

# LAMAR POWER BASEBALL

By Jess Downey

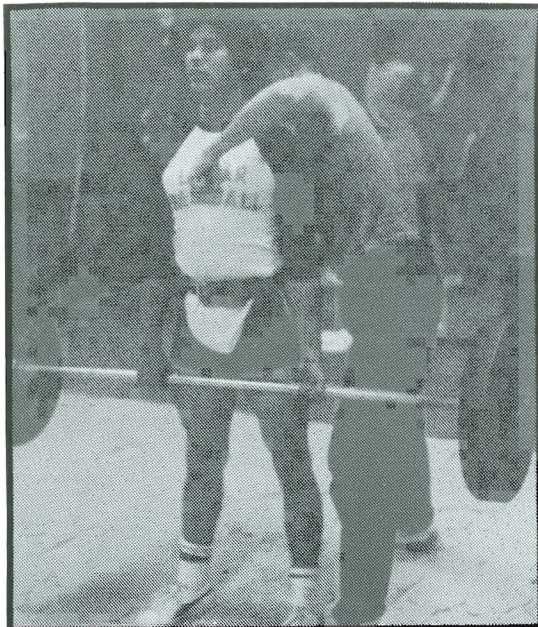
Baseball and Strength Coach

Lamar High School, Lamar, Colorado

This is my eighth year of coaching high school baseball and working as a strength coach in Colorado Public Schools. The two schools where I've coached have enrollments of around 600 students. During this time we have had seven playoff teams: two became state champions; one, second in state; one, third in state; and three quarter finalists. Presently, teams in our program have posted 112 wins and 25 losses.

The high school coaching profession has changed in many ways during the past 10 years. There can be a very shallow value in athletics created by the high emphasis placed on winning. In many people's minds, not winning means failure. My emotional desire is to win, but to have a quality program we believe that the process must be stressed from the start to the completion of a high school career. This will help assure reasonable success for athletes in all their future endeavors.

One basic discipline of any athletic program is a good weight training program. As a player in college, I used weights in my dorm room so the coach didn't know I was lifting. I knew that to compete in a power sport like baseball I needed to be bigger, faster and stronger. Our coach provided limited lifting for us my junior and senior years. The first year I coached, we stressed weight training for all players. Many basic skills are developed at a very young age among players who participate in organized baseball. Throwing motion, running form, hitting motion, fielding skills, etc., are all teachable aspects of the game. The more



Matt Camacho, Senior, 5-8, 160 pounds, hit .385. Matt Dead Lifts 500! Notice BFS Spotting Technique.

*Editor's Note:* Rick Anderson conducted a BFS Clinic for Lamar last spring. Our congratulations to the Lamar Savages and to Coach Downey who truly puts athletics in the right perspective.



Kenny Ybarra, Senior, 5-7, 145 pounds hit .380. Leads team in RBI's.

strength and power one can generate while performing the skills the higher the level one can excel. I am aware of the many intelligent players who excel because of knowing when and how to react to situations. These are players who developed through a process, and because of that, will be the first to acknowledge the importance of weight training in baseball.

We have our baseball program broken down into four various stages. Part one is to play a 55-game summer schedule and maintain a three-day-per-week weight work out. Part two is to participate in an intense fall and winter weight program. Part three is a pre-season weight training and conditioning program. Part four is the high school season during which time we have our players lift according to position. During the first three stages we stress four exercises for development of total body strength, size, and speed. The four exercises are bench press, parallel squats, dead lift and power clean. We also have players do box squats and some auxiliary lifts (reverse curls, wrist rolls, swing leaded bats, hit tires, shoulders press, and isolated arm exercises). The players also do body weight exercises such as push-ups, rope climbing, dips and peg-board climb. We use no more than 10 reps and work down to doing 3x3, 5x5, and pyramids for our workouts. During the season we have pitchers abstain from much upper body work except bench and towel bench. Any player who is having arm problems lowers the weight he is using or cuts down



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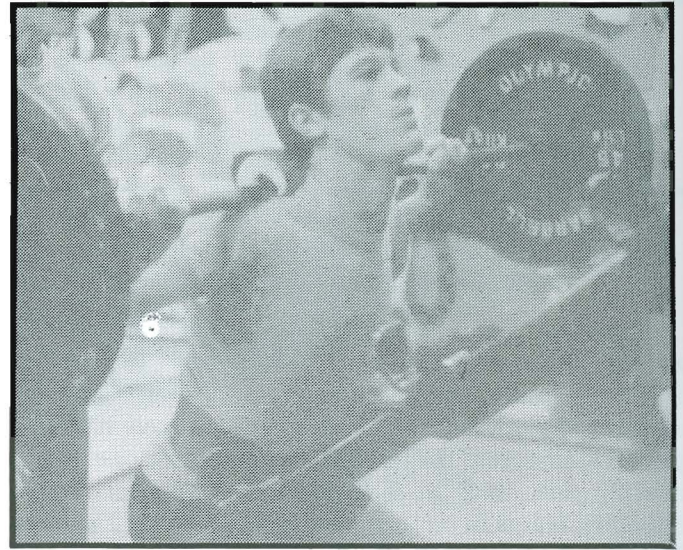
Doug Brocail, Senior, right hander, averages 85 MPH on fastball. ERA 1.80, averaged 13 strike-outs.



David Martsolf, Senior, hit .360, benches 260, squats 345, dead lifts 500, plays centerfield and runs a 4.6 forty.

on upper body work. The rest of the players remain on the same program as on the off season, except they work out three days instead of four. We also refrain from lifting on game days. We eliminate the dead lift all together during the season and work more on box squat and towel bench. The main concepts of our weight program are to use proper technique, proper spotting, good safety, proper equipment and, most of all, to go through a full range of motion in all exercises.

The primary benefits our players gain from weight training belong in three main areas: A. The individual, B. The mental, C. The team. A. The individual is a great player who will find ways to make himself better. Weight training allows players to improve from marginal players to bonifide varsity athletes. The basic advantages of being bigger, faster, and stronger contributes to our marginal athletes producing more than other teams' bottom players. B. The mental: we know through weight training our players become battlers. The buddy system in weight training is great for making players understand second effort and doing more than they thought they could. We teach that one pushes his partner to the limit and then tries to push for more.



6-4 Doug Brocail Box Squatting. Doug has gone from 148 to 195 pounds in bodyweight. Doug also plays in outfield and hits .435, benches 250, squats 475 and runs a 4.8 forty.



Mike Navarrette, Junior, rounding the bases after a 385 foot blast to the opposite field. Mike is only 5-5, 135 lbs. so he has to lift. He benches 195, squats 315, hits .424.

We compare this to having an 0-2 count at the plate, two outs, and bases loaded. The player must dig down for that little extra and, regardless of win or lose he knows how to battle. Having experienced the process, he will succeed more often than fail. Our players also learn to understand the difference between failing and knowing they've done their best. The mental attitude produced through weight training creates players who are battlers. C. The team: when our players are together working in the off-season it allows for communication and closeness to develop. Also, leadership roles develop and players start a process for a long range goal. During the season a team will put out more and tend to quit less because of the process in weight training. We also believe it reduces our basic muscle strains, sprains, and joint dislocations.

The concepts in our program are not invented by us and hold no secrets. We believe our program's success stems from sound research, good equipment, interested coaches, detail in our work ethic, good community support, interested administrators and, of most importance, hard working and enthusiastic players.