

Middle School Pole Vaulting

How to Build a Middle School
Pole Vault Program

Middle School Pole Vault - How to build a Middle School Pole Vault program

Want a copy of this??

Available online (pics and notes):

ohiopolevault.wordpress.com

(also other presentations - great videos - and information about vault)

or for us “old schoolers” Take notes if you’d like!!!!

Please silence your phone - it’s too early for calls!!

- Developed by:
- **Marty Dahlman, Retired Track Coach**
- BA Denison University, MEd Ashland University (Sports Science)
- Track Coach – Watkins Memorial High School – 1978 to 2017
- Ohio Capital Conference, Watkins Memorial High School - Halls of Fame
- OAT-CCC Fred Dafler Career Track Coach Award – 2001
- OHSAA Sportsmanship and Ethics Award - 1998
- Ohio Pole Vault Safety OAT-CCC – 1993 to present (28 YEARS!!!)
- Men's Pole Vault Coach - Team Ohio, Midwest Meet of Champions (2009 - 11)
- ASTM Pole Vault Sub-Committee member - current
- Pole Vault Education Initiative – National Safety Contributor – current
- Ohio Track Official – 1978-2001, 2019 -

- **Best Vaulters (from Watkins)**

- **SP – STATE PLACER**, **SQ – STATE QUALIFIER** **IQ – STATE INDOOR QUALIFIER**

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Kyle Burns SP 15-4 | Pat Walton SP 14-6 |
| • David Hill SP 15-3 | Scott Haden SP 14-6 |
| • Mike Huston SP 15-0 | Chris Koon SP 14-4 |
| | Troy Rhoades 14-3 |
| • Sammi Miller SQ 11-8 | Doug Payne 14-0 |
| • Rebecas Ollish IQ 10-6 | Chris Dennis 14-0 |
| • Michelle Robbins SQ 10-6 | Dusty Rhoades SQ 14-0 |
| • Rachel Arnott IQ 10-6 | Wayne Ratliff 14-0 |
| • Taylor Amrine SQ 10-6 | Austin Jackson SQ 14-0 |
| • Theresa LaGreca 10-4 | Cameron Johnson 14-0 |
| • | Mitchell Novotni 14-0 |
| | Jarod Worchester IQ 14-0 |
| | Austin Ballenger 14-0 |

Friends We Helped from other schools
 Jesse Oxley – BU - **DIII State Champion**
 Boone Troyer – LV – **DII Runnerup**
 Blake Mormon – LU – **DII State Placer**
 Jimmy Kovatch – FU – **DII State Placer**
 Austin Durbin – LV - **State Qualifier**

Before We Start

- I want to make sure you get the information you need
- My Clinic goal – learn at least one new thing
- Get at least one question answered
- So write down a question you want answered and I'll try to answer it for you by the end

Why Pole Vault in Middle School?

- - Great Recruiting Tool - kids like to vault - it's fun
- - Kids can have a lot of success early
- - Good feeder program for High School program
- - Scores points for the team
- - Skills learned cross over well to other events (long jump, hurdles)

What does it take to have a Middle School Program?

- Legal Pole Vault Pits
(see diagram attached)
- **Pits must be of legal size**
 - **19'8" wide**
 - **20'2" deep**
- **16'5" from back of box to back of pit**

A LEGAL PIT (and new too!!)



A Legal Pit includes a legal box collar



II. What does it take to have a Middle School Program?

- Poles or access to poles
- *for a beginning middle school program you simply need to have poles that are over the weight of the vaulters. Since beginning vaulters don't bend poles - how much over the weight of the vaulter really isn't too significant. A good middle school beginning series would be:*

11-0 or 11-6 - 100

11-0 or 11-6 - 120

11-0 or 11-6 - 140.

If you have a bigger kid - you will need a heavier pole

12-0 - 150

12-0 - 160.

Safety Issue –

Poles must be rated MORE than the vaulters' weight

What brand of Pole to buy?



What Brand to buy?

- All pole vault poles work
- But they all don't "feel" the same
 - In the way it bends and rebounds
- Whatever Brand you decide to buy it makes sense to be consistent with that Brand
- That way when you want to change to a different pole (weight, length) it still "feels" the same

**Pole Storage – Sewer Pipe inserted into shelving –
not on the floor and out of the way**



A Motivated Coach

Coaching pole vault is NOT very different from coaching any other field event.

It takes a coach who is willing to learn!

Safety Issue - Coach must supervise vaulters whenever they are doing an activity which requires them to leave the ground!!

Coaches Must be Safety Certified

(maybe see you in the morning??)



Ohio Association Of Track And Cross Country Coaches

Pole Vault Safety Certification

Be it known that,

Our Town Middle School Coach

(attendee name)

has successfully participated in, and has fulfilled the requirements for the Ohio High School Athletic Association's mandated Pole Vault Safety Clinic having been instructed in pole vault theory, teaching techniques, equipment safety and coaching analysis.

