

# Level 2 Track and Field



- This training is to certify coaches as Level 2 coaches for Track and Field.
- Certification (or recertification) is good for **3 years** from date completed.

# Level 2 Track and Field



This training will cover the following sections:

- Events
- Rules
- Registration and the divisioning process
- Track and Field resources.

Included is the Coaching Athletes training that will prepare you to use your sport-specific knowledge in coaching athletes with intellectual disabilities.

# Coaching Special Olympics Athletes



- For veteran Special Olympics coaches, this course serves as a reminder of the essentials of coaching.
- For new Special Olympics coaches, this course will help prepare you for your first role in coaching Special Olympics athletes.

# Coaching Special Olympics Athletes



The better the **coach** ...

the better the **experiences** ...

the better the **athlete!**



**Above:** A Special Olympics coach talking with a tennis athlete

**Left:** Special Olympics coach giving high fives on the sideline

# Course Overview



This course will cover specific topics related to:

## 1 - The Athlete



## 4 - Managing the Program

## 2 - Teaching & Training

## 3 - Preparing for & Coaching During Competition

# Unit 1 - The Athlete

Important Considerations concerning Special Olympics Athletes



## Psychological Considerations *(Learning)*



Medical  
Considerations

Social  
Considerations

# Unit 1 - Psychological Considerations



## **Motivation** – helping athletes maintain interest

- May have shorter attention span; harder to keep “on task”.
- May be motivated more by short-term rather than long-term goals.
- May learn better with more frequent positive reinforcement.

## **Perception** – helping athletes understand the sport in which they are participating

- May have impairments in sight or hearing.
- May have difficulty focusing attention on the appropriate object or task.

# Unit 1 - Psychological Considerations



**Comprehension** – helping athletes remember and perform the skill they have learned

- May find it difficult to understand verbal explanations of skills.
- May find it easier to learn through visual demonstrations.
- May have difficulty in understanding complex explanations.
- May take a longer time between learning multiple pieces of information.
- May have difficulty generalizing skills learned in one situation to a different situation.
- Written instructions may be more helpful than verbal, depending on the situation.



# Unit 1 - Psychological Challenges



<b>Psychological Item</b>	<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Action</b>
Perception	Easily distracted by noise	Control surroundings
Motivation	Easily discouraged, or having a feeling of failure	Focus on positive communication
Comprehension	Difficulty learning from verbal explanation or long instructions	Add demonstrations of skills, keeping instructions clear and concise

# Unit 1 - Psychological Challenges



## Motivation

- Challenge – Easily discouraged, or having feeling of failure
- Action – Point out positive things when the athlete is doing well

## Comprehension

- Challenge – Learning from verbal explanation or long instructions
- Action – Add demonstrations, hands-on walkthroughs of skills, keeping instructions clear and concise

## Perception

- Challenge – Easily distracted by noise
- Action – Control surroundings

**Right:** Athlete running by a crowd at track and field.



# Unit 1 - Medical Considerations



## Down Syndrome

- Approximately 10% of individuals with Down Syndrome have a condition called Atlanto-axial instability.
- This condition may cause possible injury if they participate in activities that hyper-extend or radically flex the neck or upper spine.
- Prohibited sports – equestrian, gymnastics, diving, pentathlon, butterfly and dive starts in swimming, high jump, alpine/snowboarding, squat (powerlifting) and soccer.



**Right:** Two athletes celebrate at swimming.

# Unit 1 - Medical Considerations



## Medications

- Understand that athletes may be taking medications that have physical side effects.
- Consult with head coach or head of delegation if concerns arise.

## Seizures

- The number of Special Olympics athletes with seizure disorders is higher than traditional athletes.
- Tasks to remember when assisting an athlete having a seizure:
  - Assist to a safe space around them;
  - Protect their head and neck; and
  - Lay on their side.

# Unit 1 - Medical Considerations



## Physical Disabilities

- Some athletes also have physical disabilities which may affect the sports they can participate in.
- Special Olympics has events for individuals who use wheelchairs, walkers or other assistance.
- Muscle strength may be needed for a sport and some athletes may not have the strength for that sport.
  - This might be due to lack of use or a permanent disability.
  - This will change how you as a coach approaches helping this athlete.

