

By Greg Shepard

John Stockton, Dream Team Olympian, steals the ball and reverses the action for the Jazz. David Benoit (pronounced Benwah) races down court approaching the net from the side. Stockton charges down the middle, looks left and alley oops a pass to Benoit to the right. David Benoit leaps twelve feet in the air and palms the ball viciously downward for a monstrous dunk. The crowd goes absolutely nuts! They begin to roar in unison, "Benwasome- Benwasome- Benwasome!" Last year in July that was only a dream. Today it is history! Benoit's rise to stardom was indeed "Awesome." His path towards becoming a starter for the Utah Jazz is an inspiration to all.

David grew up in Lafayette, Louisiana with his parents, sister and three younger brothers. His father, who died during this year during the Jazz playoff games, was 6-1 in height. He was forty-four. David's mother is 5-11 and he has an uncle who is 6-7. However, for awhile it looked like nature was going to play a joke on David. You see, when David was in the seventh grade he was less than five feet tall and weighed less than 100 pounds. David made the 7th

**7th GRADE:  
Less Than Five Feet Tall**

## LAST YEAR: A DREAM TODAY: IT'S HISTORY

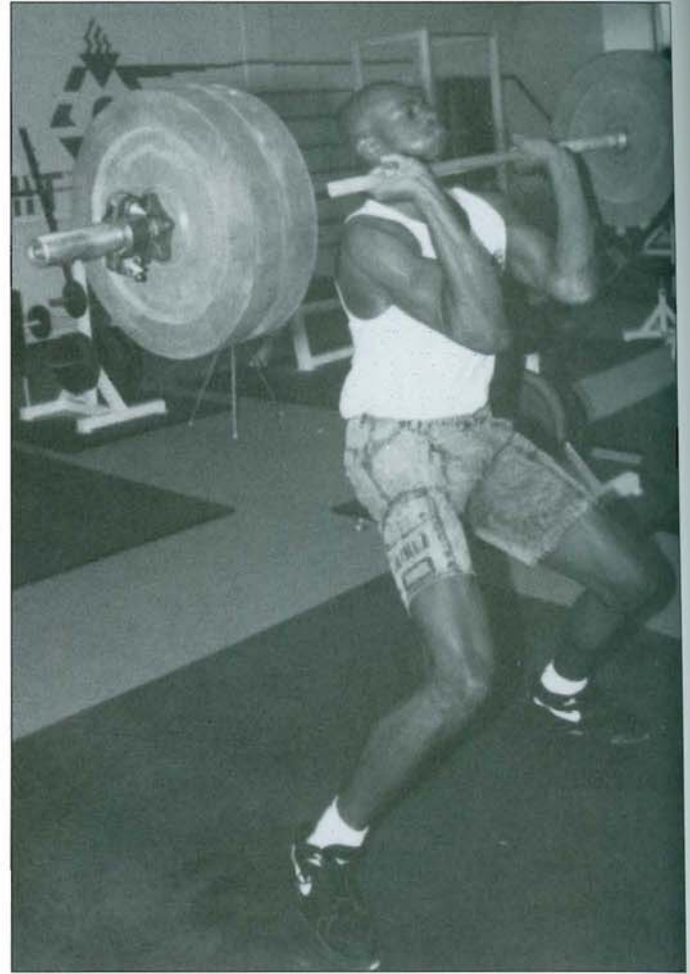
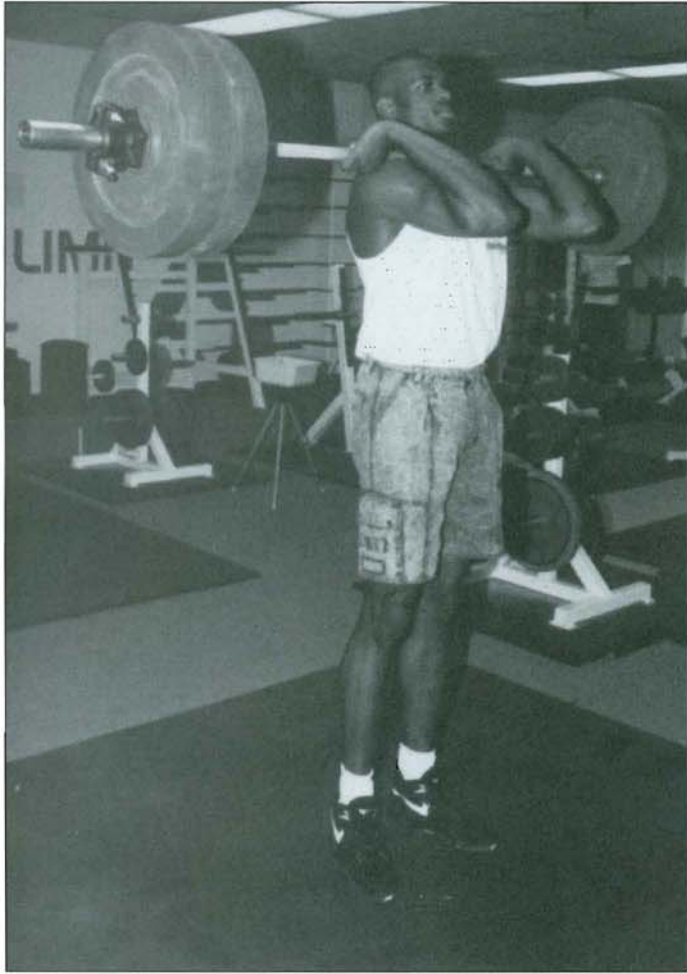
grade team but didn't play and soon quit the team. David just stopped playing and didn't go out in the 8th grade. "My friends played football, so that's what I did," remembered David. "So in the 9th grade I tried out as a receiver and quarterback." However, he was still only five feet tall and 100 pounds. Again, he quit. "Man, those guys were big. I was just going to try to get my high school diploma. It was hard for me to get chosen even in physical education class. They put me on the broken basket."

