

Section

17

THREE BATON

The proper development of your athlete within the one and two baton skills is an important prerequisite for the introduction of the three-baton event. Mastering the basics of handling, pattern, and proper follow through is a must and should be stressed throughout the instruction of 3 baton.

Three baton will combine the techniques and skills of baton twirling with “juggling” moves. Although juggling is the manipulation of one or more objects, we most often think of it as the simultaneous manipulation of 3 objects or more. Since 3 baton twirling uses three objects, it is easy to see why we use juggling techniques as the BASIS for this event.

Three baton twirling is not simply juggling. It is the marriage of the 2 disciplines of juggling and twirling and that’s why it is so unique.

DEFINITION: Three baton twirling is the continuous and uninterrupted manipulation of 3 batons at the same time by one individual and will combine the techniques and skills of three baton twirling with “juggling moves” to display mastery of perfect timing, coordination, concentration, absolute control, spatial awareness (use of many planes and levels), and manual dexterity.

There is a very important distinction that must be made as we, as coaches, assume the responsibility of instructing this extremely technical event. The goal in the development of the 3-baton athlete should be to **“twirl” 3 batons as opposed to “juggling” 3 objects.**

In juggling competitions there is an event called 7-ball juggling. The competitor must keep 7 balls in the air for as long as possible. Technique is not a factor. Very simply, the competitor with the longest time wins.

In 3 baton, at the entry level, you will see your athlete struggle to “juggle” the 3 batons just as a juggler may struggle to juggle 7 balls. There will be no evidence of follow-through or correct pattern changes and solely plain catches. As your athlete progresses with your proper instruction and development, these **3 baton-juggling basics will include a variety of releases and catches along with a sufficient representation of the three modes of twirling [aerials, rolls and contact material].** This is still not the entire picture.

It is the **consistent use of follow-through and distinct pattern of the baton that, when combined with juggling, creates the event we call three-baton.** The simple fact that your athlete is twirling 3 batons does not excuse them or you from developing and demanding proper execution of the basic twirling techniques. Keep in mind that your goal, as a coach, is to develop and reward correct fundamentals of both juggling and twirling.

In the competitive event of three-baton the ultimate routine construction would include the following **seven sequences: cascades, showers, juggles, double toss-single toss, high-low, stacks, and triple tosses.**

The Seven Three-Baton Basic Sequences

I. Cascades – *continuous alternating releases and catches with no passes.*

Forward Cascades - Batons are tossed from the inside to the outside (the R hand moves clockwise and the L hand moves counterclockwise).

Reverse Cascades – Batons are tossed from the outside to the inside (the R hand moves counterclockwise and the L hand moves clockwise).

Half Reverse Cascades – one inside release and one outside release (both hands move in the same direction).

A. Cascades / Vertical Pattern

1. Bowling Pins – *oblique pattern is acceptable at beginner levels, but as athlete progresses, pattern must be clear and perpendicular to the body.*

- batons in front of and perpendicular to body
- released open handed
- one revolution (preferred)
- body may face any plane
- catches are palm up , fingers toward inside, elbow out
- follow through – one reverse outside loop

Note: difficult for beginner

2. Pendulums – *forward or reverse cascades – see above*

- batons in opposition and parallel to the body
- released open handed, catch palm up
- inside releases most common – *forward cascades – see above*
- follow through – one forward outside loop – note: baton direction stops after catch and changes direction into next toss
- outside releases - *reverse cascades – see above*

Note: most commonly used, easiest to master

3. Crescents – *half reverse cascades – see above*

- batons in front of and parallel to body
- released open handed, either:
R inside release, L outside release, clockwise direction
L inside release, R outside release, counterclockwise
- follow through – flourish or figure 8 after inside release / catch one reverse outside loop after outside release / catch

Note – Timing of open hand releases and correct follow through requires L hand to move a bit slower than R hand. This timing skill makes crescents difficult to master.

B. Cascades / Vertical Pattern

1. Time Toss – *tosses are not released open handed*

- batons in front of and parallel to body
- R thumb release, L backhand release
- Clockwise baton direction
- Follow through – R hand flourish or figure 8, L hand reverse figure 8

1. Flat Pendulums – *forward or reverse cascades – see above*

- batons in front of body
- batons in clockwise direction above head
- inside releases – *forward cascades – see above*
- outside releases – *reverse cascades – see above*
- follow through – flat wrist twirls or flat figure 8's

2. Flat Crescents – *half reverse cascades – see above*

- batons in front of body
- batons in clockwise direction above head
- released open hand either: R hand inside, L hand outside or
L hand inside, R hand outside
- follow through – flat wrist twirls

C. Cascades / Dual Pattern – *batons are alternating flat and vertical*

- batons in front of body
- both aeriels in clockwise direction

Examples:

1. Pendulums – R thumb release (vertical) to L corner, L flat release open hand to R corner
2. Crescents – R open hand or thumb release front (vertical), L flat release from L side moving into center.

