

STEFAN'S NFL TRYOUT

By Dr. Greg Shepard

As Stefan left our BFS office on April 23rd he said, "You know what 'Amateur' means in Latin? It means for the love of sport." Stefan had made a decision. It had weighed heavy on his mind since his tryout with the Indianapolis Colts March 30th.

Coach Ron Meyer invited both Stefan and Greg Shepard back to Indianapolis. It was an exciting time. When we met Coach Meyer, he pulled out a thousand dollars. He said, "I'll bet you Stefan can't run in the 4.3's." I looked him straight in the eye as I took his money and responded, "I'll take that bet." The ever cool Coach Meyers smiled as he took his money back, "You're too confident."

It was a bad day. It was cold with snow on the Astroturf. I didn't want Stefan to run under those conditions. We decided to go to Indianapolis University and do all the testing. On the drive over, QB Coach John Becker remarked, "Did you hear about that Nigerian from Azusa Pacific. He's 6-3, 350 and all the scouts got him in the 4.5's. It's amazing. I've never heard of anyone that fast with that kind of size."

Stefan and I looked at each other and smiled. I thought, "Coach, you ain't seen nothin' yet."

When we got there, I was very disappointed. We had to run on an upstairs jogging track which circled around a physical education basketball court. The running surface consisted of a thin carpet. Not exactly ideal. Another situation was that the track curved, making stopping after running a 40 a little precarious. Nonetheless, Stefan was undaunted.

We requested to do the vertical jump first as a warm-up and to relieve some tension. The coaches agreed. Stefan's first jump from a stand with no lead step was recorded at 36 inches. Stefan cried out, "Let me do it again, that wasn't any good." He bent down with those massive thighs and exploded upwards. This time it was 37½ inches! Stefan said, "Let me do it again. I can bet another inch or two." The coaches just looked at one another and said in awe, "That's OK Stefan, we've seen enough!" One coach muttered, "That's better than anyone we got anyway."

Now, Stefan was ready for the forty. The coaches began timing on Stefan's first movement. "I want a warm-up run first at half speed. Time me just for kicks," stated Stefan with a smile. Stefan glided effortlessly, obviously not pushing himself on his warm-up. One coach shook his head, "Four Point Eight! He weighed in at 271 pounds. That was only a warm-up!"

Stefan strolled back to the starting line and removed his sweats revealing his famous tree trunk piston-like legs. He relaxed and leaned far forward from his starting stance. The coaches readied their watches. Stefan exploded. The gym shook as he thundered towards the finish. It was 4.43! "I can do better!" Stefan retorted. "That's OK, we've seen enough." came the reply.

For the conditions, I was pleased. The next test was a standing long jump. Stefan took a warm-up jump at 10-6

and again he was told, "That's good enough." Next, was a shuttle run. Stefan matched their best test scores. It was obvious the Colt Coaches had seen and now believed the phenomenon of Stefan Fernholm.

But, could he play running back? Could he catch a football? Coach John Becker took Stefan down on the basketball court and gave Stefan a battery of pass receiving tests. He had Stefan face the wall while he stood about 20 yards away. Coach Becker drilled the ball and yelled "Turn!" The second Stefan turned the ball was there and he had to react quickly. Footballs were thrown in other drills – behind him, low, high and in front. All in all, about 100 passes were thrown. Stefan dropped only two. A simple mark was put on the report. "Hands – Good."

Stefan was offered a two year contract with an above average free agent salary and incentives. The possibility of a signing bonus after May's mini-camp was also discussed. Ron Meyer was up front as he counseled, "Stefan we want you but we have no idea if you can play football or not. The cards are stacked against you because you've never played before. However, the upside is very great. If you can make it, the rewards can be very very great. With your abilities, stats and being from Sweden you could be a real media event. You make one touchdown and that may be all you need to get some heavy endorsement money. I want you to come to mini-camp. If I think at that time you just don't have it, I'll tell you. Then, you can go back to the discus. We would never leave you hanging."

