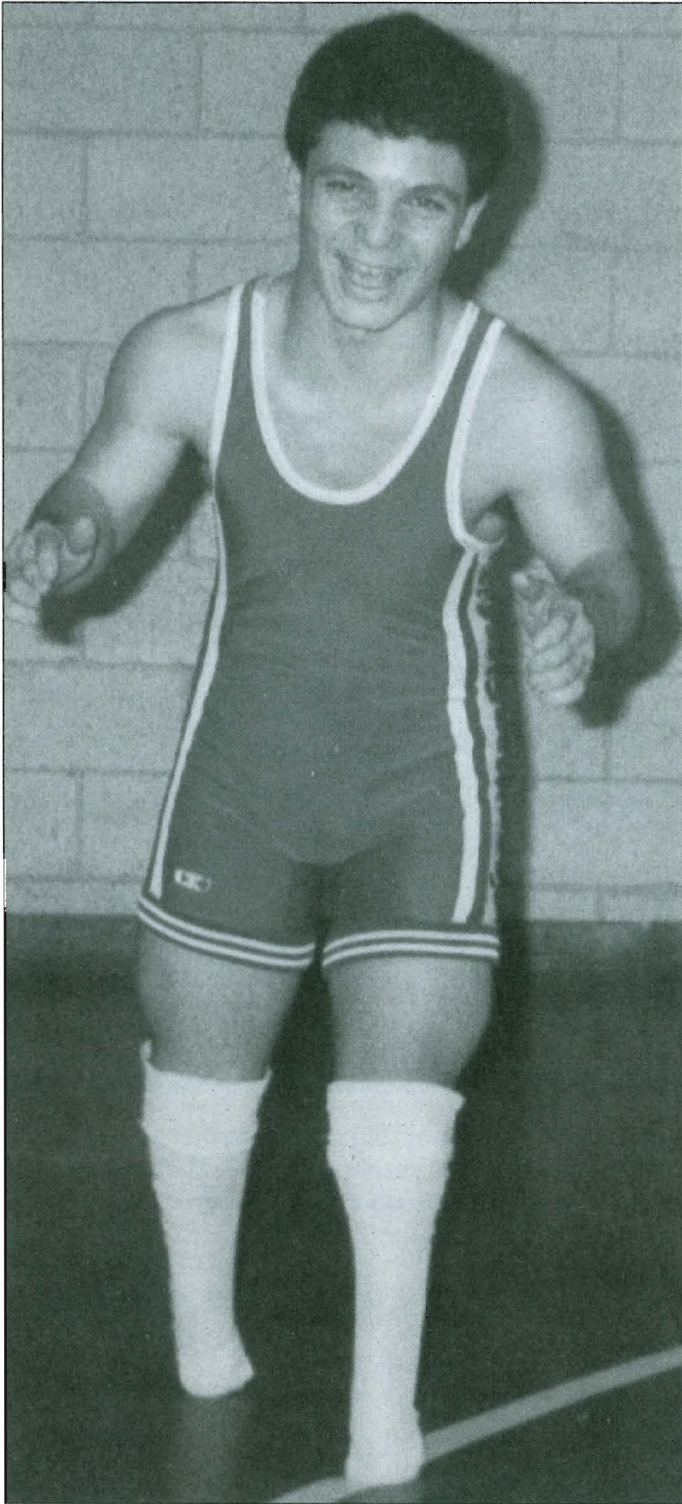


GADDY SOFFER: STATE CHAMP

By Greg Shepard



GADDY SOFFER

Georgia Class A

103 Pound State Champ

Brookstone High School, Columbus, Georgia

"I'm Different, But Not That Different."

Gaddy Soffer was born without fibula bones in his legs. The legs were also crooked and attempts to correct the situation didn't work out. A decision was therefore made to amputate his legs at the mid-calf area. Gaddy was only four and remembers it being pretty scary. Gaddy reflected, "I felt different." He wears prostheses on both feet in all activities except wrestling.

