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# TEACHING ATHLETES TO BEND: DYNAMIC WARM-UP AND FLEXIBILITY

By Mike Gentry

So many times I'd hear coaches say that an athlete had stiff hips, or that so and so was a waist bender. It's hard to be an effective athlete if you can't bend. Many times it's the football linemen or basketball player with long legs and a short torso that struggles.



By far, the best strategy I used to combat this problem of “stiff hips” was hurdle stretches. I wish I had been more consistent in their use. You can efficiently train a large group of athletes if you have ten to

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twelve hurdles and separate them into two lines of five to six hurdles; you can do four to six exercises in less than five minutes.

The hurdle stretch routine is helpful before or after activity or both. In the perfect world, I would be these stretches with your athletes at every strength workout and have a set of hurdles near the practice field or court for use before practice. The more often your athletes practice these movements over time, the better the effect.

In the videos below, the first exercise is called Tyson's simulating the bobbing effect of a boxer as the athlete's head ducks under the high hurdle several times.

The second exercise is Walking Leg Swings. The athlete stands outside the high hurdle facing it and swings his lead leg over the end of the hurdle followed by swing his trail leg over. This exercise may be done with a skip step which makes it more fun and helps the shorter legged athlete have some momentum to get over the hurdle.

The third exercise is Forward Step Overs, facing straight ahead the athlete steps forward over the low hurdle without touching the hurdle with his hands. The goal is to place only the foot of the leg stepping over onto the ground between the hurdles; the opposite leg immediately goes over the next hurdle.

The last video exercise is the Backward Step Overs; this exercise works on hip mobility. As with the forward step over, the goal is to step over the low hurdle without touching the hurdle with the hands and place only the foot of the leg stepping back on the ground between the hurdles; the opposite leg immediately goes over the next hurdle.

Additional exercises include Lateral Duck Under and Step Overs for this exercise set the hurdles up alternating high and low hurdles. The athlete stands laterally to the hurdles he ducks under the high hurdle and laterally steps over the low hurdle.

It is important to stress proper body position when going under any hurdle. Emphasize dropping the hips and keeping the chest up rather than bending at the waist!

These exercises are efficient and effective.

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