# Unit 1 - Medical Considerations



## **Autism**

- Approximately 20% of athletes have an autism diagnosis
- Approximately 50% of people with autism are non-verbal

## **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome**

- These athletes may consistently function better on performance tasks compared with verbal tasks. The more concrete the task, the better the performance.
- These athletes may tend to have attention and memory deficits and often display poor judgment in identifying right from wrong.

# Unit 1 – Medical Considerations Table



<b>Diagnosis</b>	<b>Consideration</b>
Down Syndrome	Family should ensure the athlete is screened for Atlanto-axial instability (see medical if necessary)
Seizure Disorder	Be prepared to protect and observe the athlete should a seizure occur and minimize adverse affects
Autism spectrum disorder	Understand that athletes will engage in self-stimulatory behavior (hand-flapping, jumping, etc.), and that it is not necessarily a problem
Attention deficit/hyperactivity (ADHD)	Shorten drills and provide one-to-one assistance when needed
Fetal alcohol syndrome	Demonstrate clear performance tasks

# Unit 1 - Social Considerations



## Economic Status

- May lack financial means to participate.
- May not have access to independent transportation.

## Social Skills

- May lack basic interactive skills.
- May lack language interpretation.

## Recreation at Home

- May lack physical activity.
- May lack encouragement/motivation.

**Right:** Basketball team huddles up for a breakdown





# Unit 1 - Social Considerations



All the following social considerations may impact an athlete's participation in Special Olympics:

- Inappropriate responses to social situations
- Extreme lack of endurance
- Lack of access to transportation

Our challenge as coaches is to develop a full understanding of our athletes and what they bring with them to a Special Olympics program.



**Left:** Caddie congratulates an athlete at a golf competition.

# Unit 2 – Teaching & Training the Athlete



**Top Left:** Basketball coach talking to team on sidelines

**Bottom Left:** Coach discussing strategy with an athlete



**Top Right:** Athlete getting prepared for powerlifting competition

**Bottom Right:** Coach getting athlete ready before track race



# Unit 2 - Organizing a Training Session



There are many ways to organize a training session for Special Olympics athletes.

There is considerable value in developing a consistent training routine that provides familiarity.

## **1. Warm-Up and Stretching**

- Specific to the sport
- Similar in every practice session
- Involve athletes in leading activity

# Unit 2 - Organizing a Training Session



## **2. Skills Instruction**

- Break skills into smaller tasks
- Involve as many athletes at a time as possible
- Practice skills directly related to competition

## **3. Competition Experience**

- Simulating game situations
- Work towards what the competition will look like

## **4. Cool-Down, Stretch, and Reward**

- Play a game related to the sport
- End each training with a cool-down activity and stretching

# Unit 2 - Training Sequence



1. Break down skills into small tasks or steps.
2. Put together tasks to form skills.
3. Use drills and activities that always involve many athletes.
4. Practice skills in situations that are related to the game or event.



**Above:** Athlete and trainer working on alpine skiing.

# Unit 2 - Training Sequence



<b>Step</b>	<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Consideration</b>
Tasks	Performing important parts of competition	Break down into individual parts
Skills	Performing series of tasks effectively that are necessary to perform a sport	Focus on the most important tasks for the sport
Application	Repeatedly demonstrate sport tasks in different situations	Provide game-like drills in practice
Competition	Putting essential sport skills into practice	Provide scrimmage opportunities in practice



# Unit 2 - Communication



Communication is key to immediately reinforcing desired behavior.

There are several key words that begin with a “C” which address what a coach should say:

- Clear
- Concrete
- Concise
- Consistent
- Command-oriented



**Left:** Coach and athlete share a high-five at first base  
**Below:** Coach and athlete having a conversation while at alpine skiing



# Unit 2 – Communication



<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Sport Example</b>
Clear	Use word that are easy to understand	“Swing the bat” Softball
Concrete	Connect words to something defined	“Jump forward” Long Jump
Concise	Use a few key words that cue a desired action	“Go to the free throw line” Basketball
Consistent	Use the same word or phrase for the same action	“Breathe” Swimming
Command-Oriented	Use words that reinforce a desired action	“On your mark. Set. Go.” Track and Field



# Unit 2 - Levels of Assistance



Each athlete needs to be met where he or she is.

