

TWO STEPS TO SCORING

BY SAM SNOW – US YOUTH SOCCER DIRECTOR OF COACHING

SO YOU WANT TO BE A FASTER SOCCER PLAYER? THE FIRST AND BEST WAY TO ACCOMPLISH THAT IS TO BE BORN FAST. YOU SAY THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN? THE NEXT STEP IS TO GO BLAME YOUR PARENTS (GOOD LUCK!). IF YOU SURVIVED THE LAST PART, THEN READ ON AND GET READY FOR A BIT OF HARD WORK.

THE FACT IS THAT SPEED IS SOMETHING YOU ARE BORN WITH; YOU GOT IT OR YOU AIN'T EVER GONNA CATCH LANDON DONOVAN OR CINDY PARLOW. FIRST, LET'S CLARIFY WHAT IT IS WE'RE TALKING ABOUT. SPEED FOR A SOCCER PLAYER IS HOW FAST HE CAN RUN FROM POINT A TO POINT B. IN A MATCH, THIS IS IMPORTANT TO GET TO THE END OF A THROUGH PASS, TO TRACK DOWN AN OVERLAPPING OPPONENT, ETC. QUICKNESS ON THE OTHER HAND (ACTUALLY FOOT) PERTAINS TO THE SPEED WITH WHICH A PLAYER CAN EXECUTE TECHNICALLY. WHAT? YOU KNOW SKILLS AND HOW FAST HE DOES THEM. THAT'S THE TOPIC FOR ANOTHER ARTICLE.

YOU WEREN'T BORN WITH THE SPEED OF DEMARCUS BEASLEY, SO WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO TO GET TO THAT CROSS IN TIME? EVERYONE CAN IMPROVE HIS OR HER ACCELERATION. ACCELERATION BEING BASICALLY HOW FAST YOU CAN GO FROM 0-60. IN MANY RESPECTS THIS CAN BE MORE IMPORTANT FOR A SOCCER PLAYER THAN PURE SPEED. MANY PLAYERS THAT ARE FAST NEED 30 YARDS OF SPACE TO GET TO TOP SPEED. THAT'S OKAY FOR AN OVERLAP DOWN THE TOUCHLINE, MAYBE, BUT NOT IN THE PENALTY AREA OR ANYWHERE ELSE WHEN THE MARKING IS TIGHT. HOW HAS MIA HAMM GOTTEN SO MANY GOALS FOR THE U.S.A.? WITH A QUICK FIRST STEP, ACCELERATION! A PLAYER WHO CAN GET TO TOP SPEED IN 1-3 STEPS WILL GET THE BALL BEFORE HIS OPPONENT. WHAT AN ASSET FOR A CENTER FORWARD, SWEEPER, GOALKEEPER OR ANY OTHER PLAYER FOR THAT MATTER!

PHYSIOLOGICAL FACT IS THAT PURE SPEED CAN BE IMPROVED AT THE MOST 10% AND FOR THE MAJORITY OF US WE'LL BE LUCKY TO GET A 3% INCREASE. ACCELERATION, THOUGH, CAN EASILY BE IMPROVED UP TO 30%.

DID I SAY EASILY? TRUTH IS, JUST LIKE GETTING THE TIMING DOWN ON THAT SIDE VOLLEY, THIS WILL TAKE PRACTICE. REMEMBER THERE IS NO MAGIC—ONLY HARD WORK TO BECOME A TOP PLAYER.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR ACCELERATION.

- 1) 3 THEN 1 – JUMP THREE TIMES STRAIGHT UP STAYING AT THE SAME SPOT. TRY TO GET AS HIGH AS YOU CAN—GET YOUR KNEES UP. ON JUMP NUMBER FOUR JUMP FORWARD AS FAR AS POSSIBLE. DO THIS FOR 10 YARDS TO START AND INCREASE THE DISTANCE AS YOUR FITNESS IMPROVES.

- 2) FAST KNEES – FOR LEG SPEED. MOVE YOUR LEGS AS FAST AS POSSIBLE WHILE STAYING ON YOUR TOES. GO FOR A COUNT OF 20; JOG SLOWLY FOR 5-10 YARDS THEN GO AGAIN FOR ANOTHER COUNT OF 20. THIS IS ONE SET AND YOU CAN INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SETS AS YOUR FITNESS IMPROVES.
- 3) FAST FEET – IDEA IS TO SEE HOW QUICKLY YOU CAN MOVE YOUR FEET. BARELY LIFT YOUR KNEES AT ALL. THE EMPHASIS IS ON QUICKNESS. MOVE YOUR FEET AS IF YOU WERE RUNNING ON HOT PAVEMENT.
- 4) DOUBLE LEG HOPS – FROM A STANDING POSITION, HOP WITH BOTH LEGS IN A FORWARD AND UPWARD DIRECTION FOR 20-30 YARDS. AFTER EACH HOP, THE NEXT ONE MUST BE DONE IMMEDIATELY.
- 5) DEPTH JUMPING – FROM A BENCH, JUMP UPWARD AND UPON LANDING IMMEDIATELY REBOUND UPWARD FOR MAXIMUM HEIGHT. REPEAT 10-20 TIMES.
- 6) SINGLE LEG HOPS – HOP CONTINUOUSLY ON ONE LEG FOR 20-30 YARDS. DRIVE YOURSELF FORWARD AND UPWARD ON EACH TAKEOFF AND ATTACK THE GROUND WITH THE LEG YOU'RE HOPPING ON WHEN LANDING TO PROPEL YOURSELF. REPEAT WITH THE OPPOSITE LEG.
- 7) STAIR HOPPING – CONTINUOUS HOPPING UP AND DOWN STAIRS. SINGLE, DOUBLE AND ALTERNATE LEG FASHION.
- 8) ROPE SKIPPING – USE DOUBLE, SINGLE AND ALTERNATE LEG ACTION. THE EMPHASIS IS ON CONTINUOUS REBOUNDING OFF OF THE GROUND.
- 9) DOUBLE LEG JUMPS – FROM A STANDING POSITION, JUMP UPWARD WITH BOTH LEGS IN A CONTINUOUS MOTION FOR 30 SECONDS, TRYING TO GET YOUR MAXIMUM HEIGHT.
- 10) BOX DRILL – HOP ONTO AND OVER BOXES OF VARIOUS HEIGHTS, 30 SECONDS TO 1 MINUTE OF WORK. ALTERNATE BETWEEN SINGLE AND DOUBLE LEG HOPS.



BE SURE TO DO A GOOD COOL-DOWN AT THE END OF YOUR WORKOUT!

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