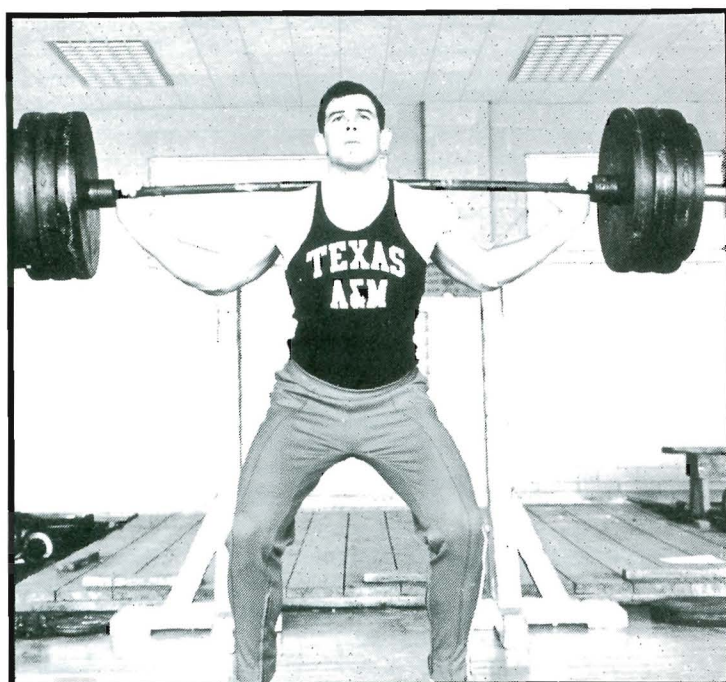


# HISTORY OF ATHLETIC STRENGTH TRAINING

By  
**Dr. Greg Shepard**  
Part 4 in a Series



RANDY MATSON 1960's Shot Putter World Record Holder:  
Olympic Champion



Matson's training methods were way ahead of football.

## THE RANDY MATSON STORY

Randy Matson was a superior athlete caught up in revolutionary training methods which propelled him to an unheard-of 71-5½ World Record in the shot put. Let us go way back in history. In 1876 the world record was 30 feet and in 1880 the 40-foot barrier was reached. It took 29 more years for someone to break the 50-foot barrier. Then, the 60-foot barrier was considered beyond reach, just like the 4-minute mile barrier — Humanly Impossible!

Impossible, that is, until Parry O'Brien did it in 1954. O'Brien used two revolutionary ideas to break this barrier. First, he changed the shot put style and secondly, he lifted weights. Through his example, many men began to perfect these two revolutionary ideas. Men like Bill Neider who broke the 65-foot barrier in 1960, Dallas Long who bench pressed 500 pounds in the early 1960's, Neil Steinhauer who threw 69 feet in college indoors in the late 1960's, George Woods, Al Fuerbach, Brian Oldfield, Michael Carter and finally a prodigious 17-year-old named Arnold Campbell who broke the 60-foot barrier in high school in 1983. Each one of these men deserve a page in this series of historical articles.

This article will discuss the first man to break the 70-foot barrier: Randy Matson.

Randy is from Pampa, Texas and in high school he was an All-District defensive end and an All-State basketball player. One month after high school Matson became the first Texan to throw 60 feet. At this time Randy was 6'6½" and weighed 215 pounds. Dallas Long was the only man to throw farther than Randy in college but Dallas had had 3 years of weight training. So naturally Randy decided that he must also lift weights. Sixteen months later Randy had gained 45 pounds and was just barely beaten by gold medal winner Dallas Long in the 1964 Olympic games. They both threw over 66 feet.

Randy continued to lift and gained another 10-15 pounds and finally one year later the track world was set on fire. Randy Matson threw 70-7! The first man over 70 feet! Matson went on to win the 1968 Olympic Gold Medal and upped the World Record to 71-5½. According to Track and Field News as of October, 1984, there were 15 men who currently had marks of over 70 feet. As a so-called professional, Brian Oldfield in the mid 70's uncorked a 75-foot throw.