It is important to use the appropriate level of instruction and assistance.

- Athletes with lower abilities may need more assistance
- Verbal assistance should always be paired with a demonstration
- Physical assistance may be needed to help an athlete get positioned



**Above:** Coach demonstrating the grip of a golf club to an athlete

# Unit 2 - Levels of Assistance



<b>Level of Assistance</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Sport Example</b>
Verbal	Tell the athlete what to do	Footwork: “run forward to the line; then stop”
Demonstration	Show the athlete the what to do	Basketball: have athlete watch while someone else shoots a free throw
Partial Physical Assistance	Place the athlete in the proper position	Golf: coach adjusts the athlete's hands on the golf club with the correct grip
Full Physical Assistance	Help the athlete through the entire motion of the skill	Bowling: coach moves the athlete’s arm through the entire bowling movement

# Unit 2 - Managing Athlete Behavior



A coach may often have certain expectations of an athlete that may not be realistic ... not because the coach does not care, but because the coach does not understand or appreciate the differences that may exist.

When an athlete shows inappropriate behavior, it may not be defiance, acting out or silliness.

These behaviors may simply reflect the person and/or what is operating in the moment.

# Unit 2 - Managing Athlete Behavior



<b>Athlete Behavior</b>	<b>Strategies to Improve Learning</b>
Swimmer has a short attention span	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Focus on a stroke for short periods of time</li><li>2. Provide multiple activities focusing on same task</li></ol>
Basketball athlete yells if they miss a shot	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Emphasize the other parts of the game</li><li>2. Work on shooting drills without a hoop, then evolve to shooting at a hoop</li></ol>
Bowler doesn't wait their turn	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Have a coach at the lane help with the order of bowlers, explain whose turn it is</li><li>2. Emphasize that the bowler will always follow the same person</li></ol>

# Unit 3 - Preparing & Coaching for Competition



A key goal of Special Olympics is to provide an opportunity for all athletes to experience success in competitions.

A Special Olympics athlete can benefit from many aspects of a competition, but nothing should be as important to the coach as the focus on the participation in the competition itself.

This section highlights ways to improve the quality of an athlete's competition experience.

# Unit 3 - Preparing for Competition



## Registration

- Provide accurate team roster information, qualifying times, and skills assessment scores.

## Official competition rules

- Make sure that you know the Official Special Olympics Rules.
- Teach your athletes the rules and, during training, phase out your verbal reminders about rules.
- At competition, coaches may have little or no opportunity to assist athletes when they are not following the rules. (A coach cannot be on the track with them!)



**Right:** A poly hockey official calls 'no goal'

# Unit 3 - Preparing for Competition



## **Supervision**

- Why are non-coaching support members important? There is a lot going on outside of the actual competition, including:
  - Transportation
  - Lodging (need for same-sex supervision)
  - Social activities
  - Multiple events to supervise
  - Awards ceremonies
- Create a supervision document that has athletes covered in every part of the competition

# Unit 3 - Preparing for Competition



## Travel and overnight

- Discuss overnight concerns with parents or group-home supervisors.
- Distribute a simple checklist of items to bring for athletes
- Make sure that all special medication needs are understood.
  - Coaches may have to assist with handling medications, so be sure to always have all medical forms and information readily available.
- Arrange an effective rooming situation that limits possible clashes between athletes



# Unit 3 - Competition-Day Coaching



## **Guidelines for success**

- Teach responsibility & independence
- Help athletes understand what to wear and what to expect on competition day
- Teach athletes how to maintain appropriate behavior at a competition
- Arrive early to allow time for putting on uniforms, a warm-up and stretching routine and focusing on the competition.
- Encourage maximum effort in practice and competition

# Unit 3 - Competition-Day Coaching



## Guidelines for success

- Let athletes compete without direct supervision
  - Allow athletes to make mistakes and help them learn from them
- Make any official protests calmly
  - If you think there is a valid reason to protest the outcome, do so in a calm manner, and **not involving athletes in disputes.**
  - Help athletes deal appropriately with winning and losing.
  - Focus on effort made, recognize accomplishments and new skills that were performed and taking something positive away from **every** experience.

