



Want the heaviest-duty squat cage sold anywhere? The BFS Heavy-Duty Super Cage is 8 ½ feet tall and has massive, 3 x 3 11-gauge steel construction.

CONSUMER'S GUIDE

to Power Racks

Practical advice on selecting equipment that is perfect for your weightroom

At what point did weightrooms start to look like the stage of a Cirque du Soleil performance? Colorful Swiss balls, suspension ropes, bungee cord contraptions – what the heck is so wrong about getting strong with basic free weight equipment?

Not that Swiss balls and such have no place in strength and conditioning, or for that matter circuit training machines. But for athletes, often this type of equipment detracts from the types of heavy-duty equipment that will help get you strong – equipment such as the power rack.

A Brief History of the Power Rack

A power rack, also known as a squat cage, was first patented in 1989 by Karl I. Mullen of Portland, Oregon. The basic power rack consists of four vertical posts linked together to increase its strength (thus the term “cage”) and

has bar catches that can be adjusted vertically. It's the bar catches that are the unique aspect of power racks.

With exercises such as squats, more weight can be squatted than can be lifted from the floor. Portable squat racks will elevate the bar, but they do not have safety catches; so, if a lifter misses the weight, the bar will drop on the floor unless the lifter has spotters.

Olympic lifters will often perform squats on portable squat racks and use bumper plates, so when they miss a weight, they simply drop the weight behind them on the platform. However, this technique takes considerable skill, and from a safety and liability standpoint it is not recommended, especially in the high school environment.

We must stress that even when lift-

ers are using a power rack, BFS always recommends spotters when performing squats and bench presses. Dropping a weight on the safety catches may save the lifter from serious injury, but it tends to ruin barbells. Also, spotters can help coach their teammates to perfect technique and encourage them to try their best.

Other basic exercises that can be



The BFS Ultimate Multi-Use Rack is a versatile power rack that offers 46 inches of work space – you can even perform power cleans inside the unit!



Champion weightlifter Maegan Snodgrass is shown preparing to squat on the BFS Squat Cage, an extremely affordable, heavy-duty unit for the high school environment. Are you on an extremely tight budget? Do you already have plate holders? Then the stock version of the BFS Squat Cage (see inset) is the power rack for you. The unit has 36 inches of workspace and 11-gauge steel for reliability.

performed in power racks are bench presses, which are usually not low enough when done with portable squat racks. The bench press is unquestionably the most dangerous exercise that is performed in the weightroom because the barbell can drop across the throat; but the bar catches of the power rack enable lifters to perform this exercise with maximum safety.

One unique feature of the power racks is that the safety catches allow the performance of heavy partial movements. Powerlifters use partial movements to work on a specific range of motion in a lift, such as the finish of a deadlift, or to overload the strongest positions of a lift. Partial movements are often used in the later stages of rehab; for example, an athlete who is

overcoming a pectoral injury may be able to perform the end range of the bench press. As the injury heals, the range of motion can be increased. Carl Miller, a former coach of the World Championship Team who now runs a successful gym in Santa Fe, New Mexico, often has his clients use partial ranges of motion to rehab their injuries.

The vertical catches also allow the performance of isometrics, a training method that works specific ranges of motion and is used on a limited scale by advanced athletes. Although isometrics are not as popular as they were in the '60s, many strength coaches who work with elite athletes find that isometrics can help them achieve greater strength gains. To perform isometrics in the bench press, for example, the safety catches will be placed at a specific height, with the barbell supports set below them. The lifter removes the barbell from the supports and then presses the bar upward against the bar catches. A typical protocol is to hold the contraction for six seconds for several sets.

Power Rack Shopping

BFS has featured USA-made power racks for over 30 years, and our experience has led us to settle on two basic types of racks: the 8-Foot Power Rack and the Ultimate Multi-Use Rack. However, there are several variations, such as having attached plate holders and having the rack attached to a lifting platform. There are also custom features, such as paint selection, and a chin-up bar and a dip attachment for the Ultimate Multi-Use Rack. Often. All BFS power racks come standard with a chin-up bar that is linked to the top of two vertical supports. Let's take a closer look at each of these products.

