



BFS Vice President John Rowbotham is carrying on Coach Shepard's vision of teaching young athletes the right way to lift for physical superiority.

The Right Track

Timeless insight into the most effective way to train young athletes

BY DR. GREG SHEPARD, BFS FOUNDER/CEO

(Editor's note: Although Coach Shepard wrote this article for coaches and athletes 28 years ago, the ideas are still relevant today. Why? Because they work!)

This year [1984] at a BFS clinic a coach asked, "Why isn't there just one right program? I get confused with so many philosophies." I don't think we should ever sit back and be content with one "Right Program." We should always be searching for a better way to do things. However, strength training has progressed to the point where we can now say this program is really good and that one isn't so good.

The purpose of this article is to determine what constitutes correct

training principles by answering six basic questions. This will enable coaches to determine if they are on the right track.

Question #1: Free Weights or Machines?

This is now practically a dead issue. It is estimated that only about 3 percent of our universities now use machines as their primary source of strength building for power sports such as football, basketball, and track and field. Most universities went through their machine stage in the 1970s and found that free weights worked better. So, unless a school is loaded with a winning tradition where talent is abundant and motivation is not necessary, machines should not be

used. A few major universities do fit that description and use machines as their primary training source.

A word of caution about parents, boosters and alumni. Because of extensive advertising of machines, it is generally considered by those groups that machines are necessary. Often great sums of money are offered to make sure the school has the best equipment. I would like to make two points regarding this situation. First, some schools are getting so much equipment – including free weights and machines – that there is a danger of athletes doing too many things and not concentrating on the basic power movement lifts. Second, instead of spending thousands for an

arm or chest machine, a coach could better spend that money on motivation with a BFS clinic and derive far greater benefit. You're on the right track if you use free weights!

Question #2: What Kind of Lifts Are Best?

The greatest success comes when an athlete emphasizes the basic power movement exercises and then does several auxiliary exercises. There are a number of power movement lifts, and a strength coach usually will concentrate on three or four. The squat and the power clean seem to be the two favorites. Others are the bench press, incline press, press lock-out, deadlift, front squat, power snatch, hang clean and dumbbell clean. But if your athletes are doing ten or more exercises such as curls and upright rows, each with equal importance, you are on the wrong track.

Question #3: Should I Do More Than Just Lift?

To be on the right track, your strength and conditioning program should be a balanced total program. Running, agility, flexibility and technique work should be included with your lifting program. Your athletes can't spend all their time in the weight-room, and you should not train them exactly like champion bodybuilders

or powerlifters if you plan for them to become great players in a sport such as football. Flexibility and agility work can be done every day. While technique and running can be done three or more times per week, lifting is normally done two to four times per week. If you are having your athletes do upper body lifts one day and lower body the next and if they do this program six days per week like body-builders, you are most likely overemphasizing the lifting part of your program and are therefore on the wrong track.

Question #4: What About Negative Resistance?

Negative resistance training methods are fine for powerlifters, but other athletes must be very careful of excessive use of negative resistance. Athletes can get stronger with these training methods but may unlearn the vital ability to create a maximum summation of force. Negative resistance training will put an athlete on the wrong track.

Question #5: What About the Future?

There will be many more fads, systems and machines in the future. I strongly advise you to let others be the guinea pigs. Coaches are now much more sophisticated and are not easily

fooled with gimmicks. In the past, systems such as isometrics, Exer-Genies, machines, functional isometrics, circuit training, wires, cables, and systems that promise quick and easy results have failed to put coaches on the right track. However, I am confident our BFS program will be even better in 1990 than it is now. It is certainly better now than five years ago. Improvements have come primarily in the areas of technique and motivation. Ingredients for change and improvement should always be compatible with our right-track guidelines.

Question #6: What Is Most Important for Success?

