

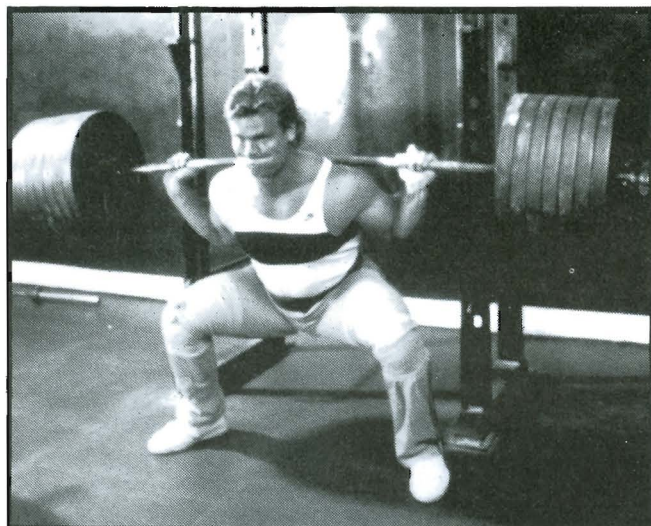
**BIGGER
FASTER
STRONGER**

SQUATS

**YOUR
TOTAL
PROGRAM**

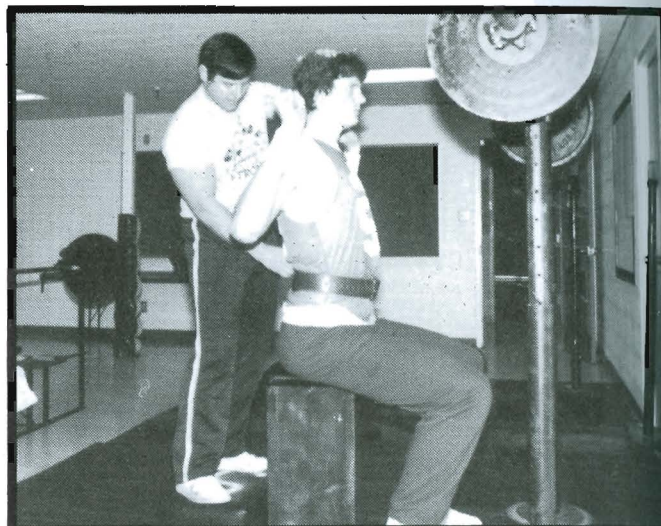
By Dr. Greg Shepard

Photo by Katie Zernhelt



PARALLEL SQUATS

Stefan Fernholm Squatting a Bunch.



BOX SQUATS

Coach Shepard working with NBA Star Mark Eaton.

The foundation of strength and power for an athlete is centered in the hips and legs. Squats are the "king" for developing this area. Squats are an absolute necessity. There is no substitute. Most strength coaches and football coaches believe this to be true. However, there is one huge problem. The vast majority of coaches and athletes have great problems with correct squatting procedures and techniques. I find more coaches having difficulties with the squat than I do the power clean. **TO ME, THE SQUAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT LIFT TO DO PROPERLY!**

Information is difficult to obtain. I have reviewed 32 books written by strength coaches. It is rare to find more than one page and two small paragraphs devoted to this most important lift. My book has 21 pages and my BFS abstract has a series of 14 articles devoted to the squat. Our core lift video also has nearly 20 minutes devoted to the squat! It's that important.

I will first discuss some general uncommon guidelines to squatting correctly. First, athletes should have only two squat workouts per week. I'm still finding coaches out there who have their athletes squat 3 times per week. This is one of the biggest mistakes a coach can make. Squatting 3 times per week leads to severe overtraining and can really hamper progress over a longer period of time. Second, an athlete should look straight ahead at a point. The eyes should be fixed on that point. It is a big mistake to tell your athletes to "Look up." Some of the athletes featured in this issue are looking up at the ceiling which is incorrect. We don't run, block or tackle looking up at the sky. We look straight ahead in all things! Third, an athlete wants to build his power through the groove of his athletic stance. I tell a basketball player to get in a rebounding position, a football player to get in a "hit" position and Stefan to get in his discus stance. Now, any coach can become an expert on a squat stance. Do not get in a narrow bodybuilders stance. Do not put a board underneath your heels. Do not take a very wide powerlifters stance with the toes pointed way out at a 45° angle. Fourth, is squatting down to a parallel position. Many, many athletes squat too high. You must go down to the parallel position to get proper functional hamstring and glute development. To make judging easy, you could get our "safety squat" device shown on page 41 or use the "marble" idea. Tell your spotters to spot from a squat position and look at the top part of the lifter's thigh. Then, imagine a marble placed halfway between the knee and the hip. Would the marble roll towards the knee or remain in position? Obviously, if the marble would roll down, the squat is too high. This makes judging easy!

To teach a beginning athlete is also easy. First, put him in a parallel squat position without the bar. Have him hold on to the squat rack for balance. Get his feet flat in an athletic stance with the feet pointed slightly out. Get his eyes fixed on his point. Make sure his knees are directly over his toes. The knees should be straight

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from every angle. Now the critical coaching point. Tell him to "SPREAD THE CHEST — WIDEN THE CHEST!" "LOCK IN THE LOWER BACK — SWOOP IT IN!" "STRAIGHTEN THE UPPER BODY — MAKE IT UPRIGHT!" These are key coaching instructions. After these coaching points are taught, then use the words "FIX IT!" These two words mean all of the above coaching points. Athletes should use a wide grip on the bar with the bar placed on the shoulders, not the neck. The reason for the wide grip is this technique enables the athlete to spread the chest better and thus it is easier to "Lock In" the lower back.

