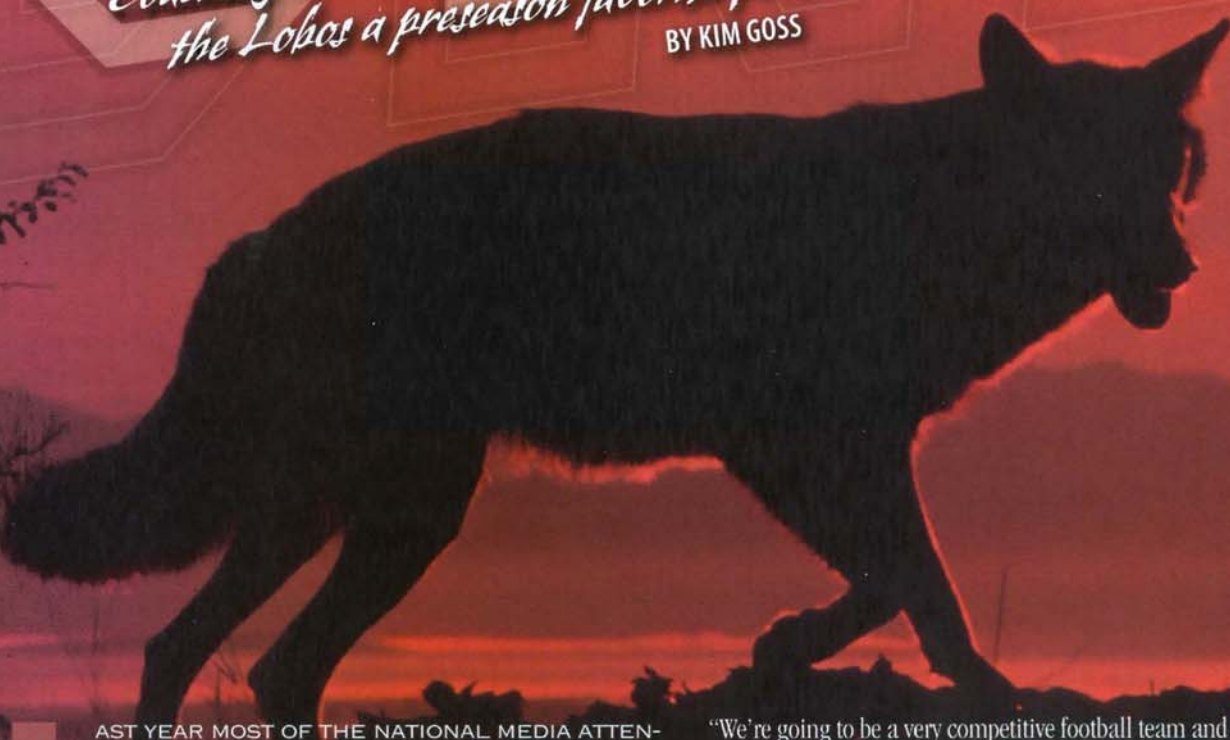




# Coming On Strong: University of New Mexico

*Coaching consistency and a great strength training program make the Lobos a preseason favorite for the Mountain West Title*

BY KIM GOSS



**L**AST YEAR MOST OF THE NATIONAL MEDIA ATTENTION REGARDING THE MOUNTAIN WEST CONFERENCE WAS FOCUSED ON ALEX SMITH AND HIS UNDEFEATED UTES. BUT WHILE MUCH OF THE NEWS MEDIA WERE FOCUSED IN THAT DIRECTION, ONE MOUNTAIN WEST TEAM WAS QUIETLY ENJOYING ITS FOURTH-STRAIGHT WINNING SEASON AND PARTICIPATING IN ITS THIRD-STRAIGHT BOWL GAME. THAT TEAM IS THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, AND WITH 17 RETURNING STARTERS – COMPARED TO 12 IN 2004 – THE LOBOS MAY JUST BE THE TEAM TO BEAT IN THE CONFERENCE THIS YEAR.

“We’re going to be a very competitive football team and a very competitive league,” says head coach Rocky Long, a former Lobos quarterback who became head coach for his alma mater at the end of the 1997 season. “We’ve been in the top half of the league the past four years, and we expect to stay up there.”

