

CLONTARF GAA CLUB

**ATHLETIC
DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME**



Clontarf GAA

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Foreword

Clontarf GAA club is a rapidly growing sporting club with over 1,650 members. We seek to provide modern top class facilities and coaching for all our members and strive to provide the opportunity for everyone to achieve their potential and participate to the fullest extent possible. To help us achieve this goal our club Games Promotion Officer, Stephen Behan, has produced the clubs Athletic Development Programme.

The document seeks to provide a resource that will assist and enable our mentors in the long term development of our players, in an age appropriate manner and allow all our players reach their potential. Developing our player's skills of Gaelic games in tandem with their Athletic Development will be assisted through the implementation of this programme.

As Chairman of Clontarf GAA club I would like to sincerely congratulate and thank Stephen for the time, effort, energy and commitment he has shown in producing this document.

Also I would like to thank Margaret, Jack, Matias and Conor for their participation in the demonstrations, and to Darren Ryan for his expertise, in putting this document together.



Michael Cronin

Chairman Clontarf GAA

Introduction



What does it take to enable a child to achieve his / her full potential as a footballer, hurler or camogie player? And what are the main factors that determine adherence to these (or indeed any) sports as the child becomes an adolescent and then an adult?

To start with the second question, it is well understood that the main determinant of adherence to any sport is enjoyment. In turn, the main determinant of enjoyment is competence (or, in early years, perceived competence), at that sport. So all children are told that they are great in the nursery, even if they're not, and this is important. And in the early coaching years it is vital that the core aim of the process is to enhance enjoyment by facilitating skill development through well organised, well informed and child-centred coaching.

With regard to the first question, we understand that children develop physically, psychologically and emotionally at widely varying rates. For any child, the factors that affect the rate of development in any of these domains include genetics, social and peer support, self, confidence, feedback, nutrition, practice opportunity and coaching structure and environment,

Athletic Development is a process that includes physical, game awareness, psychological, emotional and social elements. The physical elements include strength and conditioning, fundamental motor skill acquisition (running, jumping, getting up from falling, throwing, agility, balance) and advanced (sport specific) skill acquisition (soloing, bouncing, handpassing, kicking, blocking, high fielding for football and lifting, striking, catching, shortening the hurley, hooking and blocking, pulling and cutting for hurling). Mastery of fundamental motor skills is an essential and necessary foundation for the later acquisition of sport specific GAA skills. A base of 'core strength' greatly enhances the efficiency of the human machine during exercise. The arms and legs are much more efficient moving at speed around a stable and strong core, rather than a weak and unstable 'core section'. Greater efficiency of the machine means that it not only performs better (moves faster, turns more quickly, jumps higher) but also is likely to break down (through injury)

This manual will focus on providing a framework and pathway for the development of core strength and the acquisition of fundamental motor skills as children progress through CCC1 (ager 8-11 years) and into CCC2 (age 12-16 years) sections of the underage GAA section. Age appropriate drills and games have been designed which incorporate essential content into a friendly and fun structure.

This resource has been researched, written and produced by our Games Promotion Officer, Stephen Behan, and our strength and conditioning consultant , Shane Dalton. The club owes a huge debt of gratitude to Stephen and Shane for producing a magnificent resource which will be invaluable to all our juvenile coaches.



Dr Noel McCaffrey

DCU School of Health and Human Performance

CCCI Athletic Development

In this section the athletic development pathway for the Under 9 to Under 12 age groups will be outlined. The objective with this age group is to build on the physical literacy skills that they have already developed, be it through the nursery, other sports, through school, or just general play.

Physical literacy is the ability to use a range of fundamental movement skills in a competent manner, with the capacity to apply them with confidence in a range of settings that can lead to sustained involvement in sport and physical activity. Basically, without these fundamental movement skills, the children cannot reach their full potential in sport.

This age bracket is a very important window in a child's physical development so while it is important that we focus on the sport specific skills, it is also vital that do not neglect their athletic development.

The goal is that by the end of this programme, the children are proficient in all aspects of agility, balance and co-ordination, as well as having a good core strength. It must again be emphasised that this is not a strength and conditioning programme and the children will not be partaking in any exercises that involve weights.

Agility

Agility is the ability to change direction, quickly and efficiently. It is a vital tool for any young athlete playing sport. Think of hurling or football, how many times does a player have to change direction in a game. A forward sidesteps to avoid a tackle, a defender tries to keep beside his/her opponent, reacting to a breaking ball, all of these examples are fundamental skills of the game, therefore we must train to be agile the same way we train to be able to take scores.



Balance

Balance is the ability to stay upright and stay in control of body movement. Again it is an important asset for a player to have. Examples are everywhere in our games. When we run, we are on one foot most of the time, when we kick we are on one leg, when we jump and land, we do so with one leg most of the time. Most major injuries in sport happen when someone lands badly so by working on this from a young age, we are greatly decreasing their chances of injury.



