

**Nick Newman Interview (FULL TEXT VERSION)
(Featured in Athletic Weekly Magazine – 9/13/18)**



**AW: Tell us about your journey from athlete to coach and how you ended up in the States
(Who/what encouraged you to become a coach)**

Nick Newman: As a youngster I played many team sports and was an avid martial artist. At 14 I discovered basketball and had a dream to play in the USA. I spent the next few years developing as a player and was selected to play for an American influenced basketball academy in Durham (North of England), about 3 hours north of my hometown. At the academy I began my studies in coaching and Exercise Science.

My time at the academy resulted in an opportunity with an American High School in Ohio. Even with knowing very little about Ohio, I decided to take the chance and move to the US a few months later.

For several reasons basketball didn't work out. However, I was noticed for my jumping ability and was encouraged to make the transition to Track and Field

(Athletics). I started long jumping very late at aged 19 and wasn't very good at all in the beginning.

Tiffin University and head coach Jeremy Croy was the only school to offer me a scholarship and I accepted. To this day Jeremy and I remain friends. I owe him a lot as if it wasn't for him my life today would be very different.

I attended Manhattan College in New York for my remaining 3 years in University as they offered a more tailored degree program for me. It was here that my journey in athletics truly started. Attending Manhattan was the best decision I ever made. My coach, Dan Mecca taught me much of the coaching and programming fundamentals I know today.

I jumped 7.54m while at Manhattan and a few years later I became good enough to travel Europe a little while jumping in a few B level meets. I had a great time and met some lifelong friends.

My passion for exercise science and coaching started around the age of 15. I would often design training programs to improve my jumping ability for basketball. This desire became a blessing and a curse for my career.

During my long jump career I had many coaches (including myself) and almost every year would follow a new system, or philosophy of training. I owe much of my knowledge and coaching experience to this but at the same time it certainly hurt my development as a long jumper.

Dan Mecca introduced me to the fundamentals of training and jump-started my career. I was also blessed to work with UK Athletics' John Crotty for a year. I enjoyed my time with him as he introduced me to a new way of training and taught me much about biomechanics and jump specific training.

Jeremy Fischer and Dr. Ernie Gregoire are other well-known coaches I was lucky to work with. They taught me a great deal. Jeremy has a unique training system and philosophy, which was refreshing to learn. His results and accomplishments are undeniable. Dr. Gregoire is an incredible technical coach and further deepened my understanding of the jumping events.

My experience with such great coaches and mentors made my transition from athlete to coach a seamless one. As a result, once my athletic career was over I had earned a masters degree in Human Performance and had several years of coaching experience under my belt.

The professionalism, expertise, and encouragement of these men has been instrumental throughout my career thus far and I thank them all greatly.

**AW: Where are you based and who are you presently coaching?
(You can also mention other athletes that you have coached over the years,
NCAA achievements and so-forth...)**

Nick Newman: I currently coach the Jumps and Multi Events the University of California, Berkeley.

During my 2 years at Cal.

- Led Triple Jump sophomore Tuomas Kaukalahti to the 2018 MPSF and Pac12 conference title and 5th place ALL Americans honors at the NCAA Indoor National Championships.
- Led combined event athlete, Sophomore Tyler Brendel to No.2 on the Cal all time list in the indoor Heptathlon, a 3rd place finish at the 2017 MPSF Indoor Track & Field Championships, and a 3rd place finish at the 2017 PAC12.
- Led Triple Jumper Ashley Anderson to a 3rd place finish at the 2017 and 2018 PAC12 Outdoor Championships and a 2-time national qualifier.
- Led Triple Jumper Isabella Marten to 2nd place finish at the 2017 MPSF Indoor Track & Field Championships.