By the time David got to the 10th grade, he was still small at 5-5 and 115 pounds. David didn't play sports and struggled in the classroom. Then it happened. He started growing. The summer before his junior year David shot up to 6-1 and his friends started saying, "Hey Dave, man you're pretty tall. Why don't you play." However, the self confidence just wasn't there. David said, "No, I don't want to play. I'll just watch."

David's P.E. Coach, Leonard Moore, encouraged him, "Coach Moore got on me the last part of my 10th grade year and then Butch Stockton the head basketball coach at Lafayette High School asked



# DAVID BENWASOME



me to come out. He kept callin' me. My friends said 'Go out'."

From that moment, David's life was never to be the same. He began playing his junior year at 6-3 150 pounds. "I could stuff it," beamed David. "I started after the first ten games. I liked the rebounding part the best, especially offensive rebounds for a stuff."

David just kept growing and as a senior was 6-5 and 170 pounds. He averaged 15 points and 15 rebounds per game. Lafayette went to the finals for the Louisiana State Championships. David was All-State, All-Parish, and All-District MVP. "My overall GPA was only a 2.5 but sports helped me to stay in class and go to class," reasoned David. "But after I started playin'", my grades shot up to 3.2 then a 3.5, so I really pulled them to average a 2.5."

"As far as drugs and alcohol, it just wasn't around. We hung around with guys who didn't, it was a neighborhood thing. If a guy was in sports and tryin',

they'd leave you alone."

Some scholarships to Division I school came but David chose Tyler Junior College in Texas. He felt he wasn't ready and played there for two years. As a freshman, David started at the end of the season and averaged 7 points and 5 rebounds per game. At that point David decided to take charge, "I worked very hard to be the main guy. It was also my first real experience with weights. I did Parallel Squats, Power Cleans, Inclines and Benches. That sophomore year David Benoit averaged 20 points, 13.7 rebounds and 3 blocked shots per game at 6-7 200 pounds. He was a JC 3rd team All-American. When prodded, David responded modestly, "Larry Johnson is the only guy who made the first two All-American teams and made it in the NBA."

