

THE UTAH JAZZ

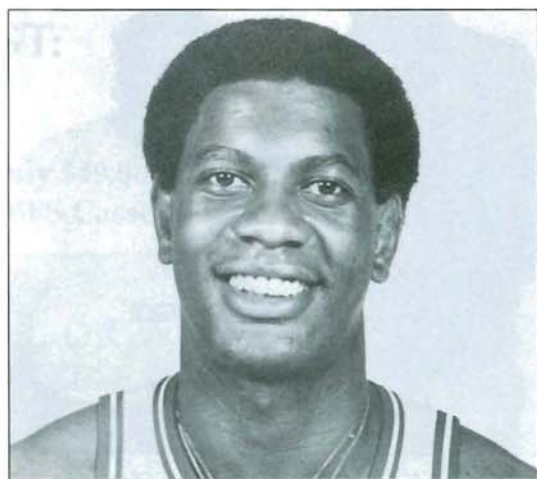
By Dr. Greg Shepard



*Mr. Utah Jazz: Frank Layden
Trainer Don Sparks in background*



*Darrell Griffith spotting in 1981. (In-Season)
Coach Shepard supervising on left.*



John Drew: A Tragedy in 1984

The strength and conditioning program instituted in 1981 by the Utah Jazz was an NBA first. It was a real pioneering effort. The Phoenix Suns had a program several years earlier which lasted several months before disbanding but the Utah Jazz have had a continuous program since October of 1981.

I watched a sports news broadcast in which then Utah Jazz Coach Tom Nissalke lamented about his team's poor rebounding stats. I yelled at the TV, "Why don't you have your guys lift weights you dummy?" Then I thought, "Greg, you're the dummy. You should have told him."

So I did. Coach Nissalke wanted his whole team on the BFS program. After the final cuts, we began. The first day was amazing. The players had never been exposed to a free weight program. My nickname was "Superman." They saw me Parallel Squat 235 pounds. I tried to tell them that the average 16 year-old football player can do that much weight. To put 145 pounds on their shoulders was a major project. Most of them demanded barbell pads and towels to protect them. The trainer Don Sparks, just about lost his load when we did Parallel Squats. He screamed, "You're gonna break their f_____ knees!!"

Such is the life of a pioneer. It took Don about three years to mellow out. Now we're Okay and friends. He gets our journal and has seen our videos. Don has also studied much NSCA material. It was an education process. As for knees and injuries, the Utah Jazz are probably tops in the league in injury free games. Since 1981, we've only had one minor knee injury.

Tom Nissalke resigned after only several months into my first season. Fortunately, new coach Frank Layden wanted to continue with the program. He thought it might be more effective if it was done on a voluntary basis. About half the players elected to do it. That number has steadily grown until, like today, everyone participates.

The Utah Jazz went through some real expansion growing pains. A major crisis in the early years was no money. We'd draft our number one player and then sell them just to keep from going under. Dominique Wilkins of Atlanta, for example, should be with the Utah Jazz. We sold him for a million to keep out of the red. Well, it's hard to win when you sell your real great players. The philosophy became to find players that nobody wanted and develop them into an NBA player. That's why Mark Eaton got a chance.

However, sometimes that philosophy backfired. John Drew, for example, was a prolific scorer for Atlanta

A PIONEERING EFFORT

but his point production was erratic. John had a drug problem. Coach Layden needed scoring help and he thought perhaps a change of environment might help John stay away from drugs. It turned out to be a nightmare.

John did help the Utah Jazz win the Midwest Division Championship in 1984 but the cocaine habit reared its ugly head once again. John would spend sometimes \$5,000.00 a day on his cocaine. Ironically, I had a six-minute Nautilus program set up for John. I almost had him do it but he said, "No, I think it might screw me up." Several days later, John went on a 3-day cocaine binge. It was after the 19th game of the season. In spite of having to be tested three times per week, John still did it and became the first player banned from the NBA.

John put Coach Layden in a precarious position one time with Atlanta drug dealers. Coach Layden was absolutely livid. The 1984 NBA Coach-of-the-Year, Administrator-of-the-Year and lovable NBA humorist vowed to draft only players with good character. He vowed to put his life into proper perspective. A "Let's have fun. Hey, basketball's only a game" attitude prevailed.

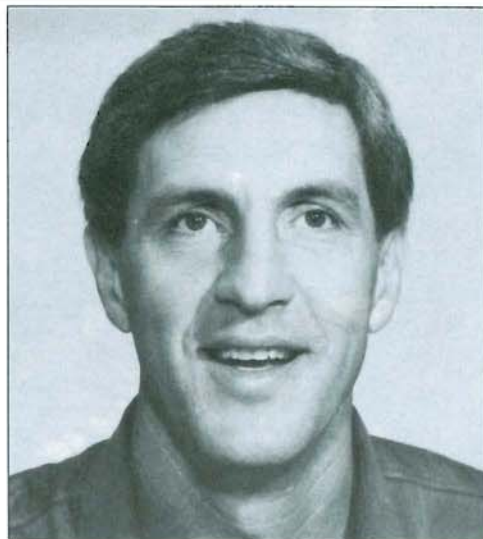
I applauded the change of philosophy. There were always 3-5 players I didn't particularly enjoy being around. Now, all 12 Jazz players are quality people who not only take their basketball seriously but they realize their potential for helping kids and the community. They are patient and courteous to the many demands on their personal life. Thurl Bailey just received the NBA's highest award for community service as designated by the J. Walter Kennedy Citizenship Award.

