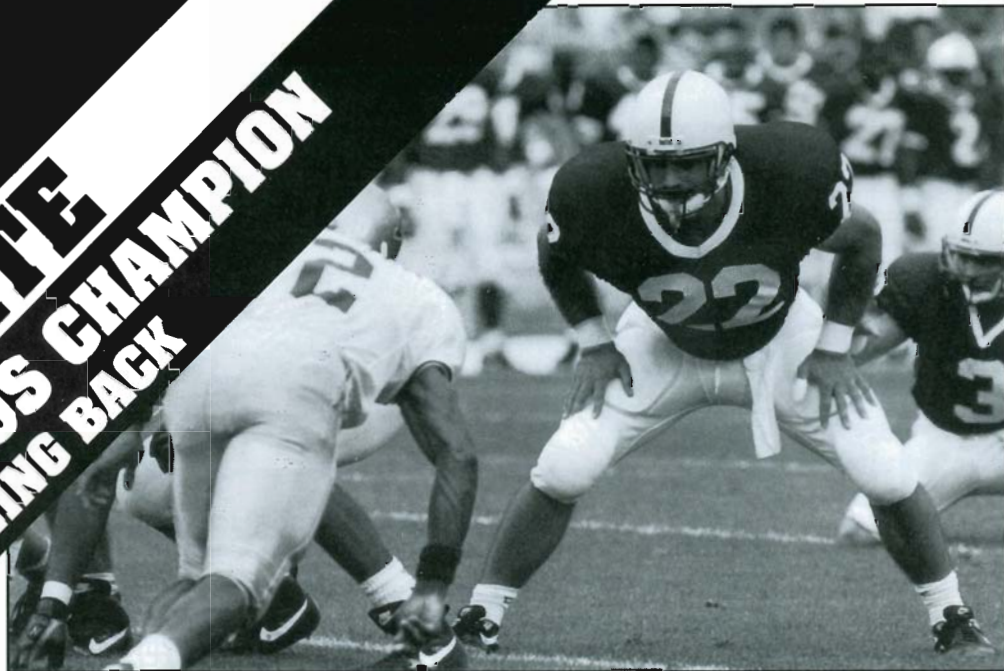


BRIAN MILNE

PENN STATE

1993 NCAA DISCUS CHAMPION AND RUNNING BACK



The Surgeons Cut Him in Half And Operated So Many Times They Should Have Put In A Zipper.

This Is An-Overcoming-Odds Story You Will Never Ever Forget!

By Dr. Greg Shepard

What you are about to read will absolutely amaze you. In the category of determination, Brian Milne is in a class by himself. Read his story in a quiet secluded place and ponder about life, coaching, family and God. And, oh yes, bring a Kleenex.

Brian grew up on a 138 acre farm in Waterford, Erie County, Pennsylvania. He started out as a 3-sport athlete at Fort LeBoeuf High School participating in football, basketball and track. As a ninth grader, he was already big at 6-1 and 210 pounds, especially when you consider Brian was a running back. He threw the discus a whopping 168 feet and won most meets.

As a sophomore, Brian increased his weight to 225 pounds and added another ten feet to his discus, but quit basketball to concentrate on football and track. His grades were in the high honor category, so Brian was already attracting attention from Division I schools. In his junior year, Brian had them lin-

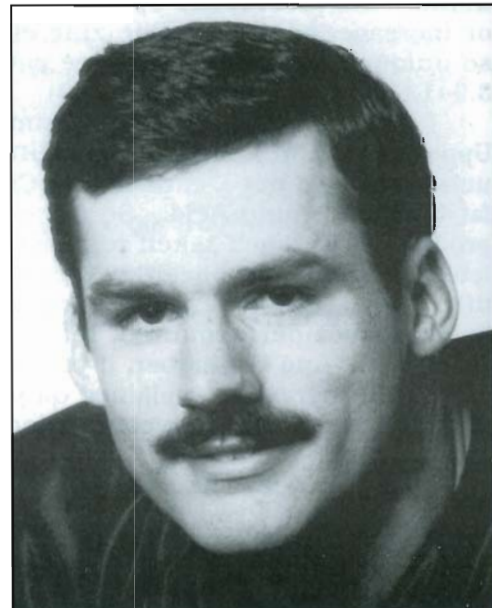
ing up as he was now 6-4 at 235 pounds and had rushed for 2430 yards and scored 30 touchdowns. The dream looked like a can't miss bet: State Discus Title, Division I Scholarship, NFL Career.