Co-Ordination

Coordination is the ability to repeatedly execute a sequence of movements smoothly and accurately. Everything that we participate in requires the ability to coordinate our limbs to achieve a successful outcome - from walking to the more complex movements of athletic events like striking a sliothar while running at full speed.

All sports require the coordination of eyes, hands and feet. Hurling requires the coordination of hand, eyes, feet and hurley to connect the hurley with the sliothar as well as position our body in an appropriate position to strike the sliothar in an efficient and effective manner.



Core Strength

All of our movements are powered by the torso; the abs and back work together to support the spine; when we sit, stand, bend over, pick things up, exercise and more. The torso is the body's center of power, so the stronger you are in that area, the better an athlete you will be. When we talk about core strength, we are referring to the muscles deep within the abs and back, attaching to the spine or pelvis. These muscles are where movement originates and it's also a main source of stability. Whether running, turning, executing a skill, jumping, etc, these core muscles help keep the body stable and balanced.

Technique is everything when doing core work and a mentor should be strict in enforcing this in order for the player to get the maximum benefit.



Implementation

Implementation will be left to each group of mentors to decide which is better for their particular team. We do not wish to dictate exactly how things should be done as I am aware each group is unique and will have their own way of doing things. What we are aiming to do is arm you with the necessary tools so that you can get the most out of your young players.



'Fail to prepare, prepare to fail'

Good preparation will be vital to ensuring that your training session goes well. Planning out your sessions well in advance will enable you to easily integrate athletic development into your training programme.

I realise that during the winter training period the time constraints on the clubhouse astro can leave your training sessions quite short and that it is easy to leave the athletic development out. I would urge you not to do this as it is just as important as the sports specific skills and in the long run it will stand to your players. I would suggest that you use the time spent training on the grass pitches to experiment with your athletic development implementation so that when the winter comes you can easily integrate it into your sessions. It would be quite easy to put an agility aspect into a skills drill, or a core exercise for 5/10 seconds before a game, etc. Again the club will provide workshops, resources and ongoing support to assist you in this manner.

A good way to implement these programmes would be to do the majority of the work during the warm up. Remember in a typical hours session, we are talking about doing approximately twelve minutes of athletic development, and a lot of that can be done with the ball. If we use 8-10 minutes for the warm up, then we have achieved 75% of our goal straight away. I have provided some sample templates of warm ups for different age groups.

You may notice at this stage that I have not mentioned flexibility or stretching for the children. In this age bracket children should be naturally flexible and the agility, balance and co ordination work focuses a lot on their mobility which will in turn help them to be flexible.



Under 9/10 Sample Warm Up

Station 1 - Agility

Flush the Toilet

Set in a confined area of cones, players must avoid the catchers. If caught they must stand still and hold arm out to side. They are frozen like this until another player 'flushes' their arm and they can run again. Two/three children can be on at a time, and different players can be picked to be a catcher each game.

Three 45 second games with 15 second breaks

Station 2 - Balance

Hop Wars

Each player pairs off with another and they must hop on their left foot. Players shoulder each other until one puts his/her right foot on the ground. Swap feet over.

Four 30 second games, two games on each leg.

Knee Tucks

Player jumps as high as possible while tucking knees up to chest.

Three sets of five jumps

Station 3 - Co-Ordination

Hand Passing Square Dynamic Warm Up

Players hand pass the ball to each other inside a square. Coach calls out dynamic exercise instructions and players stop hand passing and do the exercise, upon completion, the players go back to handpassing. Sample below;

- Handpassing
- High Knees
- Handpassing
- Heels Up
- Handpassing
- Skipping with High Knees
- Handpassing
- Side to Side runs
- Handpassing

Ten/Fifteen seconds for each exercise. Note that any skill can be substituted instead of the handpass if required, and even mixing in different skills can work also. Three minutes in total.

(Any skill/skills can be used in lieu of handpassing)

Station 4 - Core Strength

Bridges and Rivers

Make teams of 3/4 players. All bar one of the team must get into a press up position beside each other in a line on the ground. They are the bridges. The last player, the river, must crawl under his/her team mates and take up a position as a bridge at the end of their line, then the next player does the same. The first team to make it to the finish line are the winners.

Play two games which should last a minute each.

Get Ups

Players pair off. One player sits on the ground while holding a football. The player attempt to stand up without using their arms to help themselves up. Their partner stands beside them and counts how many times they can stand up in 20 seconds. Swap positions.

Two games of 20 seconds each.

The above is based on a group of approximately 50 children, broken up into four groups of 12/15. If a group has less, they can adjust the number of stations but they must try to make sure that all aspects are covered. There are a number of different games/drills listed further on in this resource.



Under 11/12 - Sample Warm Up

Station 1 - Agility

Bull Dog

Players line up at one end of grid with a ball each. Two players without ball stand in middle of grid. Players with ball must make it from one end to the other without being dispossed. Full rules apply with regards to soloing/etc. As player is caught, he puts down ball and joins the catchers until there is no one left with a ball.