Gaddy, who's only a sophomore, quickly stated, "I'm different, but not that different." Well this writer may have to disagree. Maybe Gaddy is different. Maybe we all ought to take a page from his life and use it to our benefit. First of all, Gaddy has a 4.0 grade point average. His straight A average has put him on the headmaster's list at Brookstone High School in Columbus, Georgia. Second, he won the state championship in his 103 pound weight class. Third, Gaddy can bench press 100 pounds over his bodyweight and fourth is his heart and head. Gaddy asked me, "Please don't make the article boastful about me. Our team took third in state and my teammates John Adams (125) and Tommy Greene (171) also were state champions."

Coach Larry Morgan is a great Upper Limit coach who went the extra mile with Gaddy. "I wouldn't be wrestling if not for Coach Morgan," says Gaddy. Coach Morgan remembered, "When I asked him to come out for wrestling he told me he couldn't because he didn't have any feet but I told him about another kid that I'd previously coached in Tampa who had a similar condition. That kid won the Florida state title and is now on a scholarship at Central Missouri State."

"Coach Morgan understood," said Gaddy. "He was really supportive. He had that wrestler write me a letter. My coach goes a lot out of the way to help everyone. He's a great guy."

Gaddy transferred in from an Atlanta school as an 8th grader. "They didn't want him out for wrestling," said Coach Morgan. "They said he would get hurt."

"My parents let me try with the understanding that it was going to be rough," Gaddy said. "They were very helpful. My brother, Benny, who is four years older also won the state championship in his senior year so I knew what I was getting into."

So Gaddy started his wrestling career as an 8th grader in intramural competition at Brookstone.

"Gaddy wanted to wrestle with his prostheses, but it was like having two anchors weighing him down," remembered Coach Morgan who refereed the match. One artificial leg fell off and then the other. Coach Morgan nonchalantly tossed them aside as Gaddy continued to wrestle. Naturally the crowd gasped. Gaddy's parents thought that wrestling was really a tough sport but Coach Morgan said, "Look, we don't treat Gaddy any differently

"THEY'RE NOT STARING AT YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE DIFFERENT. THEY'RE JUST AMAZED AT WHAT YOU CAN DO." LARRY MORGAN: HEAD WRESTLING COACH

than any other wrestlers. He runs three miles like the rest of them. And he can still beat me."

"At first my dad wasn't sure about me wrestling," said Gaddy. "He was sort of tentative and was worried about how I'd take it if I didn't win. But then he let me make my own decision."

"I was sort of nervous wrestling without my legs at first. Maybe they'd think I'd look weird but then I thought that I may actually have a certain psychological advantage."

Coach Morgan revealed, "Gaddy was worried that everyone was staring at him but I told him, 'They're not staring at you because you're different. They're just amazed at what you can do.'"

As an 8th grader, Gaddy won some and lost some and last year as a 9th grader he placed third in the Southeast region in USA Freestyle competition. Gaddy weighed only 85 pounds which was too light for varsity so he started to seriously lift weights. He rides a bike for his legs, does lat pulls, benches, inclines, dumbbell work and the Hip Sled. "It always helps to be stronger," maintains Gaddy. "I'm never at a disadvantage because of strength."

Gaddy wears specially made boots over the ends of his legs for traction. It works out fairly well. Well enough to go 22-1 during the regular season. His only loss was a 10-8 decision to a wrestler from a large triple A school. Then it was on to the Georgia Class A state title and two standing ovations from an appreciative crowd.

When asked about the kids at school Gaddy replied, "Well, no one has ever made fun of me but the first day of P.E. is always awkward." Gaddy participates fully in physical education classes playing football, basketball, softball etc. He's even on the cross country team. "Running on my prostheses has its discomforts but it's tolerable. It helps me stay in shape for wrestling."

