

AGILITY FACTOR

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RING CRAFT FOR MUAY THAI



Saenchai is known for his elusive ability and ring craft

Agility refers to the ability to change direction quickly. In order to do so, movements must be done in the most efficient manner. While agility may be visible in many field-based sports (i.e. football, rugby), its relevance to Muay Thai is essential and I'll explain why.

In regards to Muay Thai, competitors are often faced with missed offensive opportunities, or alternatively, are forced to weather the brunt of an opponent's onslaught (defend) and being caught flat-footed. This article will outline the various types of agility training and provide simple progressive drills you can use in your conditioning training.

Two main types of agility are prescriptive (planned/sequenced agility patterns) or reactive (to an opponent or surroundings). Prescriptive

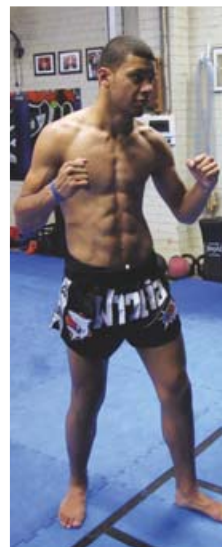


Figure 1. Athlete completing ladder drills using common footwork patterns.

Figure 2. Reactive agility introduced targeting a visual response. In this instance the athlete responds using their peripheral vision and accommodates accordingly. One partner tries to move away from the opponent while the other prevents the Velcro band from breaking.



agility allows athletes to train certain physiological mechanisms (for example, the stretch-shorten cycle) that will enhance explosive power, allowing for swift acceleration from a stationary position, or rapid deceleration of the body's inertia to be transferred in another direction. The more frequently this is trained, the faster the body's response, and as a result, the lighter an athlete will become on their feet. Prescriptive agility is great for beginners, warm-up drills, or learning new footwork patterns. Limitations with prescriptive agility are faced when extrinsic factors (outside of the athlete's control) such as an opponent or adjustment to their surroundings (ring confinements) are introduced.

Reactive agility encourages the athlete to effectively change direction in response to an extrinsic stimulus. The difference is the athlete must process the information received and accommodate accordingly in the most efficient way. This becomes particularly important for more advanced individuals during sparring or competition. Reactive agility is best trained within confinements of the sport (i.e., inside the ring), and in response to the likely stimulus (i.e., visual-opponent).

It's worth noting that often the best athletes in their sport have enhanced reactive agility as they have a 'good eye' for opportunity. Take for example



well-known Saenchai Sinbimuaithai, who is always there for a counter-strike, and his opponent is never quite able to make contact because of his elusive ability and ring craft. The more specific the reactive stimulus, placed in the most replicated environment, could help you too become that fighter. In regards to conditioning drills, too often trainers implement them in isolation, absent from the context of their sport. To maximise the positive transfer effect as a result of training a particular modality, it must be encouraged to be completed within the confinements of the sport. In other words, don't get stuck thinking your conditioning drills/sessions must be completed outside in a park or within a gym setting. Get in the ring, encourage variation, and you or your fighter will reap the rewards. **IK**

References

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Figure 3. Specificity of reactive agility training. In this instance the athlete uses confinements of the ring (ropes, shape, and size) to visually process (peripheral vision) their opponent's movements and accommodate within the restricted space.