Two games of 90 secs each.

Station 2 - Balance

Hop Wars

Each player pairs off with another and they must hop on their left foot. Players shoulder each other until one puts his/her right foot on the ground. Swap feet over.

Four 30 second games, two games on each leg.

Squat Jumps

Player explodes from squat position jumping as high as possible. Three sets of five jumps

Station 3 - Co Ordination

Hand Passing Square Dynamic Warm Up

Players hand pass the ball to each other inside a square. Coach calls out dynamic exercise instructions and players stop hand passing and do the exercise, upon completion, the players go back to handpassing. Sample below;

- Handpassing
- High Knees
- Handpassing
- Heels Up
- Handpassing
- Split Squats
- Handpassing
- Side to Side rUvns
- Handpassing

Ten/Fifteen seconds for each exercise.

Any skill or a selection of skills can be substituted for the hand pass here.

Station 4 - Core Strength

Bridges and Rivers

Make teams of 3/4 players. All bar one of the team must get into a press up position beside each other in a line on the ground. They are the bridges. The last player, the river, must crawl under his/her team mates and take up a position as a bridge at the end of their line, then the next player does the same. The first team to make it to the finish line are the winners.

Play two games which should last a minute each.

Get Ups

Players pair off. One player sits on the ground while holding a football. The player attempt to stand up without using their arms to help themselves up. Their partner stands beside them and counts how many times they can stand up in 20 seconds. Swap positions.

Two games of 20 seconds each.

The above is based on a group of approximately 50 children, broken up into four groups of 12/15. If a group has less, they can adjust the number of stations but they must try to make sure that all aspects are covered. There are a number of different games/drills listed further on in this resource.

CCCI Athletic Development Games



Agility Games

Flush the Toilet/Stuck in the Mud

Kids are in a restricted space and must avoid being caught by the catchers. If someone is caught they must freeze in place. While frozen they must perform an action, e.g.; hold arm out, keep legs wide, etc. They must stay frozen until they are freed by another, usually by doing another action, e.g.; push arm down, crawl under legs. The children will improve their agility skills as they are changing direction all the time.

Progressions include;

- ➔ Tightening the space involved
- ➔ Increasing the number of catchers
- ➔ Changing the action to a core hold with a crawl underneath to release
- ➔ Adding a football/hurling skill while trying to avoid being caught

Any chasing game in a confined space will achieve the same results.

Bulldog

One line of players line up along one side of the grid. They must make it to the opposite side of the grid without being caught by the catchers in the middle. If they are caught they also become a catcher and this progresses until everyone is caught. All can run at the same time which makes it difficult for the catchers. This works on agility, evasion, the sidestep and tackling.

Progressions include;

- ➔ Having more than one person as a catcher
- ➔ Making the players carry the ball through, catchers must tackle ball
- ➔ Change rules of catching – touch, grab, take down – increase physicality

Cops and Robbers

All players move around a grid dribbling the sliothar on the ground. These are the cops. The robbers must try and get the ball off the cops, without fouling. If successful they switch roles and the new robbers must try and rob a different ball. We are developing agility through change of direction while also working on tackling and dribbling.

Progressions include;

- ➔ Reduce size of grid
- ➔ Add more robbers
- ➔ Can be used with bean bags to introduce soloing, or can easily be adapted to football



Catch the Train

Three players form a chain by placing their hands on the hips of the person in front of them. All the others chase to try to join the end of the train. Develops agility and teamwork.

Progressions include;

- ➔ Add another train, have more than one.
- ➔ Restrict space
- ➔ Add obstacle - Coach with tackle bag, hurdles, ladders, etc.

Frenzy

Coach stands in centre of grid holding a ball. Players move around the grid performing actions as directed by coach, e.g. high knees, tuck jumps, single leg hops, etc. When coach shouts 'Frenzy', all the kids must try to make it to the grid's boundary without being hit with the coaches ball. Coach can call whenever he/she wants so players could be close or afar. Great for working on reactions, dynamic stretching, agility and evasion.

Progressions include;

- ➔ Changing the code word - Frenzy to bananas
- ➔ Add more coaches
- ➔ Make area bigger

Chaos

Inside a grid, everybody is 'on'. Players must try and tag as many people as possible without being tagged themselves. Each game will last for 30-45 seconds. This is fantastic for encouraging peripheral vision, agility and awareness of their surroundings.

Progressions include;

- ➔ Make area smaller
- ➔ Introduce coach with a tackle bag to add an extra obstacle
- ➔ Use tags/bibs that must be robbed from other players

Diamond

Players run around inside square. They perform actions as directed by coach, e.g. high knees, squat jumps, hopping or ball skills. On coaches shout of 'diamond', players must stop what they are doing and touch each side of square as quickly as possible. Great for skill based training, dynamic stretching, speed and agility.

