

THE BIGGEST OF THEM ALL



AHMAD HAYES
OF
CEDAR HILLS HIGH SCHOOL
CEDAR HILLS, TEXAS

by Michael Condiff

Like a father recalling his child's first foot steps, the fond grin across the face of Kelly Bonner.

The Cedar Hill High School Powerlifting coach is describing the first time his power-prodigy, senior Ahmad Hayes, stepped up to a squat rack at an invitational meet. Bonner can't help but laugh.

"Here he is, this 195 pound sophomore, and he gets 550 the first time out," Bonner says. "Everyone was gawking at him...they couldn't believe it." I said, "You guys haven't seen anything yet."

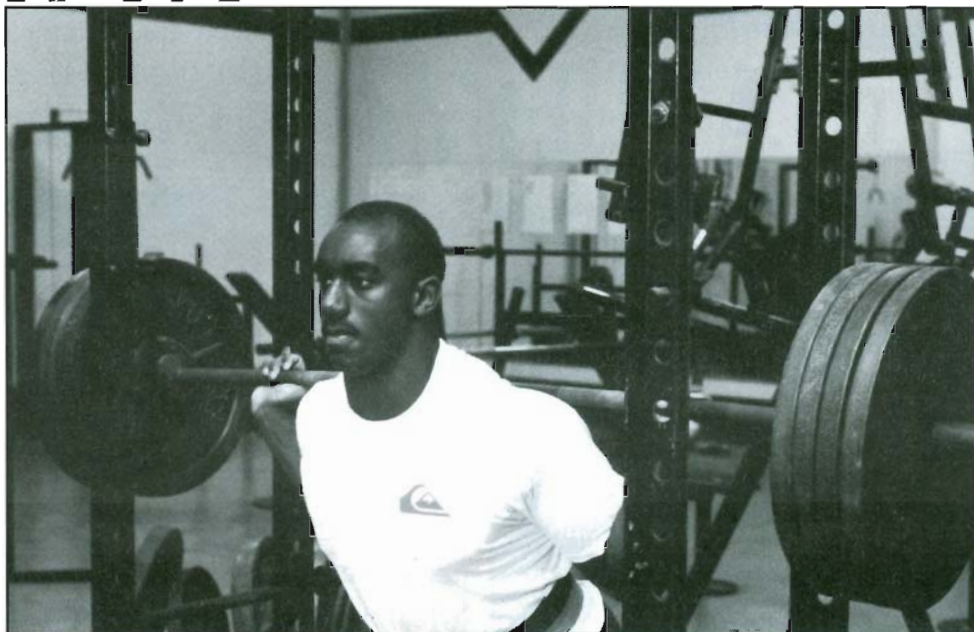
"The kid has so many tools left."

Two years and 70 pounds of muscle later, folks are still gawking at Ahmad Hayes. At 6-foot-2, with 32-inch thighs and pipeline arms, he is physically imposing. When he walks into a weight room, eyes still stare and jaws still drop.

They hit the floor on April 3.

At the 1993 Texas Powerlifting Championships on the campus of Texas A&M University, Hayes set a new high school record by squatting 820 pounds on his final attempt of the meet. The lift eclipsed the previous mark of 810 set by Marcus Henry of Houston in the 1980s and was 60 pounds more than any other lifter at the meet even attempted.

Unsatisfied, Hayes then went after the high school deadlift record of 715 pounds owned by Willie Kelly of Corsicana—but failed. He could have played it safe, gone for a lighter deadlift weight, and guaranteed himself a second straight state title. But Hayes wanted the second record. He finished second overall to Chris Akins of Paris—a monstrous 320-pounder who finished with a 1,910 total in bench, squat and deadlift.



"His first time in the weight room he squatted 550 pounds."

"Ahmad was more disappointed about not getting the record than not winning state again," Bonner said. "When he won state last year (in the 242-pound weight class), that challenge was gone for him. He wanted the records."