- Notable Cal athletes during my time here:
 - Tuomas Kaukalahti – LJ / TJ – 7.35m / 16.33m
 - Sanjay Kettles – LJ – 7.42m
 - Tristen Meye – LJ / TJ – 7.29m / 15.52m
 - Jared Geredes – 100m / LJ - 10.75 / 7.22m
 - Jack Phillips – HJ – 2.10m
 - Jayln Jackson – LJ / TJ – 7.58m / 15.18m (HS)
 - Hakim McMorris – Multi – 7257 (HS)
 - Tyler Brendel – Multi – 5674 / 7413
 - Noelle Schiller – LJ – 6.14m
 - Isabella Marten – LJ – 6.06m / TJ – 13.05m

Coaching Highlights: California

- 3 NCAA All Americans.
- 5th place - Men's Triple Jump – 2018 NCAA Indoor National Championships
- MPSF Conference Champion Men's Triple Jump
- PAC12 Conference Champion Men's Triple Jump
- 8 Conference Podium finishes (MPSF / PAC12)
- 58 Pr's across 19 athletes coached
- 10 All Time Top 10 School marks

Coaching Highlights: Other

- Coached Blessing Ufodiana to 14.06m during the 2011 season. Blessing earned a podium place at the 2013 USATF Championships.

- Coached Joshua McClam (NC) to a PB of 7.77m in the long jump during the 2018 season.
- Developed a strong coaching foundation spending 7 years coaching youth athletes across all sports and skill ranges.

AW: Do you think that the opportunities to become a professional coach are limited in the UK and do you think this needs to change. As a related aside do you think that the quality of UK coaching suffers as it relies on so many amateurs?

Nick Newman: I'll start by saying that I have been removed from the UK since 2002 and have limited experience on this subject.

However, I am aware that the number of full time paid athletics coaches within UK or GB athletics for example is very limited. More highly educated and experienced coaches would certainly benefit the development of more athletes. I don't think there's any argument there. More lottery funding should be used in this area however because most are not in a position where they can do it for free.

I think there are many excellent coaches in the UK – many of which no one has heard of. Maybe they work at the grass roots level and work other fulltime jobs. A lack of funding can limit opportunity and more importantly the desire for coaches to further their education.

A small number of full time coaches monopolizing the country's elite athletes is a mistake in my opinion and is an issue that could benefit from more funding and development opportunities at all levels of athletics.

AW: Would you consider a return to the UK (Europe) to coach?

Nick Newman: I would love to return to the UK and / or Europe one day. My experiences thus far could greatly benefit European training centers and federations and I hope one day I can share them.

AW: Have you any thoughts on how coach ed could be improved?

Nick Newman: Nothing is more important than hands on experience and the foundation gained from coaching youth athletes of all sports and levels. Today there are too many graduates with advanced degrees who have never been in the trenches so to speak.

Youth coaching and science education should be synonymous as you move through the ranks with general movement, awareness, and motor control taking priority during the coaches' education process.

I didn't consider working with elite athletes until I had spent 3-5 years coaching 8-14 year olds on the basics of movement and control. The lessons learned were by far the most important in my career so far.

Another important aspect of coaches' education is mentorship. Young coaches must make it a priority to seek out those of more and / or differing experience and expertise. Coaches in other sporting realms can provide valuable lessons and perspective otherwise lost from not venturing out of your own comfort zone.

AW: N/A Do you do work (coaching or otherwise) outside of athletics?

Nick Newman: I work full time at Cal as a coach. This involves coaching, mentoring, recruiting, and other administrative duties.

I coach several athletes via correspondence training from Track and Field and professional beach volleyball.

I am a writer for simplifaster.com, and am currently working on Edition 2 of my 2012 book entitled *The Horizontal Jumps: Planning for Long Term Development*.

AW: Where and how did you develop your coaching skills and are you further developing those skills and are there any resources that you would recommend for other coaches to follow/look-up?

Nick Newman: Successful coaching is dependent on 4 key aspects. The knowledge of science, along with the ability to observe, communicate and adjust. There is no quick way to learn this.

My ability to coach derived from my experience and failings as an athlete, my education and research, the mentorship I received, and through thousands of hours of observation and hands on coaching.

Combined, these experiences created the "coaching sense", or "coaching feel" that I have today. At this point I don't have to follow the rules as much as I did in the beginning and I feel a great sense of freedom while coaching.

Now, I spend time observing coaches and athletes from other sports more than from Track and Field. The differences in culture, psychological dynamics, rhythms, and movement trends are fascinating. I particularly enjoy watching the swim teams here at Cal. They present a world-class culture that is unmatched. Their achievements in the pool further validate their attention to detail and work ethic.