OAT-CCC Track Coaches Clinic – 1/25/2020



Clinician and Clinic Coordinator



Certification Valid through January 2023

ATHLETE SELECTION

Jumpers – Long in particular, Hurdlers, Sprinter

Why long jumpers – steps, jump, consistency, speed

Why high jumpers – vertical leap, body control

Why hurdlers – consistency in steps, coordination

Why Sprinters – speed

But most important – a kid who wants to do it

I allow kids to “self-select” – I have “Pole Vault Night” and teach everybody who wants to learn (see last slides)

Kids who “get it” and like it – come back – but everyone got a chance and doesn’t feel “rejected”

KIDS NEED TO BE WILLING TO ACCEPT COACHING

(a long jumper who won't accept coaching might foul, but a vaulter who won't is dangerous to him/her self)

Teaching the Pole Vault

Left or Right Handed???

ALSO ESTABLISH WHETHER THEY ARE LEFT OR RIGHT FOOTED

- Right handed vaulters will hold their right hand highest on the pole and jump off of their left foot
- Left handed vaulters will hold their left hand highest on the pole and jump off of their right foot
- *Many young athletes have trouble identifying what “handed and footed” they are.*
 - to identify “skill foot” - have the athlete lightly kick or punt something*
 - allow them to choose the first foot, then ask them to use the other as well - that will usually determine which is the dominant foot*

Jumping from the correct foot

Make sure that right handed athletes jump from the left foot and vice versa. Jumping off of the “wrong” foot will get in the way. While the athlete can get away with it early, the more skilled they become in pole vault, the more critical this issue becomes to vault safely and effectively.

Where All Beginners Start

- The REACH GRIP is a safe place for rookies to start
- Make sure they are reaching up with their dominant hand
- This establish the base hand hold
- The bottom hand goes “an elbow and a thumb” below the top hand
- Top hand faces “out”, Bottom hand in

The Reach Grip

Stand flat footed
with the pole straight up

Reach as high as you can with the
dominant hand

This becomes the “baseline” hand hold
as the vaulter improves handholds
will be baseline plus number of hands

The long-term goal is to grip in
“THE GRIP ZONE”



Gripping the Pole – an elbow and a thumb (left handed vaulter)

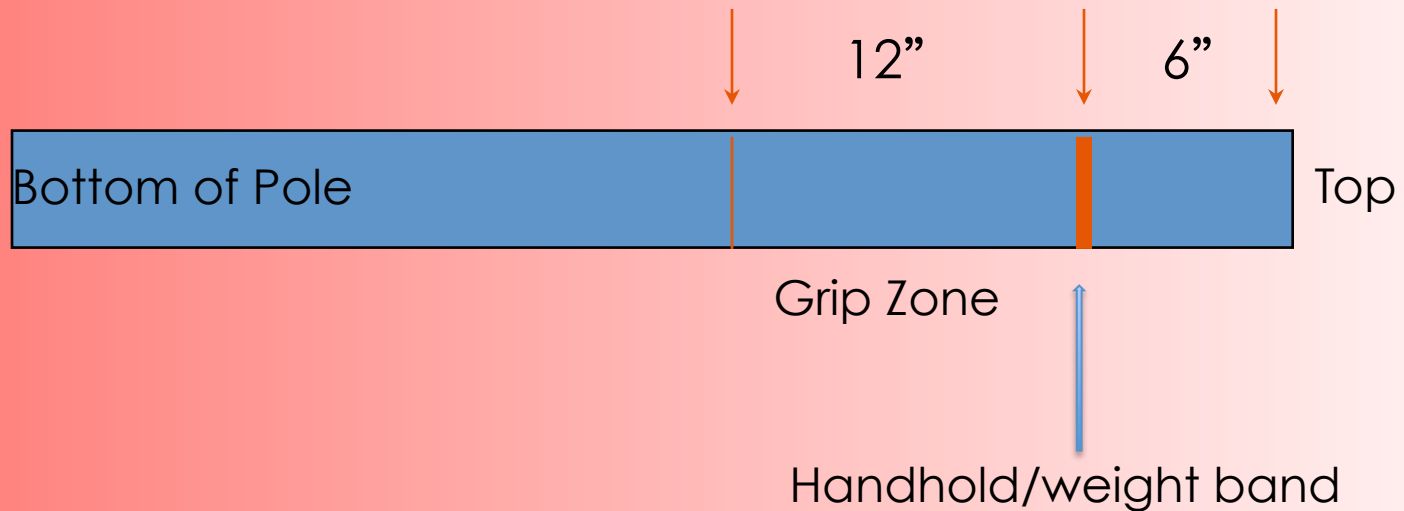
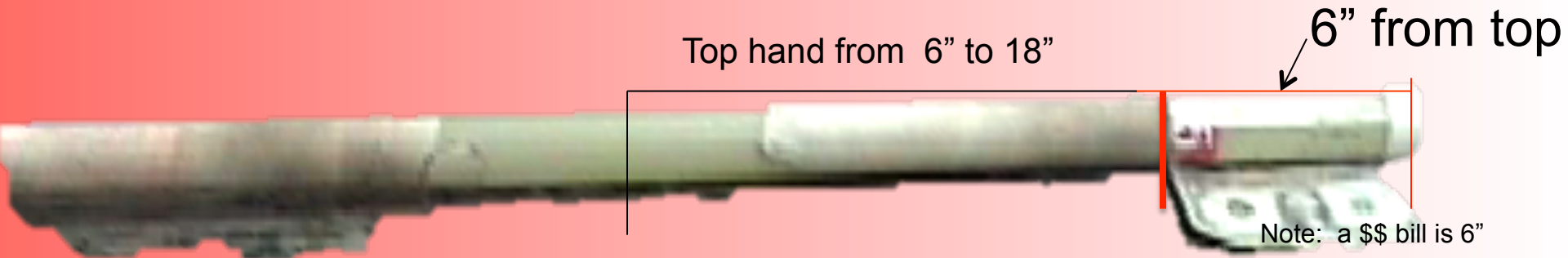


