

Bear Crawls – Weeding Out the Dysfunction

By: Chad Estes, Engage Sports November 12, 2015

While the Bear Crawl is a great bodyweight conditioning exercise, it has been my experience that many kids do it in a very dysfunctional way. It is possible to put 'fitness' on top of dysfunction – but it doesn't mean that you should!

When we look at elite performers, we only see the 'tip of the iceberg' – and the lessons learned from the Titanic tell us there is always much more to what we see than meets the eye.

We see the plyometrics, we see the high intensity workouts and we see the supplements, but at the bottom of the pyramid of sporting skill lies one thing – MOVEMENT.

Without good movement skill, one will never become athletic. Without being athletic, one will never be a great athlete. What we learned as children serves as the foundation on which we build everything else.

If a kid can't crawl well, why do we think that when we add speed or load when they are standing that those limitations are going to disappear? Guess what – they won't! Training inefficient movement patterns will lead to injury.

Use the below instructions as a guideline to help your players 'weed out' any dysfunction that exists in their movement repertoire.

FOUR POINTS

Before just telling the kids to drop onto all fours and start bear crawling, allow them the opportunity to learn how to be on their hands and feet comfortably and effectively.

This can be done by providing the time for them to 'feel' what it's like to simply be on their hands and feet simultaneously (and in different combinations) without having to worry about moving too much from this position just yet.

Our brains thrive on novelty. In layman's terms, there is something called the 'least noticeable difference' (LND). The LND describes a neurological phenomenon that dictates that the more you slow down and decrease the effort, the more differences your brains can sense.

By allowing the kids to practice the steps below with a minimum amount of effort, it allows their nervous system to pick out many subtle differences in terms of the way in which they move. This will benefit their brains when it comes to organizing movement in the future.

Steps for Getting Comfortable on Four Points:



- 1 On hands and feet. Lift R hand, then L hand. Alternate. Lift R foot then L foot. Alternate both 8-10 times. Note, the entire foot makes contact with the ground – from heel to toe.



- 2 Lift L hand and L foot. Lift R hand and R foot. Alternate 8-10 times.



- 3 Lift R hand and L foot, then L hand and R foot. Alternate 8-10 times.



- 4 Lift both feet while keeping the hands planted on the ground. Lift both hands while keeping the feet planted on the ground. Alternate 8-10 times.



- 5 Lift R foot a little, and bend R knee: pass R knee through the imaginary line between the L foot and L hand, and sit. Return to four points.



- 6 Other side. Do 8-10 times each side.



7 Alternate in an easy, hopping movement. 8-10 times total.



8 Pass the R foot, leg extended, between L hand and L foot, to sit. Return to 4 points.



9 Pass the L foot, leg extended, between R hand and R foot, to sit. Return to 4 points.



10 Alternate side to side in a smooth hopping motion. 8-10 total

** All of the above should be done without any interruption in their breathing (i.e. no 'holding' of their breath).

*** The above can be 'practiced' several times per day.

In Conclusion

Allowing the kids you work with the opportunity to learn how to be in 4 Points (including all of the above variations) comfortably – as well as being able to move into and out of each position efficiently is absolutely essential prior to using the Bear Crawl as a conditioning tool.