Progressions include;

- ➔ Last player to complete is out
- ➔ Make area bigger
- ➔ Make teams, first team to complete is rewarded



Elimination

Set out a grid with random cones scattered around it. Players must run round the grid and on call must get to the nearest cone to them on whistle. Last man to get to a cone is out. Great for working on agility, speed and reactions.

Progressions include;

- ➔ Take cones away each round
- ➔ Add different exercises as players pass different colored cones
- ➔ Reduce space

Shadows

Players work in pairs for 30 seconds. The lead player runs for 30 seconds with multiple changes of direction while the partner attempts to follow him/her. 30 seconds break after each game and then swap over. Fantastic game for working on agility, reactions and shadowing.

Progressions include;

- ➔ Lead player to carry a ball
- ➔ Tag/Bib to be grabbed by player

Snatch the Bacon

Two teams are either side of the grid and each player has an individual number. Coach calls number and player must race his corresponding number over and back across grid. First back to his/her side is the winner. Great for reactions and agility.

Progressions include;

- ➔ Have a ball in the middle they must grab first
- ➔ Have a ball at each end they must bring back
- ➔ Introduce a skill to be done also

Angle Run with Skill

Perform any normal skill drill with an angled run placed into it. For example, run out to a cone and sharply change direction before running on to perform a catch. Works on the skill as well as agility.

T Drill

Cones set out in a T shape. 10m straight run, then 5m to the left, 10m to the right, 5m to the left, then 10m backwards. Great for agility and speed work. To be done as fast as possible with maximum effort. Ideally done at the start of a session. Three/four runs each is more than enough.



Balance Games

Squat

Standing straight with feet shoulder width apart. Put hands out in front for balance and sit down into squat. Keep chest and head up, knees don't come past the toes and keep heels on ground.

Squat Jumps Vertical

Same as squat on the way down except we explode into a jump on the way up, jumping as high as we can straight up. Land with soft knees (knees bent) and repeat.

Squat Jumps Distance

Same as squat on the way down except we explode up into a jump, this time trying to jump as far as possible out in front. Land with soft knees in a half squat position.

Multi Directional Jumping

Same as squat jump for distance except jumping in all directions; forward, back, left right.

Hop Wars

With a partner we stand on our left leg. Partners try and bump each other to make other put right foot down. Switch feet.

1 Legged Hopping

Jumping and landing on the same leg in a straight line. Land with a soft knee. Switch legs.

1 Legged Hopping - Multi Directional

Same as above except jumping in all directions; forward, back, left and right. Land with a soft knee.

Circle Balance

Place your right foot into your partner's hand and vice versa. Keep legs straight and hold with both hands. On the coaches call, circle around each other keeping balance. Reverse directions.

Duck Fighting

Face a partner in crouch with both hands up in front of you. On the call, try and unbalance your partner by pushing against his/her palms. Point scored when a player loses balance or touches a hand to the ground. Great for improving hip flexibility and improving squat technique. Coach to keep backs straight and to make contact with hands only.

Split Squat

Take a big step out in front. Keep both feet facing forward and chest/head up. With back foot, bring knee down to barely touch the ground directly behind the front heel. Front heel must stay on the ground. Return to starting position. Swap legs



Co Ordination Games

Partner Resisted Sprints

Pairs stand one behind the other. The player behind grabs the front player and tries to prevent them moving forward. Let go after 5 meters. Switch roles

Knee Tag

Partners move around on toes trying to tag the back of their partners knees with their hands.

Running Technique - Hands and Arms

Work on running using arms correctly. Left knee up, right palm to right cheek and vice versa. Start slow and increase speed.

3 Point Start

To help running technique. Player starts on line in sprint start position, with left foot forward. Lift left arm back as far as possible. This leaves three points touching the ground, both feet and right arm. On whistle player sprints short distance. Encourage the player to drive off front foot. Be sure to switch sides as most will have a preference for one side over the other.

Split Squat

Take a big step out in front. Keep both feet facing forward and chest/head up. With back foot, bring knee down to barely touch the ground directly behind the front heel. Front heel must stay on the ground. Return to starting position. Swap legs

Ship, Sea, Shore

Players must react to coaches call and run to designated area on call. Key to the game is how the coach calls out the ship, sea, shore. Mix the place names up to test their reactions even more.

Ball React - ball/tennis ball/multiple balls/reaction balls

Players must react to a ball being dropped and catch it as quickly as possible. The use of different sized balls, increasing the amount of balls, single hand only, can increase/decrease the difficulty.

Commando

Mark out a 20m square. Each player in square has a ball and four coaches are inside the square with tackle bags. On the coaches call, players must shoulder tackle bags with left/right shoulder. Coaches should try and dispossess the players with the balls.

Throwing and Catching

Throwing and catching games are fantastic for improving co-ordination. Partners throwing a tennis ball/sliothar/bean bag with one hand, weak hand, 2 balls, different size balls all work well. If you have a ball each, working off the wall works equally well.