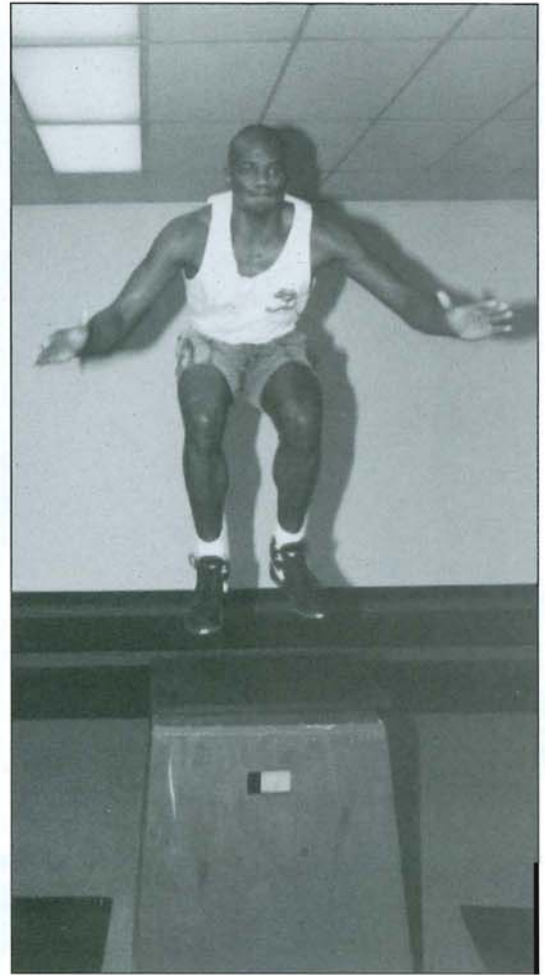
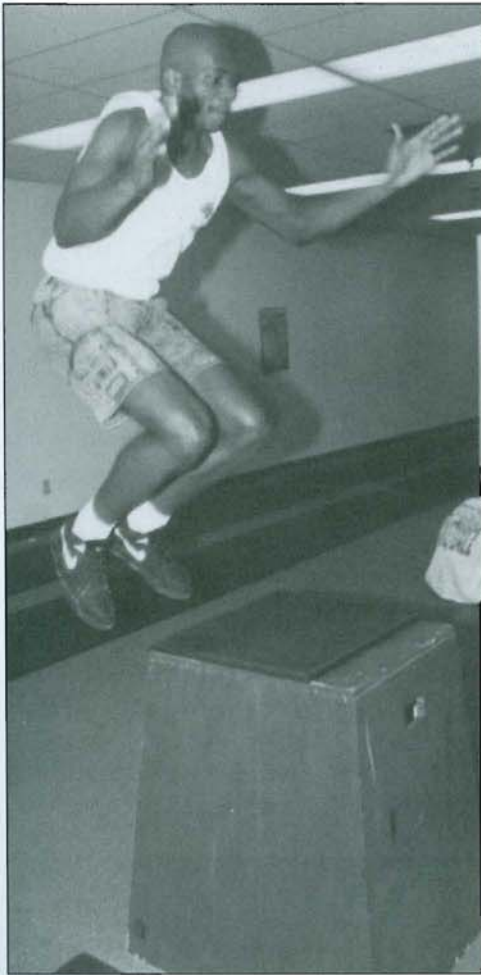
David asked his JC Coach if he thought that he was good enough to play in the NBA. Well he looked at me funny and said, "You gotta do good in the next two years at a major school. If it's meant to be, it will happen."

David decided to go to Alabama because of Wimp Sanderson. "I liked his tough style," said David.

**THEY PUT ME ON THE  
BROKEN BASKET**



# LEAPS TO STARDOM



As a junior, David averaged 10 points and 7 rebounds per game. He duplicated that as a senior. David lifted all the time at Alabama and became 6-8 and 230 pounds. "But I was too fat. I didn't feel right. I began to really watch what I ate." Dave majored in physical education and just might consider becoming a high school basketball coach someday.

