

TRAINING | HUGE MEN

By Dr. Greg Shepard

The purpose of this article is to help tall athletes and coaches understand more fully their uniqueness to training and technique. It is for the college strength coach who trains a basketball team or who trains the occasional tall and/or huge athlete from another sport. It is also for the high school coach who may have a taller skinny athlete.

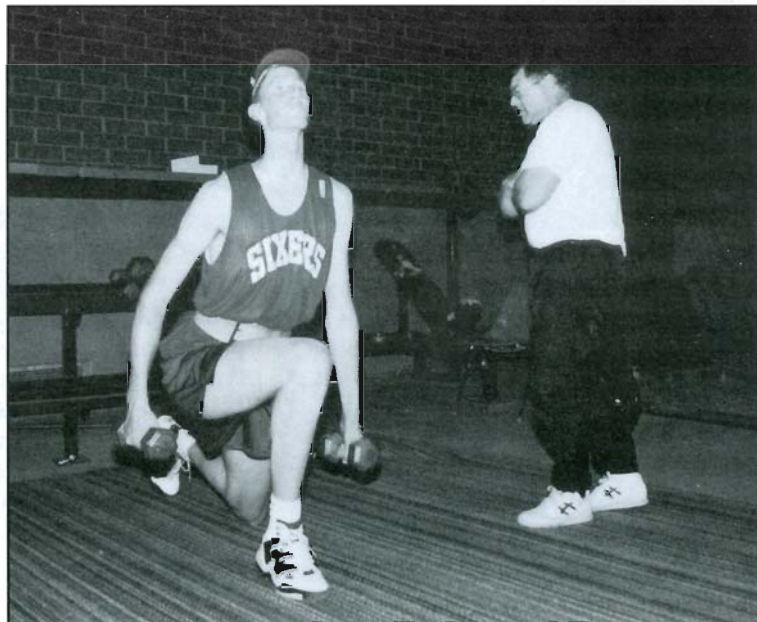
During the last dozen years, I've had the opportunity to train twenty big athletes who stood seven feet or taller. These were all NBA

players and all had similar type unique training challenges.

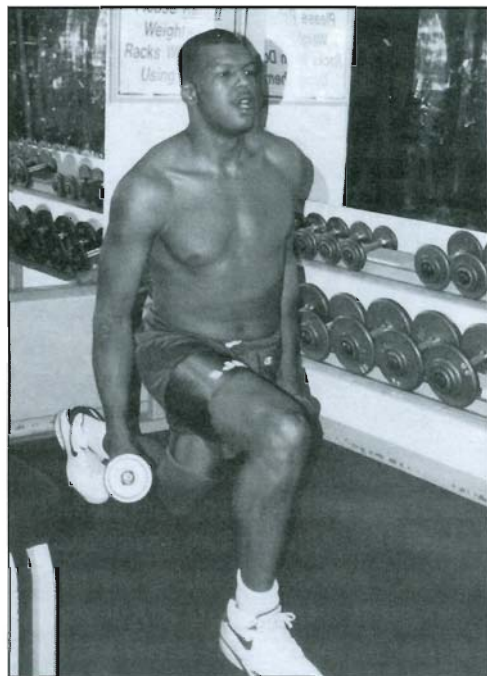
The first challenge is to overcome the intimidation factor of just going into the weight room. I would never expect a tall athlete to lift as much as a shorter athlete. The key is to get stronger and bigger with more explosive power. Rob Waldrop, who is featured in this journal, Bench Presses 500 pounds and Parallel Squats 720 pounds but he's only 6-2. If Rob were in the weight room, there would be a great tendency for a tall athlete to be

intimidated. Please, don't worry about what short guys lift. Believe me, they have their own problems.

Tall men, who are intimidated, won't lift because they are not very strong. They don't want to be seen struggling with a 140 pound bench while a short guy does much more. They would rather go on the court and play. "At least there, peo-



7-6 Shawn Bradley Dwarfing 5-9 Coach Shepard. Lunges Are important For Tall Men.



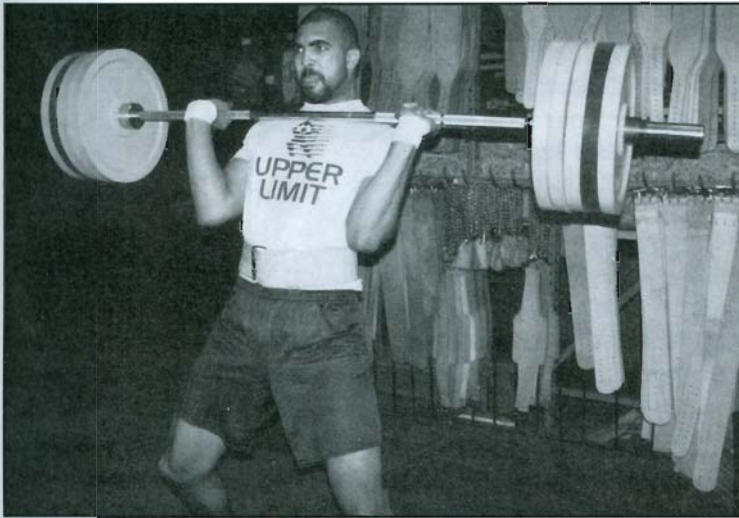
7-2 300 lb. Luther Wright Doing Lunges. Very Hard But Very Important For Huge Men.



