

# *Unlocking Your Potential with the Keys to Speed*

## **Part One**

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Ask most athletes today what physical ability they would most like to improve, and the answer you will get time after time will be “*speed*”. The question though, is how do you improve your speed? There are many different opinions as to what the best programs or drills may be, but here are some key points to consider before starting any SAQ program:

**Be Specific** – What *type* of speed do you need? The type of speed utilized by a linebacker is very different than that of a 400 meter sprinter or a point guard, so the program that you do must reflect the demands of your sport.

**Do “Off-Road” Training** – If you need to make a race car faster, you don’t do it by continually racing it down the track. What you actually need to do is take that car into the garage and do some work on it *while it is not moving*. Sometimes combinations of various alternative conditioning approaches such as stretching, strength training, balance and stability work can improve your speed as well, if not better than actually running.

**Think Movements, Not Muscles** – Yes, your hamstrings, quads, calves and glutes are all important muscles in running mechanics; however, having isolated strength in any one or all of these parts does not by itself equal running power. Our muscles are nothing but slaves to our nervous system, and it is the coordination of nerve impulses, or neuromuscular control, that dictates how we actually exhibit our strength in athletics.

**Find Your Weak Links** – Two athletes run a race and come in an absolute tie. Their speed is the same as each other and they both want to get faster. They both are the same height, weight, age and have the same training experience. However, Athlete A has poor running mechanics and Athlete B has lack of hip mobility. If all you did was to teach them both better running technique, Athlete A may get better, while Athlete B may not improve at all.

Realize also that speed can not only be analyzed in a purely mechanical fashion. Other contributing factors to take into account are things such as nutrition, hydration, body composition, rate of learning and adaptation, recoverability, mental focus and muscle fiber-type makeup; just to name a few.

With so many aspects to consider, it is no wonder that so many athletes struggle to find the right program to improve their speed. The most prudent formula is to learn what is best for your body and work smarter, not harder.

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