

Chutes and Ladders

by Shawn Moody 09_01_06

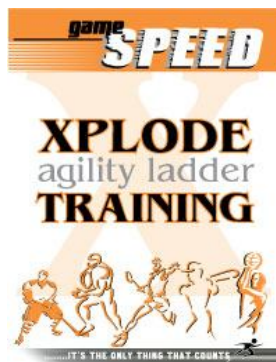


You know I can almost taste the grass in my mouth and see the dirt smashed into the knees of my gray jogging pants (you know like the one's that Rocky wore!) when I fell for the first time while running through the tires placed on the ground to help increase my footwork.

They were small car tires, but when you're 12 and weigh about 68lbs. they appeared much larger than that I promise you! As I aged it seemed that the methods and mediums for our skill work and training changed as well.

Soon I found myself performing various hops and footwork drills through the "ropes" as a varsity football player. Shoulders pads weighing you down, helmet squeezing your head and it was hard enough to pick up your knees let alone with the thigh pads in your pants! Every breath you took actually echoed a noise that resembled Darth Vader! Looking back at it, this was great stuff but if you had asked me back then I probably would have had a different answer for you!

Through the years agility training really progressed from various line drills, dot drills and now agility ladders.



Agility ladder drills are a great way to improve foot speed, coordination, quickness and proper running mechanics. They are a vital part of many speed, agility and quickness programs and can assist greatly in the development for your sport. I use them with all of my athletes regardless of their sport, and have had great success.

Before you go out and purchase a ladder and start your blistering workout, there are a few points and tips that I would suggest and like to recommend. First, agility ladders and the drills are just a tool! They are not the final answer to overall development. Second, agility ladder drills should be about the quality and form of the movement rather than producing overload. The drills are not meant to create overall fatigue. This something that I find very common among various SAQ coaches and is completely incorrect.

I would recommend that you perform these drills at the start of a training session after your warm up. The body will feel very fresh, and this will carry over to proper movement mechanics when performing the drills. And remember when you are just starting off with the various drills; take them slow at first to learn the movement patterns. Make sure you have quality movements before you try to increase the speed.

I work with many athletes that play various sports and it seems that I consistently have the following coaching points to make with all of them:

- Lead movements with your hips; don't stab with your toes
- Push off from the balls of your feet (not the toes)
- Create strong ground contact. You can't tip toe. Your sport demands more than that
- Pump your hands from shoulder height to hips (men) and from chest height to hips (women)
- Arm action begins at the shoulder, not the elbow
- Keep your elbows at 90 degrees at all times
- Keep your body relaxed and ready to fire
- Try to keep your head and eyes up on a swivel

These are just a few things that you should take note of when executing the various drills with an agility ladder. Remember the agility ladder is just a tool, but if you use it properly it will have great effects on your performance!

So, pick em up and put em down!