Karl Malone is the hardest worker in the weight room. He does more sets, more reps and produces more sweat than anyone during the season. It's amazing because he plays about 40 minutes a game. Darrell Griffith has an eleven year old boy and he will teach his son the BFS Readiness Program with our help. Jose Ortiz will take the BFS Program back to his people at Puerto Rico. Jose states, "I lifted at Oregon State University but we're a lot more intense now. I've gained a solid 20 pounds. I feel really good on the court". Jim Les says, "No question that I'd have high school basketball players lift. If I were coaching, I'd supervise it, so they'd do it correctly."

Coach Jerry Sloan approached me about Eric Leckner and Jose Ortiz and said, "These are young guys who don't get a lot of playing time so I want them lifting hard. I don't care if it's the day of the game. I want them on a continuous program all season long."

Trainer Don Sparks made arrangements this year in

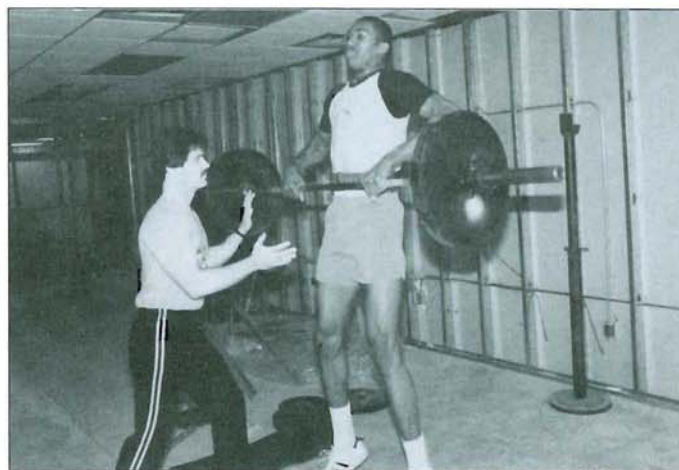
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Jerry Sloan took over as Jazz Head Coach during the 1988-89 season.



Summer workouts: Coach Shepard spotting a Boston Celtic. Mark Eaton on right. A Seattle Supersonic on left.



Thurl Bailey with Coach Rick Anderson in the off-season.

MARK EATON *Continued from page 3*

The season block shot title has gone to Mark four out of the last six years. Next year, Eaton will be the #1 active block shot man and in three years, he should be the All-Time Block Shot Champion. This year Mark had the most blocked shots in a game with fourteen. He was number seven in the NBA rebounding department with a 10.3 average as he led the Jazz to a #1 team defensive standing. The first team this decade to hold their opponents to less than 100 points per game. They also held opposing teams to a .434 field goal percentage. The next best team was over 46 percent.

Mark is married and has a 1 1/2 year old son. He takes a very active role in community affairs and was the NBA spokesman in 1986-87 for the "Say No to Drugs" campaign. Mark is extremely polite at all times. He has never been fined for fighting. Mark Eaton deserves all of his success and his \$650,000 annual salary. It was earned by a lot of hard work. He simply made it happen.

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each city for a place to train on the road. A bus would pick the team up at the hotel and take them back after a one hour workout. To my knowledge, the Utah Jazz are the only NBA team which takes its in-season training so

seriously.

Coach Jerry Sloan who had his Chicago Bull's jersey retired, represents a new way of thinking. "I never lifted as a player but now I think it's terrific. Supervision and safe techniques are important. Flexibility training along with the weights is also important. Weights help you mentally. Once you feel good about yourself, it helps your confidence. It all adds up to make you do better.

'Mark Eaton has to feel so much better about himself because he's completely changed his body structure. Now we see the same thing happening with Eric Leckner and we see the results on the court. The better condition you're in, the tougher you're gonna play."

The future looks bright for the Jazz in spite of the early playoff exit against the Golden State Warriors this year. Every game this season was a sellout. A new basketball arena is going to be built. The Jazz are finally financially stable. The Jazz have signed every first round draft choice since Thurl Bailey in 1983. It is no coincidence that the Jazz have also made the playoffs ever since 1983. Last year, they came within a whisker of beating the Lakers in the Western Conference Semi-Finals and this year was the first time in franchise history that the Jazz have won over 50 regular season games.

This steady improvement is an outgrowth of a commitment to quality players with character and a desire to make things happen. A large part of making it happen was done in the weight room with a pioneering effort.

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