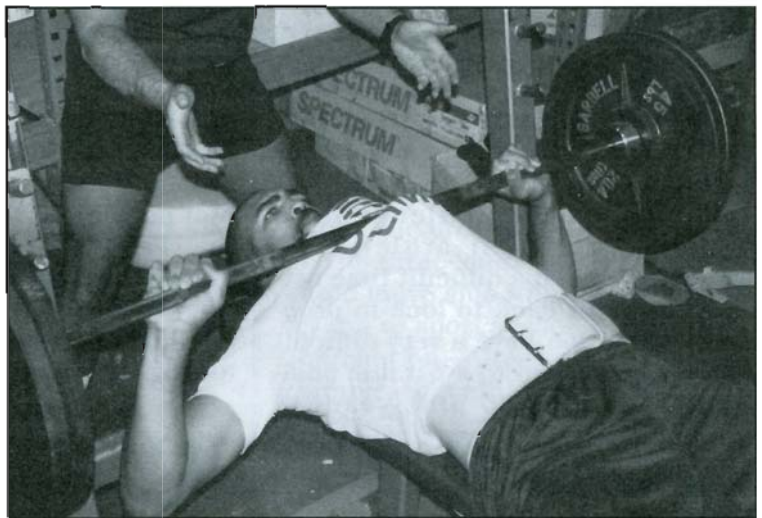
Shawn Bradley Doing Box Squats With Coach Shepard. Extra Time Teaching Technique Is Required With Huge Men.



7-5 Mark Eaton Doing Push Presses. Spotting Is 7-0 Eric Leckner



**Felton Spencer 7-1 292 lbs. Power Cleaning 500 lbs.?
Ha, Fooled You! It's Only 205.
We Put On BFS 10 And 25 lb. Bumpers.**



**Felton Doing Towel Benches With 250 lbs.
This Reduces Potential Shoulder Problems.
Vital For Skill Athletes.**

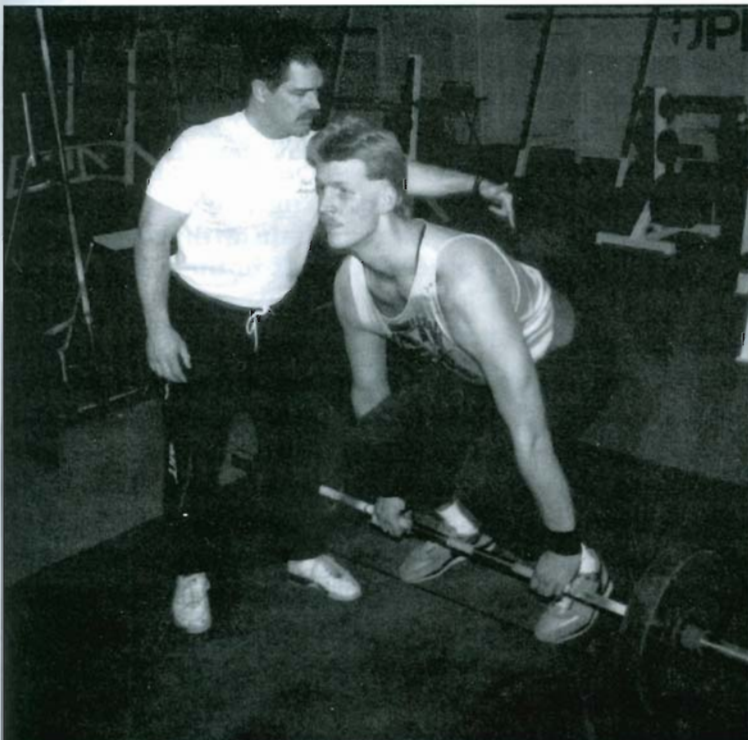
ple won't laugh at me." This is not Upper Limit thinking. The smart athlete works on his weaknesses and makes them stronger. I would say to a 500 pound bencher, "You're strong enough. Go work on your weaknesses." That could be flexibility, skills, agility, etc.