The majority of reading / studying I do now relates to psychology and philosophy. As I learn more about my athletes unrelated to sport, the more effective I am at connecting with them during it.

In terms of program and training design I read everything I can written by Tudor Bompa. I return to his work every off-season and touch on it throughout the year. His work is the foundation for all specific program design and is communicated in a concise, easy to understand manner.

I enjoy digging out the oldest soviet training programs I can find as well. They were ahead of their time in terms of exercise selection and general periodization and I still take from certain aspects of their philosophy.

I do not read sport science research very often. I find case studies, and practical application far more valuable.

AW: You follow/are an advocate of Dan Pfaff why so and do you have other mentors?

Nick Newman: I met Dan in 2010 during an England squad selection in Austria. He was coaching Greg at the time but was available to advise others during the trip. Like many, I was drawn to him and wanted to hear him speak. I had been around various greats in their respective fields but had never met anyone with more knowledge and experience as him. Much of his speaking at the time was over my head but later I would understand its value.

Much of his philosophy resonates with me. He offered me an open line of communication and has been there when needed ever since. While others ignored me, or responded with one-liners, he offered a lot more. He has publicly and privately supported me and I am greatly appreciative of that.

The likes of Dan Pfaff, Dan Mecca, Jeremy Fischer, Boo Schexnayder, Randy Huntington, John Crotty, Dr. Gregoire, Tudor Bompa & Carlo Buzzichelli have all personally helped shape my coaching, programming, and technical philosophies over the years.

AW: Having had UK athletes from my group go to various US colleges there seems to be an American way of doing things - as I'm sure there is a British way - do you see that, and does that make it more difficult for UK and European athletes to adapt?

Nick Newman: The most common difference I have found between the US and Europe is in the general structure of the weekly set up. Session components such as acceleration, plyometrics, or weight training seem to be isolated more in the European set ups. In the US, training tends to be grouped and alternated by intensity and energy system usage.

I have seen both successful and unsuccessful transitions from European to American methods. I had great success last season with a Finnish jumper and improved his indoor PR from 16.00m to 16.33m and earned a 5th place finish at NCAA Nationals. He came from a traditional European style program that included minimal general training, with lots of bounding, special exercises and maximum strength development.

Although he reached a relatively high standard with that style of programming I felt there were obvious reasons why he would benefit from the training balance my system provides.

The most important aspect of any coach or philosophy change is that athletes communicate, and coaches listen. I made it clear from day one we were a team and compromises on both side needed to be made. We had a great working relationship from the start and never had any glitches throughout the season.

In situations where European athletes struggle to transition there is a likely a communication issue, or a lack of openness from athlete or coach.

Is it important to mention that all American Universities work independent of each other. Although commonalities exist among education or certifications between the majority of college coaches, there remain vast differences in the programming and coaching methodology used at the collegiate level.

European athletes should be diligent in their quest to attend a US College and should not simply accept the first scholarship they are offered.

AW: Why, too, do US coaches tend not to value the input from the visiting athlete's coach? (This has been my experience even with a European junior champ and a desire on the part of the coach to want to seriously change technique and conditioning).

Nick Newman: Unfortunately, I have seen this as well. I can only speak for myself and will say that I learn as much about my athletes training history as possible. My training system is naturally adaptable and takes on the needs of individuals in a seamless manner.

Technical flaws that obviously hurt performance should be addressed. I too needed to change several aspects of my Finnish jumpers technique. This however was a mutual decision and one that came with significant discussion and understanding on both parts.

AW: There also seems to be a strong emphasis on weight training and it's often presided over by a non-specialist track and field specialists - I'm relating to my experiences here and it would be good to hear what you think....

So, following on, what would you recommend to a UK athlete considering attending a US college?

Nick Newman: The majority of US Colleges have a separate Strength and Conditioning department with full time staff. Each staff member works with one or several sports. Their experience or even interests are sometimes not taken into account when being assigned a particular sport. This set up can work seamlessly or can be a major headache.

I am extremely lucky at Cal in that our Strength and Conditioning Coach, Courtnee Butler is fantastic. She is extremely open minded, excellent at communicating, and has a great sense of how all components of the program must interrelate. Courtnee and I work closely together and have great trust and understanding.

