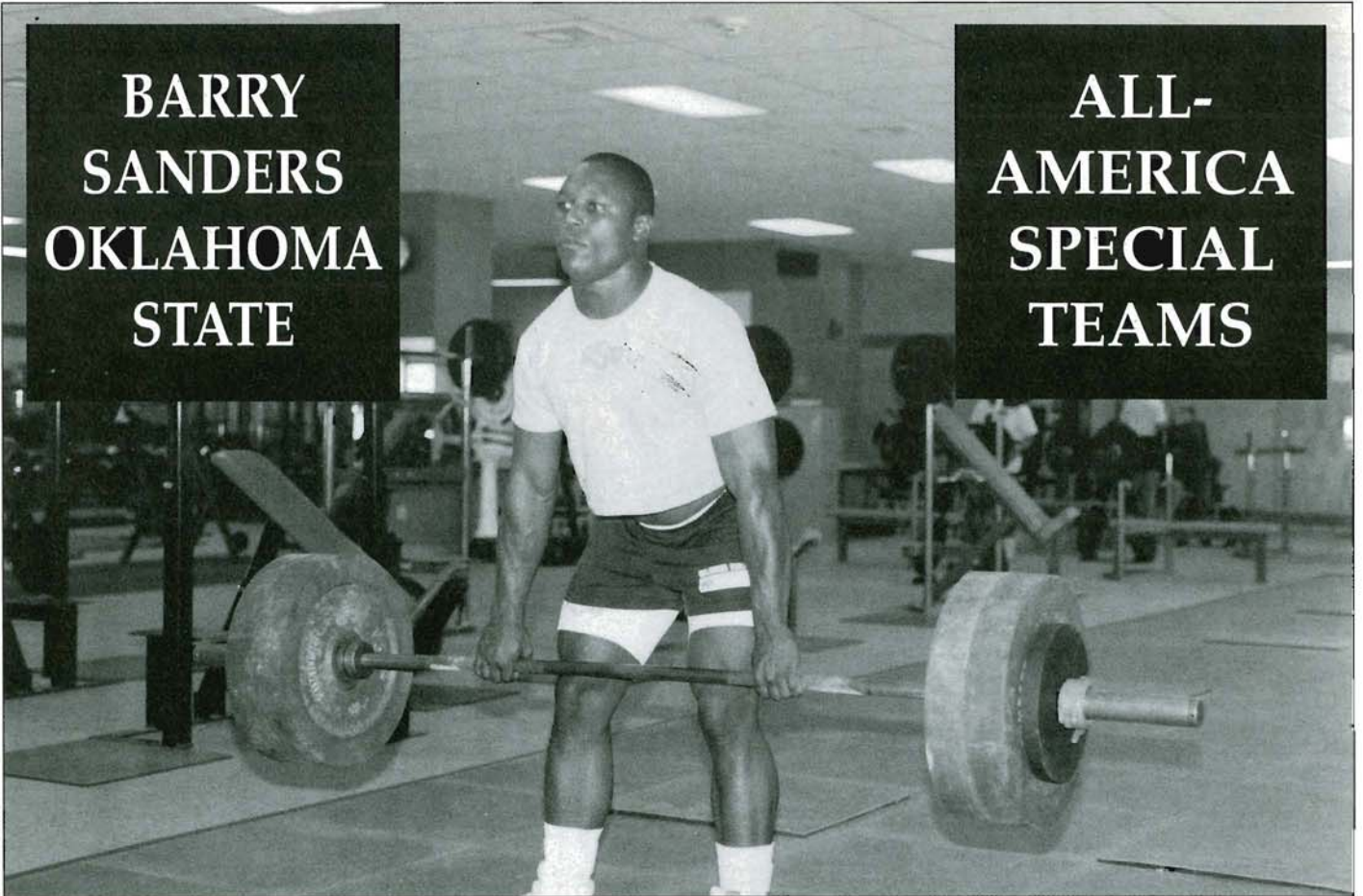


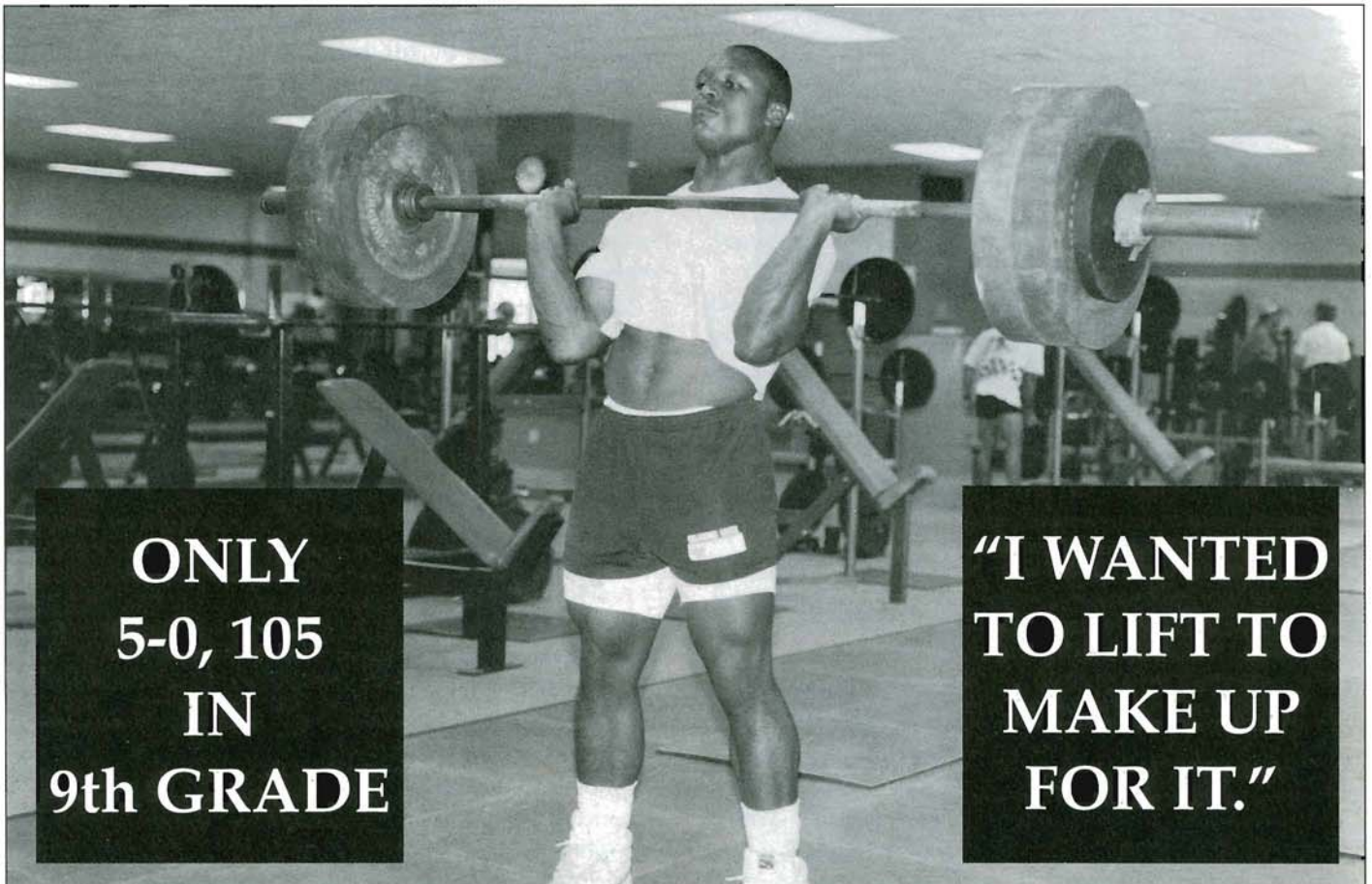
**BARRY
SANDERS
OKLAHOMA
STATE**

**ALL-
AMERICA
SPECIAL
TEAMS**



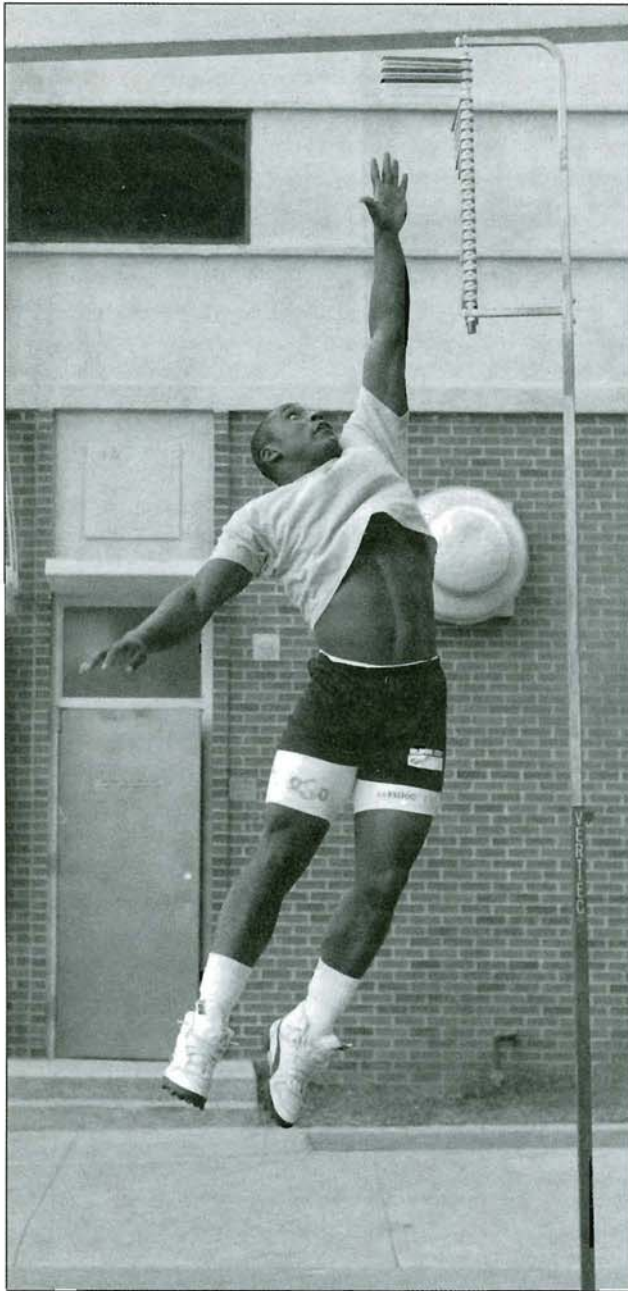
**ONLY
5-0, 105
IN
9th GRADE**

**"I WANTED
TO LIFT TO
MAKE UP
FOR IT."**



BARRY SANDERS

By Greg Shepard



Barry Sanders has a 40-inch Vertical Jump, measured by the Vertec without a step. "I know I got my leaping ability from my first love—basketball—but mostly from hopping up those stadium stairs at Wichita State."

Barry's brother Byron showed flashes of greatness. Byron plays at Northwestern but had some injury problems last season. However, when Byron was healthy, he was also awesome. He rushed for 295 yards against Minnesota. Now Mr. Sanders has two sons that will star as Running Backs at major colleges. Ah, those stadium stairs!