Although senior running back Don'Trell Moore is ranked second nationally in career rushing with 3,675 yards, the Lobos are best known for their gang-tackling defense. Masterminded by Coach Long and defensive coordinator Osia Lewis, UNM joins Oklahoma and Texas as the only teams to finish in the top 30 nationally for total defense in the past five seasons. Further, during those five years the Lobos led the conference in sacks.

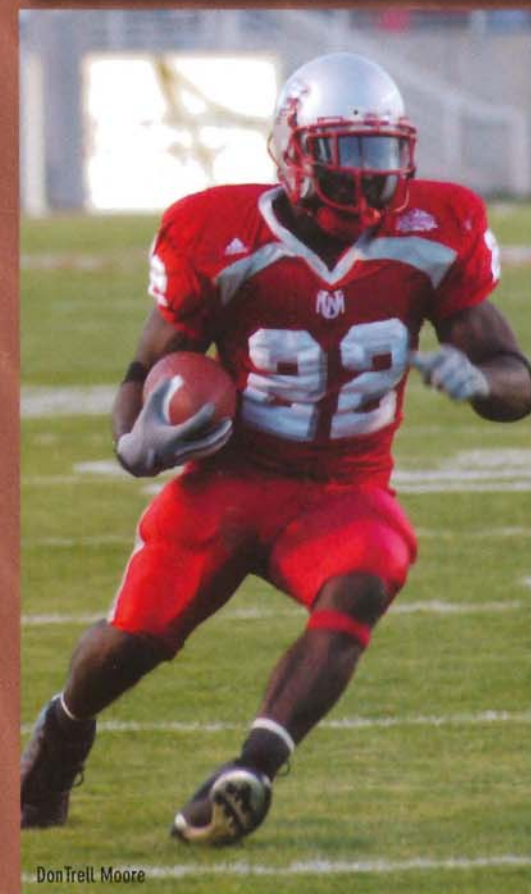




Gabriel Fulbright



#12 Kole McKamey



DonTrell Moore

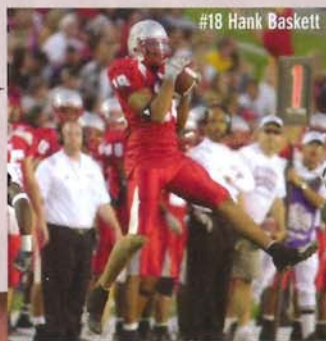
All photos courtesy UNM SID.

Whether the Lobos can continue their success at defense and improve their offense — they ranked 108th nationally in total offense — winning the conference remains open to debate. But one thing is certain: The Lobos fans certainly like Coach Long's approach. Attendance has also increased from an average of 26,743 in 1998 to a record-breaking 37,282 last season, and the number of season ticket holders increased from 12,299 in 1997 to 15,729 last year. But there are other numbers that Coach Long is even more proud of.

Since Long took over, UNM has seen its players earn academic all-MWC honors 67 times. Last year 17 players made the Academic All-MWC football team, beating the former record of 12 set in 2002 and repeated in 2003. In contrast to all the suspicions surrounding some major college football programs, Coach Long's off-field commitment to character development has

put the "student" back in "student-athlete."

Asked about his sales pitch to recruits, Long replied, "First of all, we are the state university of New Mexico and we offer a quality education. To top it off, Albuquerque is a fantastic city with unique attributes. If a recruit's personality fits our culture, our school is an easy choice." Another great selling point is the Lobos strength and conditioning program.



