

Speed has been seen as a crucial characteristic for sportsmen and women to possess for many years. Speed is often defined as how fast an object travels from point A - B, however, speed is a more complex subject. The theory of SAQ programs breaks speed down into three categories of skill: speed, agility and quickness.....

Speed....

Speed is defined as the maximum velocity a player can achieve and maintain; most humans can only maintain this maximum velocity for a short period of time and over a short distance. Speed can also be measured by the amount of time it takes a player to cover a set distance.

Training to improve maximum speed requires a strong focus on correct running mechanics, stride length and stride frequency. Drills are used to help develop an economical running technique.

The best sprinters spend very little time in contact with the ground, but the contact they do make is extremely efficient and powerful. By focusing on the mechanics of running helps to control this power to apply it efficiently and sparingly. Arm mechanics play a major role in efficient running form; good arm mechanics helps maintain leg speed and allow the player to switch to different speeds through a balanced running action between the upper and lower body.

Agility....

Agility is the ability to change direction without loss of balance, strength, speed or body control. There is a direct link between improved agility and the development of an individual's timing, rhythm and body movement.

Training to improve agility ensures that an athlete develops the best attacking and defensive skills possible with the greatest quickness, speed and control, while exerting the least amount of wasted energy and movement. Good agility levels can also help prevent injuries, and control the movement of the body and joints as efficiently as possible without causing a 'jarring' affect.

Quickness....

The act of acceleration occurs in a fraction of a second and takes the body from a static position to motion. The muscles involved actually lengthen and then shorten instantaneously (an *eccentric* contraction followed by a *concentric* contraction). This process is known as the stretch shortening cycle and SAQ training principles concentrates on the neuromuscular system that is related to this process; it ensures the initial movement, whether lateral, linear or vertical, is automatic, explosive and accurate.

Quickness training involves repeating the same explosive movement over a short period of time, such as fast foot steps and line drills. It moves the body quickly through the gears promoting an explosion of speed that can be integrated within game situations to give you that essential explosion of pace over five yards to propel you through a gap in the defense.