Barry Sanders looked at his big brother Byron, who looked up at the stadium stairs at Wichita State. "Let's do it!" they shouted. They hopped up and up. Their legs pumping and straining, they bounded like kangaroos to the top. Exhausted, they smiled.

Mr. Sanders looked at Barry and said, "Son, I've seen thousands of running backs and, Barry, I know you can play!"

Barry Sanders stood an even five feet tall and weighed only 105 pounds. He was a ninth grader. "There's been only one person that's had confidence in me—my father," explained Barry. "He's always been straight forward with me. He tells me like it is, whether it's good or bad. I believed him when he told me that I could play. He's always felt that I had the ability to play high school or major college football."

With that encouragement, Barry ran and lifted weights with serious effort. "Since I was so much shorter than the others, I wanted to lift to make up for it," remembered Barry.

Progress came slowly. He was 5-3 and weighed only 125 pounds as a sophomore. His Bench max rose slowly from his 95-pound ninth grade max. However, Barry persisted and by his Junior year he was 5-6 and 160 pounds, with a 270-pound Bench. His speed was blazing, with a 4.45 forty. Barry's explosiveness was already being measured as he soared 34 inches on a Vertical Jump test. He started on defense but played only sparingly on offense.

Barry didn't know it but he was doing some advanced plyometrics, which was adding spring and muscle-ligament-tendon strength to his legs. "I played a lot of basketball. That's my first love. I know that helped, but hopping up those stadium stairs at Wichita State with my brother was the key," said Barry.