#18 Hank Baskett

### *Getting Strong the Old-Fashioned Way*

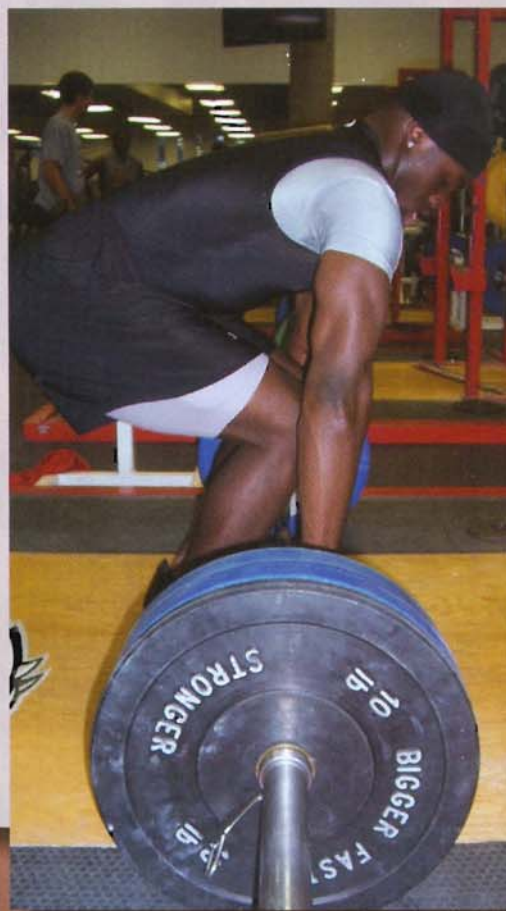
In a profession where coaches often change schools as frequently as schools change head football coaches, strength coach Mark Paulsen has stayed with the Lobos for 19 years, starting as the head strength coach. And with good reason.



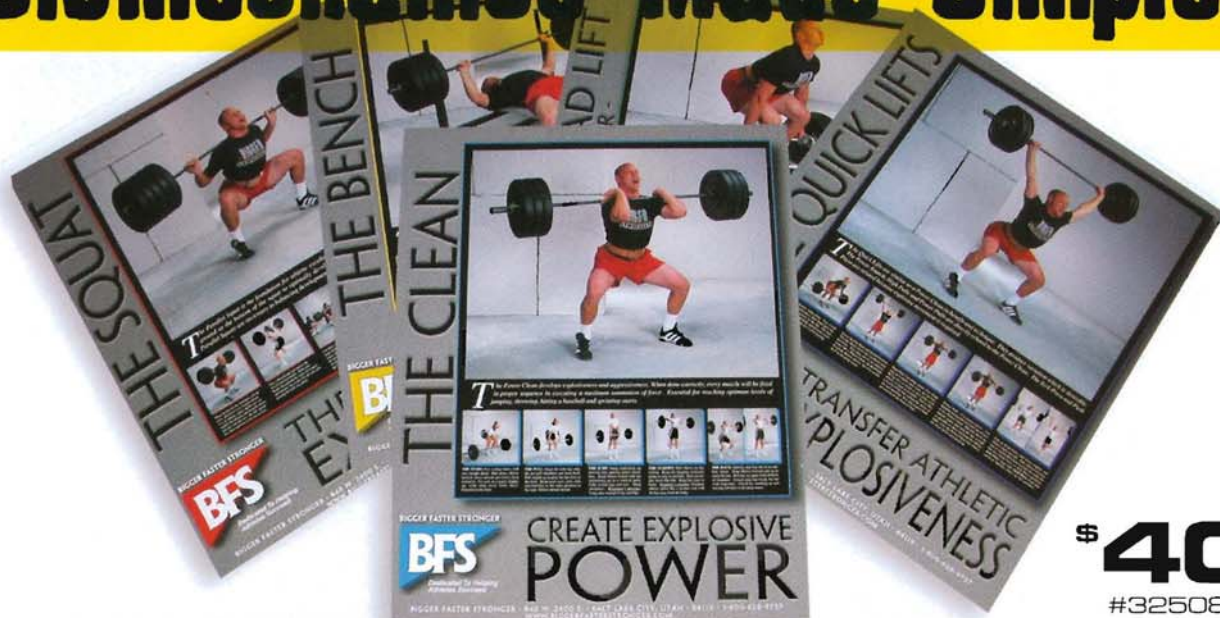
"Whenever you have success, the administration does whatever it can to keep the right people around," says Paulsen. "If you had constant turnover in the coaching staff, it would take you three years to figure out why this place was different, and by then you could be on your way down. Coach Long played here and brought in an offensive coordinator who had coached here, so the learning curve was already a little bit farther along. But even with those advantages, our first couple of years with Coach Long involved some adjustments just because we were getting to know each other."

Asked what the major differences are between strength coaches now and when he began, Paulsen replied, "You have better-educated people now in the profession, but that is not to say they are better strength coaches. The old guys who started this profession were supreme motivators — the players had so much respect for them and would go through a wall for them. The new generation of strength coaches needs to understand it's not all about writing the perfect program." To Paulsen, it's about sticking to the basics and hard work.

