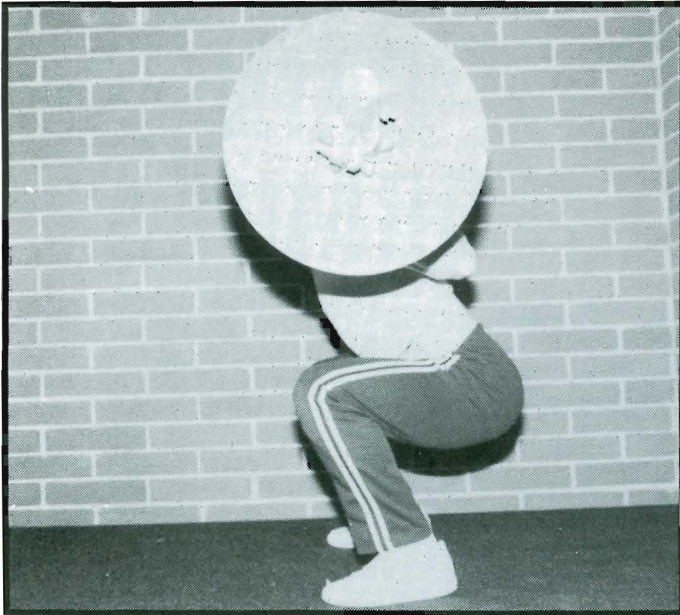


SQUAT CORRECTLY

Part Twelve in a Series
By Dr. Greg Shepard



"Squat down under control to this parallel position to strengthen knees."

KNEES AND SQUATS AN OPEN LETTER

Editor's Note: Occasionally we still get inquiries on knees and squats. Are doing squats harmful to the knees? There are still some who raise this question. Some coaches are put in a bad position with their strength program when a doctor, parent or administrator voice concern over squatting. If someone does say squats are bad for the knees, I would do three things:

1. ASK: "Do you mean deep squats or parallel?"
2. ASK: "That's interesting, could you show me any research which substantiates that theory?"
3. Show them the following letter which was written to a fellow coach having some problems with his trainers.

KNEES AND SQUATS

Dear Coach:

Thank you for your recent inquiry regarding our opinions and studies on knees and squats. You reported that your athletes were going down under control to a parallel position and then coming up to an upright position. This is most excellent! There is, however, a danger on performing squats incorrectly.

Some athletes, while squatting, will go down out of control with a very fast speed. Some athletes will do deep knee bends, full squats or deep squats where the athlete's buttocks are nearly on the floor. It is our opinion that an athlete going down out-of-control with great speed to a deep position is grossly incorrect and this may cause knee injuries or knee problems.

However, performing squats as you do, going down under complete control to only a parallel position will cause positive changes to take place. First, the leg muscles will become stronger and bigger, especially the quadriceps and hamstrings. Second, the tendons will become thicker and stronger. Third, the knee ligaments will also become thicker and stronger. Fourth, the entire articular capsule of the knee will become thicker. Fifth, the bones of the legs will become stronger and slightly bigger due to increased capillarization. Sixth, the cartilage of the knee will become more resistant to injury (according to Dr. Mel Hayashi). Dr. Hayashi, a sports medicine orthopedic specialist, has been a chief resident at the Mayo Clinic and was the Chief Orthopedic Surgeon in the 1984 Olympic Games. We believe the above positive effects of squats are why athletes who do squats correctly have a far less incidence of knee injuries

than those athletes who do not squat at all. This is especially true in football.

Coach, our organization is singularly unique in the fact we are in personal touch with thousands of football coaches. For example, we do 60 all-day seminars annually throughout the nation teaching tens of thousands of athletes how to squat correctly. These coaches are asked to report positive and negative training effects through our toll-free number. We also publish a journal which goes to every head football coach in America. We are in constant touch with America's football coaches. Our phone bill of \$2,000 a month is testimony to this fact. The results are overwhelming! Performing squats correctly seems to greatly reduce the number of knee injuries. Our files are full of coaches who relate their stories of how dramatic the reduction of injuries became after including squats in their training program. Believe me, coach, if there were a problem, we'd hear about it. We hear about many problems from coaches, but squats adversely affecting the knees is certainly not one of them.

In conclusion, we are firmly and resolutely convinced that performing squats correctly is like taking out an insurance policy against injury, especially injuries to the knee. We wish you the best to you and your athletes and continued success.

Sincerely,

Greg Shepard

Dr. Greg Shepard
President