sprint or middle distance workout. Hurdling does not have an idea what you want to accomplish for the week speed, strength and form.

**Sample Workout**: This is just hurdles and consideration must be given to what else is being done and adjustments must be made. Don't be afraid to change your workout but an idea what you want to accomplish for the week speed, strength and form.

**Account for hard days and easy**: Strength days and speed days; sharpening and rest days. Use standard hurdle drills for lead and trail leg as part of your workout.

#### **Sample Workout**:

**Monday**: 3-4 sets of start s and time over first 5 hurdles.

3-4 sets move to final 4 hurdles and work from 200 marks. Or go flat (no hurdles).

**Tuesday**: depending on meets which may act as a practice. 5 sets of flat sprints of 180's (20-23 seconds for males 26-30 female) Technique days for HH with hurdle drills for all hurdlers.

**Wednesday**: 2-3x 600's as described previously with finish with 10 flat 110's to finish with just a walk back for rest. When finished they are done. This should be a motivator and get good performance.

**Thursday**: use finish over last hurdles (6 sets) and work starts to first 2 hurdles.

**Friday**: Starts and drills light day for meet Sat.

**Race day** – Hurdles may be on track. Have your hurdlers practice accelerations with full speed thru the second hurdle. This can be a pre meet day workout.

Good Luck and feel free to call or write me:

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