"A perfect example is the European countries," says Paulsen. "How is it that we, with all our technology and Swiss balls, wind up getting creamed in the Olympic events by European countries? It seems that when our athletes break a sweat, we're right there handing them a rehydration drink! Athletes in Europe have that toughness that only comes from getting under a bar and working hard to the point where you feel like the blood's gonna come blasting out of your nose! I can deal with just about anything, but I can't tolerate non-workers."



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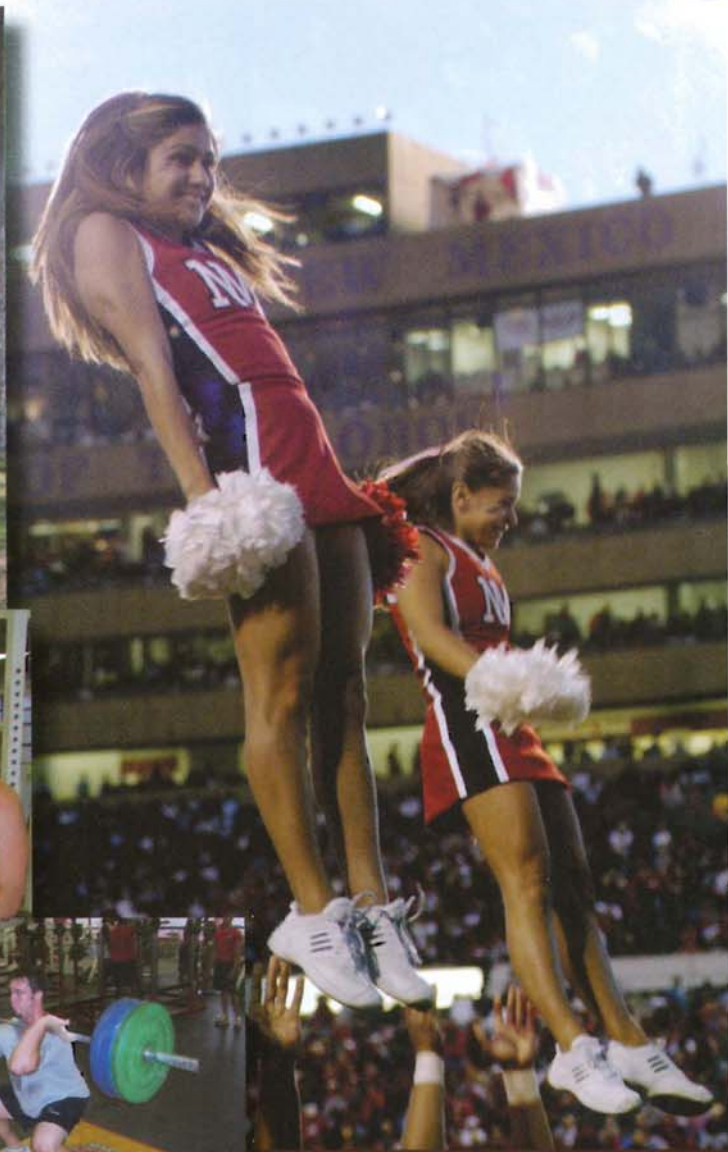
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Coach Paulsen poses with five Lobos who cleaned 350 pounds or more this year — talk about power!



In administering his program, Paulsen says he now relies more on delegating duties to his assistants and doesn't spend countless hours in the gym. "I don't put in the long hours that I used to put in early on, and I don't need to — I trust my staff and they know what they are doing. The key question to ask here is not how many hours you work, but are you effective in the time that you are here? If you're not getting the job done, then of course you need to look at investing more time or re-evaluating what you're not doing right. In my situation, family is really important to me. I've got four kids who are active in multiple sports, and I'm committed to doing things with them."

How do his new recruits react to Paulsen's stringent program? "They put one day in our off-season program and they're in shock — they don't even open their mouths. We're not working them till they puke — I'm not big on that kind of stuff — we just squat and clean and bench and incline and do all the old stuff and do it in such a way that they're shot at the end of the day! And I get zero kids questioning the program — none — but if they did, I wouldn't take it well. Frankly, their job is to show up, shut up and lift!"

