

Finding the Right Track Event

Short Sprints (100m & 200m). Short sprints place a premium on power and stride frequency. Explosiveness and height are a big advantage, provided the athlete will commit to developing the strength levels needed to manipulate the longer limbs. The ability to start and run the first part of the race is primarily power dependent. Jumping ability is a good indicator of this ability. Of course the importance and necessity of good stride frequency and fast limb movements are obvious.

Jumps (Long Jump, High Jump, Triple Jump). Jumpers thrive on speed and elasticity. Jump heights and distances are proportionally smaller to a taller athlete, so height helps tremendously. Elasticity plays a much bigger role in the jumps than in the short sprints. Here you are looking not so much for the athlete who can jump, but the athlete who can bounce, the person who can land from a jump and quickly jump high again.

Long Sprints (400). The longer the sprint, the greater the role elasticity plays in the event. For this reason, candidates for the long sprints show characteristics that are remarkably similar to jump candidates. This explains the large number of jump-400 doubles you see at young ages. These athletes must show higher than average endurance levels, so a 400 runner who struggles with the running workouts might be a champion jumper in disguise, or a good jumper with high energy levels might be a champion in the long sprints.

Hurdles (100m Hurdles & 300m Hurdles). Hurdlers thrive on speed, elasticity, mobility and coordination, with the mobility and coordination element setting them apart from long sprinters and jumpers. Never neglect the speed element. Height (particularly long leg length) is a great help in the men's sprint hurdles. The high frequency demands and low hurdle heights of the women's sprint hurdles often aid shorter athletes, so sprint candidates who lack height often find a home here. The same qualities, combined with higher than average endurance levels point to success in the long hurdle races.

Throws(Shot Put, Discus, Javelin). Good throwers show high power levels. They also show good speed qualities. In fact, many elite throwers can compete well with elite sprinter in very short races. While running speed is not essential, the ability to move body parts fast (especially the throwing arm) is essential to the event. The throwing events don't show cyclic movements as we see in running, so coordination is a must. Body types required in the throws are quite different than those seen in the other speed and power events. Good height, wide shoulders and long limbs create leverage advantages, although a fast athlete can succeed to some degree in the throws without these advantages. Body mass is typically considered as essential to the throws, but the lighter implements used in women's and high school boys throwing events give slender body types great chance for success.

Pole Vault -Vaulters have a unique combination of agility, speed and upper body strength combined with high levels of body awareness. Athletes that have some gymnastics or diving in their background often make great vaulters.

Distance (800-mile-2 mile) Endurance combined with speed make for great distance runners. While endurance and the ability to run longer in training is key, leg speed is also critical to the success of the distance runner. These athletes may not be as explosive and quick at the start but have the ability to build and maintain speed over time. These athletes also show a sense of pace and focus during longer training sessions.