Assisted Jumping

Player A stands behind his/her partner. Player A is the helper and player B is the jumper. Player B stands with knees slightly bent and player A holds his/her partners sides just above the waist. The partner then jumps and player A coordinates his lift with the jump. Can be done with single leg jumps also.

Core Games

Bull Fight

Partners face each other. One grabs the others forearms in front of his face. He/she must now try and drive their partner back, not sideways. Go for 45 secs and swap sides.

Plank - variations - see skill card for details

Bridges and Rivers

Two teams hold planks positions side by side to each other. They are the bridges. The first person in the team crawls underneath the others and resumes a bridge position at the end of group and so on until the whole team move the designated distance.

Wheelbarrows

Old fashioned wheelbarrow race. Fantastic for improving core strength and upper body mobility.

Back to Back Push

Stand back to back with your partner with your arms locked. Attempt to push your partner backwards by driving with your feet. Whoever can push their partner over a set line first is the winner.

Back to Back Wrestle

Partners sit on ground back to back with arms locked. They must try and wrestle the other onto their shoulder to score a point.

Stamp

Player lies prone on ground and partner must try and roll him/her over. Player on ground must lie as a dead weight

Parcel

One player tucks into a tight parcel on the ground. The other player tries to unwrap the parcel by pulling at their arms and legs, without any rough handling.

Wrist Fighting

Pairs hold each others wrists with one hand holding their partners' wrist and the other being held. The aim is to touch your partners ear with your free hand. Swap hands.

Get Ups - with/without ball

One child lies down flat on ground, partner stands beside them. Child on ground, must stand up and high five partner but they cannot use their hands to help themselves up. Great for working on core strength, and stability. We can do it without the ball and have the player attempt to get up while holding a ball.

CCC2 Athletic Development



In this section we outline the athletic development programme for the CCC2 age group. This is another key age bracket in terms of speed and athletic development and it is important that we do not neglect this as we want our players to reach their maximum potential.



As the athlete progresses through the programme they will improve; core strength and stability, speed and power, and the fundamental movement skills that they will need to play our sport at the highest possible level. One of the biggest benefits to athletic development is injury prevention and this is something that with the club are very keen to put in place. It is envisioned that upon completion of the pathway, the young athletes would be proficient in all the techniques needed to progress into a structured strength and conditioning programme, if they so wished.

Ideally mentors would incorporate the athletic development training program into your team's existing weekly GAA training program, incorporating all the different aspects into a structured training plan. Again the club will provide workshops, alongside further resources, to help educate the coaches in the relevant techniques.

The programme is divided into several parts which are outlined within; Functional Movement, Speed and Power, Core Strength, Jumping and Landing, and Flexibility. Each section has a progression of exercises that will be of benefit to the young athletes. Once a player can perform numerous repetitions of a specific exercise with perfect technique, it is time to move on to the next progression in that section. The plan would be for the current crop of U13s to have completed all stages by the time they reach minor.

The periodisation section is the means by which we can implement the athletic development into our coaching programme. It will help us plan out our year and it should help plan out your weekly training sessions as part of an overall training plan.



Functional Movement Series

The functional movement series are the exercises required to improve the fundamental movement skills in our athletes. They will also help improve power, strength, stability and speed, as well as having a huge impact on injury prevention. The table below starts off at the very basic level and has seven progressions for each series.

Look at the squat series as an example, it starts off with a chair squat at level one and a body weight squat with arms in front at level two. The idea being that once the player has mastered the chair squat, he/she would move onto the bodyweight squat with arms in front, and so on until he/she reached level 7, the squat with bar.

It is envisioned that as our young players move into minor that they would be at level seven in all on the table below. This will allow them to move into strength training if they so wish as they would be proficient in all the required techniques.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Squat Series	Chair Squat	Body Weight Squat with Arms in Front	Body Weight Squat with Arms across Chest	Med Ball Squat	Squat with Broom	Overhead Squat with Broom	Squat with Bar
Lunge Series	Split Squat	Forward Lunge	Backward Lunge	Walking Lunge	Walking Lunge with Rotation	Forward Lunge and Rotation with Med Ball	Medicine Ball Walking Overhead Lunge
Hip Dominant	45° Wall Run	Walking March and Hold (3 secs)	Double Leg Glute Raise	Single Leg Glute Raise	Single Leg Deadlift with Reach	Single Leg Deadlift with Broom	Single Leg Dead lift with Dumb Bells
Horizontal Push	45° Wall Press	Press Up on Knees	Press Up	Press up with Feet Raised	Partner Resisted Press Ups	Chest Press with Med Ball	Bench Press
Horizontal/ Vertical Pull	Standing 45° Row (Isometric Hold)	Inverted Row (Knees Bent)	Inverted Row Knees Straight	Partner Body Weight Inverted Row	Assisted Pull Up	Pull Up	Wide Arm Pull Up

Athletes should be able to perform 8 - 10 repetitions proficiently before moving on to the next progression. All these exercises are outlined in the skill cards and dvd included in this resource.