One feature you see in all our racks is that there is plenty of workspace inside the rack. We offer three racks

that have 40 inches of work space, and our Ultimate Multi-Use Rack has 46 inches. Many power racks have much less workspace, which increases the risk of hitting the vertical supports when lifting. Often those who purchase these types of racks find that their athletes will only squat outside the racks, thereby negating the safety feature of the safety catches.

Two keys to selecting the ideal power rack(s) for your facility are to look at the amount of space you have available and how your workout programs are designed. For example, if your space is limited, then it would be best to purchase power racks with attached plate holders – even if it means that budget restrictions will force you to wait a bit longer before your weightroom is fully equipped. Having to use plate trees takes up a considerable amount of space, restricts traffic flow and is less convenient; besides, the cost of purchasing weight trees is not that much different from the added cost of having the attached plate holders.

Regarding your workout program, if you like to perform all your core lifts in one area, then the 8-foot unit is ideal. We call this the 8-Foot Power Rack with Platform because that's exactly what it is. The platform, which can be installed with a coating of Protect-All®, measures eight feet wide by six feet long and sits flush against an

8-Foot Power Rack. The crossbar in the front of the power rack can be used for chin-ups and pull-ups.

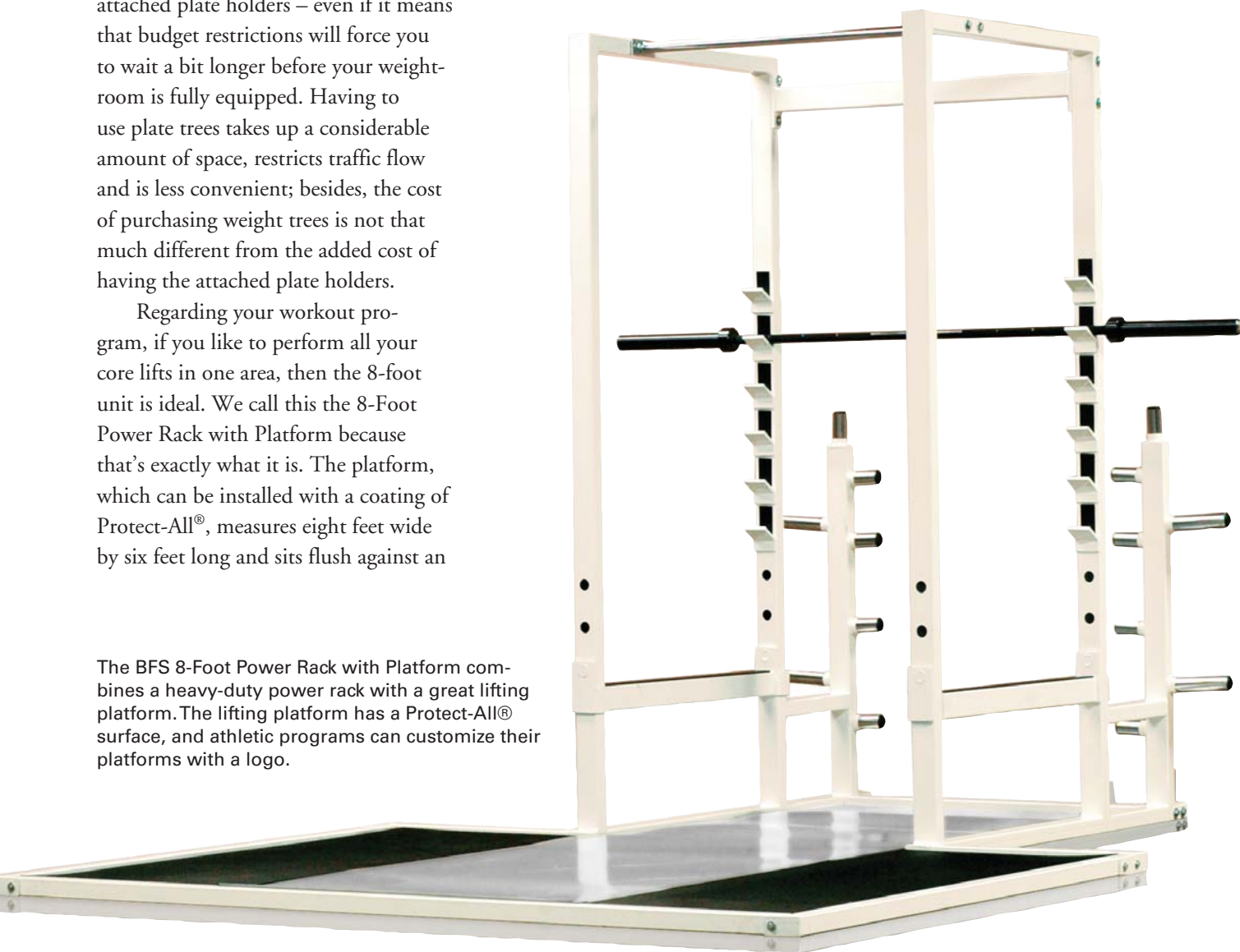
However, if space is an issue but you still like the idea of “do-it-all stations,” you should consider the Elite Half Rack with Platform. Although these stations are not made for heavy partials and isometrics, they will enable you to perform the vast majority of lifts used in most strength training programs. Utah State University made the switch to our Elite Half Rack with Platform, and it enabled them to add another station to their weightroom in the same amount of space.

