

# ECU PIRATE FOOTBALL

by Mike Gentry, Strength Coach  
at East Carolina University

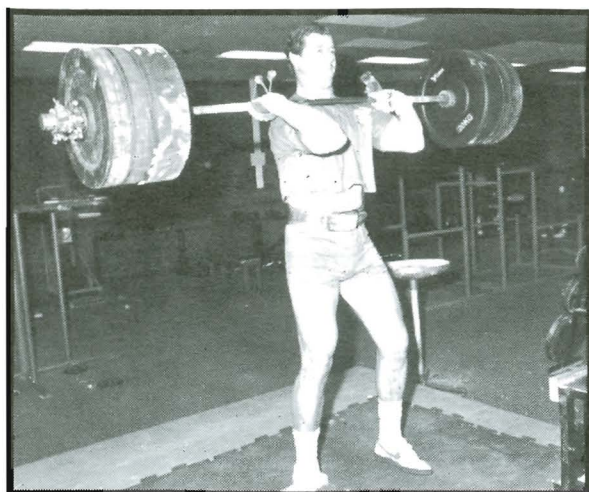
and  
Dr. Greg Shepard



Daniel Cole: Freshman DB weighs 190 lbs. has maxed out at 615 lbs!!! Notice the great form, especially lower back. Daniel is squatting correctly! The average squat on the team is 476 pounds.



Anthony Simpson: Freshman FB benching 365. The average bench on the team is 328 pounds!



Chris Durand cleaning 319 pounds! The average hang clean is 312 pounds!

I first became acquainted with Coach Mike Gentry through Terry Long the extraordinary athlete at ECU featured in our special November 1983 BFS Journal. The response to the article was super positive and I also started to follow ECU Pirate Football. They finished in the top 20 in the United States and with another 10 or 20 points scored in the right place ECU could have possibly been ranked #1 in the nation and not Miami. Now East Carolina is certainly not the mecca of recruiting in the United States. Even in their own state schools like Clemson, University of North Carolina, and North Carolina State University are extremely tough to recruit against. My personal opinion is that the great blue chip athlete will not generally come to ECU and therefore super coaching and super conditioning must be in force in order to win. With there great success this year however, recruiting may become easier. Because I believe ECU has one of the very top college programs in America, I asked strength coach Mike Gentry to share his total program.

The goal of the East Carolina University football strength and conditioning program is simple; to help our athletes realize their physical potential through progressive weight training, improved flexibility and enhanced cardiovascular conditioning. The end result of this individual improvement is increased team performance on the field and more W's in the win column.

While the thrust of this article is our strength program we try to avoid emphasizing weight training at the expense of flexibility training and our conditioning program. The emphasis placed on weight training and conditioning shifts periodically during the course of the year as we approach the competitive season. However, we never abandon our intensity in the weight room. Flexibility is a constant that is practiced year-round.

We have enjoyed great success with our strength program in the past two years and have also been successful on the field. Success begets success, and each of these successes fuels the other. Our players believe in our strength program and its methods, this confidence is crucial. Head Coach Ed Emory and his staff support the program 100% and this support too is critical for the programs success.

Our players attack their work-outs and train by our strength motto "sweat blood". They compete with each other in the work-outs. We try to provide an atmosphere of positiveness and foster the spirit of competition in the weight room.

Our sports medicine people have verified the fact that since instituting this strength and flexibility program our team injuries have been fewer and less severe during the course of the season.

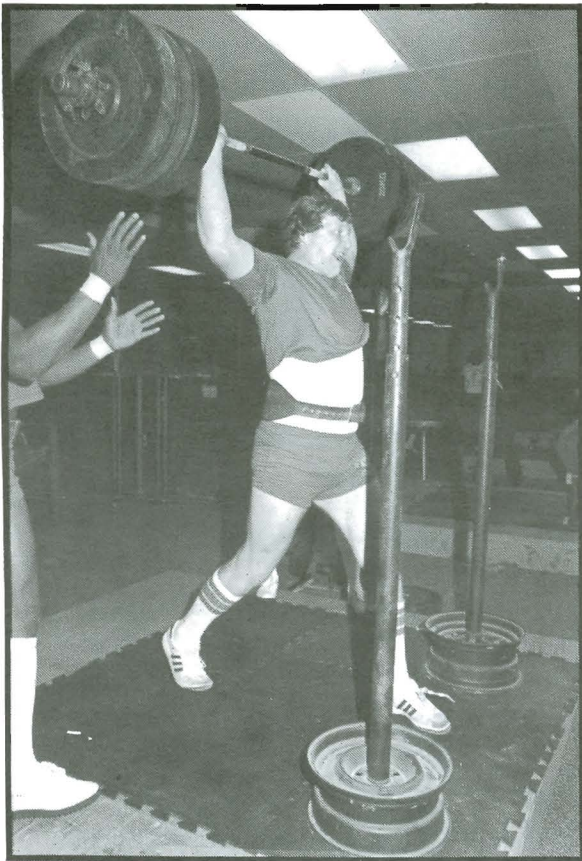
I am enclosing a copy of our awards system that was very effective in motivating our players during the off-season. I like it because it doesn't limit the awards to a select few, and encourages individual goal setting.

