

7 STEPS TO HH # 1 !!

WHY? AND THE PRACTICAL SCIENCE BEHIND IT

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Many high Hurdle runners are successfully switching over from 8 steps to 7 steps to HH # 1. Many/most are improving their overall time considerably. However, some explanation as to why this approach is successful is needed.

Are the faster times because of less # of steps in the race? Not necessarily. Is this technique / skill so good that ALL HH athletes should make the change? Again the answer is no. Let's take a short look as to the why's and wherefores of this change.

Typical World Class HH athletes are very fast in the flat runs..ie 60M indoors and 100 M outdoors. With this in mind, it often occurs that taking 8 steps to HH # 1 finds these athletes having to throttle back on this speed so that they don't run up on and therefore crowd the T/O to HH # 1. Cutting your natural stride pattern to HH #1 does two things:

1. You are not allowing yourself to take advantage of this speed component you have.
2. You are placing yourself in a poor T/O position as you depart the ground to negotiate the first HH

Let's examine these two statements. The first is easy...take away some of your speed and all else being equal, the end result will be a slower time.

The second is as simple, but a little more " practical " science is placed into the explanation. The moment a body leaves the ground, the path of the CG is established. It's a done deal as to changing this curve. If 8 steps (or any # of steps for that matter) finds you crowding the T/O, then the efficiency of the T/O is compromised. Hence, the flight pattern and MOST IMPORTANTLY the landing position coming off the HH will find you in a not so functional position to apply forces to the ground to continue to accelerate to the next HH.

Each of us as coaches has instructed our athletes in a most basic premise relative to the HH event. That being that as goes the first HH, so goes the race. Set up the 1st HH correctly, and the race then can unfold correctly. EXAMPLE: If for arguments sake, the athlete is .10 of a second slower coming off the 1st HH with 7 steps ***BUT*** is in a more functional sprint position as he lands to attack HH # 2 and beyond.... I'd take this any time!! The fundamental principle in all HH technique is to deviate from sprint form as little as possible as you negotiate the barriers. Seven steps, for the athletes skilled enough to do it,

insures this will happen. It's all about POSTURE /POSITION leaving the ground as you go over each hurdle.

Should all HH athletes change to 7 steps? NO! Why?

1. This change mandates a reversing of the 'normal' start block plates. This can be very dicy to many athletes, including World Class athletes. There are specific principles to correct start mechanics, and for some, especially the younger athlete, it is an extremely tough situation to put them in.
2. A certain amount of strength and skill is required to make this change. Younger athletes will need to develop these two areas before becoming successful with this technique of 7 steps.
3. Finally, psychologically, it is not a GOOD FEELING for the athlete to take 7 steps early on as they try to learn this skill, knowing well and good that they are NOT moving as fast to HH # 1. This might be the BIGGEST hurdle (pun !!) to successfully making the change over!!

In, 1986, I had two decathletes, both fairly strong and both 6-3 or taller. They were both 14.80 ish hurdlers. Neither ran faster than 10.92 in the 100 M. They were fast, but not blazing fast. I switched them to 7 steps to the first HH, and while early on they struggled, both recorded PR's of 14.24 and 14.28. Great improvement and a lot more decathlon points!!!

Have fun with it.