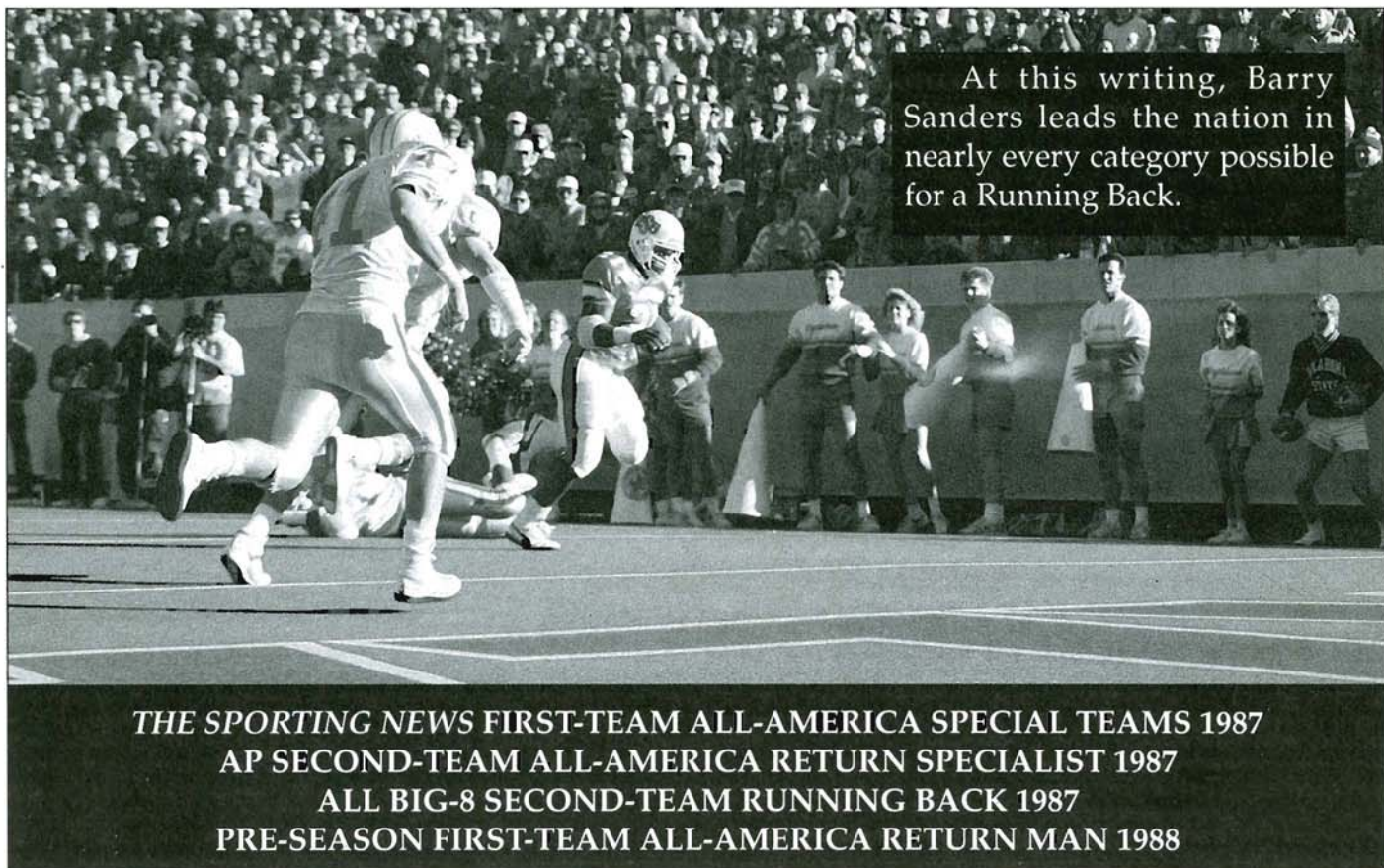
Playing for Wichita North High School as a Senior under first-year coach Dale Burkholder is when Barry really began to shine. He started at Tailback and led the Red-and-White Redskins to the Kansas State Playoffs. It was the first time the team had made the playoffs in many years.

Barry could now dunk the basketball. His vertical jump was 36 inches and he grew taller and huskier (5-8 and 175 pounds). He Benched 300 pounds and was named as an All-State Running Back.

I asked Barry about his grades and he replied, "My grade point average for all four years was 2.4, but I didn't concentrate like I should have during my freshman and sophomore years. I really improved in my last two years."

"Why did you change?" I asked. Barry explained:

BARRY SANDERS: ALL-AMERICA



At this writing, Barry Sanders leads the nation in nearly every category possible for a Running Back.