Then it happened. Pennsylvania's version of superman was going to be exposed to large doses of kryptonite. The dream became a nightmare. In early March, just as track was beginning, Brian pulled a muscle in his back trying to pick up two bales of hay. Brian decided to have it checked out and went to Hamot Medical Center in Erie. It was closed. "I was lucky they were closed," analyzed Brian. "They probably would have recommended to stretch more. As it turned out, it was a blessing in disguise."

Since the Medical Center was closed, Brian went to an orthopedic specialist. Brian remembered, "It was standard operating procedure with the orthopedic specialist to take a chest X-ray." The results were staggering. They found a grape-

fruit size tumor attached to the pericardium of his heart. Because of its large size, the tumor pushed one of his lungs over to the other side.

On March 14th, surgery was scheduled to remove the tumor. "I asked them not to cut my sternum down the middle," recalled Brian. "I wanted my recovery to be as fast as possi-



ble. I have scars underneath where my ribs split and they go around slanting upwards. They basically cut me in half. I probably had 50 staples, like you'd put in a roof, to put me back together."

Three days later the biopsy report came back and they told me I had Hodgkin's Disease. Simply put, Brian Milne had cancer. The tumor was in an advanced stage which meant that he had only a 65 to 75 percent chance to live. The growth was the result of the thymus gland. "It usually gets smaller with age," said Brian. "But mine didn't."

"I didn't want to be one of those three out of 10 people who died. It was a matter of survival. You either live or die and no way was I going to die. I had too many things I wanted to do. My parents were with me at this point. They had a whole mess of tubes going into my chest and this caused muscle spasms in my biceps. I started screaming. They gave me a shot of morphine for the pain, but it didn't help. I put a pillow to my mouth. Then, they gave me another shot of morphine. Finally, my pain tolerance was sky high."

After 5 or 6 weeks, Brian started throwing again. However, his right lung collapsed requiring another 8 days in the hospital with a tube in his side. After that ordeal, Brian began throwing again. The doctors still weren't satisfied and Brian continued with more tests. "I took one little test where they put shots of dye in my toes to light up my lymphatic system," recounted Brian, almost with a laugh. As a result of this test, Brian had a lymph node removed.