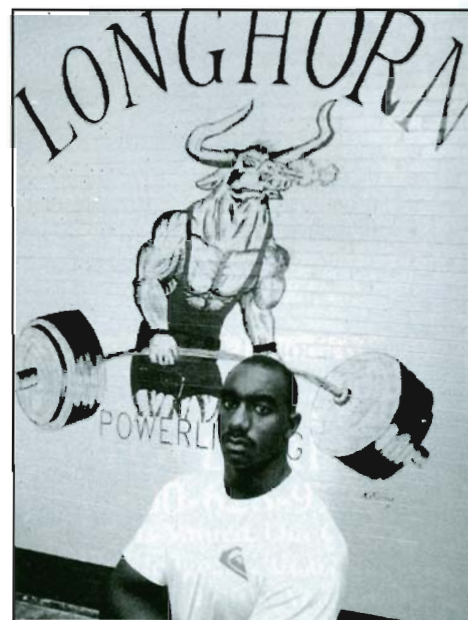
The challenge is what drives Hayes—an articulate 18-year-old, who is the Senior Class President and will attend Southern Methodist University next fall on a football scholarship (he is expected to break the two-deep chart at middle linebacker as a freshman).

Growing up in San Diego, Calif., Hayes wanted to be a high school and collegiate wrestler. But, when his family moved to Cedar Hill during his sophomore year, Hayes was forced to find a new athletic outlet. Cedar Hill had no high school wrestling program, so, at the urging of coaches, Hayes gave powerlifting a shot. His first time in the gym, he squatted 450 pounds.

"I had never lifted weights before in my life," he said. "By the time my sophomore year was over, the coaches were having to drag me out of the weight room. I loved it because I could set a new goal for myself every day.

When you're competing against the weight, there's always a bigger challenge.

The challenge for Hayes entering his senior year was just convincing himself to stay with powerlifting. After breaking the 242-pound squat record and winning a state title (1,805 pounds total) in 1992, Hayes' enthusi-





asm for the sport wavered. During the high school football season, he talked of skipping the powerlifting schedule altogether.

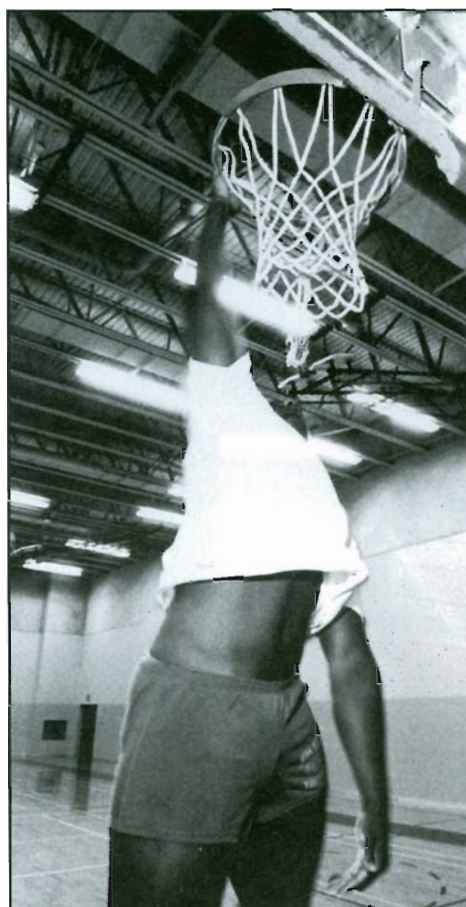
Now, he says, he was just afraid.

"I wanted to squat 800 pounds last year...and when I missed it, it messed with me for a while," Hayes said. "I was hiding out. I kept asking myself—and everybody else kept asking—'Are you going to squat 800 or not.' I was afraid that if I couldn't do it, I would let a lot of people down. Mostly, though, I was afraid of letting myself down."

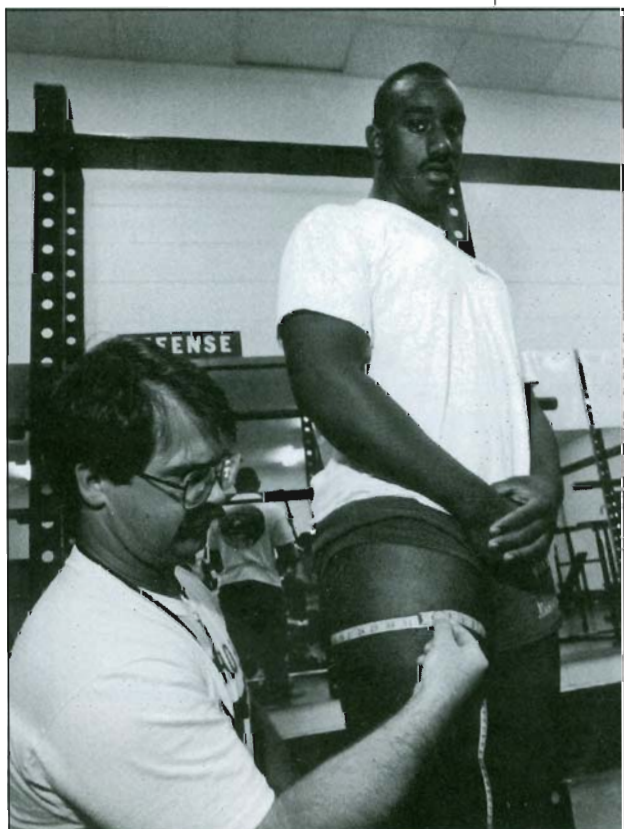
Once Hayes decided to confront his fears, the 800-pound barrier softened. He would routinely surpass the weight in workouts, but could not reach his goal of a certified lift until a regional meet in March.

