

# Why Movement Science May Be the Next Revolution in Football

*Everyone Saw the Wins. I Saw the Technique.*

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Last season, college football fans were captivated by Indiana.

The Hoosiers weren't supposed to be there. They weren't supposed to compete with the giants of college football. Yet week after week they exceeded expectations.

Many observers saw a remarkable season. Some saw a team of destiny. Others saw a great coaching story.

I saw something different.

I saw one of the most technically efficient football teams in America.

Watch the film. Watch their defensive backs tackle in space. Watch their receivers run routes. Watch their running backs enter the line of scrimmage. Watch their offensive linemen execute blocks. The consistency jumps off the screen.

That raises an interesting question: How does a program without the nation's most talented roster consistently outperform expectations?

The answer may have less to do with talent and more to do with teaching.

I don't know exactly how Indiana built that environment. Frankly, they may not want to tell us. But after more than four decades coaching elite athletes in Olympic events, I have a strong suspicion.

Throughout my career, athletes under my direction won more NCAA individual championships in the throws and jumps than any coach in NCAA history. I was fortunate to coach Olympians, NCAA record holders, national champions, and athletes who performed on the biggest stages in sport.

That success did not come from discovering stronger athletes. It came from developing more efficient ones.

Very early in my coaching career, I recognized something that changed the way I viewed athletic development forever.

Events requiring extraordinary force production are not won simply because an athlete is stronger. They are won because an athlete can repeatedly apply force through efficient movement patterns

under the most stressful conditions imaginable.

Anyone can perform a movement correctly when relaxed. The question is whether they can perform it when everything is on the line.

At the Olympic Games, an athlete steps into the ring completely alone. Everything they have done for years has been building toward that moment. The crowd disappears. The coaches disappear. The training is over. The only thing left is the connection between the athlete's nervous system and the movement patterns that have been developed over thousands of repetitions.

When pressure becomes extreme, athletes stop performing what they are thinking and begin performing what they have truly learned. The nervous system falls back on its deepest habits.

This is why pressure reveals technical flaws. It is also why great athletes invest so much time developing movement patterns that can withstand stress.

The same principle applies in football.

Fourth quarter. Third-and-two. National television. Crowd roaring. Game on the line.

Athletes no longer have time to consciously think through every detail. The body must simply know.

That realization transformed the way I coached. I became less interested in movements that merely looked correct and more interested in movements that could survive pressure. Movements that could be repeated thousands of times. Movements that remained efficient when the nervous system became overloaded.

For decades, football has embraced strength science, nutrition science, sports medicine, recovery science, and analytics. Yet one area remains surprisingly underdeveloped: movement science.

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Unfortunately, football often confuses repetition with development.

For decades coaches have told athletes to get more reps.

But repetition is not development.

Repetition simply makes a movement pattern more permanent.

If the movement is efficient, repetition strengthens efficiency.

If the movement is inefficient, repetition strengthens inefficiency.

The nervous system does not care whether a movement is correct. It only learns what is repeated.

This is why quarterbacks are developed differently.

No coach tells a quarterback to throw ten thousand passes and hopes things work out.

Quarterbacks receive constant instruction. Constant correction. Constant feedback. Constant technical refinement. Year after year.

The football world already understands movement science.

We simply apply it almost exclusively to quarterbacks.

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Every position on a football field is built upon movement patterns. There is an efficient way to rush the passer, tackle, block, accelerate, and change direction. These are not simply coaching opinions. They are movement problems with scientific solutions.

The athlete must first understand the movement. Then the movement must be observed. Then corrected. Then repeated until it becomes automatic. This process is called motor learning.

If movement efficiency influences performance, injury prevention, consistency, and force production, then why aren't we treating movement development with the same seriousness that we treat strength development?

What would happen if every position in football received the same level of technical development that quarterbacks have received for decades?

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## **The Rules That Unintentionally Froze Technical Development**

There is another obstacle that rarely gets discussed openly.

The NCAA.

Not out of malice. The NCAA's offseason regulations exist to protect student-athletes — to ensure they have time to be students, to prevent programs from demanding year-round access, to create boundaries that safeguard their wellbeing.

Those intentions are legitimate.

But the unintended consequence is significant.

Under current NCAA rules, programs can develop stronger athletes during the offseason. They can develop faster athletes. They can develop healthier athletes. Strength coaches have structured access. Athletic trainers have structured access. Nutritionists have structured access.

What coaches are largely denied is structured offseason access to make athletes better football players.

You can add weight to a lineman's squat. You cannot spend the offseason refining his pass protection footwork under direct coaching supervision.

You can improve a defensive back's forty time. You cannot systematically rebuild his transition mechanics with a coach watching every repetition.

The NCAA drew a boundary around football instruction. The result is that the most critical element of athletic development — movement efficiency — has been left largely to individual initiative, limited practice windows, and whatever an athlete can figure out on his own.

The sport got stronger. The sport got faster. The sport got healthier.

It did not necessarily get more technically refined.

Here is what I believe: the NCAA may never change those rules. And it may not need to.

Because the system I have developed does not require them to.

Repetition with constant feedback, adjustment, and correction can be accomplished within the existing framework — it simply has to be approached creatively. Athlete-initiated voluntary work. Movement specialists reinforcing standards already established by the coaching staff. Video capture systems that allow feedback to travel without a coach needing to be present for every repetition.

The rules do not have to change for the development to improve.

That is the opportunity.

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## **The Missing Coach**

Modern position coaches are among the busiest people in athletics.

They recruit. Travel. Evaluate film. Install schemes. Manage meetings. Build relationships.

And somehow they are expected to become full-time movement specialists as well.

That expectation is unrealistic.

Position coaches should establish the technical model. But there is an emerging need for movement development specialists whose sole responsibility is helping athletes learn, refine, and retain efficient movement patterns.

Not replacing position coaches. Supporting them.

The same way strength coaches support them. The same way athletic trainers support them. The same way analysts support them.

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The next competitive advantage may not come from a new scheme. It may come from understanding how athletes learn movement and creating environments where technical excellence can be developed every day.

Under pressure, athletes do not rise to the occasion. They fall back on their training.

That is not a theory. That is how human performance has always worked.