Last summer a fine 6-10 240 pound center came to the Jazz Rookie Camp. He had been a two-time Division I All-Conference center and led his conference in scoring. He had never gone into the

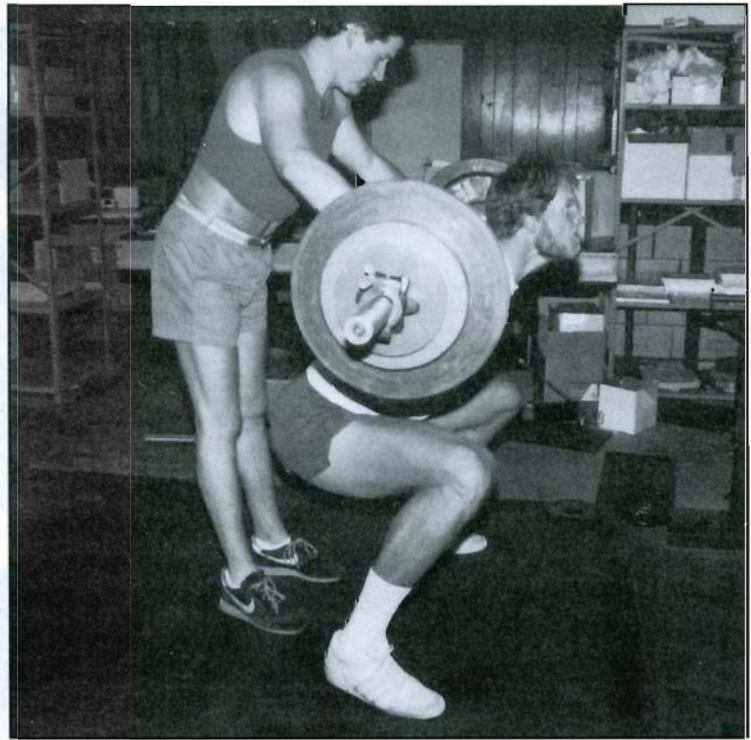
weight room. This young man stood next to three other Jazz centers and he knew from the first day his NBA career was all over. Luther Wright was 7-2 315 pound, Felton Spencer was 7-1 291 pounds, Ike Austin was 7-0 293 pounds and also standing in the wings was veteran Mark Eaton at 7-5 280 pounds. It was amazing to me that his nice young man who was 23 years old had to wait so long to find out that he should have worked hard in the weight room during

high school and college.

The second challenge is to start very light. Again, don't worry about the short guys. When I started Mark Eaton out lifting weights, he was 25 years old and weighed 285 pounds. His Bench and Clean max were 115 and his Parallel Squat max was zero! In his prime, Mark Paralleled 300, Benched 300 and Cleaned 250. These are modest marks for short guys but spectacular for a 7-5 athlete. I started 7-6 Shawn Bradley with just the bar on



7-5 Al Bannister Dwarfing 5-10 BFS Coach Anderson. Tall Men Have A Tougher Time Locking In Their Backs.



Mark Eaton Showing Remarkably Good Form. The Result Of Five Years of Squatting.



most lifts and doing 95 pounds on the Bench for 10 reps after two weeks was a major effort. Who cares what an athlete starts with? Start light and get your technique perfect.

The third challenge is to squat. Every tall athlete I've worked with had a difficult time getting the lower back to lock-in properly. They also have a very difficult time getting down to a parallel position. In all my 25 plus years of training athletes, I have never had a 6-9 plus college or pro athlete who could already Parallel Squat. Nobody! That number surely must now be one hundred. That should tell you something.

My tall huge athletes like Luther Wright and Felton Spencer can Bench OK and their upper body strength was satisfactory. However, their leg strength in mid July of 1993 was not at all good. They could not get down to a parallel position and once they finally did, they had a very hard time with 135 pounds. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that legs trying to move a 300 pound body with 135 pounds squatting power is not good.

After training Felton for two weeks in July, he went back to Minneapolis for August. When he

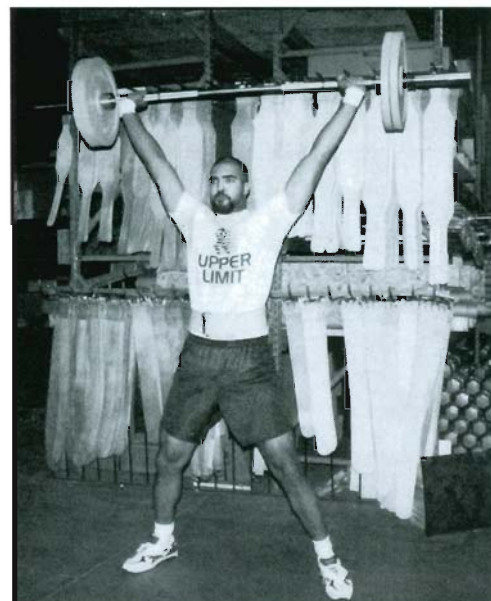
came back, he weighed 274, a loss of 16 pounds. We went right to work on the squats. By October 1st, Felton could do a perfect parallel squat with 300 pounds! His legs looked noticeably bigger. I asked him how much he weighed. He said that he didn't know. I told him, "I bet you weigh an all time high." The next day he weighed and was all smiles. He weighed 292 and had his best vertical jump ever!