Wrestling has been great for Gaddy's self esteem. "I never was as athletic as everyone else," Gaddy said. "In soccer or baseball and other sports, I was never any good. I got down at not being good at anything." Gaddy then paused for a moment and looked up, "but I always tried."

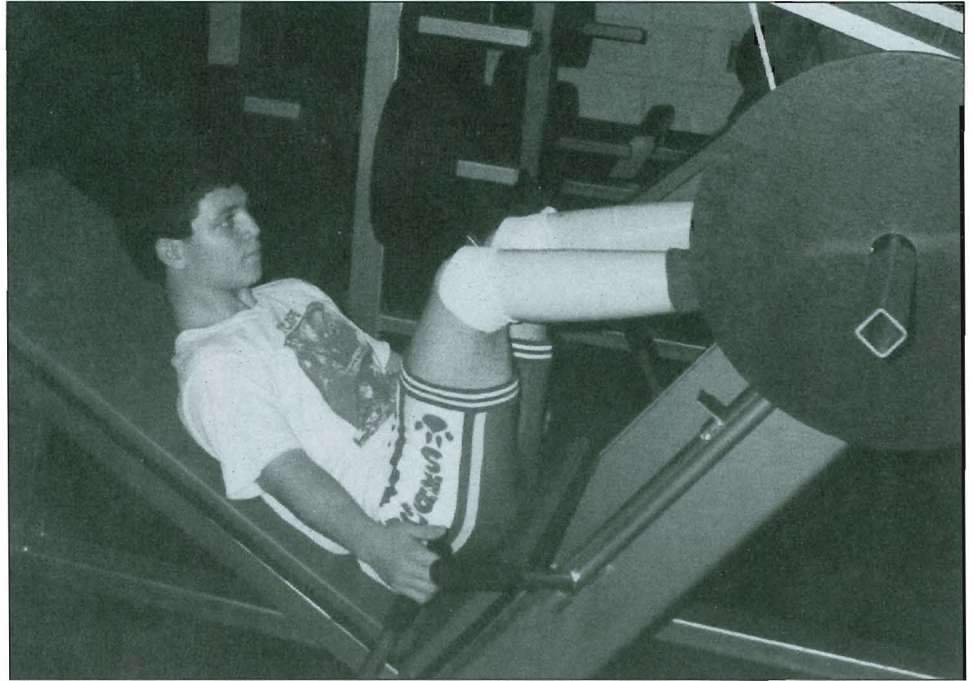
"Some people told me I can't do this or I can't do that but I guess I proved them wrong. It's not so much winning the state title but just being out there that's important."

Both of Gaddy's parents are medical doctors and go to all of the matches. Gaddy wants to follow in their footsteps and be a physician. "My education is the most important thing," stated Gaddy. "Sports and academics can go together."

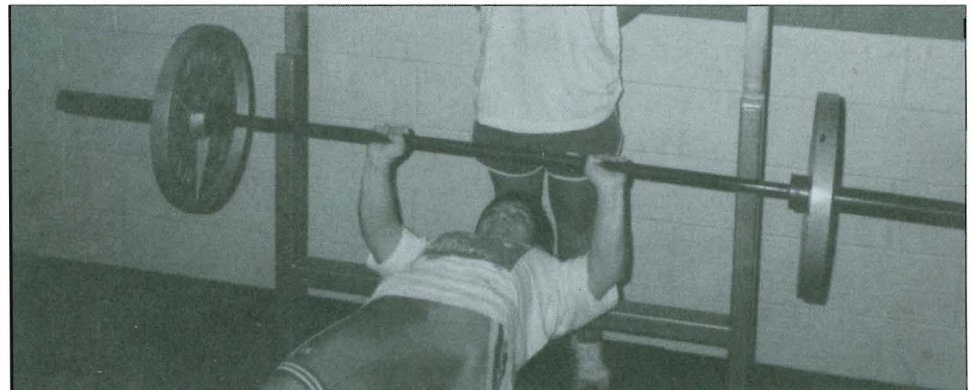
I asked Gaddy if he had any sage counsel for other kids. He responded, "Stay away from alcohol and drugs. It should never become a habit. It's pretty obvious what it does. I guess everyone needs to be educated. Always keep an open mind. Always try. If you don't you'll never know. Remember, it's not what you can't do, it's what you can do."