Plant Position



Grip Range – UCS Poles

Grip Range



The Grip Zone

- Beginners aren't ready for it – but some day when they get good enough – they'll need to know what it is – and you (the Coach) will need to know how to use the information.

The Teaching Progression

- We will teach beginning vaulters how to “carry” the pole – that is – how to run with the pole tip off of the ground
- But we will actually begin vaulters by having them “push” vault with the top hand and pole resting on the shoulder, and the pole tip on the runway
- This way – they can learn vaulting mechanics Plant, takeoff, swing without having to manipulate the pole through carry and plant
- In the end – they will do it all

Pole Carry

1. Start with both hands on the pole (in the correct manner) – pole tip on ground
2. Put top hand just behind and above hip (pole should be held in a relaxed 'V' Grip)
3. Top arm should make a 90° angle from shoulder to hand through the elbow
4. Pick up pole with lower hand. Raise pole tip to eye level
5. Lower arm should be 90° from shoulder to hand through elbow
6. Lower wrist should be bent up – facing pole

The Right Angle Carry

This is Kyle – notice he is holding the top of the pole with an “open” grip.

His top arm is at a right angle

His bottom arm is at two right angles

- one through his elbow
- one through his armpit

Kyle is an advanced vaulter and has a higher pole carry. Beginning vaulters will carry with the pole lower – at eye level, to make it easier for them to plant the pole in the box.



Tarasov Pole Run –
90 Degree Carry – Top Hand above hip
High Knee Run – Bottom Hand Palm to Pole



Running with the Pole

- Run should be tall – like a sprinter in the last phase of the 100m
- Pole should be steady –it can bounce up and down a little bit – but not back and forth (shuttling) – Pole Tip at Eye Level
- Top hand should stay near back/top of hip – but not “locked in”

Kyle Burns



Counting Steps

- Having a consistent run is critical
- To get consistent – vaulters should COUNT
- Counting means to count takeoff steps
- Right handed vaulters count lefts, left handed count rights
- Count can be simple – 1-2-3-4-5 (total of 10 steps) or a little more complex – 1-3-2-1-flat/flat