# Unit 4 – Managing the Program



## **The successful Special Olympics coach is:**

- Knowledgeable about the sport and coaching
  - Knowledge of the sport and how to teach it is essential if coaches are to help athletes and truly benefit from their Special Olympics experience.
  - Successful coaches are constantly looking for opportunities to learn more about the sport.
- Knowledgeable about Special Olympics
  - Special Olympics has a clear mission, philosophy, and rules that have been developed through years of worldwide experience.
  - A better understanding of the mission will benefit your athletes.

# Unit 4 – Managing the Program



## **The successful Special Olympics coach:**

- Recruits and trains assistant coaches
  - Assistant coaches can be recruited to provide one-to-one attention
  - Assistant coaches are the most useful when they are trained and are a part of the planning process at practice
- Recruits and trains athletes
  - A coach is also a promoter and recruiter, hopefully trying to expand their team to more possible athletes
- Assists with appropriate sport selection
  - Picking a sport that is both age and ability appropriate for their team

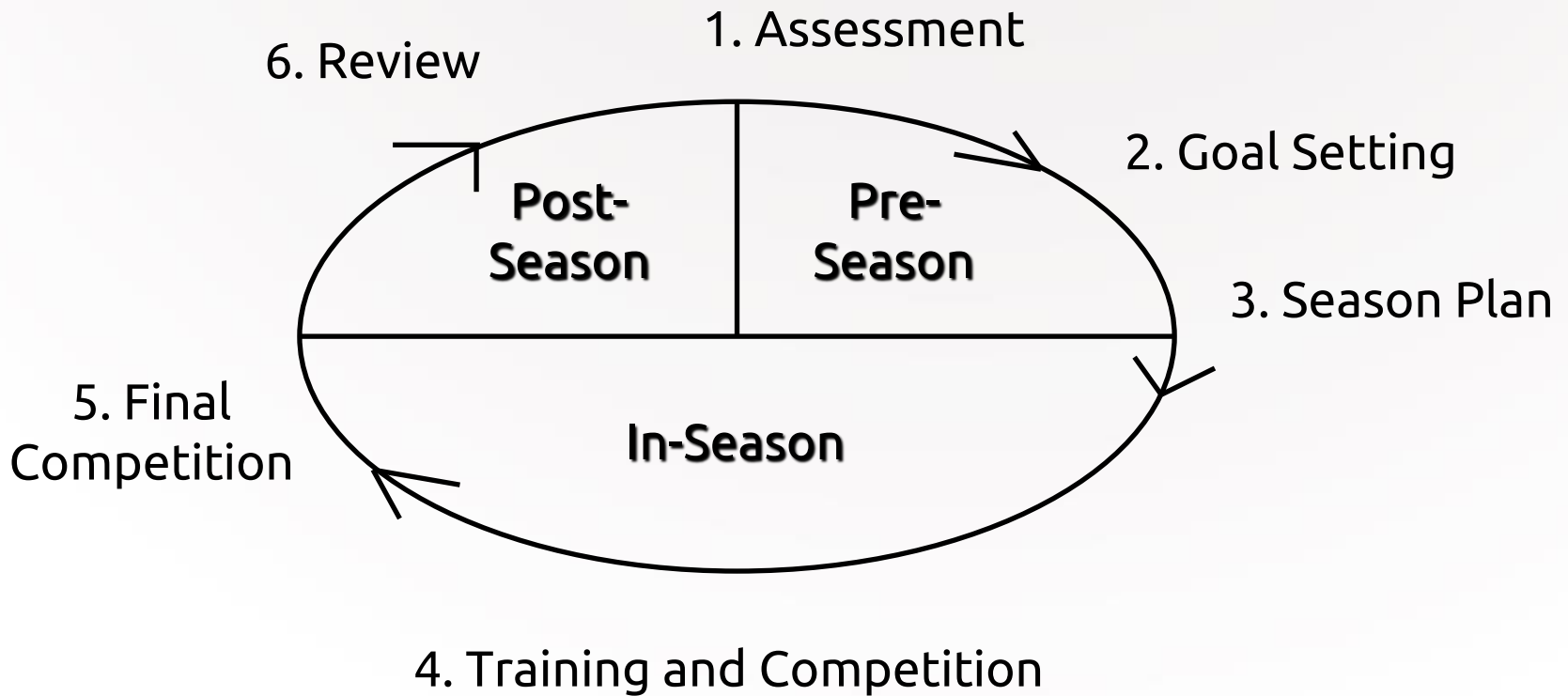
# Unit 4 – Managing the Program



## **The successful Special Olympics coach:**

- Offers activities for all ability levels
- Puts a priority on safety
- Involves families and providers
  - This includes educating families and providers about the benefits of Special Olympics, as well as appropriate nutrition and training at home
- Assists with community inclusion
  - Improves social skills and creates opportunities to spread information about Special Olympics