Nothing happened in the 1990 draft but David was invited to the 1990 Utah Jazz Summer Camp. After that, he went to the Laker's summer camp. "I felt I played well," said David confidently. Then he got kicked in the ankle and sat out the last three games. Life's tough out there and David received no NBA contract so he signed with Spain. "It turned out that I was pretty lucky," said David. He started and averaged 22 points with 11 rebounds per game. "When I was in Spain, they made me lift mostly on machines. You don't get too much out of it. With free weights, you have to think technique and they're challenging. I know free

**HE COULD STUFF A 12  
FOOT BASKET**

Greg Shepard- Jazz Strength Coach

## I KNOW FREE WEIGHTS ARE A LOT BETTER

weights are a lot better."

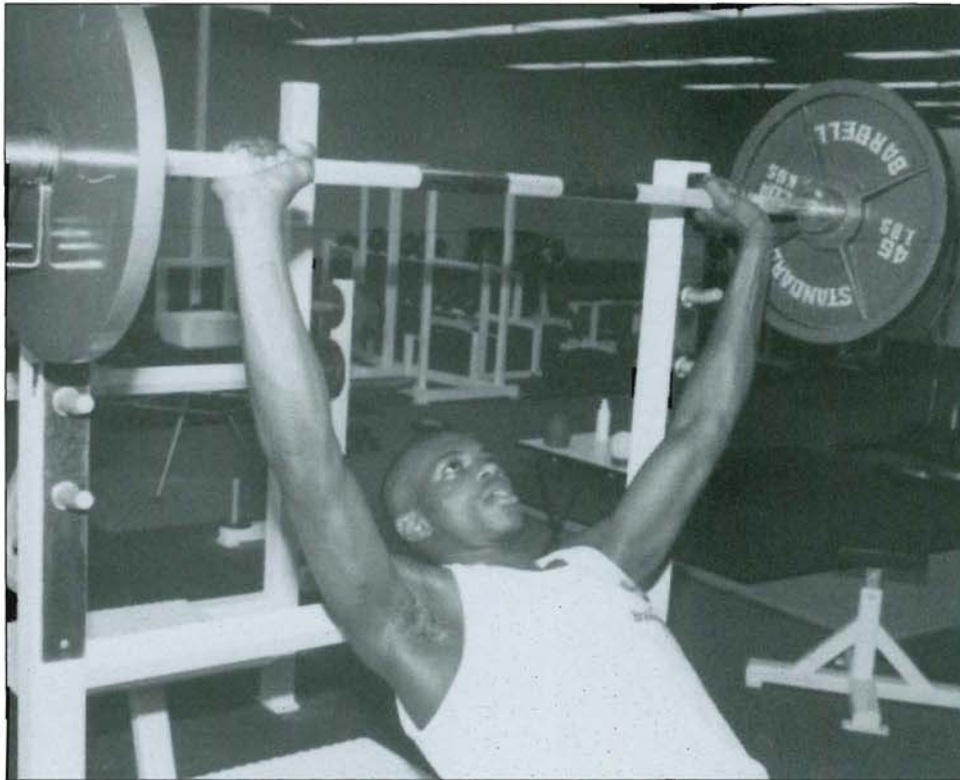
As a result of his great year with Spain, the Utah Jazz resumed their interest and invited David to again come to summer camp. He went to Miami Heat's camp first and they wanted to sign him but David held out. Good thing! At the Utah camp, he averaged 19 points and snared 8 rebounds per game. David set the summer league on fire. The Salt Lake papers headlined. "Benoit A Fantastic Surprise." But, it was no surprise to David.

"All I wanted to do was just stick around and work hard. If I ever got a chance, I'd really go. My opportunity came quick. Whenever, I got the chance, I went full bore." In his first starting role, David got 12 points and 8 rebounds. "When I come down the floor with Stockton, I get a real rush waitin' for an "Alley Oop."