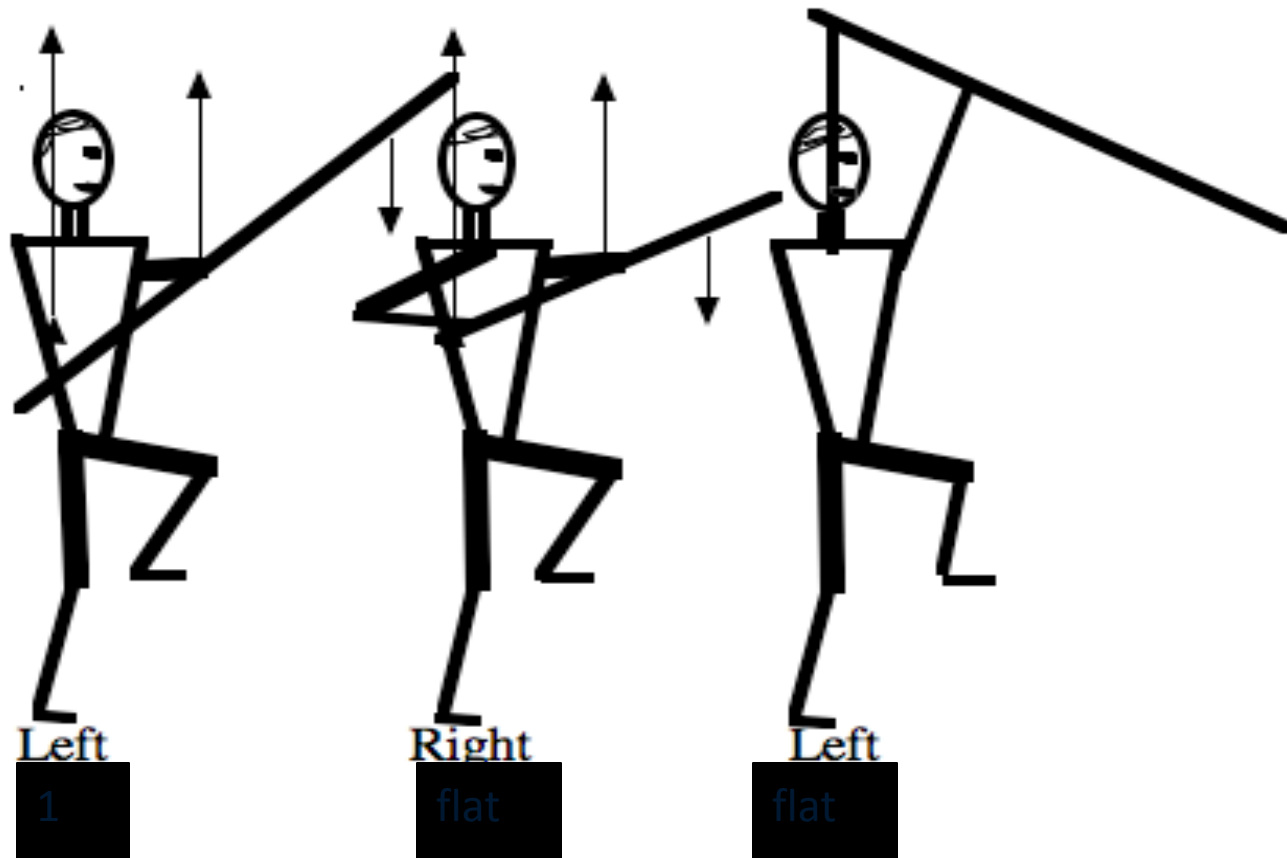
Where to Start

- I start rookie vaulters at 40' away from the pit
- That puts most of them on near a 5 takeoff step approach (10 total steps)
- As they become more proficient, I begin to move them back
- After practicing, a “5 Step” for most MS Girls will be between 40 and 50 – most MS Boys 45 to 55

