

1988-89 DEFENSIVE PLAYER-OF-THE-YEAR

By Greg Shepard
Utah Jazz Strength Coach

Mark Eaton's Story

The Mark Eaton story is perhaps the most remarkable in the history of the NBA. When Mark was a sophomore in high school, he was 6-6 and sat on the sophomore team's bench. As a 6-9 junior, he sat on the JV bench. The same result was achieved as a 6-11 senior with the varsity. Obviously no scholarships were offered and so Mark began his life's work as an auto mechanic.

Then one day, two years later, Tom Lubin an assistant basketball coach at Cypress Junior College was getting his car fixed. Coach Lubin looked at the front end of his car and saw two size 17 feet sticking out. Perplexed, he went to the other end of his car and saw Mark working away. He exclaimed, "It's the same guy!"

The rest is history. After two months of coming back day after day, Coach Lubin finally convinced Mark to come to the gym for some individual coaching. Eventually, Mark played for Cypress Junior College and played well enough there to get a scholarship at UCLA. He was 7-4 and perhaps still growing.

At UCLA, Mark played less than one minute a game his senior year. Towards the end of that season, Mark did not make the traveling squad. All this time, Mark continued to work and never complain.

The Utah Jazz at this time were a struggling expansion team with severe financial problems. Coach Frank Layden decided to draft him in 1982. Mark was the 72nd draft pick. Las Vegas odds for Eaton doing anything in the NBA were ten million to one. Eaton was signed for the lowest salary in the NBA at \$40,000 per year.

It was my second year with the Jazz when I saw this 7-4 285 pound man enter Rookie Camp. Coach Layden said, "Greg, you can workout anybody but Eaton. He doesn't know his right foot from his left and I don't want his mind cluttered up with too many things." Mark overheard Layden's remark and said, "Coach, I want to lift. UCLA forbid me to lift. They told me it would screw me up but now I want to lift." Coach Layden smiled and nodded, "Well okay, but take it easy on him."

The first workouts were astonishing. Mark got pinned on a 145 pound Box Squat. His Bench and Power Clean max were at 115 pounds. When I put him in the low power position to prepare him for the Parallel Squat, he could not come up under his own power.



Mark Eaton 7-4, 297

EATON COULD NOT SQUAT AIR!

I knew then that I had the weakest athlete in the history of sport. Mark had 18.5% body fat and when he did the BFS Dot Drill, in the world's slowest time of two minutes and thirty-two seconds, I just about had to call the paramedics. The biggest number I had in my mind when Mark began his workouts was 911.

Make made the team and began his workouts by recording everything in our BFS Set-Rep log book. We averaged 1 1/2 workouts per week during that first season with Mark breaking 275 records. By March, Mark finally started. Imagine not starting as a senior in high school or as a senior in college but starting in the NBA. Mark Eaton has been an iron-man starter ever since. He's missed only six games in seven years.

By his third year, Eaton was awesome. He Benched 300, Parallel Squatted 300, Power Cleaned 250 and Box Squatted 500 pounds. His BFS Dot Drill time was a sparkling 58 seconds. However, the change in his body fat was perhaps the most amazing. Mark weighed 297 with only 8.5% body fat. This means he gained 40 pounds of muscle and lost 28 pounds of fat!

Mark Eaton was the 1984-85 NBA Defensive Player of the Year with a still NBA record for blocked shots (456) and average (5.56). Mark continued to be a dominant defensive force in the NBA.

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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.

JAZZ: PIONEERING EFFORT

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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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