As I'm sure you are aware what I've done is try to take the

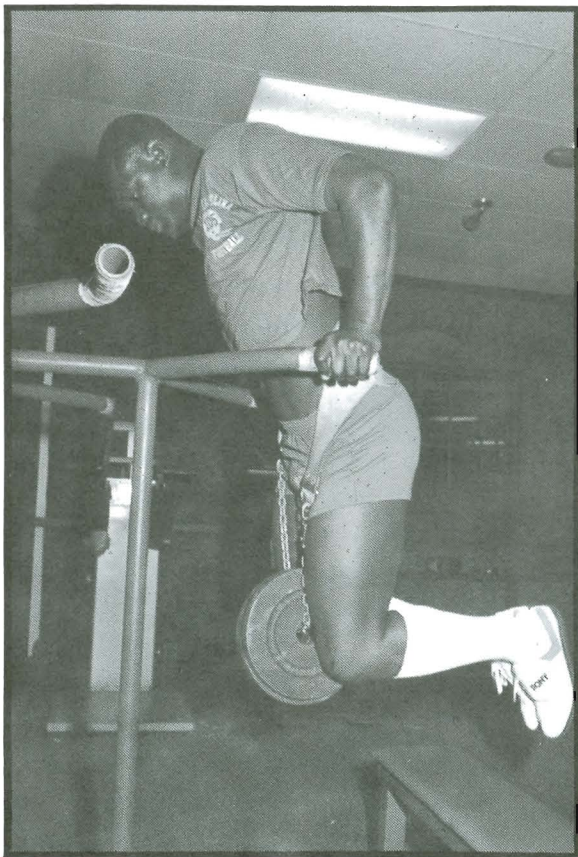
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# ECU PIRATE FOOTBALL

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Greg Sotolohorsky OT 319 Push Press. Team Average is 309



DIPS a great auxiliary exercise shown by Mike Grant Senior LB

best of powerlifting and Olympic lifting and combine them to try to make our athletes both stronger and more *powerful*.

We are trying to increase their base strength through exercises such as squats and bench presses and develop *explosive rotary hip drive* through exercises such as *hang cleans* and *push presses*.

## ECU OFF-SEASON STRENGTH TRAINING FOR FOOTBALL

We emphasize the pre-spring or winter conditioning phase of our football strength training program. It is during these eight or nine weeks that we can devote the necessary time and energy to produce the desired size and strength gains in our players.

We max test the players immediately prior to the start of winter conditioning. We also do skinfold calibrations, take anthropometric measurements and measure the players vertical jump. At the conclusion of winter conditioning, we will again perform these tests to evaluate the success of our program.

Our goal is to increase overall body strength, explosive power, and muscularity. The core of our program is based on four lifts:

- Bench Press
- Push Press
- Back Squats
- Hang Cleans

The assistance exercise used in the program are:

- Close Grip Benches
- Weighted Dips
- Power Pulls
- Shrugs
- Front Squats
- Incline Bench Press
- Leg Curls
- Bent-Over Rows
- Curls
- Nautilus Neck Machine

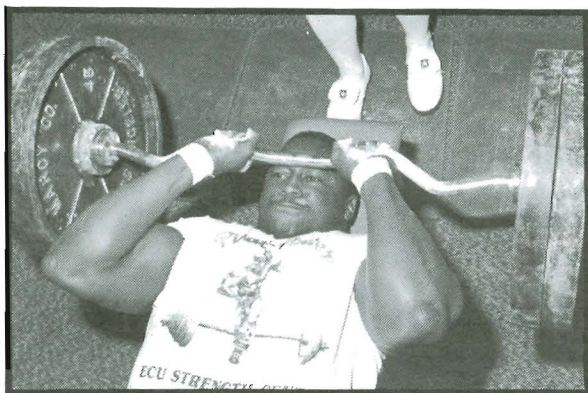
We feel we can increase base "strength" levels through exercises such as bench presses and squats and from this base level of strength build our explosive power through exercises such as overhead push presses and hang cleans.

The team is divided into offensive and defensive groups with each groups lifting three times per week on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Each lifting session lasts only one hour and a half. We strive for short, intense workouts. Following each lifting session, the group goes through the flexibility program as a group and a period of rope jumping and agility drills.

