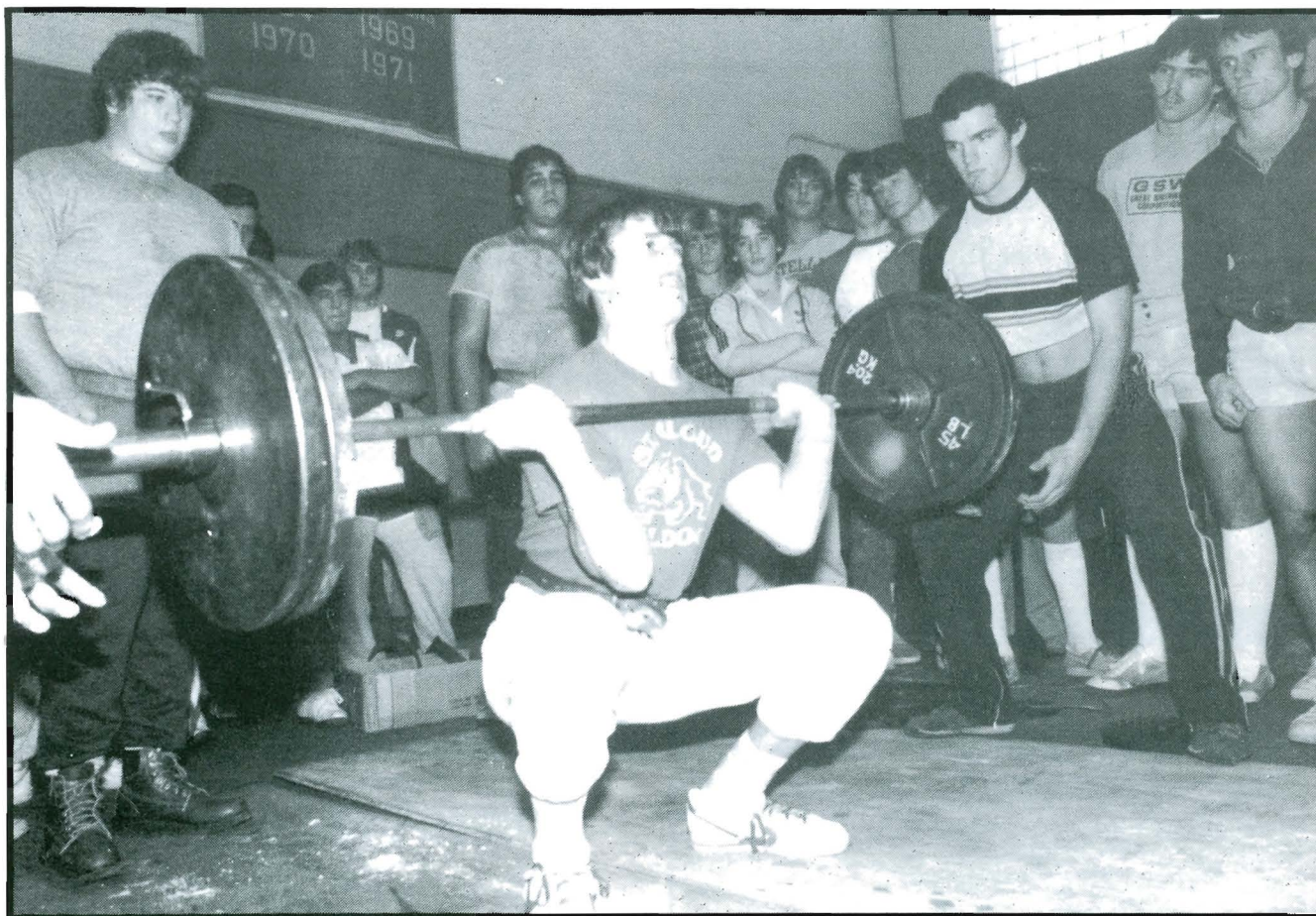


LIFTING COMPETITIONS IN HIGH SCHOOL

by Greg Shepard



A High School lifter squat clean 235 pounds.

I'm aware of only one state that has weight lifting competitions as a recognized High School Activities Association sport. That state is Florida. It flourishes mostly in central Florida. The above athlete is from St. Cloud High School in St. Cloud Florida. Two lifts are used in their competitions: the bench press and the clean and jerk. A.A.U. rules are used along with the standard A.A.U. weight classifications. Athletes must compete in dual or district meets to qualify for the State Championships. The qualifying total for the 198 pounder is about 520 pounds (300 bench press plus a 220 clean for example). Each year about 90 qualify and compete in this State Championship event in central Florida.

Meets are sometimes held every week during the winter months. Football coaches are also usually the weight lifting coaches. They have found out that it is very difficult to compete every week. In fact, it is nearly impossible. I recommend athletes should not compete more than once a month. The bad thing about too many competitions is they interfere with an athlete's training schedule. It takes time to recover mentally and physically from a meet.

The bench press is judged with the following guidelines: Hips must remain in contact with the bench, the feet cannot move, an even extension of the arms and the lifter must pause with the bar at the chest and wait for the referees signal to lift. On the clean and jerk the major aspect of judging is watching for "press outs." The bar must be jerked in one continuous fluid motion overhead. The bar cannot pause at the forehead and then be pressed to a lock-out position.

Some of the problems that have been encountered by high school coaches have to do with the A.A.U. format of conducting meets. The A.A.U. weight classes are not particularly good for high school. Finding qualified judges is a real concern, and then some A.A.U. judges are super strict on the rules and many beginners are disqualified for minor infractions of the rules such as moving a foot on the bench press. Since A.A.U. rules require 3 judges per platform, judging can become quite a hassle. Overall, however, many coaches and athletes get very excited with the weightlifting competitions, and there is no question about how the kids in Florida excel in technique especially on the clean.

If any readers desire information on "How to Run a Meet" in high school, I have prepared an audio tape on this subject. Information can be found on the next page under Innovations Album 1 on Tape 4.