"It took so long to get that 800-pound mental block out of the way," Hayes said. "When I couldn't do it last year, it felt like the weight was crushing me. But, when I was at regionals and I knew I was finally going to do it, I couldn't believe it. But now, 800 pounds is like nothing. I've started all over again with a new goal."

Eventually, Hayes hopes to become an Olympic powerlifter. He plans to curtail his power training in college to enhance his speed (4.65 in the 40-yard dash) and improve his chances of staying off the defensive or offen-



Ahmad's powerful legs give him a 33" vertical jump and 4.65 — 40 yard dash



Ahmad has enormous 32" thighs

sive lines. If the National Football League does not come calling in 1998, he the plans to resume his power training and set sights on the Olympics.

"I love football because it's like a family sport, whereas powerlifting is so individual," Hayes said. "If nothing happens with football after college, then I definitely want to give the Olympics a shot. I watch those guys, how focused they are and how pumped up they are. It just looks exciting."

"I'd also want to go after Anthony Clark's world record of 1,035 pounds in the squat. That would be a challenge."

For now, Hayes enjoys his two-hour, five-days-a-week afternoon workout sessions.

"A work out—it's like a high would be, almost," Hayes said. "When your legs are so worn out that you can't even drive home because you can't control the brake and gas. When your mus-

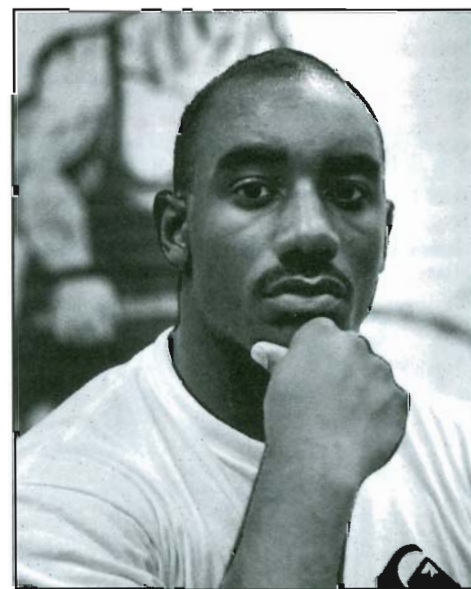
cles are so tired, but you feel so good. It's a unique experience."

And an experience Hayes has enjoyed without the use of steroids, for which he and Bonner both take great pride.

"Ahmad has been tested four times in the last three years; he doesn't mess with that stuff," says Bonner, who is vice-president of the Texas High Schools Powerlifting Association, which has taken a hard-and-firm stance against steroid use.

Said an honest Hayes: "If I had the money, I probably would have used (steroids) when I was younger, just because the young guys are so focused on getting bigger as fast as they can. But, now I'm glad I didn't make that mistake. I knew it was bad when I saw Lyle Alzado on TV with brain cancer (which was believed to be caused by excessive steroid use). I remember how big, how mean that guy used to be and then I looked at what the steroids and the cancer had done to him."

"It was sad."



Ahmad carries a 3.6 GPA and 1050 SAT score and will attend SMU this Fall.

(RECORD BOARD)

AHMAD HAYES

SQUAT BENCH DEAD 40 VJ CLEAN

	SQUAT	BENCH	DEAD	40	VJ	CLEAN
Soph	700	245	635	4.9	27	275
Junior	775	325	700	4.8	29	315
Senior	820	370	730	4.65	33	385