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Basic Technique for Discus Throwing

By Mark Harsha

Goal #1: Discus Grip and Release

1. Holding the discus:

- Place the discus in your throwing hand.
- Spread the fingers out, with the index finger inline with the wrist.
- Place the first knuckles of the fingers over the disc.

2. Releasing the discus:

- When releasing the discus, have your palm down.
- Squeeze the discus out (bar of soap).
- Have the disc come off the index finger.
- Spin the discus in a clockwise direction (for a right-handed thrower).

3. Drills that can be used to help teach the grip and release (when performing these drills, a competitive aspect can be added):

□ *Arm swings.* Use this drill to help teach the thrower about centrifugal force:

- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Place the disc into your throwing hand.
- Swing the disc level with the shoulders, back and forth, catching it in your left hand.
- Feel the discus pushing out on the hand.

□ *Discus bowling.* Use this drill to help teach proper discus release:

- Put the discus in your hand, with proper placement.

When releasing the discus, spin the discus in a clockwise direction (for a right-handed thrower).

- Bowl the discus to your partner who is standing 15 feet away.
- Remember to squeeze the discus out, making sure the discus rolls off the index finger and does not wobble.
- Once you become proficient at 15 feet, you and your partner should move farther away from each other, or you should bowl at a target.
- *Throws for height.* Use this drill to help teach the proper release of the discus:
 - Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
 - Place the disc into the throwing hand.
 - Swing the discus forward and back, next to your body, two times.
 - After two swings, throw the discus straight up, using a proper release, remembering to squeeze the discus out. Make sure your throwing arm is straight.
- *Skip throws.* Use this drill to help teach the proper release of the discus:
 - Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, facing perpendicular to the throwing direction.
 - Place the disc into the throwing hand.
 - Swing the disc level with the shoulders, back and forth, catching it in your left hand.
 - After two swings, throw the disc close to the ground, using a proper release, remembering to squeeze the disc out and keeping your palm flat.

Goal #2: Power Position

1. Body position in the power position:

- Stand perpendicular to the throwing direction.
- Position your feet shoulder-width apart, with your left foot slightly behind your right foot.
- Be in an athletic position.
- Shift 80 percent of your weight onto your right leg.
- Twist your upper body completely opposite the throwing direction. This position from up above will look like an X.
- Keep your chest, knee, and toe in line.
- Extend your right arm out from the side of your body.
- Extend your left arm out from your body, with a right angle relationship to the right arm.

2. Throwing from the power position:

- Use cones when first teaching to throw from the power position, so the athlete does not have to worry about the discus falling out of his/her hands.

In the power position, stand perpendicular to the throwing direction.

- Over-exaggerate the use of the legs in the throw, especially the hips.
- Keep in mind that the sequence of the throw should be legs – hips – legs – arm.
- Start the throw by turning the right hip to the front of the ring.
- Once the hips start moving, extend the legs upwards.
- Sweep the left arm out and around.
- Once the left arm reaches the front of the ring, bring it in tight to the body to form a block.
- Use the left side of your body to aid in accelerating the discus.
- Release the discus.

3. Drills used to teach throwing from the power position:

- *Heel turns with a partner.* Use this drill to help teach over-exaggerating the hips coming through before the shoulders. Surgical tubing could be employed to add resistance:
 - Get into the power position without a discus.
 - Have your partner place his hand near your right heel.
 - Attempt to smack and drive through your partner's hand with your heel—focusing on the speed of your heel.
- *Cone throwing.* Use this drill to help teach any parts of the throw:
 - Use cones so the athlete can concentrate on the throw and not the disc.
 - Use cones for inside throwing.
 - Use cones to produce a long pull.
- *1-2 drill.* Use this drill to help teach the thrower to keep the disc back on the hip:
 - Get into the power position with the disc held in your right hand.
 - On the command of "one," open your left arm to the throwing direction and turn your heel out.
 - On the command of "two," complete the throw—release the disc five feet in front of the ring.

Goal #3: Middle of the Ring

1. Body position in the middle of the ring:

- Stand facing the throwing direction.
- Take a step with your right foot.
- Place 80 percent of your body weight on the right foot.
- Put your body in an athletic position in relation to your right leg.
- Align your body as follows: chest – right knee – right toe.

In the middle of the ring, put your body in an athletic position in relation to your right leg.