THE SPORTING NEWS FIRST-TEAM ALL-AMERICA SPECIAL TEAMS 1987
AP SECOND-TEAM ALL-AMERICA RETURN SPECIALIST 1987
ALL BIG-8 SECOND-TEAM RUNNING BACK 1987
PRE-SEASON FIRST-TEAM ALL-AMERICA RETURN MAN 1988

"Well, Coach, I started to pay attention to spiritual values and how God would want me to live. So, I hit the books. Now, the spiritual things are the most important part of my life. I'm heavily involved in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes [FCA]. I owe a lot to my mother. She brought up my eight sisters and two brothers with good moral values. We really have a strong feeling of family togetherness."

Barry was not heavily recruited because of his lack of height and weight. "Oklahoma State University was my best offer," stated Barry. "OSU took a gamble."

Barry got baptized in the football fire quickly. All the veteran Running Backs got hurt and Barry was needed right away. Barry did not redshirt. Even though he did not start, he got some varsity playing time. This paved the way for a sensational sophomore year.

The big-gun running back at OSU was Thurman Thomas, but Barry carried the ball well enough to be a second-team All-Big Eight running back. However, where Barry really sparkled last season was returning punts and kick-offs. He led the nation in Kickoff Return TDs (2) and average Kickoff Return Yardage (31.57). Barry was second nationally in Punt-Return Yardage (16.27), and raced for another two touchdowns. Although only a 19-year-old Sophomore, Barry was an All-America Return Specialist and an important part of a tremendous 10-2 Oklahoma State season.

To me, it's amazing. Others saw Barry weighing only 105 pounds and standing only five feet tall. Mr. Sanders saw

something special *inside* his son and with believing faith said, "Son, you can play." Five years later, his son was not only playing but he was an All-America selection.

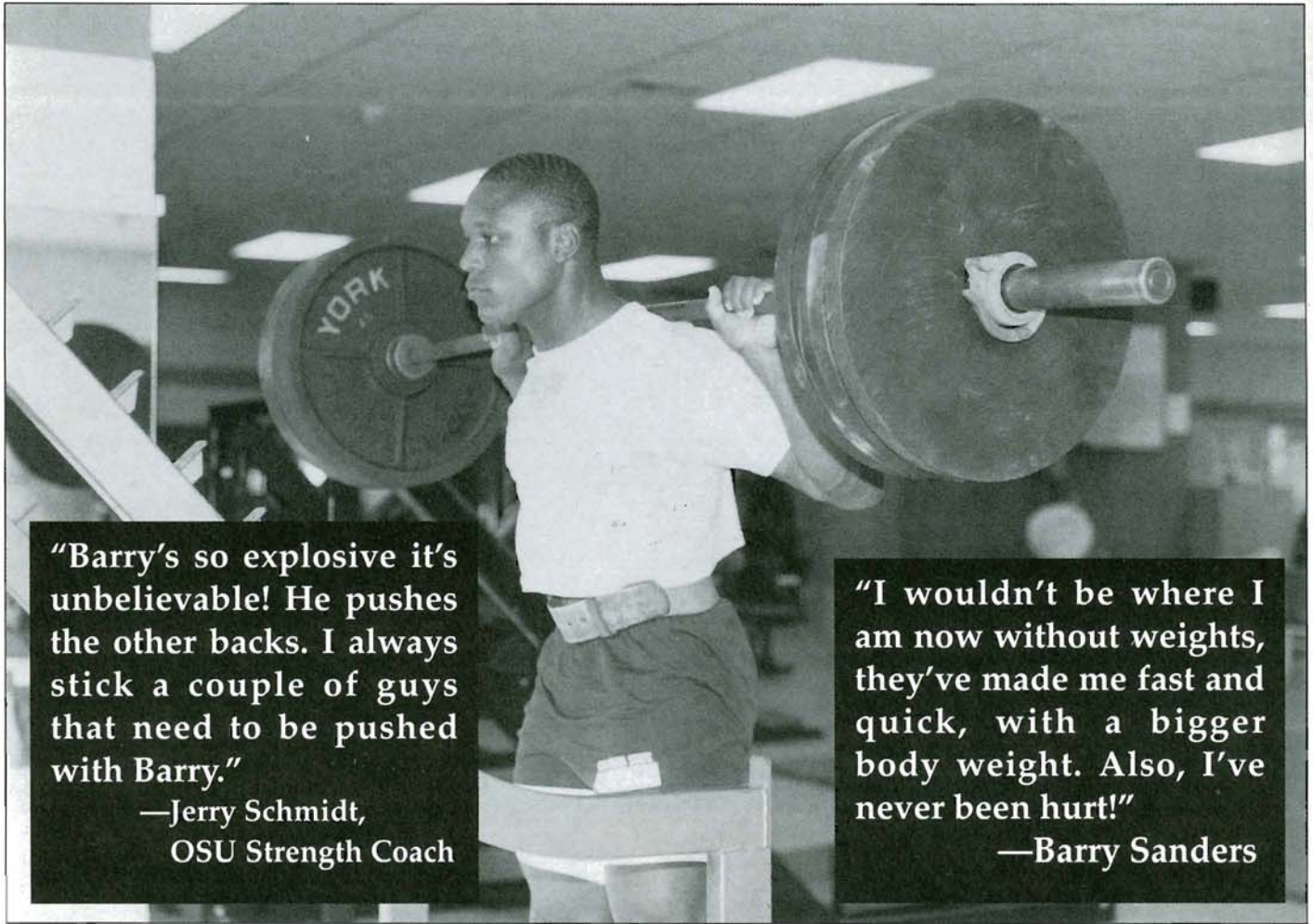
Barry has gained confidence and his 5-8, 198-pound frame is ready to be the big gun in Oklahoma State's potent offense. "Our line is going to be great," affirmed Barry. "I've never been a star, so I don't care about individual honors this year. I'm concentrating on our team's success."