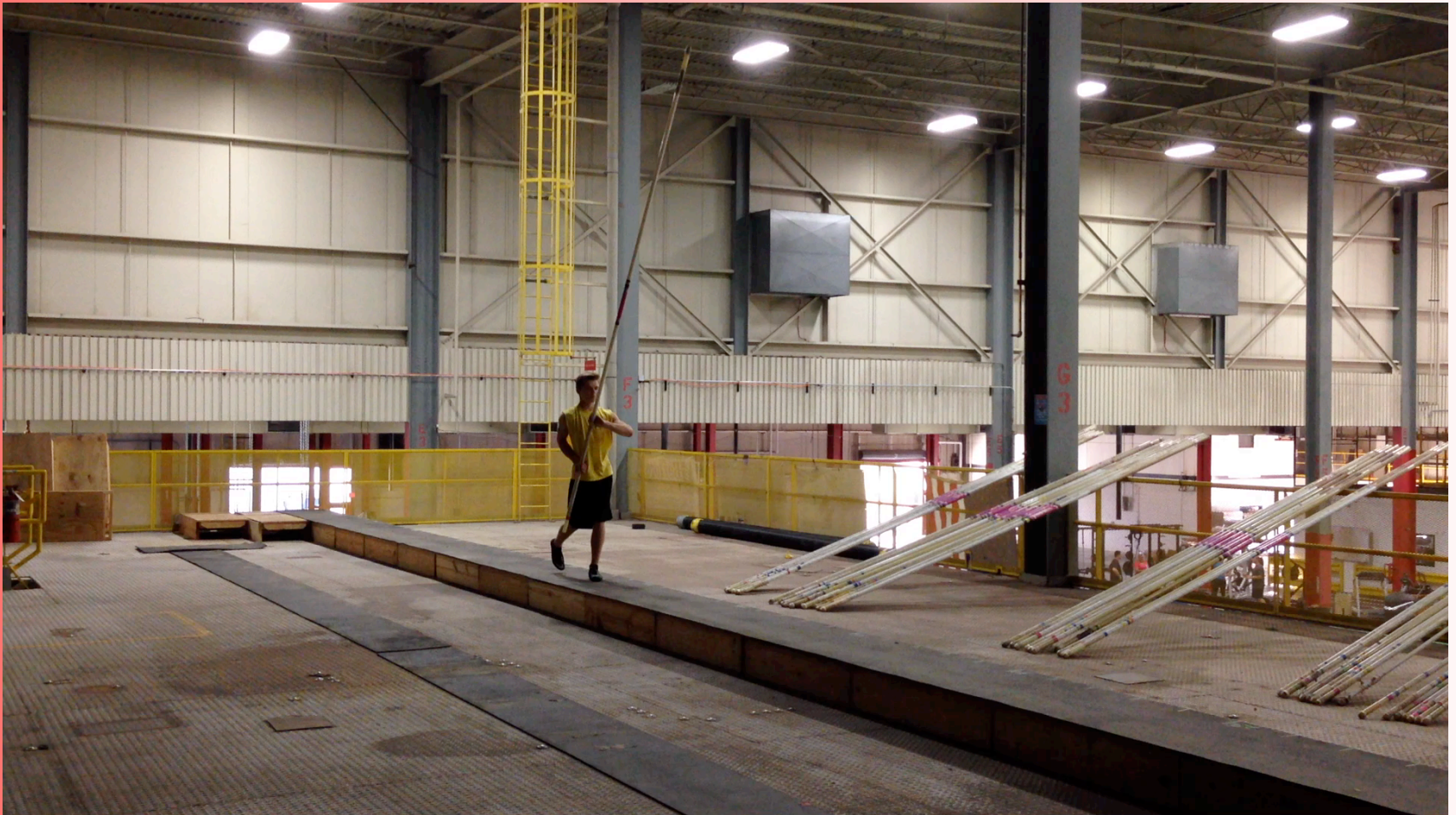
The Plant

- Planting starts as the pole drops from the carry position to the tip in the box
- Push vaulters already have the tip in the box
- The top hand should go from behind the hip
- Up into the ribs
- Up over directly over the head by the ear
- It should not be PUSHED forward, just PRESSED UP!!

Plant Mechanics



Plant Mechanics



WHERE THE POLE TIP GOES

Emphasize that the pole tip goes in the front of the box – the part nearest the runway and slides to the back of the box

This will prevent “sticking” or “spearing” the back of the box – which will cause the vaulter to PUSH the plant far forward of vertical

Where to Plant

Vaulter plants pole in
Front of box

Pole slides into the
Box and hits back
of box

As it hits the back
Vaulter should have
Top arm fully extended

Over head – and should jump off of takeoff foot

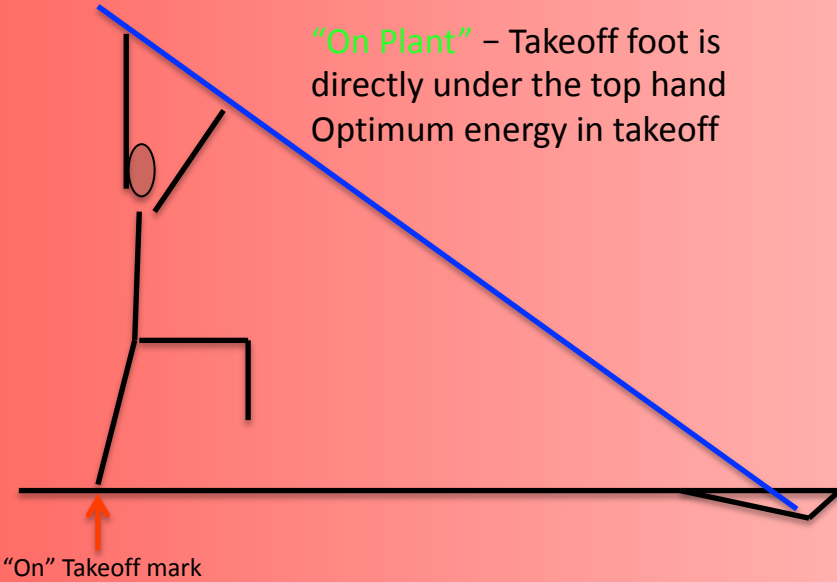


*Note: this is an old and no longer legal box collar – but it let's you see where
your vaulter should put the pole*