2. Throwing from the middle of the ring:

- Swing your right arm back where you can hit the right cheek of your buttocks.
- Point your left arm towards the throwing direction.
- Start the reverse 180 by pivoting counterclockwise on your right foot.
- Pick your left leg up off the ground and drive it to the front of the ring in a straight line, as your right foot rotates.
- Try to hit your right heel with your left foot, as it is being placed in the front of the ring (knee-to-knee).
- Complete the throw once you are in the power position.

3. Drills used to help teach the middle of the ring:

□ *Reverse 180s.* Use this drill to teach pivoting at the center of the ring:

- Start with your right foot in the middle of the ring.
- Complete a reverse 180, concentrating on picking up your left foot and bringing both knees together (cue knee-to-knee).
- Don't forget that it is critical that your right foot does not stop turning.

□ *Wheels.* Use this drill to help teach balance and continue turning of the right foot:

- Start with your right foot in the middle of the ring.
- Complete a reverse 180, concentrating on picking up your left foot and bringing both knees together (cue knee-to-knee).
- Keep in mind that it is critical that your right foot does not stop turning.
- Continue for five repetitions.

□ *High knees.* Use this drill to help teach the transition from the back of the ring to the middle of the ring:

- Stand at the back of the ring facing the throwing direction.
- Bring your right thigh parallel to the ground.
- Dorsi flex your right foot.
- Point your left arm towards the throwing direction.
- Swing your right arm back where it will be able to hit your right buttocks cheek.
- Fall into the middle of the ring—do not step.
- Once the right foot makes contact, start the reverse 180.

Goal #4: The Drive Through the Center of the Ring

1. Drive or sprint across the ring:

- This phase of the throw is a transition from the back of the ring to the middle.
- The drive from the back of the ring comes from a push off from the left ankle and a strong high knee punch from the right leg.

The drive-through-the-center-of-the-ring phase of the throw is a transition from the back of the ring to the middle.

- Do not spend much time in the air.
- Once you've pushed off your left ankle, tuck your left leg close to your right leg.
- Drive down a straight line (backward seven).
- Push off your left ankle once you reach the three o'clock position.
- Do not step with your right leg; instead, let the ground come to your right leg.

2. Drills to help teach the drive across the ring:

□ *South Africans*. Use this drill to help teach the sprint across the ring:

- Face the front of the ring.
- Place your left foot into the ring at the five o'clock position.
- Place your right foot outside the ring.
- Draw the discus back behind your hip, allowing your body to wind up.
- Drive off the left foot and make a wide arc, while leading with the right leg.
- Make sure you drive straight down the line.
- Once your right foot hits the center, continue to turn your foot, while you do a reverse pivot.
- Plant your left leg in the front of the ring.
- Get into a good power position to throw the discus.

□ *Walking turns*. Use this drill to help the athlete become accustomed to turning:

- Perform this drill while walking around the track or walking to and from practice.
- Step with the left foot.
- Step with the right foot underneath the body.
- Reverse pivot on the right foot.
- Walk two steps and do another turn.

Goal #5: Back of the Ring

1. Body position in the back of the ring:

- Face opposite the back of the ring.
- Be in an athletic position.
- Raise your arms to your sides at shoulder level.
- Twist your arms and shoulders to the right, forming an X with the axis of your shoulders and hips.
- Shift 80 percent of your weight onto your left leg.

2. Pivoting out of the back of the ring:

- Pivot the left foot (squash the bug) towards the three o'clock position.
- Pick up the right foot as soon as the left foot is pivoting.

In the back of the ring, shift 80 percent of your weight onto your left leg.

When pivoting out of the back of the ring, work only the lower body; the upper body needs to stay back.

- Work only the lower body; the upper body needs to stay back.
 - Have your right foot take a wide and low path outside the circle.
 - Once your left foot reaches the three o'clock position, drive and sprint to the center of the ring.
 - As you are driving to the center, bring your right leg in towards the center of the ring (high knee locked).
3. Drills to help teach the pivot at the back of the ring:
- *180s back of the ring.* Use this drill to help teach balance in the back of the ring:
 - Start in the back of the ring in a good athletic position, with your arms at shoulder level.
 - Keep 80 percent of your weight on your left leg.
 - Turn your arms and shoulders to the right to form an X with your shoulders and hips.
 - Lock the arm back and turn 180 degrees on your left foot—slow and balanced.
 - Keep your right foot away from your left foot.
 - *Small steps 180 and throw (step and go).* Use this drill to teach the back of the ring movement:
 - Start in the back of the ring with a discus.
 - Touch the ground with your right foot, while doing a 180 (small steps).
 - Once you hit the three o'clock position, continue the throw.



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