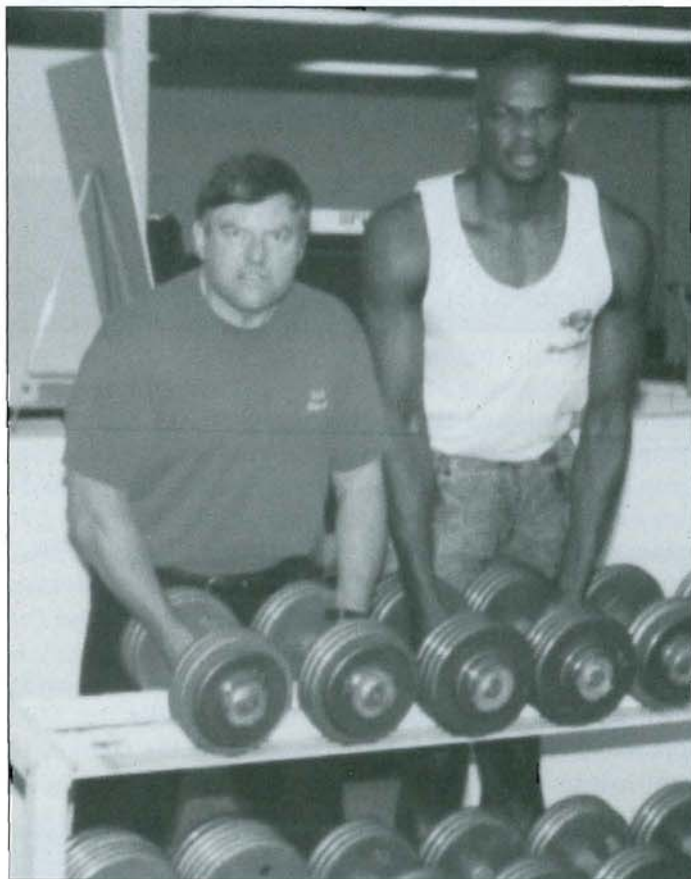
David Benoit may be the best leaper in the



# DAVID BENOIT: 6-8 225



*David Likes Both The Bench And Incline. Even With Those Long Arms He Can Bench 250 Pounds!*



*Coach Shepard And David Benoit  
"Gettin' Nasty"*

NBA. The middle photo on page 5 shows his jumping ability. His elbow is at 10 feet. When he takes a run, I know he could stuff a 12 foot basket. I don't know if it's all natural. He has done Parallel Squats and Power Cleans ever since Junior College. At Alabama, he did plyometrics." I felt they were good. My strength coach had me start jumping on a 36-inch box but he said that was too easy. Then I did five reps at 40 inches, and then went to 45 inches."

David's goals are simple. "I just want to get better. I've got a lot to work on yet." Frank Layden, former Utah Jazz Coach, has high praise for David's athleticism and notes that he's never seen a player get up and down the court with such ease. As David's strength coach, I can tell you his technique on anything he does is close to perfect.

David got married last year and has a little girl. I was impressed when I saw

## I GET A REAL RUSH WAITIN' FOR AN ALLEY OOP

his key chain with a picture of his little girl. "I'm seeing things a whole lot different now that I'm a father. If you are a father, you should stand up like a man and take care of them. Give them the best that you can. We all need to accept more responsibility.

David had a chance to reflect on real life when the Jazz were in the middle of the playoffs with Portland. His father died of cancer. He was only forty-four years old. "My dad never got a chance to see me play but he was always braggin' on me," said David quietly. "I was pretty depressed."

David would like our readers to know that he's never done drugs and that he doesn't even drink any alcohol now. He just says, "Why should I do it." David also says Vice Lombardi's sayings have always been an inspiration to him. David says, "Never quit and work, work, work."

We thank David and his Upper Limit philosophy of life. I predict that David Benoit will have a bright future in the NBA and as a father and husband. Watch for him. He's Benwasome!