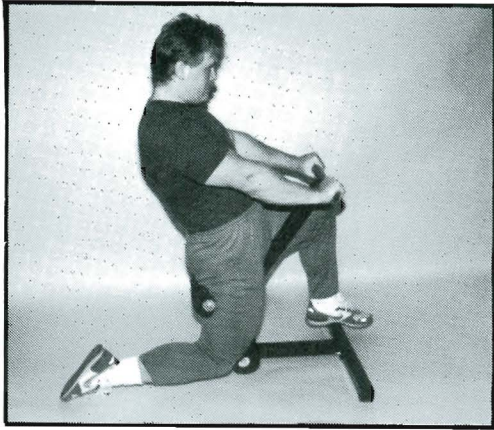
I'm sure 99% of our readers would say, "Sign! Sign! Sign!" However, Stefan loves to throw the discus. He can make tens of thousands of dollars, if he throws well in Europe this summer. If he goes to tryouts in late July and gets cut, then he's lost the summer throwing season. The noble quest of an Olympic Gold Medal has been a dream for a very long time. Granted, the upside of notoriety and money is very great with American professional football. However, do you keep after your dream or do you sign the football contract.

After 3 weeks of weighing all the pros and cons, Stefan made his decision. "You've got to follow your heart and I love throwing the discus and its challenge." He called the Colts and informed them of this decision. "It was like a huge weight released from my shoulders," said a relieved Stefan after his decision.

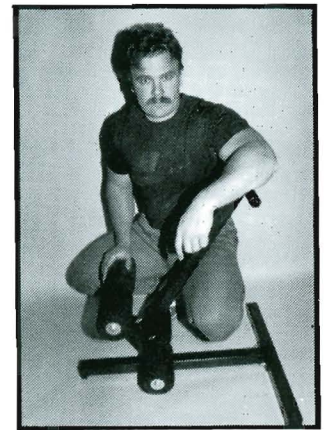
I called Coach Meyer also who said, "We will leave the offer open. We respect his decision but should he change his mind we'll leave a space open to him in our May mini-camp." They were gracious people and Coach Meyers is a class person all the way.

The matter was further complicated with the stakes potentially increased by an unfortunate accident that occurred on April 27th. The Colts starting fullback Randy McMillan will miss the entire 1987 season after suffering two broken bones in his lower left leg when he was hit by a car. Since the Colts want a big bruising athlete in their one back

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Stefan Fernholm has been using a similar device for

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offense, Stefan's potential worth may have jumped a notch.

I'd like nothing better than for Stefan to sign with the Colts and set the football world on fire. But remember the

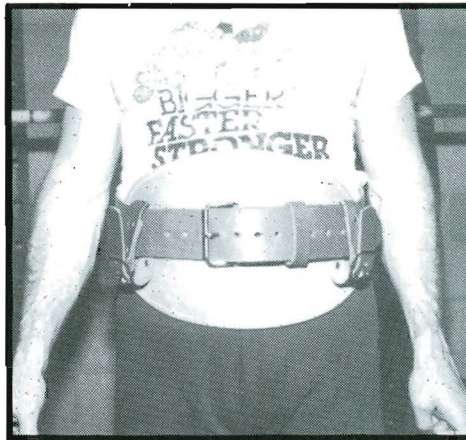
Latin. Amateur means "For the love of sport." Stefan loves the discus and perhaps this personal decision will push Stefan to a greater level, a championship Gold Medal level. We all wish Stefan our best in his noble quest, a "Quest for Greatness."

UPPER LIMIT IDEA!!

Coach John Maronto of Massillon's Washington High School reports that ELEVEN of his seniors got scholarships to play football! Jerod Vance is going to Penn State and Lance Hostetler announced his intention to attend Michigan State. Both these athletes were BFS All-Americans.

Coach Maronto made arrangements to have his seniors tutored in test taking skills. The results were astounding. Lance Hostetler raised his ACT score from 12 to 26. An upper limit idea that makes a difference.

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