Barry's strength is a great example for any lineman. He Benches 360, Parallel Squats 556, and Power Cleans 365 pounds. "I've been lifting a long time. I try to work out as hard as I can. I wouldn't be where I am now without weights. They've made me fast and quick, with a bigger body weight. Also, I've never been hurt. Flexibility is a big part of my training. Some people neglect stretching, but it's important. I do it for running style. I see some backs tighten up when they break open, and they get caught. The greater your flexibility, the more relaxed you can be when you race for the goal."

I asked Barry about the drug and alcohol problems that many people battle. He affirmed, "Coach, I will promise on my life that I've never touched a drop. As a Christian, I feel it's just not right. And drugs? Never! If somebody didn't like me because I didn't drink, well it's never bothered me, probably because of my strong family. Sometimes I've been called 'square,' but I figure five years down the road, who will remember? I have to be myself."

Continued on next page

BARRY SANDERS: ALL-AMERICA



"Barry's so explosive it's unbelievable! He pushes the other backs. I always stick a couple of guys that need to be pushed with Barry."

**—Jerry Schmidt,
OSU Strength Coach**

"I wouldn't be where I am now without weights, they've made me fast and quick, with a bigger body weight. Also, I've never been hurt!"

—Barry Sanders

Barry can Squat nearly triple his body weight—556 pounds!

Barry is majoring in Business Management and has already completed 62 hours of classwork toward his degree. Barry has taken on a heavy academic load for a football player, and he's on track to graduate in four years.

I told Barry that was really great because he'd need a degree to get a job right away. Obviously, pro football was out because he was too small. Barry immediately laughed. It was a confident laugh, but Barry is also aware of the odds. He answered my challenge, "I've been told all my life that I'm too small to play at any level. I don't listen too hard. What's important is that I give my best effort at all times. If the pros think I'm too small, I'll use my degree to get a job. I want to play pro football. It'd be nice. I try not to think about it. I'll just do my best and see what happens."

My final question to Barry, "Where do you see yourself twenty years from now?"

Barry quickly responded: "I see myself happily married and being a strong Christian. I see having four to five kids and living in a middle-class neighborhood, with a steady job."

I marveled at Barry's maturity. Many men in this world never gain this type of insight. I also felt very humble as I responded to Barry's vision, "You know, Barry, I'm happily married and feel I'm a strong Christian. I've

got four super kids and live in a beautiful home. But I enjoy something more than a steady job. I enjoy the opportunity that Bigger Faster Stronger gives me in meeting the many great people, like yourself, involved in athletics. Barry, you have made my day."

I hope every coach will make copies of Barry's story and see that all athletes get a chance to gain from Barry's faith and belief in himself. My thanks to Mickey Weber, the assistant strength coach at Oklahoma State University, for making this article possible.

"Barry is kind of quiet but he leads by example. He always checks with his coaches. Barry is just a very responsible person and is a great worker in the weight room. He follows the program to a tee. Barry could slack off but he doesn't. He's always working hard and making progress. Barry lifts four times per week in the off-season and follows our computer set-rep system perfectly, which varies his lifts from workout to workout. Barry also works on sprint training and plyometrics twice per week."

**—Jerry Schmidt: Strength Coach,
Oklahoma State University.**