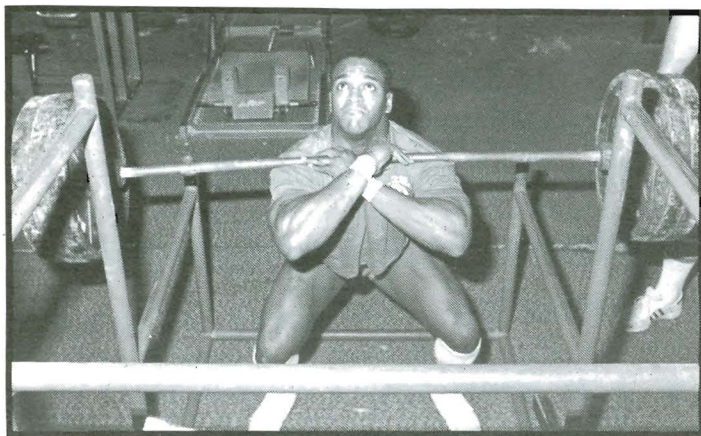
During the first 4-5 weeks of our off-season program, we do 5 sets of 5 reps on our heavy days for the core exercises and 4 sets of 8 reps on our light day. In the last 3-4 weeks of the program, we will do 5 sets of 3 reps on our heavy day and 4 sets of 5 reps on our light day for our core exercises. The object is to peak the athletes strength immediately prior to the beginning of spring football practice.

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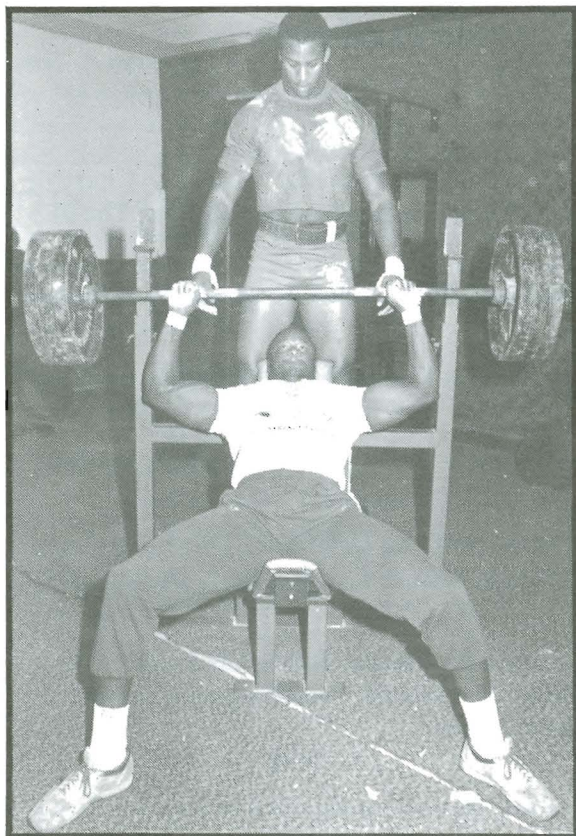
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Jeff Pegues All-American OLB doing lying triceps extension with 210 lbs.



Clint Harris Senior All-American Free Safety, doing front squats with 315 lbs.



Jeff Pegues again doing 315 inclines.

## ECU WEIGHT LIFTING GOALS

Award Levels	Squats	Bench Press	Lineman		TOTAL
			Hang Clean	Push Press	
Super Buc	600	400	350	340	1650
Buccaneer	575	385	335	325	1570
Gold	525	350	310	305	1470
Purple	450	310	275	265	1275
TE & LB					
Super Buc	575	385	335	325	1570
Buccaneer	555	360	320	310	1490
Gold	500	325	295	280	1350
Purple	425	285	260	260	1205
RB & DB					
Super Buc	545	335	315	295	1445
Buccaneer	520	315	300	280	1370
Gold	470	295	275	255	1250
Purple	395	260	240	220	1090
QB & WR					
Super Buc	520	310	295	275	1355
Buccaneer	495	290	275	250	1270
Gold	445	270	255	240	1165
Purple	370	235	220	210	1010

## ECU JUMP ROPE ROUTINE

- 1 minute both feet.
- 1 minute right foot, left foot
- 1 minute alternate foot
- 1 minute shuffle
- 30 sec. speed jump as many jumps as you can in 30 sec.
- 30 sec. speed jump as many jumps as you can.

## SUMMARY

I like Coach Gentry's Program and philosophy. It is amazing how similar we are in concept. Probably the only difference is we do the dead lift and Coach Gentry does the push press. Please note: schools like the University of Texas also do the push press. However, for high school, we love the dead lift for its intense and extremely beneficial motivational value.

Congratulations to the ECU Pirate Football players, Head Coach Ed Emory, football staff and strength coach Mike Gentry for one of the most outstanding jobs in the history of collegiate football in fulfilling your potential towards your quest for greatness.

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