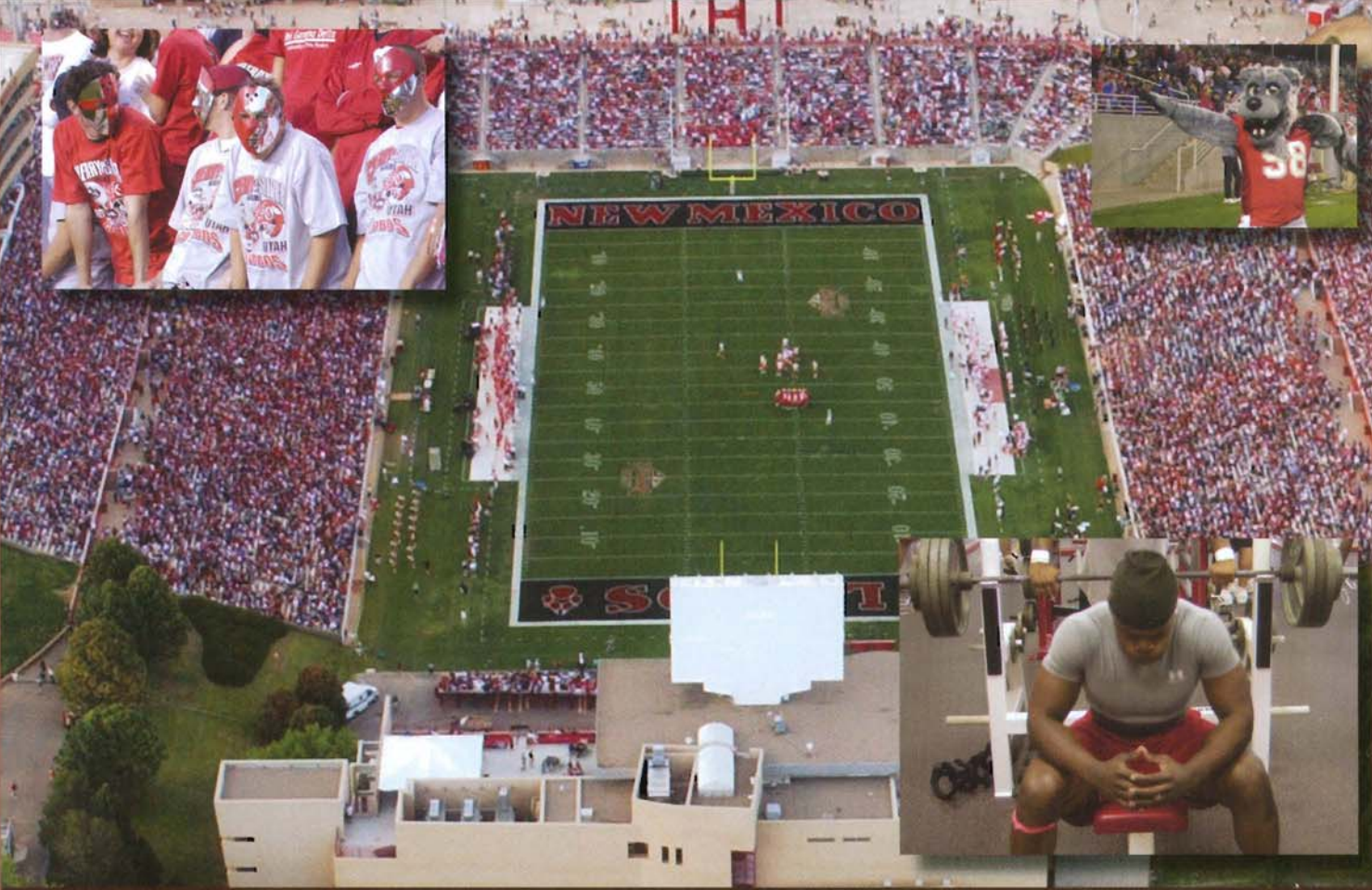
### *Doing the Math with Power Cleans*

For evidence of the success of the Lobos strength program you only have to look at their power clean numbers: This year there were 40 athletes on the team who could power clean 300 pounds. Paulsen says getting to that level has been a gradual progression, but he adds that having some athletes on the team who can do 400 pounds or close to it helps break mental barriers: "If you get enough guys in the program, you'll get a couple guys cleaning 380, 390 or 400; and then all of a sudden 300 doesn't look quite as heavy as it used to look."

