



The Pentathlon

The pentathlon is an athletics event that involves five individual sporting events. These are listed below in the order of competition. If a coach has an athlete who performs the long jump, shot put and high jump well, he or she might want to discuss with the athlete the possibility of competing in the pentathlon as a single athletics event. As in other athletics events, the athlete must possess speed, strength, endurance and flexibility to be successful; however, the multiple events of the pentathlon require strong dedication, motivation and concentration as well.

1. 100m
2. Long jump
3. Shot put
4. High jump
5. 400m

Athletes' times and distances are converted into points. Special Olympics athletics has devised tables of scores ranging from 1 to 1200 points per event. In pentathlon, the athlete who scores the greatest number of points in all five events wins. Place standings in each of the five events have no bearing on the final outcome.

According to the official rules, athletes competing in the long jump and shot put get three attempts to register a legal record. This directly impacts the coach's and athlete's strategy for approaching these events. If the athlete fouls on all three attempts, he/she does not score any points for that event. Athletes compete to get a safe and legal mark on the first attempt, and then use the next two attempts to achieve a better mark.

Training Components of the Pentathlon

Training should emphasize major components of a pentathlete's conditioning, such as speed, strength and endurance. Developing skills for the weaker events should also be emphasized, but to a lesser extent. Once the athlete is well conditioned, and the events are balanced as far as scoring is concerned, the focus shifts to the jumping events and the 100m. These events provide the greater share of points. The training components for the pentathlon follow.

- Speed Training** is the most important aspect, because speed is directly related to the 100m, 400m and long jump.
- Technique Training** is kept simple. Identify similarities in events. With a few hours of training, you can obtain more points in those events that require technique.
- Strength Training** focuses on the general overall condition of the athlete.
- Specific Strength Training** deals with plyometrics, or exercises focused on the eccentric/concentric contraction cycle of a muscle, such as hops and bounds.
- Rest and Recovery** is very important due to the demands on the body during training and competition. You want to avoid injuries and burnout.