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Developmental Horizontal Bar for High School Boys

I. Essential H-Bar Equipment

- 3-4 foot low bar with/without straps
- High bar (competition height)
- High bar (competition height) with straps
- Theraband (lots)
- Theraball (1-2)
- 4ft of 3/4" PVC pipe (2-3)
- 2-5lbs weights (not dumbbells) plates
- 2-10lbs weights (not dumbbells) plates
- 1-35lbs weights (not dumbbells) plates
- (- Total gym)

II. Philosophy

Gymnasts need repetition of a single skill while minimizing the negative physical impact on their bodies. On h-bar that especially means rips/hand wounds. It is not that you avoid them but there are ways to maximize learning while decreasing negative physical impact. I believe the best way is to create a training circuit. A training circuit should be made up of 5-8 stations where the gymnasts of different skill levels train specific event (h-bar) with a high number of repetition. These stations are flexible as to what a gymnast needs to improve a specific "skill set"; however, they are not interchangeable. Each station should have a specific purpose and specific goals and specific limitations.

I work with the assumption that there are 8-12 gymnasts on the event and each gymnast is at a different skill level and at various stages of development in the various "skill sets". My job as a coach is to create a progressive and positive training environment which interests the gymnast, motivates the gymnast to actively participate and where each individual gymnast progresses in their development in specific event skill sets. To be able to accomplish this goal as a coach I must prepare effective exercises (drills that have purpose and meaning for the gymnast) for the gymnast to train; I must learn to critique and clearly communicate good technique and how to fix bad technique in specific and understandable ways so that my gymnast can be encouraged by small successes. (My job as a coach is to teach new skills, develop routines, and fine tune skill sets. Finally, and most importantly I am to foster in my gymnasts integrity, a high work ethic, a sense of leadership and a sense of team camaraderie.)

On an event gymnasts should be continually engaged in training exercises. There is little rest time unless a dynamic, connective or long set of skills are being performed.

III. Developmental High Bar Skill Sets

- I. Cast to cast handstands – o/g to u/g
- II. Back hip circle to free hip handstand
- III. Tap swing to giants
- IV. Half higgins to full higgins
- V. Piroette to full spin eagle
- VI. Hops...(I will not deal with these as I see them as an alternative when a gymnast cannot accomplish Skill Sets IV & V)
- VII. High Level In-bar Skills (I will not deal with these here both the reasons stated in VI and VIII.)
- VIII. High Level Release Skills (I will not deal with these here as most high school gymnast aren't at this skill level nor have the time to effectively work these skills)

IV. Cast to cast handstand – o/g & u/g

On low bar - cast to handstand – spot and no spot

Problems:

Falls back from the bar:
“shoulders forward of the bar”

Archy body position:
“ hollow body”

Not enough height:
“powerful push through the back and shoulders”
“slide your head in - ears between your shoulders”
“ look through your eyebrows at the bar”

Drills

- candlesticks
- Theraband and PVC cast
- Theraband casts
- Theraband pulldowns
- Straight-straight with weights
- Bungee bounce with floor bar

V. Tap swing to o/g giants

Step 1: Talk and review body positions through good tap swing often
- teach and reteach

Step 2: Tap Swing

Problems

Body Position:

- “pike arch to hollow” change to - “hollow stretch hollow”
- “keep shoulder stretched through hollow”
- “keep hips stretched through hollow”
- “keep body long”
- “stretch deep down and subtle scoop”
- “pressure on the bar during back swing”

Drills: - Floor bar and theraball extensions (keep pressure down on bar)

- Low bar handstands
- Low bar handstands to hollow fall
- Stretch to hollow on high bar

Step 3: Hand stand Position on floor bar

- tight kick to handstand
- Emphasize perfect form

Problem:

Shoulders pull in:

“stay stretched by pushing down on the bar”

Hips pull in:

“stay stretched by extending your hip away from your ribcage”

Arched body position:

“squeeze body in a tight hollow”

Step 4: Over grip giant

Pre-requisite: cast to handstand

good/efficient tap swing

“pike arch to hollow” change to - “hollow stretch hollow”

- Lots of strap bar (1-2 perfect giants)

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VI. Back Hip Circle to Free Hip Handstand

Step 1: Back Hip Circle

-teach back hip circle on low bar

Emphasize perfect form

“tight hollow body”

