

TEACHING OF A BASIC HIGH JUMP TECHNIQUE

By V. Taranov and V. Sergejev

There are many ways to teach high jumping. In the following text Russian coaches, Taranov and Sergejev, present their recommended step by step approaches in three variations in order to accommodate different types of beginners. The article is a slightly edited translation from Legkaya Atletika, Russia, No. 2, February, 1994. Re-printed with permission from Modern Athlete and Coach.

Although the basic teaching methods of the flop high jump are thoroughly covered in technical literature, practical experience reveals many serious shortcomings among beginners, even among the best juniors. Most of these are a direct result of the mistakes made in the initial learning stages and obviously responsible for a reduced improvement rate.

Successful learning of an effective high jump technique depends largely on basic preparations in initial stages. The basic preparation period over the first 12 to 18 months must therefore include the development of a rational running technique, strengthening of the support and movement structure and improvement of coordinative capacities. Above all, it is necessary that the coach formulates precise learning targets, decides the sequence of teaching processes and selects the most effective teaching means and methods.

The main objective at this stage is to acquire a rational structure of the high jump technique as a whole, based on the evaluation of the quality of the performance and the execution of imitation, as well as semi-specific, and specific exercises. The coach is responsible that the beginner develops a correct image and "feel" of the target technique.

The beginner, in order to acquire the complete structure of the target technique, must have a good understanding of an effective performance as a whole and solve the basic tasks of learning the takeoff, the bar clearance and the landing techniques, combined with an efficient coordination of the run-up with the take-off.

The first task is solved by the formation of an image of a rational technique as a whole, using descriptions, explanations, examples and demonstrations with detailed comments. Several methods can here be employed to improve and speed up learning processes. These include slow motion films and videos, photo sequences, drawings, adjustable models etc.

The following tasks can be solved in a particular step by step sequence, or as a complex combined approach. The basic step by step teaching processes are here described in three variations according to the individually different needs after the end of the preliminary preparations. The teaching means are only summarized, as detailed information is readily available in coaching literature.

VARIATION I

This variation is suitable for young athletes who have an efficient coordination between the run-up and lead leg movements at the takeoff. Typical evaluation can here be based on the performance of the running long jump or jumping exercises that involve a takeoff from a run-up.

Sequence of the exercises:

1. Learning of the structure of the running action on the straight.
2. Learning of the structure of the running action on the curve.
3. Learning of the structure of the running action that changes from straight running into a symmetrical curve.
4. Performance of a run-up with the aim to reach the correct takeoff spot that is marked on the ground.
5. Performance of a run-up, combined with the takeoff and an upright flight along a low crossbar.
6. As in exercise 5, but the athlete lands after the clearance in a sitting position.
7. As in exercise 6, but the athlete lands in the bar clearance position.
8. Performance of the complete jump from the run-up.

VARIATION II

This variation is suitable for young athletes who have an efficient capacity to combine the run-up with the takeoff movements but require a more progressive approach to secure the development of an effective complete technique. Most of the listed exercises can also be successfully used in the learning process of variation I.

Sequence of exercises:

1. Exercises that imitate arm action at the takeoff.
2. Exercises that imitate lead leg action at the takeoff.
3. Exercises that imitate the coordinated lead leg and arm action at the takeoff.
4. Exercises to develop a rolling heel to toes takeoff action.
5. The rolling heel to toes action combined with the curved approach run.
6. Two bounces on the takeoff leg, followed by the takeoff and landing in a sitting position.

7. As in exercise 6, but clearing a low bar.
8. A straight three-stride bounding run-up, followed by the takeoff and landing in a sitting position.
9. As in exercise 8, but from a curved three-stride approach run.
10. As in exercise 9, but clearing a low bar.
11. A straight run with a takeoff performance at every third stride.
12. As in exercise 11, but on a curved path.
13. As in exercise 11, but the final takeoff is combined with a jump over a low bar and landing in a sitting position.
14. As in exercise 13, but with a proper bar clearance position.
15. A six-stride curved run-up with bounding last three strides and the performance of the takeoff.
16. As in exercise 15, but clearing a low bar and landing in a sitting position.
17. As in exercise 16, but with a proper bar clearance position.
18. An extension of the six-stride run-up to a length that fits individual demands. The final three strides must remain stressed.

VARIATION III

This variation is suitable for young athletes who are frightened to clear the bar backwards and land on the back and shoulder (insufficient preparations in gymnastics and acrobatics). The listed exercises are performed prior to variation I and variation II drills.

Sequence of the exercises:

1. Dropping from a standing position backwards on a pile of mats. The body remains straight, arms are kept close to the body and the chin is pointing to the chest.
2. Lying on the back, the athlete imitates the bar clearance. Legs are supported by a partner or placed against a wall, while the athlete, supported by his shoulders, lifts the hips as high as possible. The exercise is completed with a backward roll.
3. Imitation bar clearance action similar to exercise 2, but the athlete executes the exercise hanging from a horizontal bar and is assisted by a partner.

4. Standing backwards, the athlete performs a high jump over a flexible training bar. It is advisable that the landing level corresponds as closely as possible to the takeoff level to allow sufficient time to perform the bar clearance action.

5. As in exercise 4, but a two-legged takeoff is performed following a short straight approach run.

6. As in exercise 4, but the two-legged takeoff is performed following a short curved approach run.

7. One, two and three strides approach high jumps from an elevated takeoff (10 to 20cm), performed in the actual flop technique.

8. As in exercise 7, but the run-up is extended up to seven strides.