

The Three Rules of *Speed Training*

Simple, proven methods to dramatically increase running speed



BY **DR. GREG SHEPARD, FOUNDER/CEO BFS**

Early in my career I spent my summers in the Los Angeles area training with track athletes. I was amazed at the size and speed of their throwers. There were about 30 of these men who weighed an average of 270 pounds and who could run between 4.6 and 4.8 in the forty. At the time, pro football players were not even close to that.

I wanted my high school football players back at Sehome High School in the state of Washington to be like those throwers. So when I returned, we parallel squatted just like those throwers and practiced sprinting, and we timed our players twice per month. It took only one year to get phenomenal results.

I had 50 players run between 4.5 and 5.0 in the forty. That was in 1970. Can anyone match that today? Sehome had an enrollment of 1,400 in grades 9-12. We played mostly larger schools and ended up playing Snohomish High School in a mythical state championship. They had minus 77 yards.

My next move took me to Brigham Young University, where I worked with football players and the powerlifting

team. Paul Howard, a lineman, gained 45 pounds in one year, reaching 275, and improved his forty from 5.2 to 4.8. He played 10 years for the Denver Broncos. Paul Devine, a running back who was also on my power lifting team, helped us win the 1973 national collegiate powerlifting championship. Paul graduated and raised his family in Southern California. His son Kevin was taught how to parallel squat and train. Kevin ran a 4.2 forty at the combine and played in the NFL for several years. I was so impressed with Kevin that we did a football speed video featuring Kevin's ideas on speed improvement.

In 1977 I had a 5'9", 250-pound sophomore football player named Charles who ran a 6.9 forty. I told him that he may have just set a record for the slowest time in history. I said, "As I see it, you've got two choices. Either eat lettuce for every meal or squat like crazy." Well, he didn't like lettuce. By the end of his senior year, this athlete had grown two inches and weighed 300 pounds. What do you think? Was he slower after all those squats and with those extra 50 pounds?

Charles parallel squatted 745 pounds in a national competition and briefly held the teenage national record. He ran a 5.1 forty and could grab the rim of a basketball hoop with both hands from a stand. Did his stride length improve? Of course it did. Why? Because he had become much stronger in every molecule in his legs and buttocks. That improvement can be attributed almost solely to parallel squats.

About ten years later, Stefan Fernholm, a discus thrower from Sweden, became part of BFS. He was absolutely incredible. Stefan ran a legitimate 4.23 forty weighing 270 pounds. He is featured in a number of our videos and books. Stefan could parallel squat 800 pounds. Tom Busch, our 2003 BFS Athlete of the Year, ran a 5.1 as a freshman at Park High School in Minnesota. Tom gained only 18 pounds (reaching 228) by his senior year, but his forty time improved to a blazing 4.47. Tom never missed a parallel squat workout in four years and always broke his eight personal records per week as the BFS program guarantees.

What are the real keys to improving speed? What can you do to develop speed in the best and fastest way possible? BFS has the answers to these questions. To get you started, you need to understand three basic rules about speed. If you accept and understand them, you will be on your way to achieving great individual and team speed.

Rule #1: You can improve speed significantly. It is amazing to me that there are still some individuals who believe you are born with your speed and there is nothing you can do to get faster. That is so ridiculous that it is tragic.

There are many things you can do to improve speed. It is easy to go from a 5.9 forty to a 5.2 or from a 5.6 forty to a 5.0. It is easy to improve from a 5.2 forty to a 4.8 or from a 5.0 forty to a 4.6. You can even go from 4.8 to 4.5 in a year or from 4.6 to 4.4 or 4.3 in the same time period. I can make these statements confidently because we have made these exact same improvements with literally thousands of athletes.

Rule #2: You must use a variety of speed improvement components. Many people concentrate on only one component of speed improvement or use a gimmick to improve speed. For example, an athlete might wear a special shoe or use a parachute or work on stride length. This is not the answer. Many athletes will work only on technique drills. I'm not saying it's bad to do this, but if you want to get an edge on everyone else, you will need to use all the BFS components for speed improvement. We have ten such components.

Rule #3: Everything you do in your strength and conditioning program should be related to speed improvement. Since very few



Santa Rita High School photo by Paul Conecry



Derek Watton, McDonell Central High, photo by Lisa Tenold

A strength and conditioning program that focuses on speed makes spectacular plays happen in football.



Strength is a key ingredient in speed for any sport. Shown is pro hockey player Joe Rullier, who has power cleaned 319 pounds and front squatted 485 pounds.

people in strength and conditioning programs are even aware of this rule, you will get an edge on your opponents when you implement and coordinate a



speed relationship among all phases of the BFS total strength and conditioning program. For example, why do you stretch? Some say they stretch to prevent injuries, while we at BFS stretch to improve speed and jumping power. Therefore, when we stretch, we make sure our body, toes and legs complement and reinforce correct sprinting

BFS clinician Jeff Scurran teaches perfect technique at a BFS clinic. The BFS program focuses on how to stretch to improve speed and jumping power.

technique. We know that very few programs include this perspective. This is why with BFS you will get the edge in speed that you desire.

If your team follows our BFS guidelines for speed as spelled out in my book *Bigger Faster Stronger*, or if they attend a BFS clinic and learn from our qualified staff of BFS clinicians, I am confident that you can become the fastest team in your conference and will always be among the fastest high school teams in your state. **BFS**

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