II. Showers – *toss, pass, catch. All releases from one hand and all catches in the other, with passes in between. Tossing in a “circular” pattern.*

A. Showers / Vertical Pattern

1. Slap Showers – *slap refers to the type of pass, received palm up (unmatched)*

- batons may be in the same or different planes
- batons in clockwise direction
- all releases L hand, all catches R hand.
- Release may be backhand or open hand backhand

2. Box Showers – *box refers to the planes used (front, side and back)*

- Can move to the right or to the left :
- R box – all releases RH, all catches LH, turning R. Matched hand passes in between. Thumb releases commonly used.
- L box – all releases LH, all catches RH, turning L. Matched hand passes in between. Backhand releases commonly used. Forward outside loop can be used after pass to define next plane.

- Variations – releases and catches can vary, leading to various combinations of baton directions.

Showers / Horizontal Pattern

1. Flat Showers

- All releases L hand, all catches R hand
- Matched hand passes from RH to LH
- Batons clockwise direction above head
- Body may turn to L or stay stationary in any plane

C. Showers / Dual Pattern

- All releases LH (alternating flat – vertical), all catches RH
- Flat passes are matched; vertical passes are unmatched (slap).
- Releases may be L open hand (flat), L backhand or L open hand backhand (vertical)

III. Juggles – all releases and catches in the same hand. Leaves other hand free for other moves (fingers, rolls, full hand, loops, swings).

A. Vertical 2 Baton Juggles

- batons in clockwise direction
- most common - batons move in circle from L to R, following each other, usually open hand tosses. Tosses can be layered inside or outside each other. Dual planes may also be used.
- releases can vary: RH - open hand, thumb toss
LH – open hand, backhand toss
- follow through – RH – figure 8's or whips
LH – reverse figure 8's or reverse outside loop

B. Horizontal 2 Baton Juggles

- Releases are open hand, either RH or LH
- Releases are in clockwise direction above head
- Due to the nature of the flat pattern, batons are placed along side each other, to avoid collisions.

C. Dual Pattern 2 Baton Juggles

- Releases alternate flat and vertical from one hand

IV. Double Toss – Single Toss - Releasing 2 batons at once, then the other baton and vice versa

- May release the “double” from one hand or both hands
- Batons may be all in the same direction or in opposition
- Body may face any plane
- Batons in any plane; various planes can be used at once.
- A variety of releases catches and different baton heights, enhance the complexity of this skill. In addition, spins and body moves can be added under the batons.

V. High Low Combinations – *one high aerial with a 2baton trick underneath the aerial,
OR two high aerials with a solo trick underneath.*

- May be dual pattern
- May use multiple planes
- Use of two batons as the “high” element, elevates the proficiency
- Skilled 2 baton athletes are often comfortable with this method of manipulating three batons

VI. Stacks – *all three batons are in the same plane, in center of body, creating a high,
medium, low visual picture or a “stack”.*

- release first baton, then second, under both batons execute a “low” trick
- catch batons in opposite order of tossing (Ex: toss baton #1, #2, #3...catch baton #3, #2 then #1).
- May be dual pattern

VII. Triple Toss – *all three batons have been released before the first one is caught.*

- Three high tosses that follow each other in succession is the most challenging triple toss. (Ex: toss baton #1, #2, #3 and catch baton #1, #2, #3.)
- May use dual pattern
- May use dual planes
- A triple toss may consist of a single release from one hand and a double release from the other at the same time

PROFICIENCY LEVELS for THREE BATON TWIRLING

Points to Remember:

1. Planned collections are preferable to those that occur due to lack of control or lack of strength.
2. 3 baton basics will progress from having only one baton in the air, to a more fluid manipulation of overlapping tosses where 2 batons are actually in the air at once.
3. As proficiency develops, 3 baton basics are low and tight, allowing contrast to bigger “tricks” that open up. This contrast creates better clarity so tricks are easier to read.
4. The art of 3 baton twirling is creating pictures in the air with the batons, utilizing multiple tosses, different baton heights, multiple planes and distinct pattern.

Beginner Three-Baton Proficiency

Coach must put the importance on the fundamental basics of 3 baton at the beginner level.

- ❖ Developing basic timing of 3 baton basics
- ❖ Clear use of patterns & planes
- ❖ Building arm strength to maintain continual tossing
- ❖ Introducing the blending and connecting of sequences

Expectations of the 3 baton athlete at the beginner level.

- Isolated 3 baton series due to lack of control and strength
- Limited use of rolls and contact material with emphasis on aerials
- “Filler” (non 3-baton) material common to connect 3-baton basics; such as rolls, fingers and wraps
- Collections may be planned or unplanned. Choreographed collections teach control and confidence. Collecting all 3 batons is common to begin a series.
- More repetition of skills due to limited repertoire of 3 baton basics.
- Mostly "standard direction" of batons
- RH dominant
- Higher tosses generally seen – athlete needs “thinking” time to coordinate all 3 batons.
- **Progression:**
 - Vertical pendulums, RH vertical juggles, RH vertical box are easiest
 - LH flat box takes a lot of strength
 - Bowling Pins are very difficult because they are perpendicular to the body

Intermediate Three-Baton Proficiency

Coach will continue to reinforce the fundamental basics of 3 baton at the intermediate level while introducing clear follow through, tighter timing and basic rhythms.