Core Work

All of our movements are powered by the torso; the abs and back work together to support the spine; when we sit, stand, bend over, pick things up, exercise and more. The torso is the body's center of power, so the stronger you are in that area, the better an athlete you will be. When we talk about core strength, we are referring to the muscles deep within the abs and back, attaching to the spine or pelvis. These muscles are where movement originates and it's also a main source of stability. Whether running, turning, executing a skill, jumping, etc, these core muscles help keep the body stable and balanced.

In the table below, there are four series of core exercises ranging from level one to level five. Again as a player masters one level, they move onto the next level. One difference is that the difficulty of all of these exercises can be advanced by **increasing the time** involved.

Coaches should start off with exercises that last 10 seconds and progress up to 30 seconds before moving to the next progression.

Technique is everything when doing core work and a mentor should be strict in enforcing this in order for the player to get the maximum benefit.

	1	2	3	4	5
Straight Plank	Straight Plank	Plank 3 Points Of Contact	Plank 2 Points of Contact	Plank Press Up Position	Plank Press Up Position – 3/2 points
Side Plank	Side Plank Arm at Side	Side Plank Arm Raised	Side Plank Hip Dips	Side Plank Leg Raised	Side Plank Partner Resisted
Glute Raise	Glute Raise	Glute Raise Legs Raised	Single Leg Glute Raise	Single Leg Glute Raise Leg Raised	Glute Raise Partner Resisted
Rotational	Windmill Press Ups	Russian Twists	Band Resisted Standing Holds	Band Resisted Kneeling Holds	Russian Twist with Med Ball

Athletes must be able perform the above task proficiently for between 20 and 30 seconds before moving on to the next progression. All these exercises are outlined in the skill cards and dvd included in this resource.



Jumping and Landing - Multi Directional

Players jump and land many times during a game. Landing badly can be one of the most common causes of injury, most noticeably the cruciate ligament, and can rule players out for a long time. It is important with to train our young athletes in how to jump and land properly, and to do so in all directions. The table below outlines the different progressions of double leg and single leg jumps and landing that can be implemented into your sessions.

1	2	3	4	5
Squat Jump	Squat Jump Double Leg to Double Leg	Counter Movement Jump DL to DL	Counter Movement Double Leg to Single Leg	Alternate Single Leg Bound And Stick
Hurdle Double Leg to Double Leg	Hurdle Single Leg to Single Leg	Hurdle Single Leg to Single Leg Side to Side	Step Off Box Hurdle Jump Double Leg	Step Off Box Hurdle Jump Single Leg

Athletes should be able to perform each exercise at least 5 times proficiently before moving on to the next progression. All these exercises are outlined in the skill cards and dvd included in this resource.



Speed and Power

Speed and power training increases athleticism. Average athletes become good athletes and good athletes become great athletes. Speed is perhaps the most potent weapon in an athlete's arsenal. Speed and athletic ability, like height, was once believed to be a product of one's genes; an inherited trait that one either had or didn't have. Modern research has shown this is not the case. As already stated, this age bracket is a very important one in terms of speed development.



Dublin Hurler Johnny McCaffrey powers through a tackle

Speed, agility, coordination and athleticism are physical activities that involve specific muscles and neurons. These specific pathways can be trained to be faster and more efficient. Like any other physical skill whether it is kicking a ball or swinging a hurl, it can be taught, learned, practiced and improved with the proper training techniques. This neuromuscular connection can be developed and refined by the proper application of specific drills and exercises. SAQ (Speed Agility Quickness) training develops these neuromuscular pathways. It also improves an athlete's overall strength, balance, stability, coordination, quickness and speed.

Speed is basically how fast you can run. Generally, max speed development requires about 6-8 seconds at max or near max effort with a full rest recovery so your heart rate is about normal before beginning the next exercise. The rest period does not have to be wasted though, an example of a speed drill would be a 6 second 100% effort sprint, then 30 seconds to a minute of kicking practice, then back to sprints again.

Agility is the ability to change direction, quickly and efficiently. It is a vital tool for any young athlete playing sport. Think of hurling or football, how many times does a player have to change direction in a game. A forward sidesteps to avoid a tackle, a defender tries to keep beside his/her opponent, reacting to a breaking ball, all of these examples are fundamental skills of the game, therefore we must train to be agile the same way we train to be able to kick scores.

Being quick is related to speed but not the same. You might be able to run fast if you have enough time to increase your speed, but how fast can you move off the line? This is acceleration is quickness. If you can perform a task in a brief amount of time, you are quick. Often in game players do not have enough time to get to their max velocity, so quickness is actually more important. You can make your drills more quickness related by adding some reactive components.



By implementing this type of training at specific times in the season it will help convert the strength that the athletes have developed into speed and explosive power. It will also help fine tune a team and help them peak towards a specific goal or a certain point (or points) in the year. This is outlined further in the periodisation section later on.