This is certainly not the case at all US Colleges. I have many frustrated coaching colleagues who battle their Strength and Conditioning Coach on a daily basis.

Poorly designed, progressed, and connected strength programs can break a Track and Field athletes performance fairly easily.

Again, the best advice I can give is that European athletes do research on all aspects of their potential US Coaches philosophy, training set up, and support staff roles. Be candid with the coach, the majority of the time they will be honest with athlete.

AW: Have you or would you like to coach other events? (Noting you do jumps & multis). How do you pick up the knowledge to coach a varied number of events?

Nick Newman: Naturally, I enjoy coaching the sprints and hurdles and feel very comfortable with all events from 60-400m.

My favorite event to program for is the Multi events. It is a true game of chess with ever changing parts. At Cal the multi eventers do their pole vault and throws technical training with our event specialist coaches. As my career develops I would like to make these events a priority for gaining experience and knowledge.

AW: What have been important milestones in your development as a coach?

Nick Newman: Coaching myself from 7.54m to 7.80m was important for me. It forced me to be present in the journey. It taught me so much. Mostly what not to do. The trial and error was invaluable and probably save many of my future athletes.

My time coaching Blessing Ufodiana was special. She was my first elite level talent our first year together will never be forgotten. She was a mature athlete when we

met with many years of training experience. For several years she had plateaued around the 13.20m mark and I presented a new way of thinking for her. That season she PB'd almost every meet including her 14.06m at The Prefontaine Classic. Helping her to realize 14 meter potential so quickly was extremely fulfilling.

My first year coaching in the NCAA was of course memorable. My decathlete earning indoor and outdoor conference podium places along with 26 PB's was very special. My first NCCA ALL American coaching honor during my second season makes the list also.

I do not take for granted what we have been able to achieve at Cal during my first 2 years. My athletes have incredible character and work ethic and deserve all the success in the world. They make my job easy.

AW: What is your approach to jumps coaching? How much has your philosophy to jumps coaching changed over your years in coaching? Could you provide a little information on your training planning process perhaps and what the keys are to develop a long jumper?

Nick Newman: My book *The Horizontal Jumps: Planning for Long Term Development* talks in detail about this topic. For the purpose of this interview I will try to keep it brief.

Our primary end goal categories are speed, speed-strength, reactive strength, and efficiency of technique. Each goal can be broken down into a hierarchy sub categories. The development of each sub category is essential as we move up the chain of specificity.

Generally speaking I train specific qualities year round. Everything we do has a close relationship with the end goals.

Developing a foundation means that each specific quality is progressed through a continuum. For example, sprinting speed is priority and can be a stubborn developer for many. An important foundational area of speed is the ability to accelerate. As a result we begin aspects of acceleration training from day one. Synonymous with acceleration development is heavy implement throwing, static plyometrics, and maximum strength work in the weight room etc. Benefits gained from these training methods are strongly linked and make up the bulk of our initial preparatory cycles.

Maximum strength development takes priority early in the year. I am a firm believer in the benefit of high levels of maximum strength and RFD in Deep Squats, Reverse Lunges, Power Clean, Clean Pulls, and RDL's. The primary strength program will always see variations of these exercises.

The periodization of specificity sees the following shifts (in no particular order):

- Bilateral to unilateral exercise choice
- Full range of motion to specific range of motion
- Slow maximum force to fast maximum force
- Acceleration to maximum speed to assisted maximum speed
- Approach rhythm to approach speed
- Short approach jumps to full approach jumps
- Static multi directional plyometrics to speed based linear plyometrics
- Resisted Jumps to body weight jumps to assisted Jumps
- Maximum strength to speed-strength
- General strength & general fitness – Steady inclusion all year

In a nutshell, we sprint, jump, throw, lift heavy, lift fast, and develop technique multiples times a week all year.

We use a specific testing battery and test often throughout the preparatory cycles. These tests fall seamlessly within our training plan and are easy to monitor.

Key tests used are as follows:

- 40m Sprint (Electrically timed – 30m+10m)
- Fly 20m Sprint (35m run in for Men, 25m for Women)
- Approach 11-6-1m (Electronically timed)
- 12 Stride Jump
- Standing 4 Bounds + Jump
- Max 4 Bounds + Jump
- Power Clean
- Kaiser ½ Squat Power Output
- Deep Squat

We do not development aerobic qualities or muscular endurance past the minimal levels required to perform recovery strides, body weight circuits, and pool recovery routines.