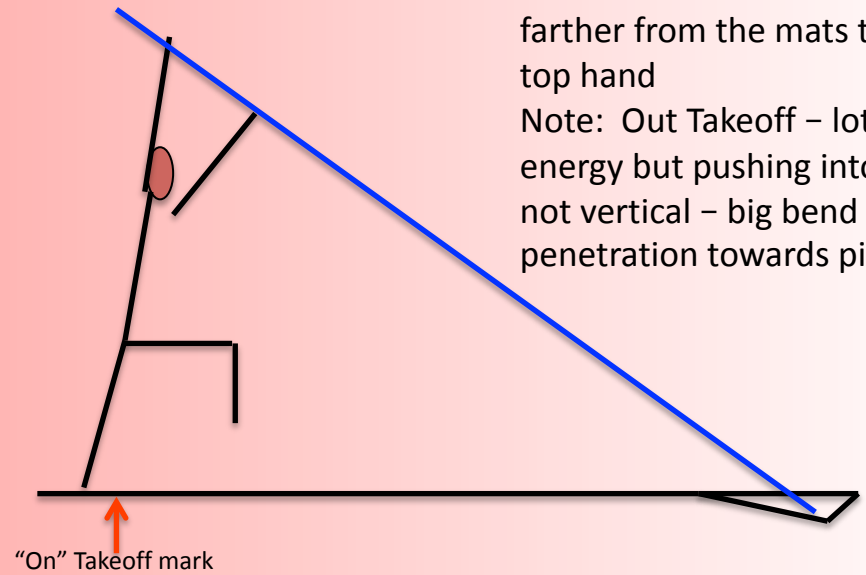
Getting the takeoff step right

- Just like getting “on the board” in long jump
- That’s why counting is important (for both)
- A consistent “ON” step will allow for a good vault experience
- So – you need to learn how to “catch steps”

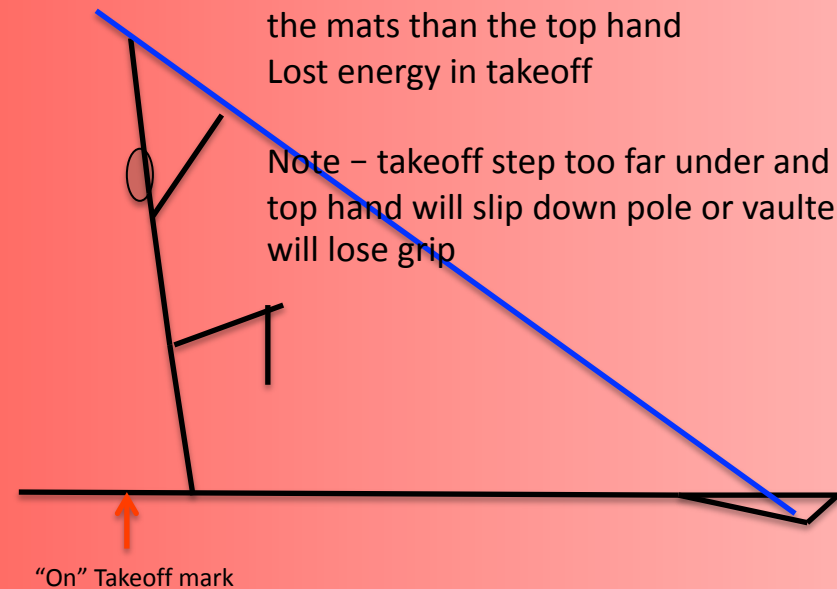
"On Plant" – Takeoff foot is directly under the top hand
Optimum energy in takeoff



"Out Plant" – Takeoff foot is farther from the mats than top hand
Note: Out Takeoff – lots of energy but pushing into pole not vertical – big bend but less penetration towards pit

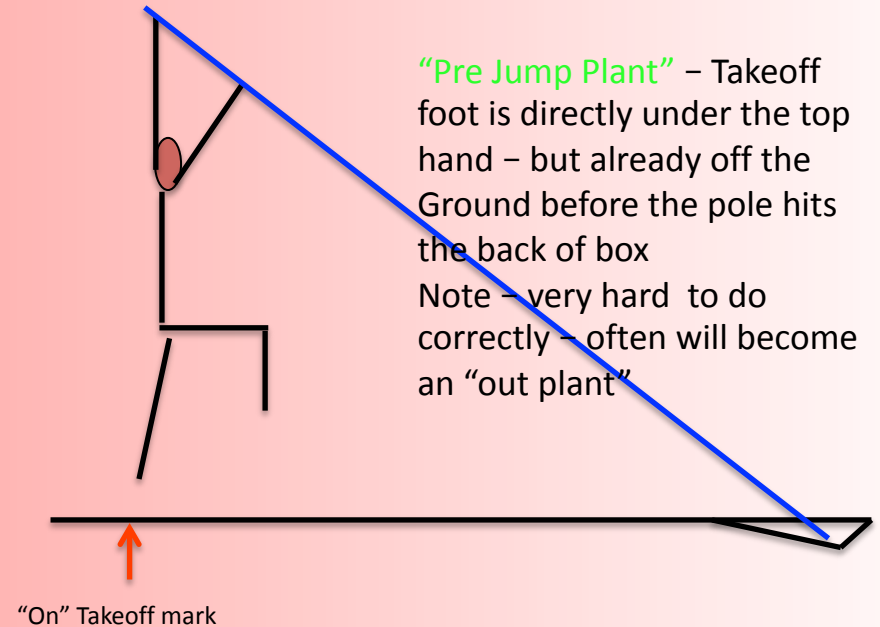


"Under Plant" – Takeoff foot is closer to the mats than the top hand
Lost energy in takeoff