At the core of SAQ training is a series of drills and specific exercises that develop the body's core muscle groups and the neuromuscular pathways that control athletic movement. Some of these are outlined below but there are literally thousands available online.

	1	2	3	4	5
Speed	In Outs	On Off Runs	20 Yard Dash	Gear Stops	Partner Resisted Sprints
Agility	T Drill	Snake Run	Hurdle Jumps	20 Yard Shuttle	Angle Run
Quickness	Ladder Runs	Feet Reaction Drills	Hand Reaction Drills	Visual Reaction Drills	Partner Wheelbarrow Drills

The drills are broken up into the various categories above but note that speed, agility, and quickness are closely related and sometimes overlap in the various drills. For example, one drill maybe listed under Agility but it also has a lot to do with Quickness. Don't get hung up on the terminology, just get out there and do them with maximum effort. Remember, SAQ requires max effort so you can simulate the actual game situation. If you do them at half speed without maximum effort then you won't develop what they are designed to develop. Speed work must be done at the start of a session, after the initial warm up in order to get maximum benefit.

All these exercises are outlined in the dvd included in this resource.





Flexibility

The benefits of good flexibility include improved performance and, most importantly, decreasing the chance of getting injured. It is essential to establish proper stretching techniques, not only to increase flexibility, but to avoid injury. Flexibility improves your range of motion and a full motion range helps your balance and decreases your chances of falling. Flexibility allows your muscles and joints to stretch and bend, decreasing muscle strains and sprains.

Flexibility exercises should not be the first thing done in a session, warm up the muscles first with some light activity before beginning your stretching. The table below list stretches for most of the body and should be integrated into your structured training plan. Coaches should also encourage their young athletes to stretch frequently at home.

	1	2	3	4	5
Ankle Mobility	Front Ankle Rocks	Side Leg Swings	Wall Running Drill		
Calf	Against Wall	Press Up Position One Leg over Other	Calf Pump	Partner Resisted	Knee Bent Achilles Stretch
Hamstring	Half Kneeling Hamstring Stretch	Toe Touch	Partner Assisted	Door Stretch	Towel Stretch
Quad/Hip Flexor	Half Kneeling	Half Kneeling with Twist	Side Lying	Spiderman Stretch	Hyper Extension Prone Position
Glutes	Knee to Chest	Sitting Knee Across Body	Knee Under Lie on Top	Figure 4 and Tuck	Dynamic Kicks
Groin	On Heels, Elbows Push Knees Out	Legs Wide, Lean to Side	All Fours, One Leg Straight to Side, Back on Heels	Side Squat	Diagonal Squat
Back	Bent Over Rotations	Thoracic Rotations	Quadruped T-Spine Rotation	Heel Sit Stretch	Back Extension
Shoulders	Thoracic Rotations with Knees Bent	Thoracic Rotations	Door Frame Stretch	Elbow Push Downs	Wall Slides

There is no need to do every exercise listed above in every session, the table is intended to help coaches plan out a variable flexibility programme so that they do not miss out on a specific area of the body.

All flexibility exercises are outlined in the skill cards and dvd resource contained in this resource.



Periodisation

Periodisation is an organized approach to training that involves progressive cycling of various aspects of a training program during a specific period. It is a way of alternating training to its peak during a season. Periodic training systems typically divide time up into three types of cycles: microcycle, mesocycle, and macrocycle.

A macrocycle typically refers to an annual plan that works towards peaking for the goal competition of the year. At under 15/16, an example of a macrocycle could be geared towards peaking for championship, and set over a season. At under 13/14 level it could be based over two/three years as continual development should be the emphasis, with the goal being to challenging strongly for U15/16 championship in the future. Remember that we are referring to athletic development when we are talking about an annual plan in this case, although there is nothing to stop you integrating the same plan with your football/hurling development.

A mesocycle represents a phase of training with a duration of between a month to six weeks. The goal in mind is to make sure the body peaks for the high priority competitions by improving each cycle along the way. A microcycle is typically a week because of the difficulty in developing a training plan and allowing for unforeseen circumstances.

Below is a sample athletic development macrocycle for an U16 team. The sample has been constructed with the emphasis on the championship, using the league to develop technique and strength, building towards speed and power heading into championship season.

