

WORKSHOP

Right Moves

Philip Newton reviews a new book on movement

Sport strength and conditioning is a fairly new discipline. Of course, there have been individuals who have acted as athletic trainers in all sports for as long as organised sport has been around. However, it is only in the last 10 to 20 years that the Strength & Conditioning (S&C) specialist has come to the fore in most sports.

These individuals have emerged primarily from the broad church of Sports Science and, in a short period, have revolutionised the way athletes – both recreational and professional – approach their sport. New and revamped training schedules have been devised and a more analytical and scientific approach to improving sporting performance has emerged. S&C coaches and medical professionals in sport have also achieved a greater understanding of the



PHIL NEWTON

of Lilleshall Sports Injury Rehab is the England Squash & Racketball physiotherapist.

Find out more about Lilleshall Sports Injury Rehab at www.lilleshall.com

positive and negative ways in which the body adapts to the physical loads imposed by performance and training.

Training programmes for all sportspeople should serve not only to enhance performance but also to minimise the risk of injury. This book deals with a topic that underpins both these aims and which is of relevance to all sports – the development of effective movement.

Writing in a simple and straightforward style, the author (Joanne Elphinston, an eminent physiotherapist and performance consultant) avoids using technical, medical or scientific terminology that could marginalise a proportion of its broad target audience: coaches, therapists and sportspeople. From her work with sportspeople at all levels – from recreational to elite and professional – and from lecturing around the world to medical and sports professionals, Joanne Elphinston has a wealth of practical experience to draw upon.

She starts by explaining what 'stability' is and why it is important in all sports. Sporting examples are used

to illustrate situations where a lack of stability can reduce physical performance and possibly lead to injury. Some anatomy is introduced in the second chapter. This is done in a very practical and applied way and is enhanced by many simple but excellent illustrations.

After a brief overview of some stability and movement concepts – such as posture, breathing and abdominal control – in Chapter 3, the fourth chapter deals with functional assessment. A simple method of identifying good and bad movements is described. Simple balance and body alignment tests are initially described, then more complex movements are introduced. This chapter does not present sport-specific testing. Instead it uses specific sporting examples to demonstrate appropriate and inappropriate movement patterns. It is left to the imagination and experience of the reader to decide which tests are appropriate for their sport.

The next four chapters (5–8) make up the bulk of the book and comprehensively deal with 'building fluent movement'. This is done by implementing an exercise programme that is 'systematic and progressive'. Such a programme consists of four phases: Activation and Awareness; Integration; Global Coordination; and Dynamic Control and Stability Conditioning. As in the preceding chapters, extensive use is made of excellent pictures to aid exercise description and to show good and bad movement patterns.

Chapter 9 takes a relatively brief (20-page) look at how some of the principles of correct stability and movement should be applied to warm-ups, weight-training routines and flexibility programmes. Stability training for children is the subject of Chapter 10. Teaching children how to move well is the underlying theme, and some very useful tips and approaches are given. Many of the movement anomalies that we encounter as adults and which limit our sporting performance and result in both minor and major injuries are acquired at an early age. Showing children how to move well is therefore vitally important.

The penultimate chapter takes a look at a number of sports and suggests which of the previously described tests are a priority. A list is then given of priority exercises for each of the four phases taken from Chapters



5 to 8. Squash is not one of the sports mentioned. However, the examples given would help the imaginative squash coach or interested player in planning a programme for their sport.

The final chapter deals with injuries affecting specific types of sportspeople: for example, a triathlete with Achilles tendon pain and a tennis player with a shoulder problem. The format is a brief case history with details of appropriate functional testing and the treatment approach, with of course particular reference to movement and stability training.

This book, just like the game of squash, is all about movement. Very few squash players naturally develop perfect patterns of movement. Most require help to identify where improvements should be made and need to be shown how to do so. The role of the coach is imperative and central in this respect. At the elite end of the sport, players who have access to an integrated team of coaches, S&C specialists and sports medicine personnel will achieve the best results. The book is comprehensive enough to satisfy the requirements of all such sports professionals. However, its brilliance is that its content, style and structure make it accessible to the general reader, to those whose sporting interest is at the opposite end of the spectrum to the professional.

In the preface, Elphinston states that 'simple things done well win the day'. This basic philosophy runs throughout this excellent book, which reads well in sequence or when used for reference.



STABILITY, SPORT AND PERFORMANCE MOVEMENT: GREAT TECHNIQUE WITHOUT INJURY

by Joanne Elphinston
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