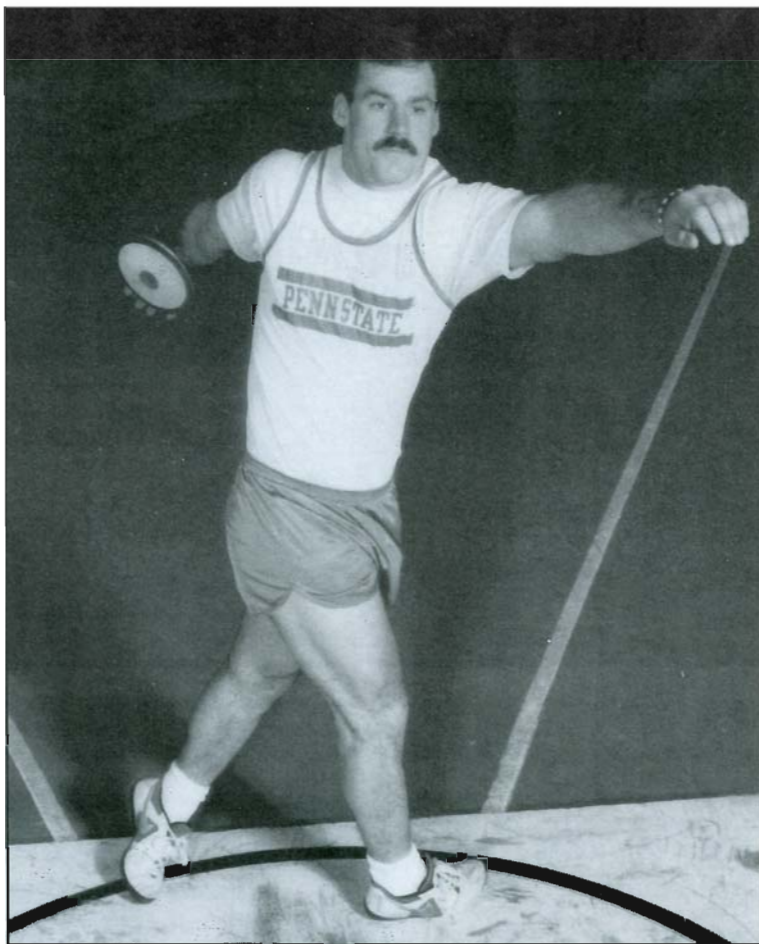
"Brian will be a big addition to our football program. He is a big league prospect. Milne is a big man who can run. I think he is much more comfortable with his physical status now than he was when he was out for football the last time. He was still not quite sure that he could handle it all. He is a story in himself. I am excited about him coming back out. I think that will give us a pretty good fullback situation."

-Joe Paterno

Brian continued throwing as best he could through all his tests and operations. In later May, the doctors informed him that his spleen needed to come out. "But the state track meet was coming up," said Brian, "and I wanted to throw." The doctor said it would not endanger Brian in any way and he agreed to postpone the operation for five days.

"I won state in the Discus," said Brian modestly. His spleen was removed and again the results were bad. "They found out there was cancer in my spleen, so then they knew I should have chemotherapy treatments. Those treatments began in July after his junior year at LeBoeuf High School."

Every other Monday Brian went to the Cancer Center at 8:00 in the morning. "They knocked me out to get over the nausea," said Brian. His treatment lasted four hours and during that time Brian woke up many times to puke his guts out. After his treatment, Brian was wheelchaired out of the center. His mother drove while Brian held his "sick bag". One particular time after wrenching hard with dry heaves, Brian looked over and saw his mom crying and he was



Brian won the Discus Gold Medal at the World Junior Track Championships in Seoul, Korea, in September of 1992 and the 1993 Penn Relays Discus. Milne holds the Penn State record in the Discus with a toss of 207-5.

worried about her. He asked her, trying to laugh, "Mom, am I stressing you out?"

Brian would continue throwing up until midnight after which he would sleep for a day and a half. By Wednesday, he could finally eat something. The chemotherapy treatments burned his skin and it turned a reddish color with a dry texture. Because of the constant throwing up, his tongue and throat were so irritated he couldn't taste his food. Brian managed to also go to school by Wednesday, but he obviously missed his senior year of football. "I want to every game," said Brian sadly. "It wasn't a happy deal. I was depressed but I thought I should be there for the team."

It took a full week to feel better after the chemotherapy treatments. Brian's routine was sick a week then in recovery for a week. This lasted for six