Note – takeoff step too far under and top hand will slip down pole or vaulter will lose grip

"Pre Jump Plant" – Takeoff foot is directly under the top hand – but already off the Ground before the pole hits the back of box
Note – very hard to do correctly – often will become an "out plant"



Push Vaulting

- So we drill all of that stuff – carry, plant, etc.
- But we start vaulters push vaulting – sliding the tip of the pole along the runway and into the box
- This takes the carry and plant actions out of the equation – and let's vaulters “HAVE FUN” sooner
- It also allows you to teach jump and swing from the beginning as well

Push Vaulting



Progression

- 1. Start by just jumping up in the pit
 - Taking off of correct foot – landing on both feet
- 2. Add to that – landing on butt instead of feet
- 3. Add to that – extending into pit
 - How far into the pit can you land – contest!!!
- 4. Add to that – swinging up over very low bungee

Progression

- 5. While doing all of that:
 - Continue to catch step – move vaulter back on the runway to use full five step
- 6. As the vaulter lands deeper in pit, move handhold up – 1 grip at a time
- 7. Continue to move bungee up – a few inches at a time
- 8. When vaulter can clear 5' or better – teach turn

Teaching How to Turn

- New vaulters learn to swing up but have a lot of trouble with the concept of turning. This is a quick and easy “fix” for that (thanks to Jim Green from Granville - I stole this from him!!!).
- Over a low (for them) bungee/bar, have the vaulter swing up. Tell the vaulter to land on their feet in the pit, facing the runway
- Once they can do that, gradually begin to raise the bar/bungee closer to their best height, continuing to have them land facing the runway.
- Once they are turning and landing, have them fall to their back as their feet touch the pit

“Land on Your Feet Facing Me”



And from there

- 1. Encourage vaulters to “pick up” and carry
- 2. Continue to drill carry/run/plant
- 3. Use landing diagram to determine when to move handhold up
- 4. Once the vaulter is in the grip range – learn the mechanics of plant/press/drive/swing

Coaching Zone

- **use of “coaching zone” in pit** (*see diagram*)
- - Coaching Zone can determine
 - - depth of plant (energy storage)
 - - erratic forces in plant (off line plants)
 - - when to make changes in pole selection
 - - other problems

Use the Coaching Zones

Landing in 1 OR 2:

POLE VAULT CRISIS

LOWER THE VAULTERS GRIP

THIS NEEDS TO BE FIXED NOW!!!