You have a choice. You can do parallel squats twice per week or do parallels once and box squats once per week. I love box squats once per week. The box should place the athletes legs slightly above parallel as pictured above. The basic technique is the same as the squat. Do not just touch the box but actually sit on the box under control. Then settle back slightly keeping the "Fix It" position. Now, the athlete is ready to drive the hips forward and up in an explosive type movement. The last part of the movement is rising up on the toes.

We do box squats for the following reasons: The athlete gets used to a heavier weight, he builds superior hip and hip tendon strength, by varying the squat-box squat workouts we can help eliminate plateaus, we can coach great squatting position easier, we can create explosive power in a more superior way than parallel squats and most importantly, the athlete recovers rapidly. This means an athlete can do heavy box squats and play a game the next day or have the energy to work on speed, plyometrics, and technique the following day. Believe me, this has far reaching consequences over a long period of time.

Squats will strengthen and thicken the muscles, bones, tendons, ligaments and the entire articular capsule which surrounds the knee joint. It's hard to believe but there are still a few orthopedic and medical doctors who cling to the ancient belief that squats are bad for the knees. When done correctly, squats can be like a life insurance policy against knee injuries. To me, if you don't squat and your athlete gets a knee injury, you're liable.

I've also heard some say box squats will ruin your back. Absolute nonsense. Granted, correct technique must be used but you must have that on any lift. I've used the box squat with athletes for nearly two decades without a single problem. When I work with pro basketball players making hundreds of thousands of dollars, we really get after the box squats. Getting hurt on the box squat is ridiculous. I've also checked with my athletes who did box squats in the early 1970's and no problems. There are no long term affects. We also do not get any negative calls on our toll free line from the hundreds of coaches doing the box squat program.

STEFAN WOVES ATHLETES

Stefan Fernholm and Rick Anderson did a clinic at another school in the Pittsburgh area last month.

Stefan had piled choir risers on top of each other in the auditorium. They were 4 feet high; a full 48 inches! He stepped back two feet, bent down and vertical jumped right 70 on top of those risers.

BELL HIGH SCHOOL Continued

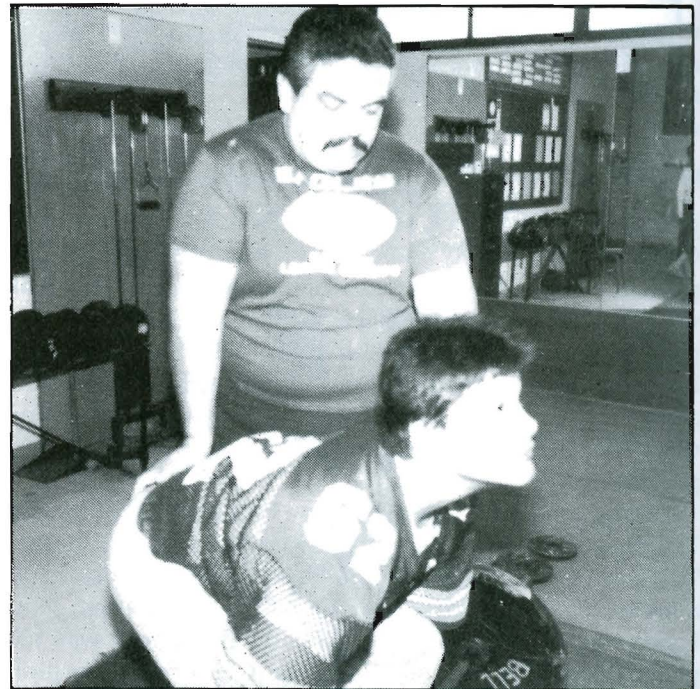
"Coach Nitta," I asked, "Tell me about your record as a head coach."

"Well Greg," he answered, "the first year we were 1-8, the second 2-5-2 and the third year 7-3-1 and made the playoffs. I then read about BFS and had Rick Anderson come for a BFS Clinic. One hundred kids paid \$8.00 each for the clinic. I felt really good about this because our kids generally come from poor families. After the clinic, the kids pulled me aside and said, "Coach we're not going to lose for you."

"The next year we went 11-1 and had Rick back again. So finally, this year we won the Championship for the first time in 10 years. Our QB, Eliud Pacheco who is 5-9 and 195 (a little fat) led us to that Championship. He was the 2-A player of the year. For the City Championship we were ahead at halftime, gave up only 6 first downs but lost 21-18."

"After the first clinic, I've told everyone it was the best single day I've had as a coach. It was the best single thing for our kids. It was our turn-around. Rick was so great and positive. It's changed the whole approach to kids with some of our assistant coaches. The mental attitude is absolutely amazing. We now believe we are winners. We have 46 squad members back with 29 lettermen. Our dream is still alive."

Again, what a day! We came to inspire but received inspiration! Tosh Nitta turns adversity into prosperity at every turn. He has taught us and I hope our readers many valuable Upper Limit lessons. Our best wishes to Coach Nitta, his coaching staff and the athletes at Bell High School.



Coach Ed Elias spotting Freddy Reyna on the Dead Lift.

UP-DATE: COACH NITTA

It was a difficult decision. Perhaps the toughest one ever for Tosh Nitta. Coach Nitta accepted the Head Football Coaching job at Sanger High School in Sanger, California. Rick Anderson has already done a clinic for them. We hope history repeats itself. Knowing Coach Nitta, it should.