- ❖ Develop a broader base of 3 baton skills within the 7 sequences
- ❖ Arm strength is able to sustain longer sequences and higher tricks
- ❖ Adding follow through will promote continuity and fluidity.
- ❖ Begin to incorporate simplistic rolls and contact material to add density
- ❖ Tighter timing creates lower tosses, increased revolution and focused attention
- ❖ Rhythm is established as high toss tricks are added and connected by basics.
- ❖ Visual contrast is noticeable and created by use of high/low toss combinations.
- ❖ Increased control is apparent by better placement of tosses

Expectations of the 3 baton athlete at the intermediate level.

- More variety of 3 baton basics - broader base of skills - they feel more comfortable and can now handle some of the more difficult basics -
- Less collections than beginner; some collections will be performance errors rather than designed to facilitate completion of a sequence.
- Better revolution, control and strength
- Increased mental and physical endurance
- More balanced use of left and right hands
- The use of dual planes, dual pattern and double tosses
- **Progression:**
 - Basics flow from one to the other without collections
 - Dual pattern, dual plane and double releases are incorporated
 - Bowling Pins, single/double tosses, high/low combinations are more frequent
 - Crescents and time tosses help to establish the standard direction of twirl as the foundation for larger tricks
 - Stacks and triple tosses are attempted at this level

Advanced Three-Baton Proficiency

Coach will challenge the athlete to demonstrate all seven 3 baton basic sequences.

- ❖ Timing and speed is appropriate for each type of 3-baton sequence
- ❖ Creating a seamless and innovative approach to the event
- ❖ Incorporating more blending of baton and body
- ❖ Continue to incorporate rolls and contact material within each type of sequence and to connect sequences

Expectations of the 3 baton athlete at the advanced level.

- Demonstrates a solid juggling basis with proficient twirling technique
- Absence of collections
- Frequent use of 2 and 3 batons in the air at the same time
- Mastery and control of all batons and body positions
- Incorporation of difficult releases and catches
- Greater use of baton directions, patterns, planes, levels, depth
- Clarity due to better contrast - basics are low and tight, so "tricks" are easier to read

➤ **Progression:**

Basics are tight and fast. Used mostly as connectors to or recovery from big tricks.

Stacks, triple tosses, high/low combinations are the core of the routine

Use of dual and tri plane increases

Higher and more complex combinations develop

Intricacy of releases / receptions is enhanced by body detailing

In the 3 Baton event, the coach must take the athlete from the level of “juggler” to the level of twirler again. Basic twirling skills will be more difficult as one manipulates three batons. Gradually these basic skills will reestablish themselves and juggling and twirling will merge to create the “twirling juggler”!

The introduction of juggling techniques and skills at an earlier level is recommended. There are many books available on juggling that offer the opportunity for all ages and ability levels to begin the skill of juggling. This can be utilized to enhance some of your other training time and make the learning of eye-hand coordination a whole lot of fun.

Eye-hand coordination, a sense of rhythm and precise general handling are essential in mastering the three-baton event. It is easier to begin the skill with objects other than batons, i.e., scarves, balls, rolled socks, bean bags. Research what is available and begin to have fun with the blending of "juggling" and baton twirling.

ADDITIONAL QUALITIES TO CONSIDER FOR 3 BATON:

- **Ambidexterity** - Takes on a new meaning in multiple batons because it is essential to the continuity & fluidity of twirling three batons.
- **Timing** - Accuracy in the timing of releases & catches is crucial to the coordination of three batons. It is the key to proficiency. It is essential for fluidity, smoothness, and continuity - otherwise collections occur. Every toss must be done on a specific count, be placed correctly, and be tossed at the correct height. The tighter the timing, the more proficient the athlete is.
- **Risk Frequency** - How often are there situations where an exposure to error occurs?
- **Simultaneous Responsibility** - How often must the attention of the athlete be focused on more than one task at the same time.
- **Reorientation Factors** - How often does the athlete take their eyes off one or more batons creating a visual & mental demand? This also includes adjustments to different patterns and planes.
- **Adjustment Potential** - Usually in reference to aerials. A trick with low adjustment potential represents a high level of difficulty. Inherently, a trick that requires perfect synchronization of movement to be successful would have a low adjustment potential.
- **Readability** - The clarity of the pattern, planes, revolution and distinct height on the batons. These qualities provide a clear view of the designer intent.
- **Simultaneous Blending** - The blending of the baton and the body continuously throughout the routine at all times.
- **Dual Pattern & Multi-Plane work** - Executed sequentially or simultaneously.
- **Collections** - The absence of collections displays a higher level of proficiency, at any level of ability in 3-Baton.