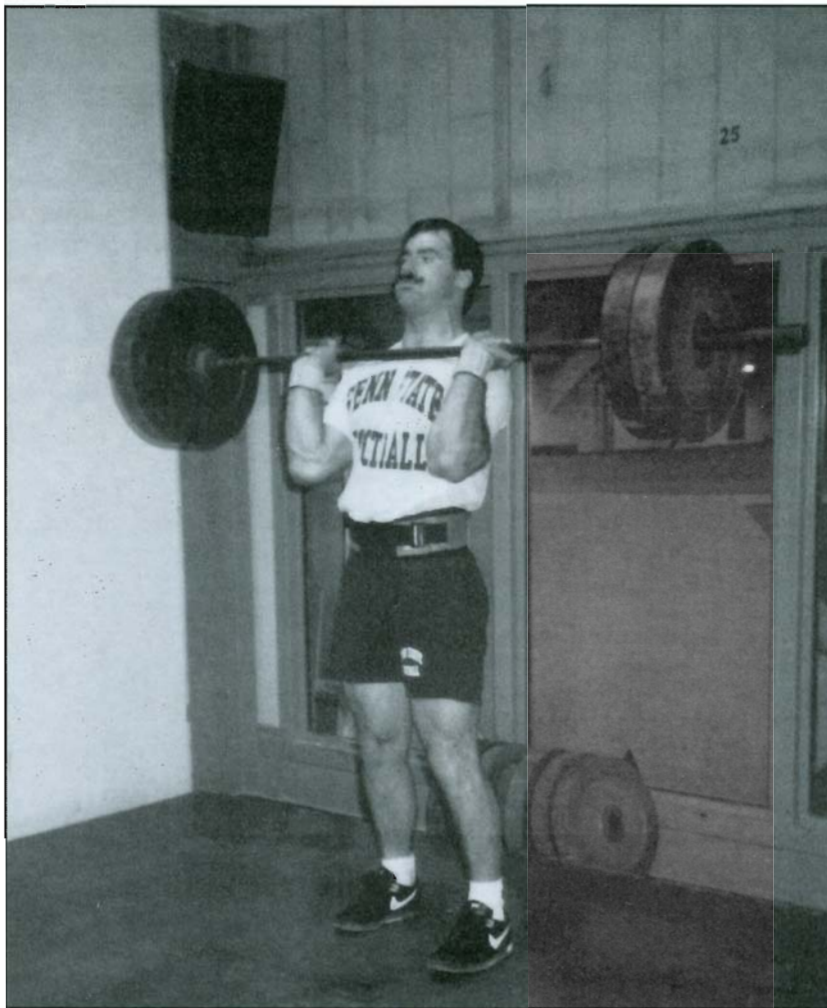
months and sometimes he'd have nightmares about being killed and dying. "It was then that I thought to myself, I have to take charge, I have to get healthy." Brian's tribulation finally ended on December 26th and Brian recalled, "I puked my guts out again the day after Christmas." But the good news from the CAT scan was, Brian Milne was now cancer free.

The new year brought new goals. On January 1st, Brian started lifting again, this time with a 5 pound plate. Brian had lost 35 pounds during his treatment but he was determined to rebuild his body for track. The weight returned to his scarred but valiant frame. Superman was back. Kryptonite had been defeated. Brian set two state records by throwing the Discus 206-3 and the Shot 63-1 1/2.

One can only imagine what Brian could have done had he been healthy. As a 10th grader, Brian had done a legal 505 Pound Parallel Squat for 5 reps, a 285 Pound Clean and a 305 Pound Incline. The day before the tumor was removed, his Coach watched his phenomenal power six discus throws at the 230 foot mark. "They were all good throws," exclaimed Brian. Want to know what the world record is? 225 feet! Enough said! Whoops, wait a minute, there's more. Brian managed a

"Brian is focused on what needs to be accomplished. He doesn't get distracted; other people change their minds or goals, but he stays focused."

**-Bill Whittaker
Assistant Track Coach**



"I Don't Do Many Benches. They Don't Help Me As Much As Squats And Cleans."

3.7 grade average throughout all his turmoil. One dream completed, now on to the next. Where would Brian go to college?

"Out of state schools found out I was sick," answered Brian, "They stopped calling and sending letters. They didn't know how to react. But in my eyes everyone dropped me except Penn State. Joe Paterno would call me in the hospital and tell me to not to worry about football and to just get healthy. He assured me that my scholarship was still available. The track coaches also kept in touch. They kept their loyalty so I chose Penn State. Besides that, I felt I could get a good education there."

