

Teaching the Fosbury Flop

~David Turnbull

- Nike Track Clinic Coaches
 - Portland, Oregon
- “The closest thing to flying - is over a high jump bar.”
- High Jump is speed, timing, courage, and belief—all in one moment.

This is why we do it!

Nina Fleck 2022-Best in meets 4'8". LAST DAY OF JUMPING 5'0"



Why the High Jump?



- Combines speed, power, ballistic ability, coordination, and confidence.
- One jump can change an athlete's belief in themselves...forever!



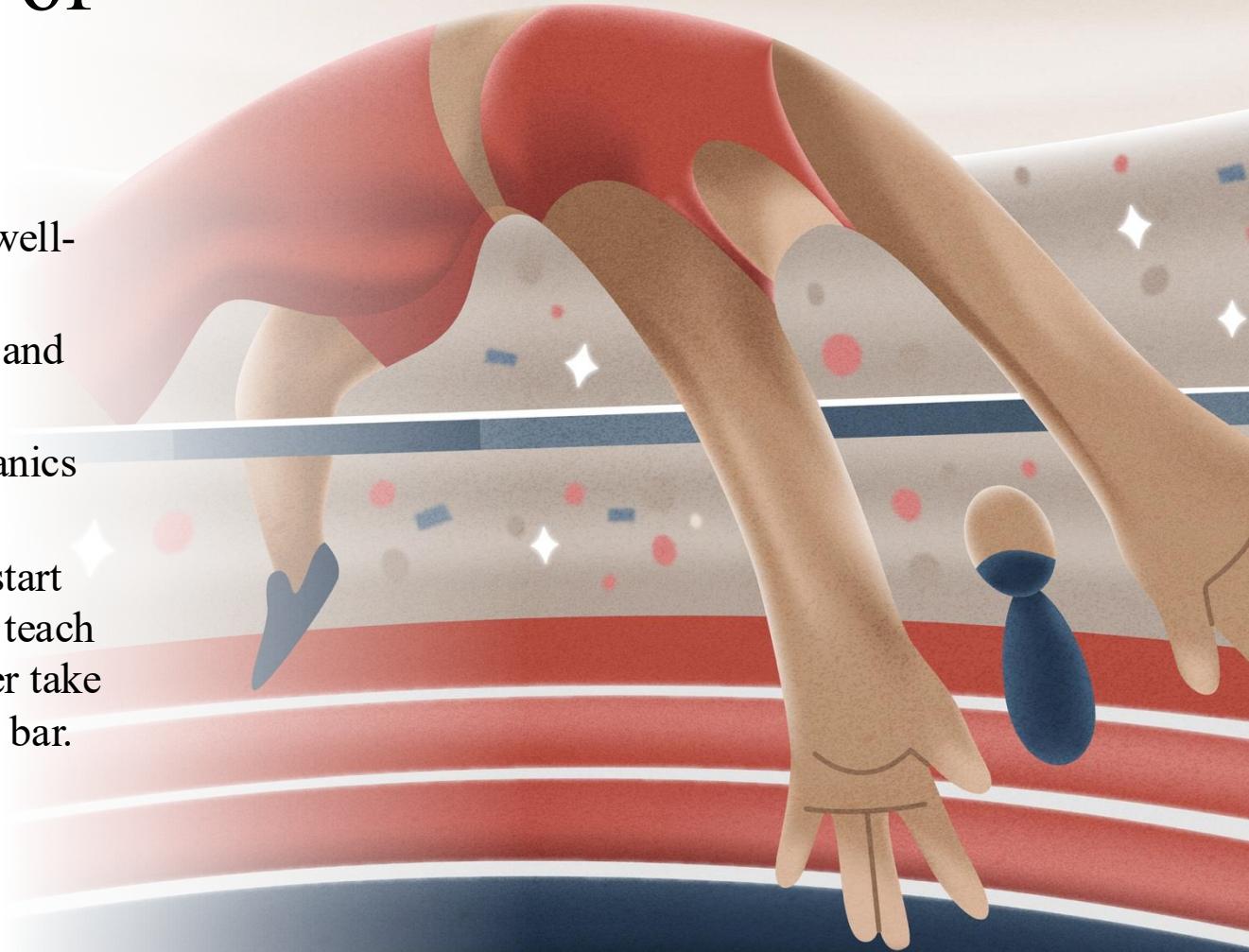
Jack Normand-
Freshman year, we
wouldn't allow him to
high jump. 6'11.25 HJ,
49'7" TJ and 23'4" @
NNU.