What's even more amazing about their power clean numbers is that it's not just the linemen making the 300 standing, as running back Don-Trell Moore power cleaned 340 last year. Paulsen says, "We even had a freshman wide receiver do 350! Now he's a bruiser — I've never seen a receiver look like this. And now that we've hit 40 athletes who can do 300 pounds, the new benchmark we've set is 45."

Although he believes in power cleans, he does not allow his players to perform cleans from the mid-thigh. "We're not hang clean people — I





don't like hang cleans because you lose the hip action that you get by going to the floor. If they are done like an Olympic lifter would do them, there's some benefit; but you don't see that very often – it turns into what my assistant Joaquin Chavez calls a "hang swing."

Squat cleans and snatches are also an issue with Paulsen. "At some point you've got to transition into getting your focus onto the football field, and the reason I bring that up is that when you do a squat clean it's too easy to get an elbow stuck on the quad – a lot of things can happen. I'm also not big on snatches. Do I like the move? Absolutely. Do I think snatches are incredibly explosive? Yes I do. But we're not four-deep in players here, and you have to look at the risk/benefit ratio. You blow out a shoulder on a starting defensive end in New Mexico and we're sucking air. If a coach wants to do snatches and the athletes are good at it and they get results, then I say, 'Have at it,' but personally, I have very little confidence that it's right for my athletes."

Another key exercise in the Lobos' program is squatting. "We try to get people to squat as deep as they can, with appropriate poundage. I mean if you shoot your hips up out of the hole – turning it into a good morning – that accomplishes nothing. We also like to front squat, but we don't do multiple variations of one-legged exercises because we just don't have time for them."

In addition to having strong athletes, Paulsen says the Lobos have had a low injury rate over the past five years. "We're a very healthy team, knock on wood. I'm not saying that this necessarily correlates with the

strength program, and sure, we could have three athletes blow out a knee in two-a-days. All I know is that we've been fortunate lately in this area, and I hope it continues."

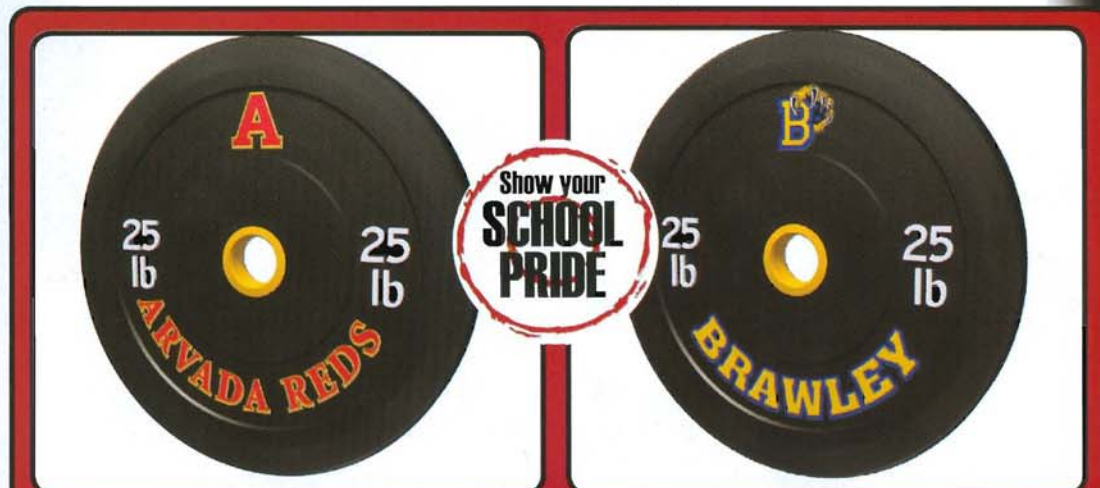
He said despite their success, overconfidence is not an issue. "Considering the fact that I don't have a ring and I've been here 19 years, there'd better not be any cockiness here. Last year we thought we could win the conference. The great thing is people are starting to respect the fact that we have a solid program now. We have a tough preseason schedule in that the last couple years we've started off 1-3, and we've had to rally six or seven straight games to finish the season three years in a row. It's time to change that. But I don't think this team has lacked confidence for the last several years. They know they have earned the right to be in every game they're in."

