



THE LEAN BERETS

AVENGERS OF HEALTH!

“Speed, Agility, & Quickness Basics”

INTRODUCTION: SAQ (Speed, Agility, & Quickness) drills are designed to teach and improve running mechanics and enhance running performance. ***Quality of movement is priority #1.** Strive for 90% perfection or modify until you can get 90% rather than just grinding through a lot of poor movement. More often than not, a person needs to “regress” SAQ drills until they can control them. Make the drills as simple as needed to preserve quality and safety then “progress” as they can be controlled after you develop proper form and conditioning. *Stay focused yet relaxed as excess tension decreases “speed.”*

SPEED: “Speed” is basically about max velocity or how fast you can run. Interestingly, most people probably need “quickness” drills more than all out speed drills because their sport efforts use much shorter bursts. Generally, max speed development requires at least 4-5 seconds at max effort. ***If you want metabolic improvement for true speed, don’t run “speed” drills slow—run them FAST!***

AGILITY: Think of good agility as your ability to transition from one movement into the next with control and coordination. Simply put—***agility is coordinated movement.***

QUICKNESS: 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 “quickness.” ***If you can perform a movement task in a very brief amount of time, you are quick.*** Many sport plays never allow enough time for max velocity, so quickness is actually more important!

PLYOMETRICS: ***This is simply jump training.*** Historically, people did a lot of jump training with gymnastic vaults, warm up, military-style training, etc. Many of the warm-up drills involve hops and jumps. ***The key is landing more than the jumping.*** Always land softly and absorb force through your joints instead of landing hard and jamming your knees, hips, and back. Keep “amplitude” low meaning you don’t jump very high until you ***earn the right to land safely***—then increase amplitude as needed.

- **VOLUME MUST BE KEPT LOW TO PRESERVE QUALITY!** A common mistake with SAQ is thinking more is better; it’s not. More “high volume” means form and safety breaks down. You can only control a very small amount of whole-body explosive efforts at one time. Short breaks are critical for recovery, and the overall volume for a particular day must be limited especially for those new to plyo and SAQ drills. Generally recommendations are 60-150 “strikes” per session with many short rest breaks in-between.



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SURFACE: Ideally, these are done on grass which is a softer surface. You need about 30-100 yards depending upon the drill, but most of the shorter actual SAQ warm-up drills only need about 30-40 yards.

FOUNDATIONAL STRUCTURE & ALIGNMENT

- **Feet:** Should be aware of “Tripod” position, using balls of feet and arch to absorb shock, and concerns with “heel striking” and force production. Be aware of “Chi Running” or barefoot running technique on balls of feet.
- **Shoes:** “Motion Control” shoes prevent feet from working naturally. These can actually “increase” force into ankles, knees, hips, and spine.
- **Ankles:** Ankles need good “mobility” (freedom of movement) to facilitate proper running and navigate uneven ground. Ankles also need “stability” (control of movement) so they don’t collapse under stress—often resulting in pronation where the foot folds inward towards midline. If you have an ankle problem—you won’t have efficient running form, so pay attention to true foundations of running which are feet and ankles...and what you put on them too.
- **Knees:** With linear “straight line” running, knees should track over feet generally. Be aware of “valgus” forces which mean knees collapse inward to midline putting excessive force on inside knees.
- **Hips:** Should be neutral meaning they line up knees and feet pointing FORWARD instead of externally rotating outwards. If you want to run forward without knee injuries—get hips aligned so knees don’t point in wrong directions. Hips must be mobile to deliver proper leg swing and align big toes for proper leverage during gait whether walking or running. Tight hips can also force spine to move laterally as hips swing up and down.
- **Arms:** Should swing naturally from shoulders and not cross midline. Cross-body movements decrease running efficiency. Arm swing intensity increases with maximal efforts like sprinting or running uphill. Proper arm swing helps *distribute ground forces* generated with foot strikes.
- **Torso:** Chest should be “open” to facilitate good breathing. Shoulders should not be rounded forward collapsing chest and limiting lung capacity.
- **Head & Neck:** Run with your legs and arms—not your head and neck. Gaze should be forward not up or down. If you need to look down—use eyes as much as possible—not neck. Also, “use eye movement” for peripheral vision as much as possible as turning neck sideways alters gait and impacts concentration.