



Improving the Non-Throwing or Opposite Side of the Discus Thrower

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The non-throwing or opposite side would be the left for a right handed thrower and the right for a left handed thrower. Many young discus throwers take a little more time developing their skills with the opposite side or non-throwing side of their bodies. We are going to look at a systematic way of improving this part of the throw. Let's follow along as though we are helping a right handed thrower.

Drills to Get Started

The 360 drill

The athlete will focus on being over their left leg and rotating all the way around in 360 degrees. The main focus will be on level shoulders and keeping the left arm and leg aligned through out the rotation. The other focus would be on having their body weight slightly shift over the left side to keep the athlete balanced. Be aware that the left arm does not get a head of the left leg. You may have them keep that left arm in the range of the side of the body to the front of their chest. The movement starts from the ground by grinding their left foot, not from them swinging their left arm out to get momentum.

Walking South Africans

Have your athlete line up on a line approximately 10 to 20 yards. Have them walk through South African positions focusing on having their left arm and shoulder always in front of their body. The cue or thought process is to see their hand in front from the start as well as seeing it once they stop in their power position. The cue I give athletes is face-face, meaning face the direction of the throw and face the back of the ring seeing their hand from both positions. We will look at this cue in more detail later.

Opposite Arm Partner Drill

This drill is done with 2 partners, usually with a coach and another athlete assisting the thrower. The thrower starts in the full throw position and his or her partners are at the 3 o'clock position and the 9 o'clock position. Their first movement is to come to the middle of the ring and stop while facing the landing area. The partner at the 3 o'clock position will stop their left arm from moving away from the direction of the throw. In the second movement, the athlete will come around and stop in their power position. The second partner at 9 o'clock will help them to keep that left arm back over their right side. Each partner is holding both of their hands out to stop the left arm at each point of the throw. This drill is used in extreme cases when athletes are having great difficulty in performing this movement.

Cues and Drills in and out of the Ring

Face to Face

The drill is designed to have the athlete focus on looking at the direction of the throw as they come to the middle of the ring (This is the first thought of facing (face) the throw). Then upon landing in their power position that athlete will focus on facing or looking to the back of the ring (The second thought of facing (face) the back of the ring). This is a drill to keep athletes set though the throw as they hit the middle of the ring. In turn, it puts the focus on delaying their upper body until its time to throw. It also allows them to not rush their left arm around in the middle of the ring. Make sure they let the throw come to them and not rush to face those positions.

Stop and Go

Have your athlete start from the full throw position, begin movement and stop in the middle of the ring with their left arm in the direction of the throw. Have them under control when they stop in the middle of the ring. Allow them to reset by winding their discus back again and go into their power position. Make sure their left arm or side is back over their right side keeping the separation. This is a drill where they will hold their discus with out throwing. Those that are more advanced will get their rhythm down to throw it while using the drill.

The Pole Drill

Find a pole that you can have your athlete grab on to with their left hand. From a South African position have them step to the pole. The point of this drill is to give another cue for facing the throw. By holding the pole it will keep them from swinging that arm out too soon into the throw. For some athletes thinking of the left arm may not work, so this way they can think about their shoulders or even their head looking out to help create that separation in the middle.

The Reach Drill While Throwing

In this drill you want the athlete to focus on reaching their left arm to the direction of the throw as they come to the middle of the ring (make sure they let the throw come to them). Then have them reaching to the back of the ring while they are landing in their power position. Again, when doing this drill keep it at 60% to 70%. This drill allows the athlete to control their upper body speed and again, to feel that separation. Make sure they do not section the throw out and they keep that right foot turning in the middle of the ring.

*This drill does not have a particular name, but you can have an athlete hold an object in their left hand like a 16 oz water bottle when throwing. Have that athlete throw at about 60% to 70% effort. This will allow them to be aware of what the left arm or side is doing while they throw. Many times we coaches will tell the athletes what they are doing and they can't seem to feel it, this along with video will help to bring awareness to that problem.

*Another cue in training to bring awareness to this problem would be to have the athlete look at their left arm through out the throw. This again will allow them to become more controlled and aware of what that non-throwing arm or side is doing. Have them throw at 60% to 70%. Many times athletes may throw further when controlled, even though they may think they are moving too slow. Visibly, it helps them hit better positions and allows them to get the maximum power into the throw.

These are just a few of many drills and cues coaches use to help the non-throwing side of the body. I hope these will get you going in the right direction. For further explanation of the drills I can be reached by email at jfrazi13@utk.edu. Good luck and great success!

Frazier's Recent Success with Athletes Throwing the Discus

- *9 All-Americans by 5 athletes since 2003
- *7 Athletes at the NCAA Championships 2003 to 2007
- *5 Athletes in the 2005 NCAA Discus competition for men and women
- *4 Men over 61 meters since 2004
- *3 Women in the discus final at the 2005 NCAA Championships
- *2 International Champions for their countries 2004 Nigeria and Greece
- *2 NCAA Western Regional Discus Champions 2003 & 2006
- *2 PAC 10 Champions Women 2004 & 2006
- *2 Collegiate Men over 61 meters in the same competition 2006
- *2 Athletes in the Men's USA Championships Discus Final 2006
- *1 Runner-up Men's USA Junior Championships 2002 and NCAA Men's Discus 2006
- *1 USA Junior Champion 2003