

SQUAT CORRECTLY

Part Seventeen
In A Series
By Dr. Greg Shepard



BFS trainer Richard Bates working on his parallel squats with our 7-foot-4-inch Utah Jazz Center Mark Eaton last July.

Utah Jazz Center Mark Eaton is pictured squatting in free open space without a spotting tier. He makes \$600,000 per year. Maybe we are foolish? Maybe we *should* have a spotting tier? Maybe we *should* squat him in a machine in which the bar goes up and down on a cylinder? After all, can we really afford this guy getting hurt?

Sound familiar?

At a clinic I did earlier this year, the women's coaches had put a lot of pressure on the high school football coach to buy some squat equipment for the girls. They kept repeating what the salesman had said about his squat machine. "You don't want to squat with free weights," he argued. "Our machine is completely safe. Free weights can be real dangerous." So they paid

\$400.00-plus for a squat machine that has a bar moving up and down on a cylinder. A hook attached to the bar on each side is secured on pegs about four inches apart on a vertical shaft. So when I got ready to do the clinic, here was this squat machine.

In our last issue, I related how two athletes had lost fingers while squatting with spotting tiers. The injuries occurred when the athletes took their hands off the bar and put them on the tier. When the bar crashed down, the fingers were instantly sheared off. I also promised that I would write about a death-trap squat machine in this issue. I just described it in the paragraph above. I mean, this squat machine was brutal.

To begin with, this school had a sign which said, "When lifting with free weights, you must have a spotter." I asked, "Does this mean when you lift on a machine that it's okay and safe to lift alone?" Boy, were these guys nervous now. I could see their guts twinging. "You see that squat machine—that's a death trap!

"What do you mean?" came a scared reply.

I got in the apparatus and said, "Picture me squatting alone with 400 pounds. I take the weight on my shoulders by turning the bar and, thus, the two hooks off the pegs." Then I squatted down to parallel and asked, "What if I get stuck and can't come back up?"

It was plain to see that I was an inch short as I tried to twist the hooks back to the pegs. I was stuck. I couldn't bail out forward or backward. I was a dead man—literally. They gasped and stammered. Their faces were an ashen white, but they were grateful that nothing had happened to a student—yet.

It was also incredibly bad trying to twist the bar to the pegs, even from an upright position. With a heavy weight, a lower-back injury would be very likely. Needless to say, the sign was changed immediately; and during the clinic they paid attention when their athletes were taught how to squat correctly.

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