

SUCCESSFUL LONG JUMPING

Steve Votsis

[Assignment: Write an informational process analysis essay in which you describe how something is done for a general audience of people who do not have the specific knowledge you do, but who would benefit from or be interested in your "insider" expertise.]

(1) Track and field, as sporting events, have survived from Greek and Roman times. With the World Championships recently completed and the Olympics to be held again next year, more people are viewing track and field meets than in recent history. Among these events, the long jump, in particular, has drawn special attention because Carl Lewis has been attempting to break Bob Beamon's world record. However, despite the recent attention, most people view the long jump merely as an easy and enjoyable event in which one simply runs fast and jumps. However, it is much more than that. There are some very explicit actions which must be done in order to have a successful jump. The road from the beginning to the end of a good long jump includes a series of steps which must be performed perfectly.

(2) The first step in a long jump is the run-through, which is the run a leaper makes from a spot on the runway to the point where he leaves the ground by jumping. The run-through is very important because it sets the stage for the jump itself. The jumper begins his run from a spot on the runway approximately ninety to one hundred feet back from the sandpit. This spot is always chosen earlier in practices. The athlete first stands at this point, concentrating on how he wants to jump. He then gathers momentum in his own way. (When I jumped, I gathered momentum by stepping forward and backward like a bull ready to charge his opponent.) Next, the participant begins his run, gathering consistent speed as he continues along the runway. An erratic run-through will result in a bad jump. If his speed is fast and consistent, however, he will be on his way to a great jump. This step usually takes a total of twenty seconds to complete.

(3) In the second phase of a successful leap, the athlete is concerned with the way in which he will leave the ground. At the end of the runway, there is a wide, white board. This is where the jumper leaves the earth. He must plant his jumping foot on this board rather hard in order to get a good vertical lift. If the participant has practiced his run-throughs and is consistent, his jumping foot will be put down very close to the front edge of the board, but not in front of it. As soon as he plants his foot, he forcefully lifts his opposite knee as high as possible. In addition, he must also thrust his arms from his sides toward the sky. These gestures result in getting the athlete as high in the air as possible. The higher he is, the longer he can remain in

the air, and the longer will be the jump. This crucial step of leaving the ground is what basically makes or breaks a jump.

(4) The third action in the execution of a running leap is staying airborne as long as possible while still maintaining forward movement. Two things are to be done during this stage. The first is kicking the legs in order to remain in the air. Some achieve this by moving their legs in a way that resembles riding a bicycle. This is called the hitch kick, for the jumper is hitching his legs back and forth. If the athlete cannot physically do this, he may, after lifting his knee, try to spread his legs slightly and thrust them forward so as to keep forward momentum. The leaper also needs to thrust both arms upward at the outset of his jump and then quickly move them forward in order to complete the leap. This will cause a bit more forward motion and may result in a longer jump. Although a jumper's distance is greatly determined by his run and foot-plant, his motion in the air can give him those few extra inches which help to win a meet.

(5) The fourth, and final, stage in completing a good jump is entering the sandpit. This part of the long jump, like the others, is very important to the length of the leap. As the athlete feels himself being pulled back down toward the ground, he extends his legs out, or reaches, in order to record the longest possible jump. After extending, a long jumper finally lands in the sandpit, ideally with both feet directly next to one another. If he lands with one foot in front of the other, his jump may be shortened by a full foot. Therefore, a successful jump can become mediocre rather easily. Along with reaching his legs out and landing correctly, a good leaper will lean forward after he lands to keep from falling backward and negating one or two feet from the jump. This action may cause the participant to become somewhat dirty; however, a long jumper will do what he has to do in order to perform well. Once the jumper exits the sandpit, he has finally completed the quick but hectic process of long jumping.

(6) To truly appreciate a long jumper's ritual and effort, you must attend a track meet. I was a jumper in high school and had hoped to continue here. Unfortunately, the sport of track and field has been eliminated at Valparaiso University. Although I can't continue jumping, I can still watch with many other new and devoted spectators as the long jump becomes a feature event at track meets throughout the world.