Finally, rather than having remov-

able pins, it's better to have bar catches attached to the vertical supports, rather than steel rods, as this reduces the amount of time between sets. In the high school environment these rods often end up on the floor, whereas this is less likely to happen when the bar catches are attached to the vertical supports.

These pages show our selection of power racks to help you determine the best equipment for your needs and budget. Swiss balls may have some value outside the circus, but in the weightroom let's focus on using the right tools to get your athletes strong! **BFS**

The BFS 8-Foot Power Rack with Platform combines a heavy-duty power rack with a great lifting platform. The lifting platform has a Protect-All® surface, and athletic programs can customize their platforms with a logo.



ELITE HALF-RACK WITH PLATFORM

Perform all core lifts in one station

From
\$2399

STOCK VERSION
Item #320462

Stock Now With Chrome Guides and Protective Stripping on all Bar Contact Points and Black Powder Coat Paint
Built to last: Massive 7-gauge steel tubing.
CALL FOR CUSTOM PRICING AND FEATURES

Box Squat

Bench Press

Power Clean

Hex Bar Deadlift

Versatile

Expandable

Technique Attachment #400019 - \$219 Dip Attachment #400018 - \$199

Our most popular
**TOTAL PROGRAM
Unit!**

COST EFFECTIVE SPACE EFFICIENT DUAL ELITE HALF RACKS W/PLATFORMS

INCLUDES 2 HEAVY-DUTY
FLAT TO INCLINE BENCHES!



Shown in custom

Great for group or team usage • Designed for the most demanding facilities
Massive 7-gauge steel construction

Stock Price
\$5,199
#320465

BIGGER FASTER STRONGER

BFS

DEDICATED TO HELPING
ATHLETES SUCCEED
SINCE 1976

CALL NOW 1-800-628-9737
online at www.biggerfasterstronger.com • email us at info@bfsmail.com
843 West 2400 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84119 • Fax (801) 975-1159

**ULTIMATE MULTI
USE RACK**
STARTING FROM **\$1,999**
Stock (Black Paint) #400096



**8 FOOT POWER
RACK**
STARTING FROM **\$769**
Stock (Black Paint) #400041



IS YOUR PROGRAM READY FOR
**THE TOUGHEST
RACKS**



**HEAVY
DUTY SUPER CAGE**
STARTING FROM **\$1,269**

Stock (Black Paint) #400241

BIGGER FASTER STRONGER

BFS

**CALL BFS FOR CUSTOM OPTIONS
AND PRICING**

DEDICATED TO HELPING ATHLETES SUCCEED SINCE 1976

GET TOUGH 1-800-628-9737

online at www.biggerfasterstronger.com • email us at info@bfsmail.com

843 West 2400 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84119 • Fax (801) 975-1159