Clontarf U16 2013 Season					
Macro Cycle	Challenge for U16 Championship - Develop AD in Preparation for Minor				
Season Stage	Preparatory Stage Pre Season	Competition Stage League Season	Goal Stage Championship Season	Transition Off Season	
Mesocycle	General Prep 6-8 Weeks	Specific Prep 10 - 12 Weeks	Pre Championship 6 - 8 Weeks	Championship 4- 12 Weeks	Rest Maintenance 8 - 12 Weeks
Training Aim	Introduction to Techniques Concentrate on; Funct Movement, Core, Jump/ Land Skills under Fatigue will help build Endurance and Mental Strength High Volume Low Intensity	Build to Max Strength Concentrate on; Funct Movement, Core, Jump/ Land Game Specific Skills through Games/ Drills Game Plan Development Medium Volume Medium Intensity	Convert Strength to Speed and Power Concentrate on SAQ, Core, Jump/Land Game Specific Games with Game Plan integrated into each Drill/ Game Low Volume High Intensity	Maintain Power, Max Strength and Speed Concentrate on; SAQ, Core, Jump/Land with maintenance on Funct Movement Game Specific Games with Game Plan integrated into each Drill/ Game Low volume High Intensity	Body Regeneration Rest important Maintain Techniques of Functional Movement through 'Homework' or sporadic group sessions.
Flexibility/Injury Prevention Year Round					
Microcycle					



You will see that the flexibility is maintained year round as this is vital for injury prevention. Note that there is not many hurling/football specific skills listed, these can easily be added if you feel that this is something that your team needs to work on. There is also no listings under the microcycles as these are your weekly plans and must be flexible for unforeseen reasons, etc. They should consist of the relevant components that will achieve the goals of your mesocycles.

An example of a microcycle for the general preparation phase of a typical two sessions a week team would be as follows;

General Preparation - Week 1 - High Volume & Low Intensity

	Session 1	Session 2
Warm Up 10 -12 mins	Hand Passing Square Stretching; -Ankle/Calfs -Hamstrings -Quads/Hips -Glutes -Back	Kick Passing Possession Game Stretching; -Ankle/Calfs -Hamstrings -Quads/Hips -Glutes -Back
Athletic Development 1 3 - 4 mins	Introduction to Techniques -Squat -Press Up -Lunge -Plank	Introduction to Techniques -Squat -Press Up -Lunge -Plank
Skills Development 1 10 - 12 mins	Hand Passing Possession Games in Tackling Squares Concentrate on techniques, short rest periods will build endurance. 1 min on, 1 min off. Teams of 3/4 a side	Kick Passing Possession Game Working on accurate passing and handling Similar to warm up game but small sided teams so work rate is up, small breaks in between. 3 mins on, 90 secs off
Athletic Development 2 4 - 6 mins	Introduction to Techniques -Squat Jumps -Press Up -Split Squats -Plank	Introduction to Techniques -Squat Jumps -Press Up -Split Squats -Plank
Skills Development 2 12 - 14 mins	Hand Passing Games Small sided, 5/6 a side, hand pass scores only Non stop with short breaks 3 mins on, 90 secs off	21 Shooting Game Floating goal in middle and opposing teams must score from either side. Emphasis on shooting and tackling. Two 6/7 mins games
Warm Down 8 - 10 mins	Light Jog and Stretching as above	Light Jog and Stretching as above

Just to show the contrast, below is a microcycle for the week leading into championship. See the emphasis is now gone to speed and power and game specific drills.



Pre Championship - Week 6 - Low Volume & High Intensity

	Session 1	Session 2
Warm Up 10 -12 mins	Hand Passing Square Stretching; -Ankle/Calfs -Hamstrings -Quads/Hips -Glutes -Back	Kick Passing Possession Game Stretching; -Ankle/Calfs -Hamstrings -Quads/Hips -Glutes -Back
Athletic Development 1 10 - 12 mins	SAQ/Jumping and Landing -20 Yard Dash -Partner Resisted Sprints -Ladder work -Box Jumps Done at full speed, active recovery periods can be used for skill practice	SAQ/Jumping and Landing -In Outs -T Drill -Hurdle Work -Single leg to single leg jumps Done at full speed, active recovery periods can be used for skill practice
Game 1 10 - 12 mins	Backs and Forwards Working on game plan, movement, support play, kickout tactics, etc. Plenty of coaching opportunity, lots of stoppages, feedback to players Two 5/6 minute games	Attacking Drills 5 v 4, 4 v 3 attacking drills to work on shot selection, tackling technique, etc. Plenty of coaching opportunity, lots of stoppages, feedback to players Four 2/3 minute games
Game 2 16 - 20 mins	Full Match Play as close to 15 versus 15 as numbers allow. As close to real match conditions as possible. Two halves of 8/10 mins Half time for feedback	Full Match Play as close to 15 versus 15 as numbers allow. As close to real match conditions as possible. Two halves of 8/10 mins Half time for feedback
Warm Down 8 - 10 mins	Light Jog and Stretching as above	Light Jog and Stretching as above

The above table can be adapted to any team's individual requirements. For example, if the U16s age group had one hurling and one football session in a week, both management teams could co-operate and integrate the overall athletic development plan into those two sessions. This would entail some planning at the start but would hugely benefit the player's development as they would be working on the same techniques consistently.

Think of the macrocycle as your long term goal over the season. You can customise it to suit your team's own needs and the season stage can be broken down into months if the fixtures are known in advance. We can also tailor the macrocycle to peak several times in a season, depending on your goals. The mesocycle just breaks this down further into specific medium term goals and the microcycles are the weekly plans which are our short term goals.

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