My Coaching Philosophy for the Flop

- Simple cues beat complex explanations
 - I break it down to three components
 - 1-Knee Drive
 - 2-Hips up/Head back
 - 3-Head up/Feet up
- Confidence grows from consistency
 - Self Efficacy – Success, Routine,
- Safety and fundamentals come before bar height
- Every jumper flies a little differently. There is no “one size fits all” in the high jump.

Safety: The Foundation of Flight

- Use properly sized, well-secured landing pits
- Check bar standards and crossbar placement
- Teach landing mechanics before full jumps
- I personally always start with scissor kicks to teach knee drive and proper take off position from the bar.

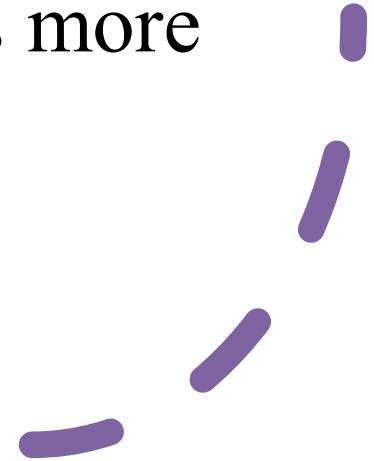


The Fosbury Flop: Overview

- Introduced by Dick Fosbury (1968 Olympics)
- Back-first bar clearance using rotational forces
- Allows athletes to jump higher with less vertical force
- Today's universal competitive technique

The Approach: Setting Up Flight

- Typically 8–10 total steps
- First steps: controlled acceleration
- Final 3–5 steps: smooth curve
- Consistency matters more than speed