At Penn State, academics are serious business; it's the fastest growing research university in America. Joe Paterno has stressed academics to the point where last year 89% of the entering 1986-87 football recruits were 1992 graduates. In fact, 19 Penn State football players have been

selected first-team All-Americans since 1965 and 14 have been recipients of NCAA Post-graduate Scholarships.

Penn State ain't bad either in football tradition. (Greg: That sentence doesn't fit with the rest of the style) They played their first game in 1887 and have since compiled a 670-285-41 record with an NCAA record of 49 straight non-losing seasons between 1939 and 1987. They have appeared in 29 bowl games, winning 17 and tying two. At this writing, Joe Paterno has compiled a 253-67-3 in 27 1/2 seasons and is first among active coaches in total victories with two National Championships. And boy do they ever attract a crowd. Over a million fans flocked to see the Nittany Lions in 1991 play both home and away. It seems fitting that Brian Milne chose Penn State.

Penn State's faith in Brian was heightened even before he got there. Joe Shesman, Brian's high school football coach, invited him to play in an Erie County All-Star game in the summer. Brian emulated Walter Payton by running up hills on the farm and doing long wind sprints on a dirt road. The result: Brian rushed for 184 yards on 30 carries.

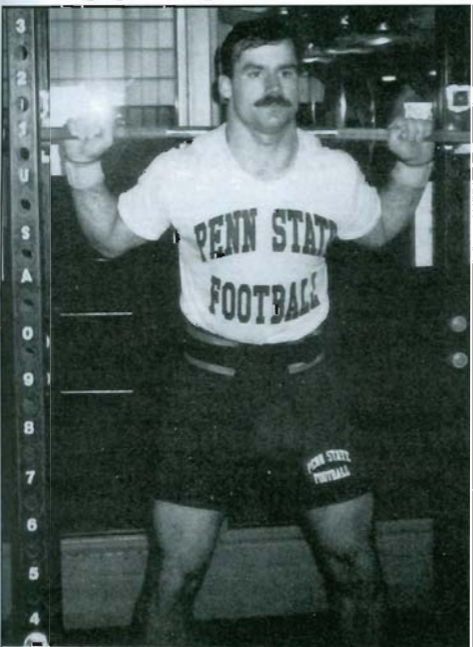
Brian took a red shirt year in football for his freshman year but not in track. In his first ever collegiate meet, Brian whipped the Discus out 207-5 which was the best throw in the nation up to that point. Three days later another operation. This time it was Brian's appendix. Brian laughed, "After what I'd been through, an appendectomy was nothing." Bill Whittaker, Penn State Throws Coach quipped, "I told Brian to get a zipper, then anytime they needed to take an organ out, it'd be easy."

"I believe with all my heart and soul," said Brian convincingly, "that appendix operation

kept me out of the Olympics." Brian tried to get back into throwing and lifting as soon as possible to get ready for the Olympic Trials. One of his throws was probably far enough but a foul by one inch prevented Brian's appearance in Barcelona.

During this time, Brian still had reoccurring nightmares. Every three weeks he dreamed of being shot or killed. Brian's body had been to war for too long. "I needed a rest to get my health back," Brian reasoned. "My shoulders hurt. Even today I hurt. So I took a year off from football in 1992 which cost me a year of eligibility but I did keep on lifting and got strong. The football coaches were disappointed, but they understood. There were no bad relations. I left on a good note."

Brian has deep feelings about Coach Whittaker. Brian received special permission to work with Coach Whittaker on strength and conditioning all year long, even during football season. "I don't do many Bench Presses," stated Brian, "They don't help me as much as Squats and Cleans. I lift primarily with free weights for my training program. Bill Whittaker, my throws coach, is my lifting partner, my friend and kind of like my second father. He's the only one I let spot me. Coach Whittaker is also a person I can go to and he's one of the reasons I'm at Penn State. Coach Whittaker is one of those guys I'd go to war with."



