

Different Frames of Perspectives in Coaching Track and Field Events

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If you have ever been to an athletic contest (soccer, basketball, football, baseball, etc) and sat close to the action at one game, and at another game sat very far from the action, maybe higher up in the seating, you may have noticed how different the game looks in each instance. The viewing from a higher, further perspective, allows a much wider frame of view. You can take in the whole activity and watch as plays begin to be set up and unfold. Sitting closer, we have a narrower frame to view through. The narrow frame allows us to view parts of the action much closer and in greater detail, but we cannot see the game as a whole. The two different frames make it seem as if we are watching two completely different games. Changing our frame of the game creates different perspectives that allow us to understand and process the game differently each time.

Often as track and field coaches, we get caught up in observing athletes from the same coaching perspective each time, without realizing the benefits a different frame of perspective can provide. In observing the same activity from a different perspective, we can pick up different aspects of the athletes movement, which can be very useful. We can see movements in a different frame. It almost can look like a different event. By changing our perspective, we can provide better coaching to our athletes, better cues, and give better feedback to ourselves.

Below is a list of different perspectives that can be used.

1) **In front of the athlete, behind the athlete, to the side of the athlete.**

Coach Boo from LSU, talks about watching athletes from behind and being able to see hip and spinal movements, which may cause the athlete to deviate from the desired plane of movements. Likewise, weight shifts in the throwing events are seen differently from the side than from behind. Move to different positions for the same activity to see how the event differs. Just be careful of standing in front of a thrower about to launch an implement!

2) **Change the distance**

In watching the long jump, standing at the board, five feet perpendicular to it, is much different than standing perpendicular to it, 50 yards away. The approach looks much different and errors that weren't seen before become much more obvious. A further distance away allows the event to be observed as a whole, while closer perspectives focus more on parts of the movements.

3) **Listen, don't watch.**

Coaches of several athletes in the same event are able to distinguish between the athletes, just by hearing the unique rhythm that the athlete produces in performing their event. All events and athletes produce unique rhythms. Allowing hearing to be the only sense we rely upon, we can pick up errors that visually we may be missing out on. In jumping events we know that everything up to the take off point is the most crucial part of the event. By listening, we can hear the increasing rhythm on the runway, if there is any deceleration, and the quick "one-two" of the last two steps. Try it some time, turn your back and just listen.

4) **Video**

Video is a great tool, which allows us to see action over and over and at a slower speed. It can measure kinematic data and allow the data to provide feedback. It can create a picture in the mind of the athlete of what is being done correctly or incorrectly. While it can be a great tool most of the time, in some cases it can be overly critical.

5) The Athlete

The athlete can provide feedback to you the coach, through their expression of what they felt. The athlete brings the perspective of being in the event. The athlete's feedback can assist you as the coach in developing cues and relating the event to the athlete in their terms. Allowing the athlete the opportunity to provide feedback creates an environment in which the athlete becomes part of the development and coaching process. Allowing the athlete to be part of the coaching process enhances their understanding of the event and accelerates their learning. This process also allows the athlete to be able to find errors and corrections themselves, becoming less reliant upon constant coaching feedback. As the athlete matures and participates in bigger events or events where the coach may not be present, the athlete can make appropriate corrections.

6) Other Observers

Another coach or athlete can provide input on what they observe. You as the coach, who works day in and day out with the athlete, may become somewhat immune to bad habits that the athlete may perform. Another coach or athlete, whom you trust, can tell you what they observe. Other athletes in the same event on your team can provide valuable assistance as they begin to understand the technical aspects of the event. So as to minimize interference in the coach-athlete communication, all information that the athlete receives should filter through you as the coach of the athlete.

Conclusion

Altering the perspective in which an activity is framed, allows you the coach to continue to process the activity in different ways. Athletes need variance in training to continue to overload and progress their system. You as a coach need variance in the way you frame your athlete's event to continue challenge and progress the athletes abilities. Be vigilant in observing and vary the perspective in which you frame the athlete's event. Good luck!