Motivation and technique are the most important factors. You can be following a right-track program perfectly, but if techniques are not taught correctly and a coach is not present to supervise, encourage and motivate, the program is doomed to failure. I also believe that even if a coach institutes a program that is not on the right track, if they teach it correctly and with motivation and fierce intensity so their athletes believe in it, they can make it successful. However, it is a whole lot easier to be successful if you're on the right track! BFS

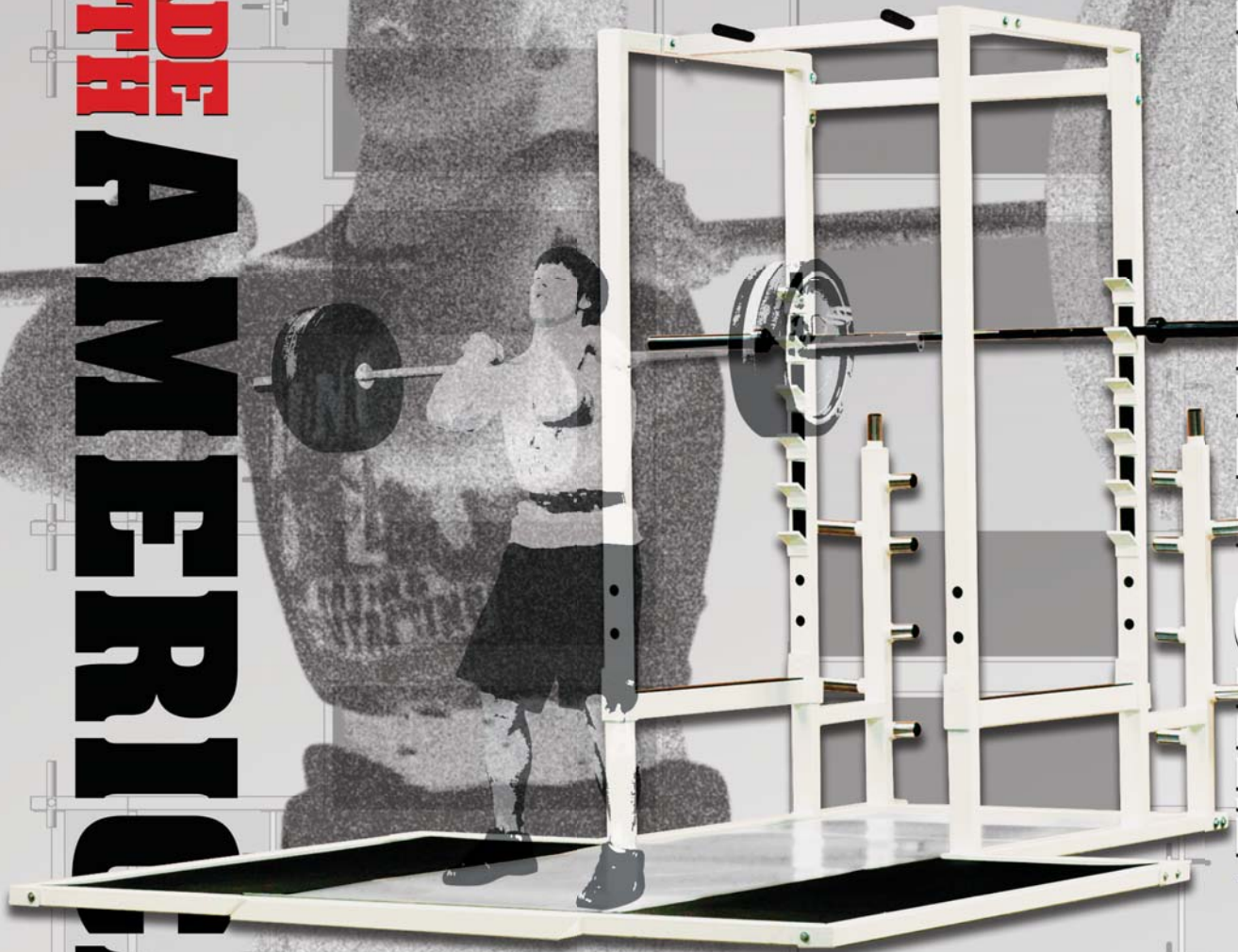
Weight training is key to athletic success, but a total conditioning program involves many other elements, such as agility, flexibility, and endurance training.



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