



Long-Term Player Development: FUNdamentals

A Focus on Drills and Exercises to Promote Athleticism



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What is LTPD?

LTPD identifies seven basic stages in the optimal development of a player essentially from childhood to adulthood based on the physical, mental, emotional, and social maturation of the individual. LTPD optimized player development at each stage of maturation and avoids the hazards associated with arbitrarily imposing adult training regimens and competition formats on children. The seven stages are as follows:

- Active Start (0-6 years)
- FUNdamentals (6-9 males, 6-8 females)
- Learning to Train (9-12 males, 8-11 females)
- Training to Train (12-16 males, 11-15 females)
- Training to Compete (16-23 +/- males, 15-21 +/- females)
- Training to Win (19 +/- males, 18 +/- females)
- Active for Life (any age males and females)

Here, we will focus on player development for athletes in the FUNdamentals category. We will solely focusing on athleticism and strength and conditioning for this developmental stage, and not on tactical or technical applications.

The FUNdamentals

All sports are based on fundamental movement skills and sports skills. Fundamental movement skills are often referred to as the ABCs – Agility, Balance, Coordination, and Speed. Fundamental sport skills include activities such as running, jumping, throwing, hitting and catching. It is imperative to have children in this age category develop this physical literacy prior to their adolescent growth spurt.

Strength and Conditioning Training Goals

At this stage of development, as stated above, physical literacy of the ABCs is essential. A heavy focus should be placed on the following physical aspects:

- Agility
- Balance
- Coordination
- Spatial awareness
- Reaction Time / Speed

Strength and Conditioning Training Considerations

It is important to keep in mind that there is a wide range of athletic capability (or literacy) with children in the FUNdamentals developmental stage. Keeping this in mind, it is important to develop a training program which allows children to build up their literacy slowly so as not to get frustrated. It is also

important to build fundamental skills slowly to ensure structural tolerance and so the body is not put under more stress than it can handle.

After assessing your FUNdamentals athletes, you can put them into Group 1, Group 2, or Group 3 (based on their physical literacy). As you will see in the 'movements' portion of the program below, the three different groups represent 3 different progressions of the same exercises.

Players need to receive the right type of training at the correct stage of development. If these sensitive periods are missed, players may grow to be fast, strong, and reasonable skilled, but they may never be as fast, strong, and skilled as they might have been if their training had been timed properly.

Lastly, an emphasis must be placed on 'fun' in this LTPD stage. Our goal is to keep the children engaged and happy so that they develop an interest sports at a young age that will hopefully carry through into adulthood.



FUNDamentals Training Program

Dynamic Warm Up:

A great way to incorporate athleticism training into your sessions is to do a dynamic warm up. Use the length of a squash court to get the kids warmed up. Several of these exercises incorporate one or more of the ABCs. Here are some dynamic warm up exercises for all children in the FUNdamentals stage:

- Balance:
 - Knee Hugs ([See Video](#))
 - Walking Quad Stretch ([See Video](#))
 - Frankensteins ([See Video](#))
 - Lateral Bounds ([See Video](#))
- Running Technique:
 - Walking Knee Drives ([See Video](#))
 - Walking Knee Drives with Opposite Arm Drives ([See Video](#))
 - Running Knee Drives with Opposite Arm Drives ([See Video](#))
 - Skipping ([See Video](#))
 - Backwards Skipping ([See Video](#))
- Footwork:
 - Side-steps ([See Video](#))
 - Carioca
 - Forward Run: 'stop' and 'go' ([See Video](#))
- Jumping:
 - 2 footed hop ([See Video](#))
 - 1 foot to 2 feet hops ([See Video](#))

Stationary Warm Up:

Stationary warm ups should focus on proper movement patterns as well as stabilization.

- Balance:
 - Single Leg Hold ([See Video](#))
 - Single Leg Hold (eyes closed) ([See Video](#))
 - Single Leg Hold Mirroring ([See Video](#))
 - Partner Towel Pulls ([See Video](#))
 - Single Leg Partner Towel Pulls ([See Video](#))
- Squats ([See Video](#))
- Core:
 - Seated Holds ([See Video](#))
 - Seated Holds while clapping feet ([See Video](#))
 - Plank ([See Video](#))
 - Plank with partner ball passes ([See Video](#))

Agility / Coordination / Speed Movement Drills:

- 4 Cone Drill
 - Progression 1: Touching the cone that the coach points to ([See Video](#))
 - Progression 2: Naming cones A, B, C, D
 - Here, coach yells out letter and the athlete must run to touch that cone and then retract to the middle of the 4 cones.
 - Progression 3: The coach now changes the cone letters (ex: C, D, A, B)
- Ladder Drills
 - Progression 1: 1 step in each square ([See Video](#))
 - Progression 1: 2 steps in each square ([See Video](#))
 - Progression 2: Hops ([See Video](#))
 - Progression 3: Zig Zag hops ([See Video](#))
 - Progression 3: Hop scotch ([See Video](#))
- Hexagon Drills
 - Progression 2: Hexagon hops ([See Video](#))
 - Progression 3: Single Leg Hexagon hops ([See Video](#))
- M-Drills:
 - Progression 1: Forward M-drill ([See Video](#))
 - Progression 2/3: Forward and Backward M-Drill ([See Video](#))
- Speed:
 - Quick Feet ([See Video](#))

- Quick Feet and Sprint on Command [\(See Video\)](#)
- Quick Feet with Switches [\(See Video\)](#)
- Quick Feet with Switches and Jumps [\(See Video\)](#)

Catching / Reaction Drills:

- Progression 1: Partner tosses [\(See Video\)](#)
- Progression 1: Closed eyes, open on command and catch [\(See Video\)](#)
- Progression 2: Turn on command and catch [\(See Video\)](#)
- Progression 2: Stand up on command and catch [\(See Video\)](#)
- Progression 3: Facing Wall and catch [\(See Video\)](#)