By today's standards, Matson's lifts were very modest. His Bench Press was 330, Incline Press 250, Parallel Squat 425 and his Dead Lift was about 500 pounds. With his talent and abilities combined with his competitive nature and lifting by today's standards, Randy Matson might very well have approached 80 feet.

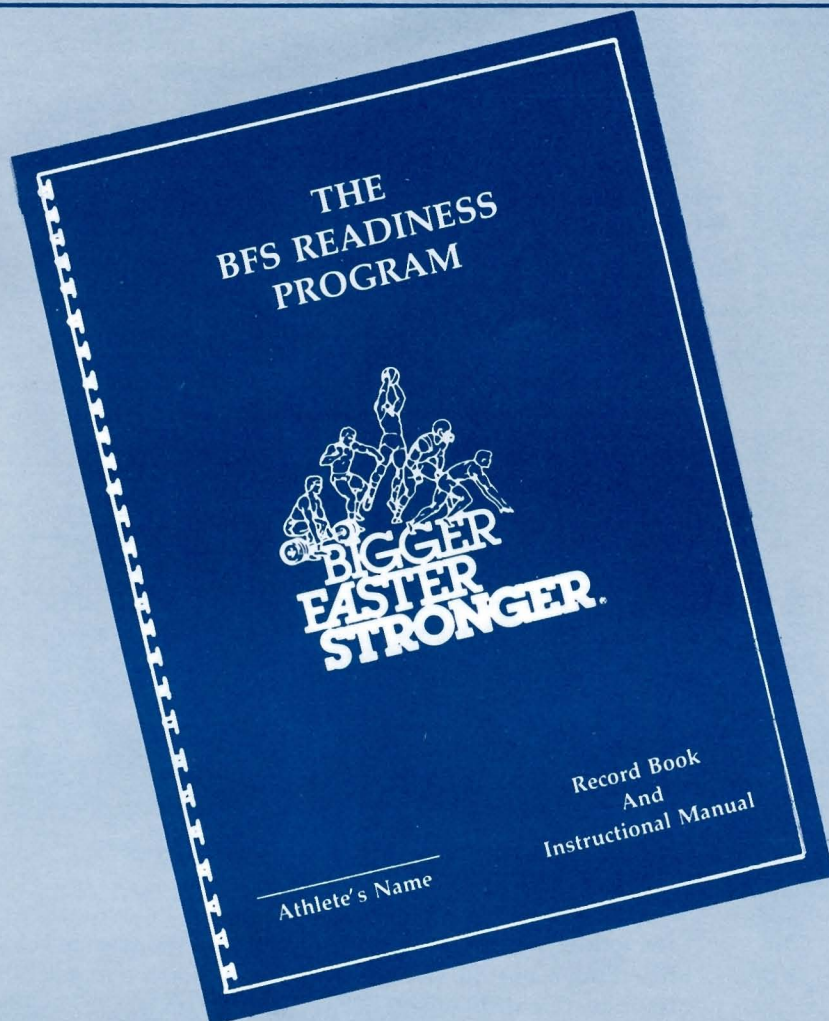
While football coaches during the Matson era were experimenting with isometrics, exergemics, universal gyms and the beginnings of the Nautilus principles, shot putters were ALWAYS training with free weights. If shot putters experimented away from free weights, they would very quickly get smaller, weaker and slower and consequently their shot put performance would decrease.

Texas A & M football coaches thought Randy Matson was a freak of nature, a modern-day superman never again to be duplicated. Like the vast majority of major colleges, it took Texas A & M about a decade after Randy to hire a strength coach, and longer than that to realize that free weights were the only way to go. If they'd only known the secret of training practiced by Randy Matson and all other shot putters, Texas A & M could very well have been a dominate football power in the 1960's.



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