

inside sports

Dynavision is "strength conditioning for the eyes"

By **Chris Dempsey**
The Denver Post

Posted: 10/21/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

In 1989, it was called the Dynavision 2000. In 2010, with refinements and a captive audience in the sports world, the name has been streamlined to D2, but its benefits are anything but simple.

In the burgeoning sports vision category of athletic training, the D2 has gained traction as an essential piece of equipment.

Already a favorite of hockey teams, the technology has spread into the college ranks and is threatening to break through into professional football and basketball.

Improving peripheral vision, speeding up reaction time, and improving anticipation and concentration under stress and fatigue are general goals of using the D2.

The machine is a big, black box on a base that adjusts the height to accommodate kids on up to 7-foot NBA centers. There is a screen in the middle and lights all around it. The athlete's attention is focused on what is happening in the screen — usually numbers are flashing — and the participant has to call out what he or she sees.

Meanwhile, the lights around it turn on and off.

Without looking away from the screen, the athlete is asked to hit each light when it turns on. Results are tabulated and recorded to track results, which then can be compared with performance on the field or on the court.

"The buzz words in sports are explosive reaction and reaction time," Dynavision's Phil Jones said. "It's a high-performance training device. They can see their reaction times getting quicker and start to feel the effects of seeing the field better, or quarterbacks seeing the defensive backs out there running around and not having to take their eyes off their main targets because they can see in their periphery better."

A prototype was introduced to the Edmonton Eskimos of the Canadian Football League in the late 1980s. Jones played on that team.

"I did some training on it and realized how much it was improving my performance as far as seeing the field better, reacting quicker and general concentration levels," Jones said.

But the company that produced it at the time didn't necessarily know what to do with it. Jones bought it, redesigned it and started "going after" professional teams in all sports. Interest at that point was lukewarm.

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THE DENVER POST

"People figured your vision was what it was," Jones said.

Then, unexpectedly, Jones found willing participants in the medical community. The machine was discovered by occupational therapy and caught on.

"Sometimes the people lose a portion of their visual field," Jones said. "Not claiming that it would bring the field back, but it just was a good tool to teach them how to scan their field."

The machine found its way into more than 600 hospitals in 26 countries.

"It really became a branded name," Jones said. "Most occupational therapists know the name Dynavision."

Now the sports world does too.

Jones' machine received positive reaction from conferences of the National Athletic Trainers Association and the National Strength and Conditioning Association. It has also drawn considerable interest as a tool used in concussion testing.

Al Wile, assistant director of the Human Performance Lab and director of Sports Vision at the Air Force Academy, is a leading expert in the field. Air Force has three D2 machines used by its athletes in a number of sports. Many players and coaches swear by vision training.

"It's training the muscles of the eye," Wile said. "It's like strength conditioning for the eyes."

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