Landing in 3 or 4

Vaulter is safe

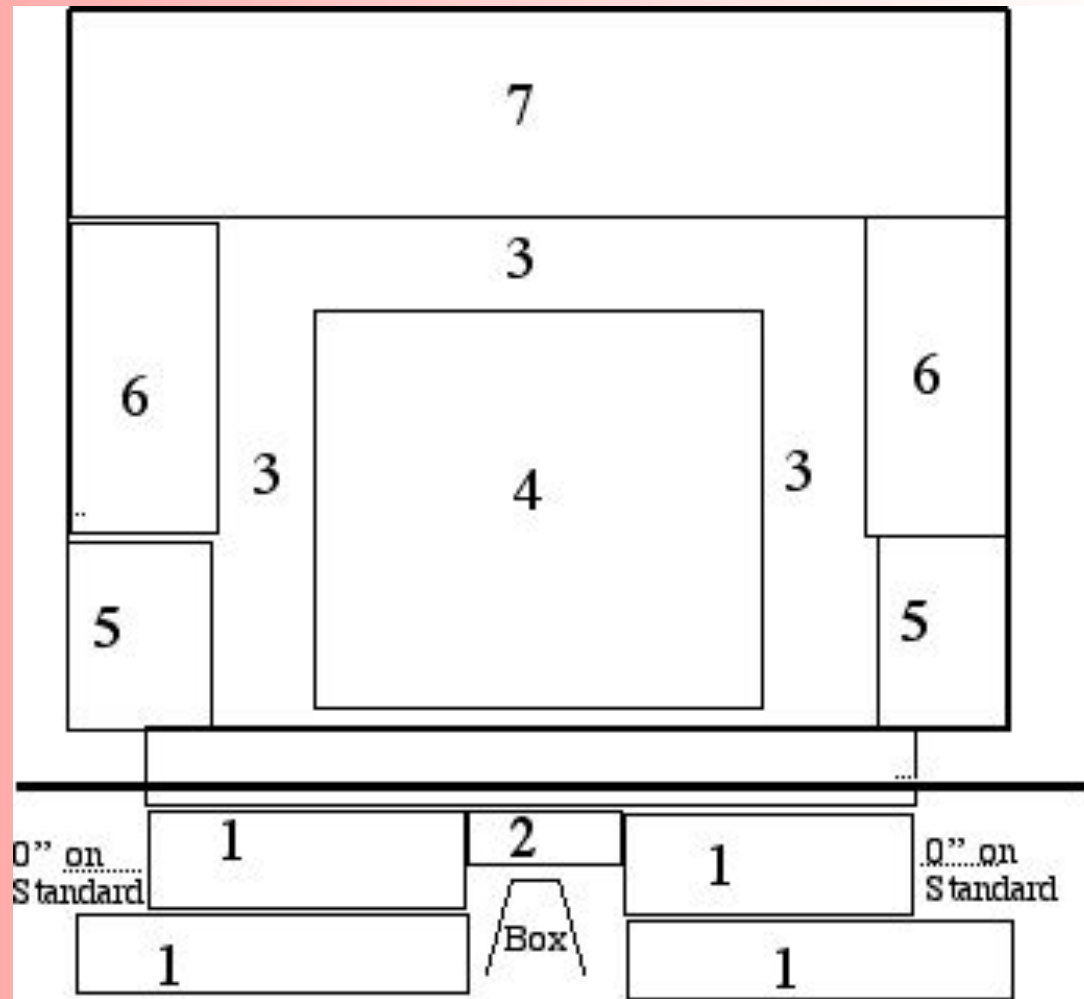
Landing in 5 or 6

Check Plant Mechanics

vaulter is probably not getting to vertical on plant or roundhousing plant

Landing in 7

Vaulter either needs a bigger pole or a stiffer pole – it's a good problem



Middle School Pole Vault Night

Step 1- Pole Orientation

- show athletes the correct orientation of the pole

Step 2- Pole hand grip

- have each athlete grip the pole correctly - repeat several times

Step 3 - Pole Carry

- have each athlete show the proper pole carry - repeat several times

Step 4 - Pole "March"

- have athletes line up and "march" (walk) with poles
 - emphasis should be on high knees - proper shoulder placement
 - have athletes count jump steps (lefts for right handed vaulters)

Step 5 - Pole "Jogs"

- continue pole "marches" increasing tempo - working from slow to moderate

Step 6 - Pole Runs

- near optimum speed runs - emphasis on counting step, slow to fast acceleration remaining under control (particularly keeping the pole in control)

Step 7 - Standing Plants

- athletes lineup with poles - go from poles in carry position (command - "poles up") - to plant
 - make sure plant action is correct - repeat many times!!!!!!

Middle School Pole Vault Night

- Step 8 - Walking Plants
- have athletes do “pole march” for six lefts, initiating the plant on the penultimate left and completing it before the last left
- Step 9 - Running Plants
- continue the “pole march plants”, increasing the tempo to a run
- Step 10- Left-Right-Left Drill
- *this is one of the most significant drills in pole vault - it should be taught correctly as it will be a continuous drill for the vaulter's career*
 - Plant pole against a hard object (wall, a vault box, curb, etc.)
 - Vaulter takes three extended steps back from the wall
 - Vaulter starts with pole in “carry” position
 - Initiates drill with first left step (top hand and pole comes to “high rib” position)
 - Takes next right step (top hand and pole shoots directly overhead, left hand rises with pole as pole tip drops)
 - Take final left (pole should strike wall) - vaulter stays tall and drives chest under the plant (will cause the pole to flex)
 - **Safety Issue - make sure the vaulter's step is correctly under the takeoff hand and make adjustments if not. A step too far under may cause the vaulter to fall backwards**

Middle School Pole Vault Night

Step 11- Sand Vaulting

- sand vaulting uses the long jump pit as “the planting box”
- coaches put pits (we use a high jump pit) in the long jump pit for the vaulter to land on
- vaulter use a “reach” grip
- vaulters line up on the long jump runway - approximately 30’ from the pit
- vaulters run down, plant in the sand, and swing up (on the correct side of the pole - right side for right handed vaulters) landing on their backs in the high jump pits
- *note: coaches should emphasize the vaulter keeping the top arm long (not pulling on the pole). They should also emphasize keeping the jump leg long and the vaulter leading with the chest - not the hips*
- **Safety Issue - make sure the vaulter has the plant straight overhead. A plant to the side will cause the vaulter to fall off to one side or the other of the pit. Also, spotters should be used on either side of the pit as the vaulters learn this drill (watch for the poles hitting the spotters though!!)**

Sand Drills - on the only warm day in January - work on swinging up (don't worry about a box - plant in the sand!!!)



QUESTIONS??

- NOW IS THE TIME – WHAT CAN I HELP WITH??
- Thanks to the OAT-CCC, President Diane Krumpak and Clinic Director Wayne Clark for having me here
- Need more info??
- www.ohiopolevault.wordpress.com
- Email me at dahlman@aol.com

A Model Vault - HS