While the subtlety's of the program is individualized based on multiple factors I can say that the system tends to cover all bases. It allows for easy adjustments based on testing numbers, daily stressors, etc.

In terms of how my philosophy has changed over the years. Today I am far more aware of the time and repetition required to significantly improve the special qualities related to jumping far. These must be addressed all year. I used to believe short isolated training cycles were enough to develop each quality.

I greater understand the connection between each training method and training goal. I now see the dots joining during training cycle, whereas I couldn't before.

At this point, I'm able to successfully deviate from "the plan" and I believe that having the ability to do so according to athlete needs will lead to optimal results I believe these are natural evolvments for many coaches.

AW: What advice as a coach would you give to your former athlete self?!

Nick Newman: The training and adaptation process takes consistency and time. Although I never stopped training I was constantly experimenting with different programs. The first piece of advice would be to trust the program and stick with it. My improvement while at Manhattan College was from 6.86m to 7.54m. I had no reason to not trust that process.

Secondly, I would advise against obsessing about specific distances and instead focus on training and competing.

Third, I would recognize the type of jumper I was and never stop developing my natural strengths. After my time Manhattan College I focused almost solely on improving speed. My signature was strength and power output and my ability to takeoff. In my quest for speed I neglected these qualities.

AW: What advice would you give to jumps coaches out there working in clubs and with young athletes? Perhaps 4-6 key points that they should always consider when coaching to this age group.

Nick Newman:

- Focus on developing kinesthetic awareness, coordination, and control above everything else. Challenge these qualities in creative ways and keep it fun.
- Focus on developing good technical habits and teach them to correct others in areas related to posture and basic technical positioning. Target movements should be squatting, lunging, hip hinging, bridging, various starting positions, stopping and change of direction, running, sprinting, skipping, hopping, vertical and broad jumping, and various throwing actions.
- Include a high variety of exercises and movements for developing strength and stability.
- Keep training general and development across all related events. Recognize the explosive kids and train them across all speed/power events. Likewise with the endurance kids while keeping training fun and diverse.

- Encourage teamwork and team games during training. Track and Field can be isolating but there are plenty of team games that can be used to develop related qualities.

AW: What type of training planning model do you use? Perhaps expand on this a little as to why you think it works...

Nick Newman:

My regular training week set up is as follows: (Jumpers)

Monday – Acceleration / Static Plyometrics / Max Strength (weight room)

Tuesday – Part Technical Jumps/ General Strength / Medicine Ball

Wednesday – Speed / Running Plyometrics / Speed-Strength (weight room)

Thursday – General Strength / Medicine Ball / Pool Recovery

Friday – Whole Technical Jumps / Speed / Complex Weights (weight room)

Saturday – Special Endurance / Plyometrics

Sunday - Rest

I use 3-week reverse step loading cycles with every 3rd week seeing a reduction in density and volume. Testing occurs naturally during each week as well as during the tapered 3rd weeks.

While the set up remains similar throughout the preparatory period the weekly content can look significantly different depending on the month or cycle focus.

The set up and periodization model I use is successful (80%+ setting PB's during their first year using it) for the following reasons:

- Training quality is high
- Training specificity is high
- Training consistency is high
- Training intensity is high
- Training components are constantly connected to event specific repetition
- Athletes are stressed and tapered regularly
- The program sees a balance and contrast in training components
- Progressive training themes limits the chance of injury
- Training progressions are linked across all individual components
- Any jumper “type” can fit the system

AW: How do you monitor rest and recovery with your athletes?

Nick Newman: Through constant communication and observation. It is a daily task that requires diligence and a caring eye. My athletes are very vocal and I encourage it from day one. They tell me how they are feeling and over time become very in tune with their bodies.

We perform the same warm-ups on specific days each week. This can be very helpful as I begin to identify trends with each athlete in context of time within the cycle etc. An athletes mood, posture, reactivity, coordination, and general differences from his/ her norms are all signs to look out for.