# Unit 4 – Preparation



# Level 2 Track and Field



**Right:** Athletes running towards the finish line.



# Coach Ratio



Athletes	Level II	Level I		Athletes	Level II	Level I
1-4	1	0		33-36	3	6
5-8	1	1		37-40	3	7
9-12	1	2		41-44	3	8
13-16	1	3		45-48	3	9
17-20	2	3		49-52	4	9
21-24	2	4		53-56	4	10
25-28	2	5		57-60	4	11
29-32	2	6		61-64	4	12

- All Coaches and Unified Partners must complete the Level 1 training prior to participating with a team.
- Level 1 certification requires a Volunteer Application and Level 1 online training and both items are found [here](#).



# Track Events



## General Events

- The commands of the starter will be “on your marks... set...” and, when all competitors are set, the gun will be fired.
- During walking events, athletes must always have one foot in touch with the ground.
- For 800-meter races, athletes will stay in the lanes through the first turn and break toward lane one at the break-line marked after the first turn.
- For 1500-meter or longer races, a waterfall start will be used.

# Track Events



## Physical Assistance Events

- Athletes can have a person on the track to guide them, however the athlete must propel themselves under their own power.

## Device Assistance Events

- Athletes can provide their own assistance device, which may consist of canes, crutches, or a walker.
- Athletes may not receive physical assistance from coaches or officials.

# Track Events



## Wheelchair events

- The first two wheels on each competitor's wheelchair will be regarded as the starting and finishing points of all races.
- Athletes will not be pushed, pulled, or otherwise assisted during these events.
- Please ensure that athletes are correctly registered for their events based on if they will be using a motorized or non-motorized wheelchair for competition.

# Track Events



## Athletes who are Blind or Deaf

- A rope or guide runner may be provided to assist athletes who are visually impaired.
- Guide runners must be provided by the delegation and be registered for the competition as a coach.

## Rules for Unified Relays

- Each team will consist of two athletes and two partners.
- Every relay team is only allowed one substitution.
  - Athlete subs can happen at any competition.
  - Unified partner subs can only happen at regional competitions.

# Field Events



## Jumps

- Running long jump, standing long jump, and high jump are offered at competitions.
- For running long jump, an athlete must be able to just at least 1 meter. If an athlete jumps less than 1 meter at regionals, they cannot advance to state in the running long jump.
- The minimum opening height for all high jump competitions will be 1 meter.
- Athletes can compete in either the standing or running long jump, but not both.

# Field Events



## Throws

- Shot put, softball throw, and tennis ball throw are offered at competition.
- Softball throw and tennis ball throw are events for athletes who throw the ball 15 meters or less.
- If an athlete throws more than 15 meters, they will be awarded participation and cannot advance to state in that event.
- If you have an athlete throwing more than 15 meters, they should be competing in the shot put, if able.

# Field Events



## Pentathlon

- The five events comprising the pentathlon are the 100-meter run, running long jump, shot put, high jump and the 400-meter run.
- If the achieved time or distance is not given in the pentathlon score table, the score for the nearest lesser performance should be read.

# Competition Details



## Divisioning

- At the state competition, divisions will be based on the athlete's regional results.
- There may be multiple divisions on the track for certain events.
- Please make your team aware of this, so there is not confusion on why an athlete is so much faster or slower than another during a single race.