Brian Squats 750 Pounds

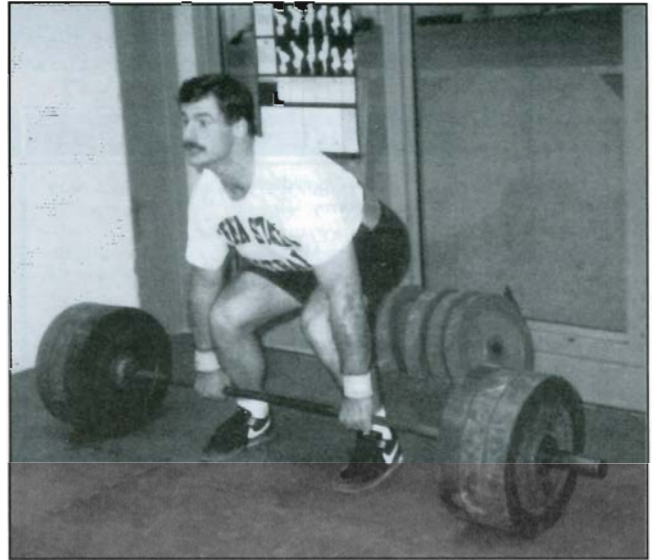
Brian achieved a 425 Bench and a 750 Squat. Coach Whittaker has Brian Squat without knee wraps and therefore on big Squats goes to about one-inch above parallel. Brian works out with 315 on the Power Clean but hesitates to go higher because of his "bad shoulders". At 6-4 250 pounds, Brian has blazed to 4.6 forty time and has a vertical jump of 31 inches. These marks were completed before the NCAA Track Championship last June.

It had been three years since Brian had been diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. Even though the recovery had been complete, the road was rocky and filled with near misses and disappointments. Brian was in fifth place after four throws. He had two left. The human spirit is capable of enduring much, but also giving much. Such was the case in New Orleans in the 1993 NCAA Discus Championships. Brian's next throw soared out to 200 feet 5 inches and that was good enough for his first major title. Brian Milne was an NCAA Champion as a 20-year old sophomore.

Brian felt his health had returned and thus decided to play football again. It took a while for Brian to work into the system, but he made progress with each game. He is a devastating blocker from his fullback position and has 75 yards in 11 carries after 7 games. The dreams are still intact and moving forward.

Those dreams include an NFL contract and going to the 1996 Olympics. As Brian earnestly stated, "why not?" He is majoring in Exercise and Sport Science and with a 2.8 GPA is on course to graduate in his 5th year. Brian has thought about teaching and coaching at the high school level or going into corporate and personal fitness.

Brian is very conscientious about his diet. He stays away from food high in fat and junk food although once in awhile he has a soda. Brian also abstains from alcohol. "I've never had a drink in my whole



Brian Works Out With 315 pounds On The Power Clean

life," affirmed Brian. "I never saw the purpose and I know of no benefit. So why do it?" Brian laughed when asked about the effects of peer pressure. "Being 6-4 and 230 pounds, I had no problems with that, but I also had a strict father so I didn't run into drugs or alcohol."

I asked Brian what he had learned from his ordeals and triumphs? He answered, "I came closer to God. I wear a gold cross all the time to thank Him. I know people and human nature better. I found out who my friends were and who will go to war with me."

"I see all these people who complain constantly and it makes me wonder. They just don't know how blessed they actually are. I've learned to take life day by day and live to the fullest. I learned to never give up because life is too precious to live for. I made the decision to fight and scrape to live. I didn't want to die."

"Everything happens for a reason and a purpose. A lot of mothers and people have asked me to give encouragement to their kids that are going through the same things I went through. I also speak a lot at Leukemia and Cancer groups. I love helping people."

I believe Brian is correct. Things do happen for a purpose. Brian's adversities helped create in him a wiser and stronger spiritual self. We sincerely thank Brian for his inspiring Upper Limit story and also thank Coach Whittaker for making this article possible.....□