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Speed & Power Training Simplified: Hex Bar Training & Force Production

A very talented and gifted strength coach and athletic trainer, Ryan Flaherty, has developed an extremely effective training protocol for speed and power. I want to first of all give him the credit for most of what I am going to write and tell you about in this post. If you want to learn more about him and his work with professional athletes in California I highly recommend you looking him up online.

What Ryan started to notice from his research was that force production, as measured by maximum Hex bar deadlift, correlated completely with running speed and jumping ability. An athlete with a higher hex bar deadlift weight, relative to the athlete's bodyweight, will be able to run and jump faster and higher.

Key Idea

Get stronger on the Hex bar deadlift, and you will run faster and jump higher, particularly if you minimize your hypertrophy (muscle building) and / or weight gain, because you will be able to generate more force.

For example, the formula is simple:

Maximum Hex Bar Deadlift / Bodyweight = Force Number

Example 1. Hex bar deadlift = 300 / Bodyweight = 150, Force Number = 2.0

Example 2. Hex bar deadlift = 400 / Bodyweight = 150, Force Number = 2.66

The concept is simple as well:

A higher force number equals greater force production, and thus greater speed and jumping ability.

In a race, a person who takes fewer steps by taking a longer stride generally wins. Speed is trainable and so is stride length. Greater force productions results in greater stride length . A 100 m sprinter who has consistently good form and who takes a longer stride will win by one or two feet, while a marathoner who has a consistently longer stride could win by a mile!

Technique matters in running, but what matters the most is developing more power relative to bodyweight.

A runner could have perfect running form, but if lacking power, he or she would still struggle to run faster. The Hex Bar, if done correctly, is safe and works 90% of skeletal muscle. It is much safer than bar squats, Olympic lifts, or regular deadlifts. If you don't have one in your training facility, try to get one.

So what are athletes, or individuals just looking to be in better shape, to do to implement this powerful method?

- 1) Develop a training program which improves Maximum Hex Bar deadlift strength.
- 2) Also perform bodyweight exercises to target weak areas (hips, knees, core, back).
- 3) Throw in some other jumping exercises on 1 and 2 legs to develop even more leg and hip power for running and jumping.

Here are some general tips for how to implement a Hex Bar Force Production program:

- Train on the Hex Bar once per week.
- For general population a high-performance goal would be a Force Number of 1.8-2.4 (according to Flaherty). Professional or semi-pro athletes could aim for a 3.0 or even higher.
- Use longer rest times between sets, because when training for power, it takes 3-5 minutes for energy to replenish. Try alternating some stretching or upper body exercises during the rest times.
- Look for “energy leaks” using one leg squats, one leg drop downs, side planks, and full squat range of motion, as well as other assessments. Energy leaks are muscle or joint dysfunctions which prevent proper biomechanical movement.
- Use smaller exercises for the hips, back, core, and knees to “plug the leaks” and strengthen or improve function in these areas.
- Here’s a sample program to get you started:
 - **Week 1- 4 sets of 8 reps**, increasing the weight each set and maxing out on the last set but leaving one in the tank you could have done.
 - **Week 2- 4 sets of 6 reps**, increasing the weight each set and maxing out on the last set but leaving one in the tank you could have done.
 - **Week 3- 4 sets of 4 reps**, increasing the weight each set and maxing out on the last set but leaving one in the tank you could have done.
 - **Week 4- 4 sets of 7 reps**, increasing the weight each set and maxing out on the last set but leaving one in the tank you could have done.
 - **Week 5- 4 sets of 6 reps**, increasing the weight each set and maxing out on the last set but leaving one in the tank you could have done.
 - **Week 6- 4 sets of 5 reps**, increasing the weight each set and maxing out on the last set but leaving one in the tank you could have done.
 - **Week 7- Rest**
 - **Week 8- Back to Week 1, Repeat for 3 cycles. Take 3 months off per year for long-term training.**
- If you’re worried about gaining weight, do one set less, and also try dropping the weight if possible. Negative reps, when the weight is lowering, tend to build more muscle mass.
- Add in some one leg squats, and two-leg and one-leg jumps for additional power.
- You could injure your spine severely if you use poor technique. Keep your back straight and don’t hold your breath. Make sure you use proper lifting form!

Hex Bar Training for power and speed is an awesome concept, because it is so, so simple. I’m excited to use it more with my athletes and clients. Now get to work!

Check out the pics on the next page to master the technique, and contact me for more information.



Hex Bar Deadlift Starting Position

We could write 20 pages on this position alone. There is more going on here than meets the eye. The main points are 1) Back flat is most important. 2) Eyes straight ahead or looking at a point on the floor just ahead. 3) Screw your feet into the floor to engage your glutes 4) "Tighten the chain" before you lift to save your back excessive stress. 5) Draw your navel in. 6) Breathe in before lifting without holding your breath and out as you lift. 7) Knees slightly out 8) Feet shoulder width apart, with slight variation for body type. 9) Feet straight ahead. 10) Weight and grip centered 11) Hands in the middle of the bar. 12) Focus on hip extension, on using the powerful muscles of the hips, versus the knees. 13) Squeeze or tighten your glutes as you lift 14) Shoulders neutral, not forward or back. Anything else? Of course, but it would take 20 pages!



Hex Bar Deadlift Top Position

1) Back still flat. 2) Core and navel pulled in. 3) Breathe out as you come up. 4) Don't hyperextend the spine as you straighten it. 5) As you go back down keep the back straight. 6) Recollect your technique from the start position. 7) Repeat.



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