That's fairly heavy stuff coming from a fifteen year old but he's not always that serious. At the Area I finals, Gaddy put his prostheses and sweat suit on backwards. He laughed, "I walked all around so it looked like my head was on backward."

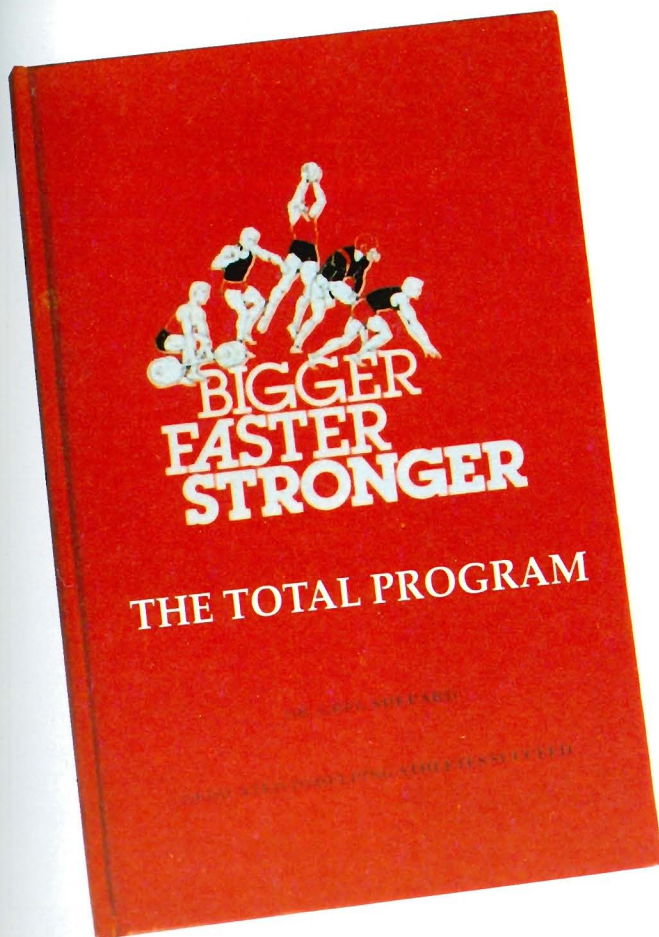
How can you help not liking Gaddy Soffer or Coach Morgan. We thank them for being Upper Limit all the way.



