

Coaching the Sprint Start



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Setting the Blocks

- Determine "Power Leg" vs. "Quick Leg"
- Best way to do this is have athletes run up to a soccer ball and kick it
- The kicking leg is the Quick Leg
- The support leg is the Power Leg
- Most "righties" kick with their right foot, and vice versa for "lefties"
- The foot of the Power Leg is placed closest to the starting line, and the Quick Leg foot is placed back




Setting the Blocks ...continued

- Next, determine distance from starting line to the placement of the front block
- The standard 2 "foot lengths" is a good place to start, but this will usually be adjusted backward
- Check placement of front foot by putting front knee on the track with thigh at 90 degrees
- This knee should be from 0"- 4" from the starting line, depending on the limb length of the athlete
- The back block should be placed one foot length plus 1-2" behind the front

Setting the Blocks ...continued

- Starting blocks vary greatly in rail length, pad size, and adjustability




- To achieve consistent setting of the blocks:
 - don't count holes or slots!
 - pedals can be placed in any hole
 - distance from start line to pedals is the important factor
 - learn to measure distance with feet and/or hands
 - For blocks with a long rail, place front of rail one foot length behind starting line. For short railed blocks, use one and a half foot lengths

On Your Marks Position

- Walk from behind blocks past starting line
- Put hands on track and back into blocks, front pedal first
 - heels off pedal
 - toes curled under
- Wipe hands on hip one at a time
- Position hands behind starting line
 - slightly wider than shoulders
 - fingers together parallel to starting line
 - create bridge with thumb and fingers
 - lock elbows
- Rock forward until shoulders are over hands
- Flatten back (straighten spine)
- Drop head and look down at starting line
- Remain motionless

On Your Marks Position ...continued



Set Position

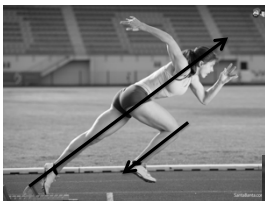
- Raise hips to slightly above shoulders
 - come up steadily - don't pop up too quickly
 - take (and hold) a deep breath
 - front leg - knee bent at not less than 90-95 degrees
 - back leg - knee bent at 125-135 degrees
- Put pressure on **both** blocks
 - utilize more of back leg to raise hips
 - try to relax front leg
 - concentrate on back pedal
- Keep neck in line with spine
 - look down at track
 - don't raise head
- Remain motionless and relaxed



At the Gun

- Think of movement, not sound
- Push off with **both feet**
 - Quick "pop" with back foot
 - Long "push" with front foot
- Drive arm of power leg side forward
- Take a long, **low**, powerful first stride
 - Drive back knee forward
 - Heel recovery differs from max speed
 - Keep heel low
 - Don't drag toe
 - Keep shin angles low
 - Don't extend lower leg
- Gradually lengthen stride through acceleration phase

At the Gun ...continued



- Look for:
- Full Hip Extension
 - Straight line through ankle knee, shoulder and head.

- Low first step
- Low shin angle
- Big arm action



At the Gun ...continued

- Use these coaching cues

- "Low Heel"
- "Load Back Block"
- "Pop/Push"
- "Drive Knee Forward"
- "Throw your Hand"
- ~~"Stay Low"~~



- **NEVER**, ever, tell your athletes to "Stay Low"
 - Low exit angles on the start are a product of powerful force application and the resultant rate of acceleration
 - Telling a weak athlete to stay low will result in bending at the waist and impede hip extension