# Competition Details



## Track Events offered at State

- 10 meters: Assisted Walk, Non-Motorized Wheelchair
- 25 meters: Walk, Dash, Assisted Walk/Dash, Wheelchair races
- 30 meters: Wheelchair Slalom
- 50 meters: Walk, Dash, Assisted Walk/Dash, Wheelchair races

# Competition Details



## Track Events offered at State

- 100 meters: Walk, Run, Wheelchair Race
- 200, 400, 800, 1500 meters: Walk, Run
- 4x100: Relay, Unified Relay
- Pentathlon

# Assistance Needed Categories



- **Guide Runner** – When an athlete is visually impaired and needs someone to run with them.
- **Whistle Start** – Race will start by whistle instead of starting gun. Used when athletes have severe reactions to the gun.
- **Visual Start** – Race will start by starting gun, but an assistant will signal near the athlete to give them a visual cue to start.
- **Touch Start** – Race will start by starting gun, but an assistant will touch the athlete to give them a cue to start.

# Assistance Needed Categories



- **Staging** – Athlete is allowed an assistant through staging area.
- **Outside Lane** – Athlete will be on an outside lane (1 or 8).
- **Middle Lane** – Athlete will be on the middle lanes (2-7).
- **Rope** – Athlete uses a rope/guide provided by the delegation.
- **1-on-1** – Athlete is allowed an assistant through the staging area and up to the starting line. The assistant must wait for the athlete at the finish line.

# Registration



Registration is done online by head coaches or head of delegations.

Athletes are allowed to compete in three individual events (or the pentathlon) and one relay event.

When a coach registers their athletes and partners, they must submit the following:

- Qualifying time for each athlete/partner in each event they are registered in.
- Coaches on the team.
- Updated paperwork for those that need it.

# Practice, Skill Development & Resources



**Above:** Athletes during a race.

- Special Olympics Minnesota wants to make sure that you have confidence in your knowledge of the track and field rules.
- On the next slide, you will find links to many resources that can help with the training and skill development for athletes.

# Practice, Skill Development & Resources



## **Special Olympics Track and Field Resources**

<http://www.specialolympics.org/Athletics.aspx>

For any questions regarding Special Olympics Minnesota track and field please contact [sports@somn.org](mailto:sports@somn.org).

# Healthy Athletes



- **Improve** access to health care for athletes at event-based health screenings.
  - Make **referrals** to local health practitioners.
  - **Train** and **educate** health care professionals, providers and students.
  - Healthy Athletes events are often held with sports competitions.
  - Athletes receive 2-4 hours of screenings, education and care.
  - Athletes with follow-up needs receive referrals to local providers.
  - All services are provided by volunteer health professionals and students.
- Contact Jeff Prendergast| Health Programs Coordinator [jeff.prendergast@somn.org](mailto:jeff.prendergast@somn.org)



**FIT FEET**  
(podiatry)



**funFITNESS®**  
(physical therapy)



**HEALTH PROMOTION**  
(better health & well-being)



**HEALTHY HEARING**  
(audiology)



**MedFest®**  
(sports physical exam)



**OPENING EYES®**  
(vision)



**SPECIAL SMILES®**  
(dentistry)



**STRONG MINDS**  
(emotional wellbeing)



# SOMN Health Programs



## Fit5

- Plan for physical activity, nutrition and hydration
  - 5 fruits and vegetables a day
  - 5 bottles of water a day
  - 5 days of physical activity a week
- Fitness cards offer exercises to challenge abilities. These can be done at practice, the gym and home.
- Seasonal pledge challenges for teams offer incentives and resources.



Start now! Fit5 Guide and Training Cards

- Contact Lindsey Swanson | Health Programs Coordinator  
[Lindsey.Swanson@somn.org](mailto:Lindsey.Swanson@somn.org)

# SOMN Health Programs



## SOFit

- Comprehensive health and wellness program focusing on four pillars of wellness: emotional, physical, nutrition, and social.
- Resources and funds provided to delegation or organization
- Check out more info here: [Fitness - Special Olympics Minnesota](#)
- Contact Lindsey Swanson | Health Programs Coordinator  
[Lindsey.Swanson@somn.org](mailto:Lindsey.Swanson@somn.org)

**Above:** Athlete working on her squatting.

# Coach Recognition Item



- Each coach that becomes Level 2 certified or recertified in a sport can order one coach item per calendar year.
- Information can be found [HERE](#).
- Please note that if you have not completed a Level 2 training or recertification course, or you have already received an item for the year, you will not be shipped an item.

# Level 2 Track and Field Quiz



To take the Level 2 Track and Field quiz please [click here](#).



Thank you for volunteering your time, and best of luck with your upcoming season!