Paulsen knows a lot is riding on his athletes this year but he believes the strength program has brought the Lobos where they need to be to pull off a conference win in 2005. Says Paulsen of his profession, "Being a college strength coach is not all about knowing the latest research. It's not all about doing stuff on a balance ball with one leg up and all that. To me, that sort of coaching will get you fired. What I tell recruits is meant to appeal to what's going on inside their heads: This window of opportunity comes and goes unbelievably quick, so dedicate yourself to something worthwhile and avoid all the traps out there. There will never be another opportunity to do what you're doing here and now." **B5**



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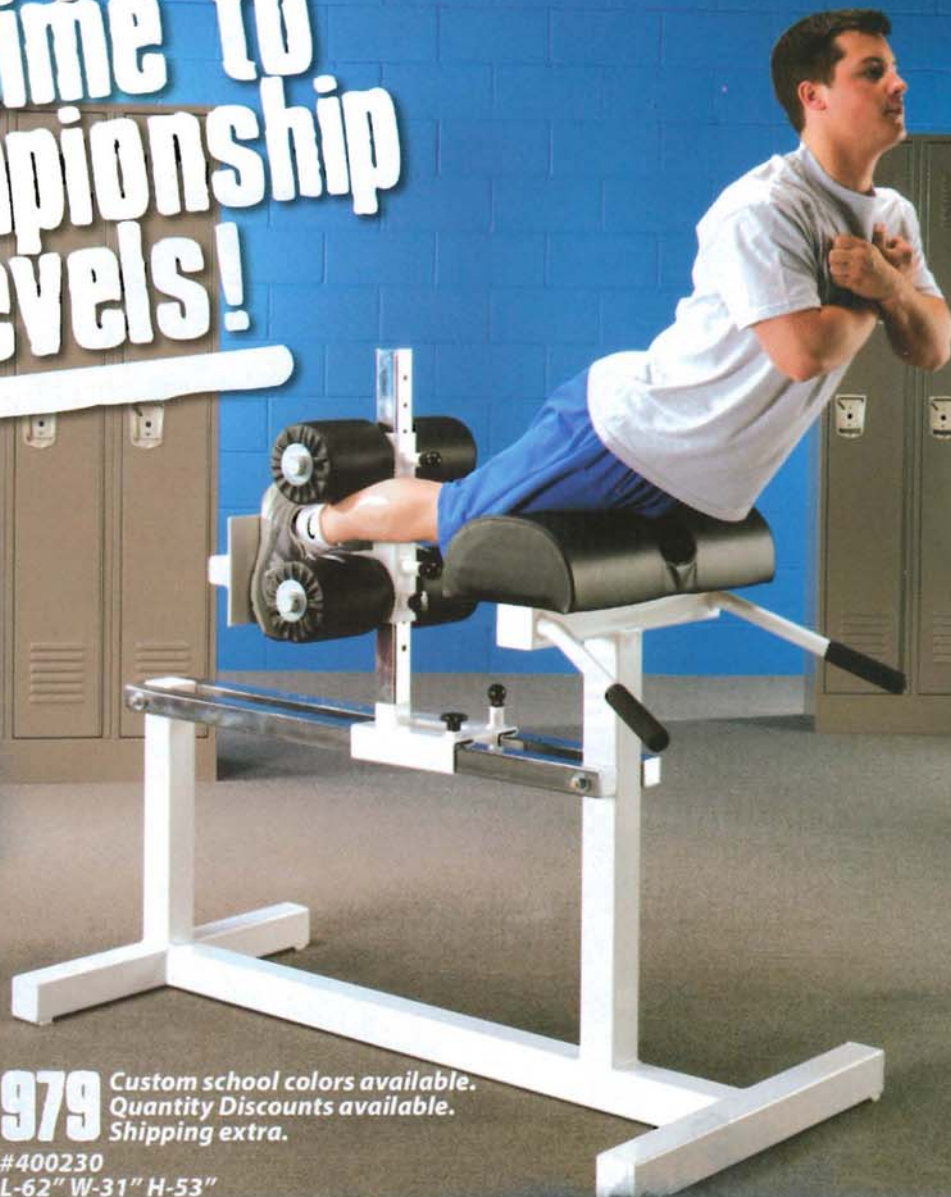
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