

Middle School Shot Put

By Virg Polak, Watertown Middle School, Watertown, South Dakota

In the Watertown Middle School (7th and 8th graders) we are lucky to have a Shot Put coach and Discus coach. We divide Shot and Discus by boys and girls---we alternate meeting every other day.

We start the season by showing a technique video, MF's "Come to Practice Shot" by Rob Lasorsa. I will stop the video at times and have the throwers do some of the drills right away so they have a good feeling about what the coach wants for technique.

The shot/discus area early in the season have limited room in our gym, so one group goes to the weight room and the other gets to use a half of gym and then switch half way through practice.

Shot put things we do:

1. Warm up with series of medicine balls drills (MF's Medicine Ball book) to loosen up shoulders.
2. Throw vs air—showing proper technique. You don't have to worry about how far the shot go. The young throwers are not embarrassed and are able work on improving technique. Early season, I use a towel balled up and throw it. It is safe and everyone can throw at the same time safely. You get a lot of throws in a short time to keep the young athlete's interest.
3. We work a lot on throwing down a line with or without a shot checking their proper technique. The thrower can check himself on his power throw or full technique going straight down with shot or feet. Coach explains that shot should be close to the line.
For right handed throw
If the shot is to the right of the line----it means you drop your shot off the jaw causing the shot to come out too early. You are throwing with all arm and not getting your body behind it.
If the shot is to the left of the line----it means you stepped too far to left with your left foot (step in the bucket). You are throwing off balance so you lose all your power.
4. We will video the throwers from side and back view to show the athlete's technique. Usually we will do it after a couple of weeks of practice. Every thrower get 3 throws from each angle. We show the video to the throwers the same night to give them immediate feedback.
5. I believe not to measure throws early in the season. Emphasis work on technique, don't worry about distance.
6. Every thrower should have a shot—even if they are light. You can rotate the light shot between athletes. We throw a lot in practice. If the arm gets sore, the athlete needs to set down the shot and work on the footwork. As a coach, I keep asking if anyone's arm is getting sore.

7. I use the Bosco ball to work on balance of power leg. It is a fun activity that challenges you to stand on one leg on the ball. As they improve I have the athlete try to bend the power leg. I feel it give the athlete confidence in his technique.

8. I encourage trying different events in track. I will have an individual workout with an athlete after his workout at a different event. The athlete may not realize his ability in the throwing event.

9. I go over what to do for warm up routine at a meet (how many power throws, glides, and air throws). Proper warm up will give the middle school athlete a better chance for success. I explain your best throw is usually between your 4th and 7th throw so I don't want them to over throw. Explain to the athletes how to act around the throwing rings and proper etiquette.

10. For young middle school thrower, we don't do a lot of running of distance. I try to get the running in without them realizing that are do it by retrieving their shot after throwing. It helps increase the number of throws in a practice.

11. We chart every throwers throws all year to show them their success. We talk about PR (Personal Record). You are only competing with yourself. At the next practice we have an honor roll for all PRs in the last meet. We give a little tootsie roll for all PRs.

12. Make sure you encourage all athletes to go out next year for track. Many young throwers take time to become a good thrower. We need to keep them in the program. I have our high school throwers talk to them about staying in the program.

13. We have the throwers lift weights every day for about 10 to 15 minutes at the end of practice. Shot putters will lift upper body while the discus throwers will lift lower body. We lift light weights and 10 reps per lift. We have six stations for each day. We are teaching proper lifting techniques to our young athletes. Our season runs about eight to nine weeks so we will not see much improvement of lifting but we are teaching the throwers to go to the weight room. It is mental thing that jump starts their lifting in the future. We have the athletes say something to the coach as they leave the weight room--a catch phrase (for us it is ARROW PRIDE).

Upper Body Lifts

1. Bench
2. Incline Bench/Military Press
3. Shot Put action with a dumb bell
4. Power Cleans
5. Heel turn with a five or ten pound weight (having your heel move the weight).
6. Yahoo (starts at the top of power clean and extend the bar above head with a spotter)

Lower Body Lifts

1. Front Squats
2. Leg Press
3. Leg Extension
4. Leg Curl
5. Leg Ups (hang on a chinning bar and bring both knees up to your chest)
6. Hip Twisters (same as Leg up but twist the hips).

You may change the lifts according to your weight room and weight machines you have. Make sure you keep them for only 10 to 15 minutes especially to start with. What you do and say to a middle school thrower may make the difference of them coming out next season. Have your throwers leave every practice or the weight room with a smile.