USA Track & Field Coaching Manual
by USA Track & Field

The USA Track & Field Coaching Manual is the official coaching guide of the sport's national governing body. The manual is designed to provide ready-to-apply information about every major event. The contributing authors to the USA Track & Field Coaching Manual have worked with national, world, and Olympic champions. Each is an event-specific expert who has demonstrated the effective use of the art and science of coaching to train their athletes to achieve maximum performance.

The USA Track & Field Coaching Manual is divided into five parts, allowing the reader to turn straight to an event of interest for comprehensive coverage. Part I, "Coaching Essentials," presents many of the most important facets of managing a successful program with useful insights on planning, promoting, and recruiting.

Chapter 1, "Organizing a Successful Program" (by Joseph L. Rogers) emphasizes the importance of creating a solid foundation on which to build a winning team, of fostering a positive environment, and of hiring and training coaches to make it the most knowledgeable staff possible.

In Chapter 2, "Predictive Testing of Athletes", Phil Henson and Paul Turner hold that it is no longer possible the USA to dominate Olympic and World Championship competitions by simply "showing up" and bringing those who have filtered to the top of an event on their own. Against this background they outline a programme which was created in an effort to stop youngsters with exceptional physical talent from going unnoticed. It enables coaches to recognize potential olympic athletes at a young age and predict their performance in track and field events.

Part II, Running Events, contains seven chapters loaded with material on proper mechanics, training regimens, and competitive strategies for the sprints, hurdles, distance races, and relays. The chapters are authored by Curtis Frye ("100 and 200 Meters"), Clyde Hart ("400 Meters"), Ralph Lindemann and John Millar ("100- and 110-Meter Hurdles"), Gary Winckler ("400-Meter Hurdles"), Mike Poehlein ("800 Meters to Mile"), Lance Harter and Harry Groves ("3000 to 10,000 Meters"), Rob Johnson and Karen Dennis ("Relays").

The next four chapters form Part III – Jumping Events. In this section the reader finds extensive information on technique and training for the Long Jump (presented by Kyle Tellez and Kathy James), Triple Jump (by Dean Hayes), High Jump (by Sue Humphrey and Doug Nordquist), and Pole Vault (by Jim Bemiller).

Throwing Events, Part IV, consists of chapters on the Shot Put (by Bill Godina and Ron Backes), Discus (Don Babbitt), Javelin (C. Harmon Brown, Bill Webb, and Bob Sing), and Hammer (Ken Bantum). The authors agree that there are two keys to success for athletes in these events, namely efficient mechanical form and generating maximum power.

Part V covers Racewalking (it seems a bit strange that this chapter, which is the shortest in the book, has been written by five authors, namely Jeff Salvage, Bohdan Bolwicaski, Gwen Robertson, Ian Whatley, and Gary Westerfield) and the multi-events of Heptathlon (by Cliff Rovelto) and Decathlon (by Harry Marra). These chapters are especially helpful when a coach has athletes who may not shine in a single running, jumping, or throwing event, but who are versatile, have a great work ethic, are highly conditioned, and have a will to win.

Almost all chapters go into considerable detail and include a tremendous amount of good information, with alternative techniques being explained very well. Coaches are given valuable tools from basic teaching methods to advanced workout patterns.

In summary, it can be said that the USA Track & Field Coaching Manual is a resource book for coaches at all levels. Although it contains nothing radically new, it could be a valuable addition to any serious track and field coach's library.

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Reviewed by Jürgen Schiffer