Now, I know most of my strength coaching friends at the college level don't do Box Squats for various reasons. I ask you to reconsider. Teaching tall athletes to squat begins with the Box Squat. You can get the lower back in perfect position and they will be immediately successful. Then, after this success, you will have a much easier time teaching the Parallel Squat. Beginning with Box Squats is truly one of the great secrets of strength coaching for anyone, but even more so with tall athletes.

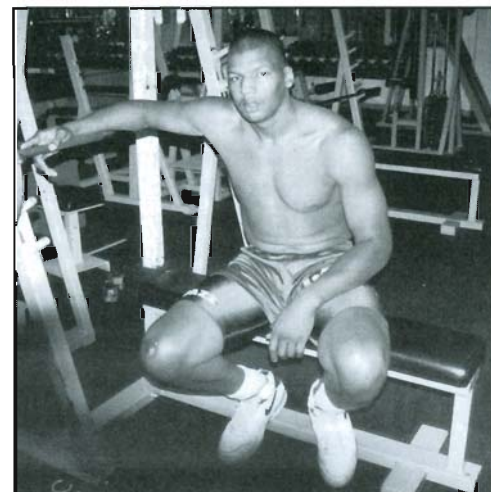
The fourth challenge for tall athletes is to Power Clean and/or Power Snatch. You will increase explosive power and significantly increase vertical jump quite rapidly. Surprise! These are lifts tall athletes can normally do quite well. Being tall gives a longer pull thus creating an advantage over a short

athlete. Another invaluable tool is to teach these lifts with our training plates and/or BFS Bumper Plates. Starting out light in the proper position is vital to experiencing success immediately without risking injury.

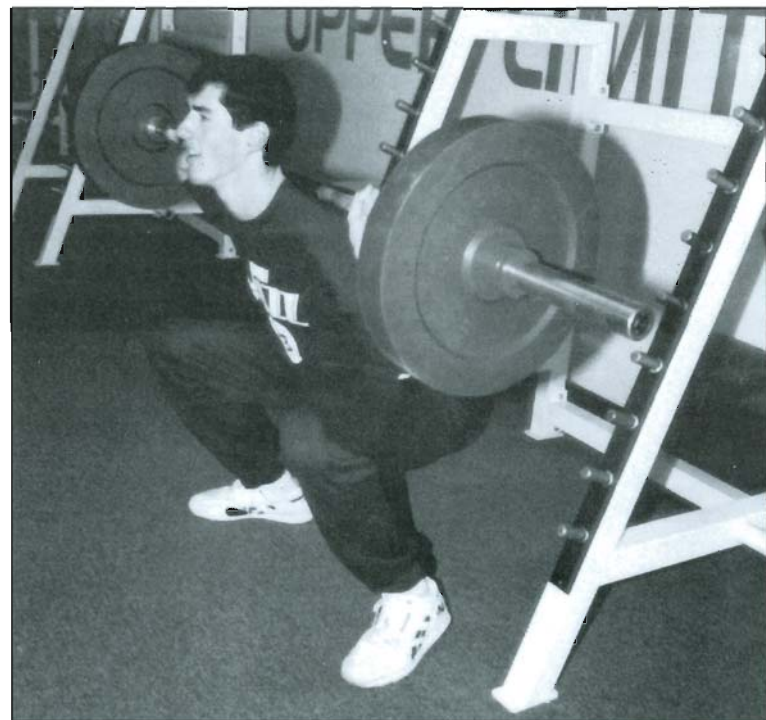
The fifth and last challenge is to workout consistently in all phases of strength and conditioning. Work on agility and flexibility everyday. Do Plyometrics and



Felton Spencer learned How to Do Power Snatches In Less Than Two Minutes Using BFS Bumper Plates



Luther, Oct. 1, 1993 at 7-2 294 Six Weeks Earlier He Was 315 and 15 plus Percent Fat.



7-0 215 lb. Walt Palmer Squatting, Walt Needed Another 50 lbs. To Have A Chance In The NBA.

Speed training two to three times per week. Train with weights three times per week in the off-season for about one hour per session and train two times per week during the in-season for about 30 minutes per session. Mark Eaton used our BFS program during that first in-season and broke 275 personal records. Felton Spencer, the heir to Eaton's starting center position for the Utah Jazz, has vowed to break even more records during the 1993-94 season.

How about you? What will history record for your efforts? Good luck! BFS is behind you all the way. It takes effort and a lot of hard, smart work. Sweat bullets when you train. You can rest when you're dead.....□