“straight arms”

“rotating tension on the bar the entire time”

Drills-

Hollow rocks

Candle sticks

Form drills (partners)

Toe point flexibility

Step 2: Free Hip to Handstand in strap bar

Problems:

Slow Flat Free Hip:

“hips are a hand span away from the bar”

“get your shoulders where your hips are and your hips where your shoulders are faster”

“As soon as you hollow rock open the arms powerfully”

Archy body position or whippy flat free hip:

“tighter hollow rock position”

“increase your body tension throughout your body”

Powerful flat free hip:

“invert your body faster”

Drills-

Back extension rolls to handstand on FX
Thera-band + PVC casts
Back extension rocks (w-spot)

Step 4: Free hip handstand on Low bar w/ or w/out spot (no straps)

Step 5: Free hip handstand on high bar

VII. Half Higgans to Full Higgans

Prerequisite:

Must have good handstand on floor bar
Must have mediocre giants on H-bar

Step One: ½ higgans on floor bar

On floor bar standing on a firm 8" mat have gymnast kick to a good handstand and ½ turn into mixed grip position.

Problems:

Looks over his shoulder/head out-late traveling hand/tucks head into chest/doesn't know where he is"
"keep your head neutral. Look through your eyebrows @ your traveling hand...watch it come to the bar."

Gymnast is off center or falling too fast:

"Push through your posting arm the whole time"
"stay on top of your posting arm longer"
"keep pressure on the bar throughout the skill/turn"

Loose body/heels hit first:

"keep a tight hollow position even after you turn"
"both hands up-don't drop your traveling hand"

Step Two: Stationary ½ higgans on high bar/girls bar

Gymnasts gets a very small tap swing less than 15 degrees turn to ½ higgans on the back of the front swing.

Step Three: ½ higgans on H-Bar

Take it to the H-Bar from giants—give voice cue as to when to go/turn...use mat to spot.

Step 4: Full Higgans

Repeat all of the drills above except have gymnast roll to the full higgans position.

Problems:

Gymnast can't get to the full higgans position:
"go to ½ higgans then roll"

Gymnast's hand is late and coming away from the bar:
"pressure on the back of the bar w- the traveling hand"

Gymnast can't seem to get the hand into the eagle grip:
"bend the wrist to catch or 'click' in your dowel"

Drills:

PVC pipe eagle grip stretch:

Grab pipe in eagle grip over head and work hands inward

Grab pipe in eagle grip over head move arms in and out of dislocate position

PVC Pipe with Theraband:

Overhead hook up. Grab in eagle grip facing away from the point of tension and work on hollow body lean and slight smooth pull---increase in hollow through the pull.

Under Grip Giant to Full Spin Eagle

Step 1: Prerequisite:

u/g cast to handstand

good u/g floor bar handstand to hollow fall

Problem:

Gymnast has head out:

"slide your head in"

"look through your eyebrows @ the bar"

Loose or arched fall:

"maintain stretch and tension on the bar"

Drills:

u/g Theraband Casts

u/g Theraband w- PVC casts

Step 2: Pirouette On Floor Bar:

Kick up into u/g position begin turn before handstand

Problems: (similar problems to handstand and higgans)

"push down posting arm"

"keep shoulder extended"

"Keep hip extended away from the rib cage"

"keep your belly button to your back"

Drills:

Elbow hollow rocks

Full body Thera-band stretch

Step 3: Pirouette on H-Bar

Step 4: Full Pirouette on Floor bar:

Kick up into u/g position begin turn before or in handstand maintain stretch position through shoulder and between hip and ribcage. Watch the traveling hand though your eyebrows throughout the spin position.

Gymnast should catch well before a hollow body landing on an 8" mat.
It should be done and completed within the 7/8 of handstand!

Problems: (much the same at the piro and higgans)

Gymnasts has no clue what to do with his body:

“pirouette/ ½ turn then continue your motion to your back”

Gymnast collapses:

“keep pressure on the bar with straight arms”

“get tall throughout the skill”

Step 5: Full Pirouette/Full Spin on H-Bar

Step 6: Full Piro to Eagle/ Full Spin to Eagle grip

Lots on the low bar-stay on top of the bar.

Gymnast should catch well before a hollow body landing on an 8" mat.

It should be done and completed within the 7/8 of handstand!