

## Deceleration Training Part 1

By Lee Taft

What is actually the most important component of multi-directional speed?

There is no doubt that one of the most fascinating aspects of sport is speed. When you see it- you know it. It can break open games or save games. Speed can change how a team runs its offense or designs its defense. It may surprise you that what really separates the fast athletes from the rest is how quickly they decelerate.

Now this certainly isn't the case for track athletes, but I am speaking more of court and field sport athletes where being elusive is key.

What exactly am I speaking of when I say deceleration? Do I mean stopping, changing directions, or slowing down? Yes! That is what I mean. Most fans watching competition may not even notice the deceleration that takes place. They just see the athletes pulling away with great quickness or getting caught from behind by even greater quickness!

Deceleration is the act of no longer accelerating or maintaining speed. It comes in many shapes. When we see a basketball player perform a change of direction of the dribble, the individual had to decelerate to make this change of direction occur.

What determines the amount of deceleration—a complete stop or a slight hesitation—is due to several factors, the first being the speed at which the athlete is coming into the change of direction. Obviously the faster the athlete is moving, the more control is needed to decelerate the body.

The second factor is the angle at which the change of direction is going to be made. If the basketball player is going to change direction at an angle of 10-15 degrees, the deceleration doesn't need to be as great to control the body and to make the cut or change efficient as if the angle were 90 degrees.

The third factor that determines how much deceleration is needed is the implement or equipment control (ball, stick...). Staying with basketball as the example for a moment, let's say the ball handling abilities of the player are limited. This player will need to decelerate much more than a player that can change direction with the ball easily without any loss of control. In a sport like lacrosse, for example, many times the stick is in both hands, and the ability to change directions, with great body control, will change due to not having the added benefit of the arms to help control the balance of the body.

The final factor I look at that determines how much deceleration is needed is strategy or tactic. Great offense players know that getting the defender off balance is important in beating them. If the deceleration move is so subtle that the defender never has a chance to react to it, it probably won't be effective. Now if the deceleration is aggressive, the

defender will most likely decelerate as well, and now you've got em! So you see, deceleration training has a little more to it than just stopping and starting.

In part 2, I am going to share with you some critical aspects of deceleration that are grossly misunderstood by many trainers. As a matter of fact, some of the techniques that are being taught by other trainers are dangerous! Stay tuned.....

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