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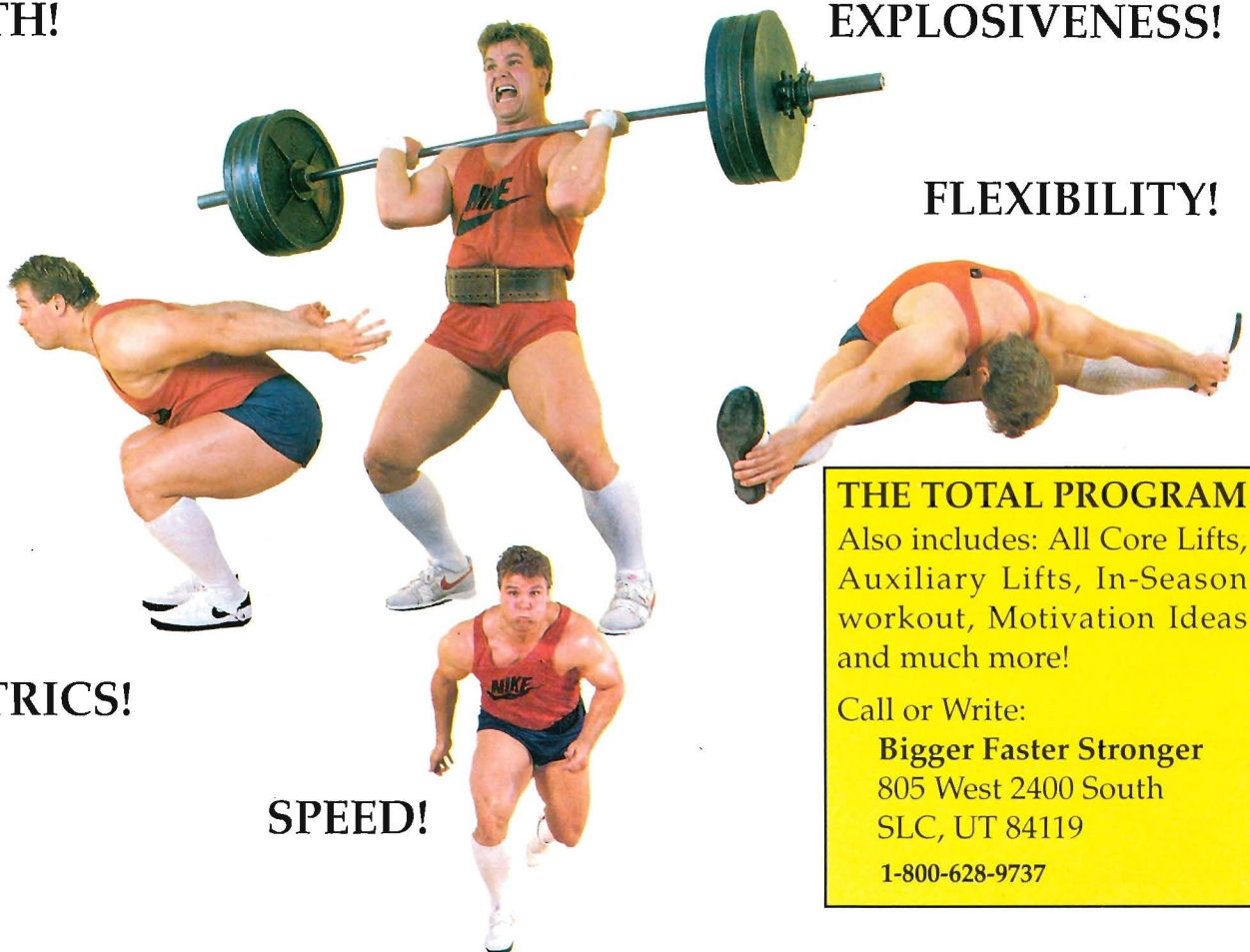
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1 THE START: Head level, eyes straight, hips down, arms locked, spread chest, lower back locked-in.



3 MIDDLE PULL: Move hips in explosively under shoulders. Do not jerk shoulders and head back. Head, eyes and arms keep the same position.



2 THE BEGINNING PULL: Head, eyes and arms the same. Begin lift with legs only. Maintain same back angle. Do not jerk weight off the platform.



4 ERECT POSITION: Head straight, eyes level, arms locked, shoulders over hips. Bar moves in a straight line. Do not jerk shoulders and head back.



5 FINAL PULL: Up on toes, fully extend your legs. Do not pull with arms or jerk shoulders back. Bar should continue in a vertical path.



6 THE FINISH: Stand erect, elbows up, bar resting on the deltoids and collar bone.





Stefan Fernholm: 6'-1 1/2", 270 lbs., Squat: 820, Clean: 440, 40-4.3, VJ: 40

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SQUAT:** Stefan squats 800 pounds! Illustrates leg and hip power with correct squatting technique.

**Poster 4
CLEAN:** Stefan cleans 415 pounds! Illustrates correct power clean technique with awesome poundages.

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PLYOMETRICS:** Stefan demonstrates beginning and advanced plyometrics!

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