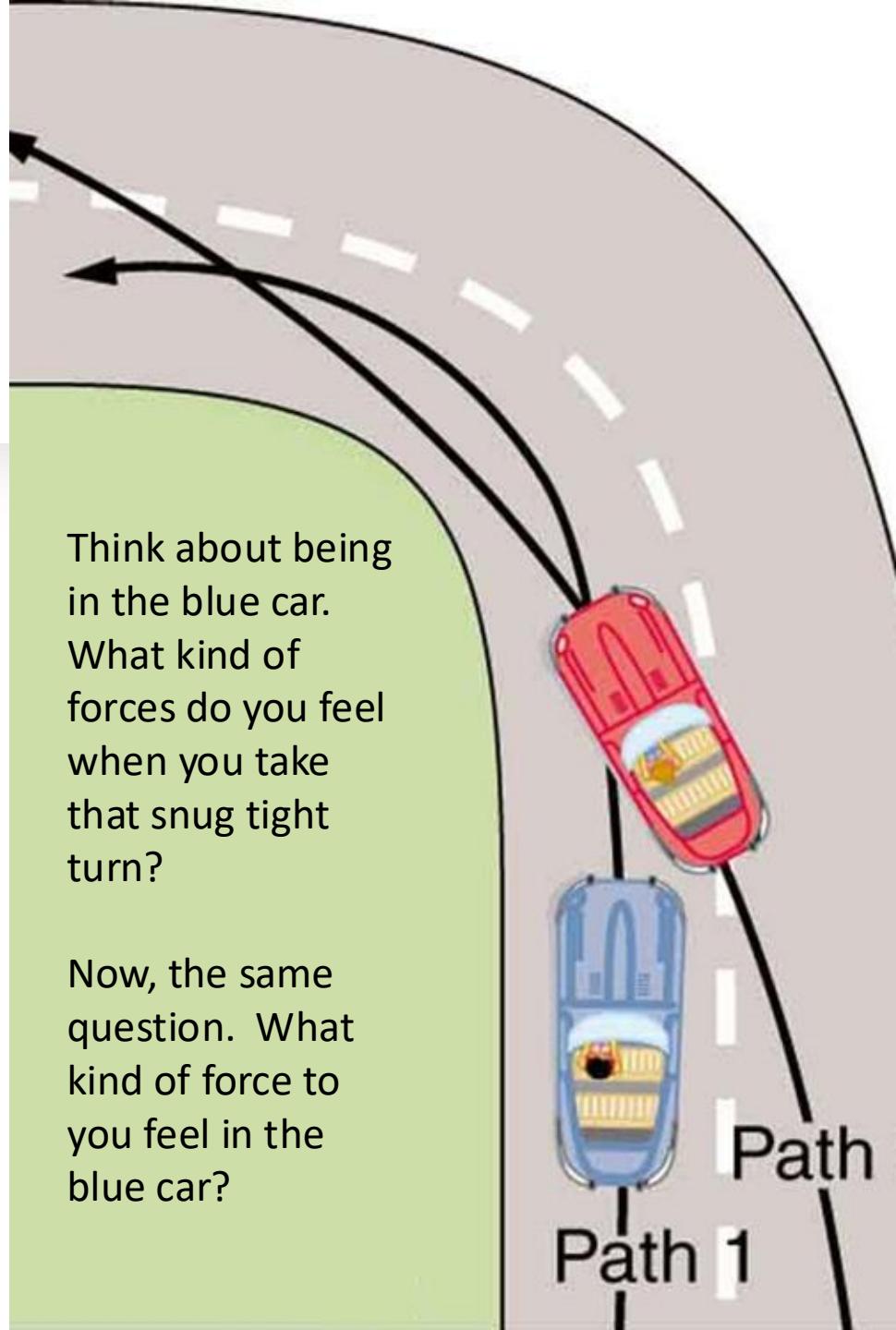


The Curve: Creating Rotation

- Curve away from the bar, not into it
- Slight inward lean (away from bar)
- Prepares body for natural rotation
- Think: running around a large circle
- Look at these two cars. Both accomplishing the same goal, but different approaches.
- Does a person's center of mass, strength, speed, elasticity play a role in the approach?

Think about being in the blue car. What kind of forces do you feel when you take that snug tight turn?

Now, the same question. What kind of force do you feel in the blue car?



Takeoff: The Moment of Truth

Take off from the outside foot

Free knee drives up and across

Tall posture — jump UP, not into the bar

Arms drive vertically for lift

Bar Clearance: Flying the Flop

Head and shoulders lead first

Arch the back as hips rise

Hips clear before legs

Bring heels over the
bar***common mistakes here!

Landing: Finishing the Jump Safely

Land on upper back and shoulders

Chin tucked to chest

Relax into the pit

Confidence in landing builds aggression in takeoff

- Drill, Drill, Drill!

Common Beginner Errors

Approach too
fast or
inconsistent

Leaning
toward the
bar

Taking off flat
or collapsing

Watching the
bar

Essential Drills for New High Jumpers

Scissor

Scissor jump drills

Approach

Approach run-throughs (no jump)

Pop

Pop-up takeoff drills

Curve

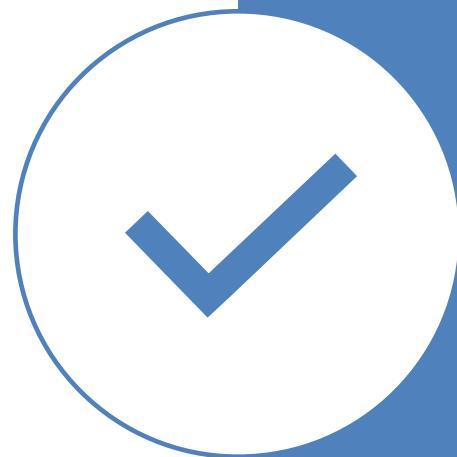
Curve running without a bar

Low

Low-bar flop progression

Teaching Progression

- Approach consistency
- Curve awareness
- Takeoff mechanics
- Low-bar clearance
- Gradual bar height increases



Practice Management Tips



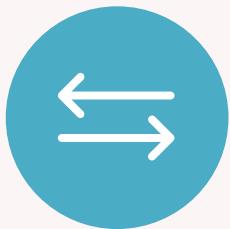
LIMIT TOTAL JUMPS
PER SESSION



QUALITY REPS OVER
QUANTITY



ROTATE JUMPERS TO
MANAGE FATIGUE



SHORT, CLEAR
FEEDBACK BETWEEN
JUMPS

Simple Coaching Cues

“Smooth,
Fast and
Cool”

“Tall at
takeoff”

“Jump up,
not in”

“Head
back, hips
high”

Final Thought

- When athletes trust the approach, they trust the jump
- When they trust the jump, they learn to fly
- Ultimately, the more they believe, the higher they jump!