Training sessions are modified often depending on the number of red flags I see on given day. Training quality is priority and it is my job to monitor and adjust so each athlete can gain an appropriate benefit.

AW: Do you have a relatively large amount of biomechanics and sports science back-up available to you that has helped your coaching?

Nick Newman: I collect a ton of data from each athlete and analyze video daily. It is all performed in house by myself only.

AW: Do you have any fundamental conditioning exercises that'll you use i.e. go-to exercises? Please describe/list.

Nick Newman: The following exercises / methods are commonly used as primary components within the training program:

Acceleration / speed development:

- 10-30m sled / hill sprints
- Fly 10,20,30m sprints
- 20-60m regular sprints
- Over-speed (bungee) 40-60m sprints
- Sprint – Float – Sprint variations – 60-120m

Plyometrics:

- In place vertical jump variations
- Low intensity hop and stick variations
- Vertical / horizontal bounding combinations
- Low – high depth jumps
- Vertical / Horizontal hurdle jumps
- Resisted (weight vest) versions of all above options
- Assisted jumping (Bungee) variations

Strength:

- Olympic lifting variations
- Deep / Half / Quarter / Pause / Concentric squat variations
- As above performed unilaterally
- RDL variations
- Lunges in all directions
- Low / Medium / High box step ups
- Kaiser squat

Jump Technical:

- 6-20 step full jumps
- 6-12 step takeoffs with weight vest
- Full approach runs / takeoffs
- Variations of steering and targeting drills from all approach lengths
- Minimum number of part drills. Only used if absolutely needed.

AW: What are your thoughts on weight training for jumpers? Can it be over emphasised??? And what are viable alternatives (if any)???

Nick Newman: For 95% of jumpers I believe weight training is very important. There will always be those who succeed without it but that alone is not proof that weight training is unnecessary.

Like any aspect of training, weight training can be overused, can be programmed ineffectively and can be a likely reason for poor performance or injury.

It can also be an extremely effective method for developing a foundation of strength and power.

We lift 3 days a week during the fall and twice a week during competition months (January – July).

Our primary aim during early fall is to develop high levels of maximum strength and rate of force development. We spend 6-9 weeks with an emphasis on maximum strength before moving toward speed-strength and complex training methods. During the competition period we maintain maximum strength levels through focused sessions every 2-3 weeks. I have found this along with specific complex and contrast training is very effective at maintaining and even improving maximum strength during the competition period.

Other related training methods I call bridge builders. Methods such as heavy sled sprinting, special jump exercises with barbells, and long/triple jumping with weight vests do a great job of bringing weight room strength closer to event specific work.

AW: In terms of jump technique has there been any recent new ideas/re-inventions that you can think of? Or have you had any eureka moments?

Nick Newman: I think we have a strong sense of what is ideal. How we communicate it is the interesting part. Coaching and developing technique is an individual trial and error game. It can be different for everyone.

I have had break through moments with an athlete and days later that cue, or analogy has failed with someone else. It is what makes coaching a great challenge.

AW: What are your long-term goals as a coach?

Nick Newman: I admire Dan Pfaff's path. He began coaching youth and high school sports, worked through the collegiate ranks and led some of the NCAA's elite programs. Along the way he developed professional and Olympic athletes and became an educator, mentor, and now a coaches coach.

I would like a similar path but perhaps in a more specialized way. A long time from now I would like to be known as one of the greatest jumps coaches and contributors of all time.

AW: Why should someone take up coaching?

And following on, what do you like the most about coaching and the least?(!)

Nick Newman: Beyond being a musician, actor, or professional athlete I can't think of too many better career options really.

I get to make a difference in young people lives while helping them achieve their dreams. This is number one for me. It is an incredible moment when an athlete achieves something special and you know you've been a major contributor to it.

The diversity of daily duties is appealing to me also. I am not stuck at a desk for long periods of time and generally am allowed a flexible schedule.

Daily tasks vary but generally include, hands on coaching, coaches meetings, recruiting calls / emails, recruiting visits, programming, video analyze, research / study, and various other administration tasks. I enjoy every aspect of the job.

The aspect of the job I like the least is the constant question, "how could I have helped this athlete better?" or "what more could I have done".

It is difficult when several in the group improve significantly and one or two don't. This is something I will always struggle with.