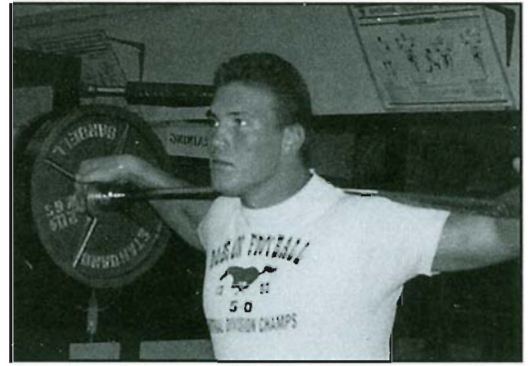


FROM TRAGEDY TO National Champion



A POWERFUL LESSON ON ALCOHOL, GANGS AND GUNS

SPECIAL EDITOR'S NOTE: Tim Croff, who just graduated from Dobson High School in Mesa, Arizona, graciously consented to tell his story. He hopes that it will be of help to both coaches and athletes.

Let me say up front, there are sensitive issues concerning Tim's incident with alcohol, gangs and guns but I feel these issues need to be talked about with both athletes and non-athletes. This article should provide a vehicle for meaningful discussion.

I admire Tim for being so honest and forthright. He is a courageous person with a great heart.

By Dr. Greg Shepard

Coach Mike Clark, one of the most successful football coaches in Arizona, has had his teams working on the BFS program for years. A year ago last summer Coach Clark was looking forward to another great year. Why? Well, he had a lot of good, hardworking kids headed by a real blue chipper, 6-3 270 pound Tim Croff. Not only was Tim great at football but he was also a premier wrestler and a fine thrower in track. Tim was working hard with the weights preparing for a special senior year of sports. The potential for greatness was in the palm of his hand.

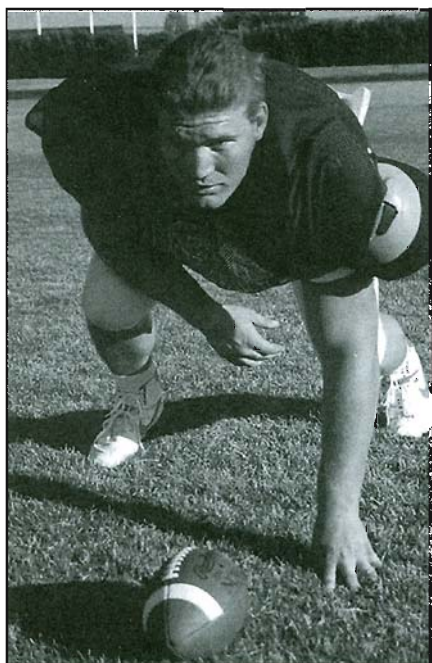
However, life is about choices. Sometimes good kids will make a wrong choice or put themselves in a vulnerable position. Such was the case on a hot July night with Tim and his friends. Here is the incident that happened in Tim's own words:

"I was at a birthday party for one of the guys on the football team. A friend who was older got us a hotel room and there was a lot of drinking going on. I had 12 or 13 beers and was feelin' it. I learned if you are going to drink you should limit yourself.

"Anyway, we heard about another party. I headed out the door and was waiting for some other friends. I

was sitting outside in the parking lot with some girl friends. Another car comes by with 5 minority type guys. They just stared at us. I looked away. I didn't want any trouble. But, then some remarks were made.

"I headed over to their parked car. They were going to another party. I asked them, 'What's your problem.' Nothing really happened and we ended up shaking hands. But one of their guys went up to another room where their party was while we were talking. All of a sudden about 30 guys come down and confront us. I had already got back in my friend's car to go to this other party. My friend, who also had a lot to drink, was driving jumped out of



the car to face those guys. I tried to grab him but wasn't quick enough. So I jump out and ran over to try to get my friend back in the car.

"Then I saw a gun out of the corner of my eye. It was a 45. I didn't have time to react or say anything. Another guy had a shotgun and was right in front of me 10-15 feet away. The guy with the shotgun blasted me. I was hit in the arm, stomach, groin area and my leg. The only thing I could think of was 'I am not going down.' I didn't want to go down because he would have finished me off. I'd testify to that. I only took a step or two back and bent over. I ran to the car. I knew it was bad. It knocked my breath out. It was like a big giant fist hit me in the gut. I was just tryin' to get away. My friend's hand got sprayed. We tried to get to the hospital as fast as we could.

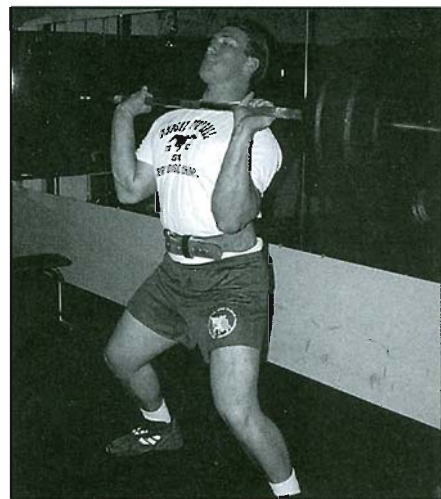
"As we got to the emergency room, I tried to get out of the car but couldn't. My friends helped me in. I did my best to hold on, to keep standin'. After they put me in a wheelchair, I blacked out. I don't remember anything after that.

"They cut my clothes off. The shot gun pellets hit my genitals, stomach and arm which required surgery. I spent two weeks in the hospital. They told me my work in the weight room probably saved my life. They never caught the guys but it was speculated that the shooter was a gang member from Los Angeles.

"After I got out of the hospital on Friday, I started running three days later. There was no way I was going to miss my senior year of football. I made it to all the practices. My grip in my right hand has affected me some in wrestling. Other than that, I'm in pretty good shape now. We are still paying on the deductible on the hospital bill.

"I learned that it is best to mind your own business and keep your mouth shut. Stay with your friends and don't go to big parties. I have changed my partying habits a lot since the shooting. I have never done drugs and know now that I have too much at stake. I don't want to screw up my future."

Tim's injury did not seem to slow him down in football. He made the All-State football team as a defensive lineman. "It took me a little time, but I got back into shape fairly fast after the shooting," Tim said. I wanted to get back to something I enjoyed." Tim went ballistic in wrestling as he posted a 38-0 record with 33 pins. His career record at Dobson was 122 victories, 94 pins, 23 consecutive pins, fastest pin (:08 seconds), 18 tournament championships, 71 consecutive wins, most victories 4 years-3 years-2 years and 1 year. In his athletic career at Dobson, Tim earned 11 varsity letters, four in wrestling and track and three in football. He has also earned All-State honors in football,



Tim's great strength helped him win a national championship.



Tim has a great vertical leap!



He has a complete workout which includes Plyometric Box Jumping.





Tim Benches 400 and Power Cleans nearly 300!

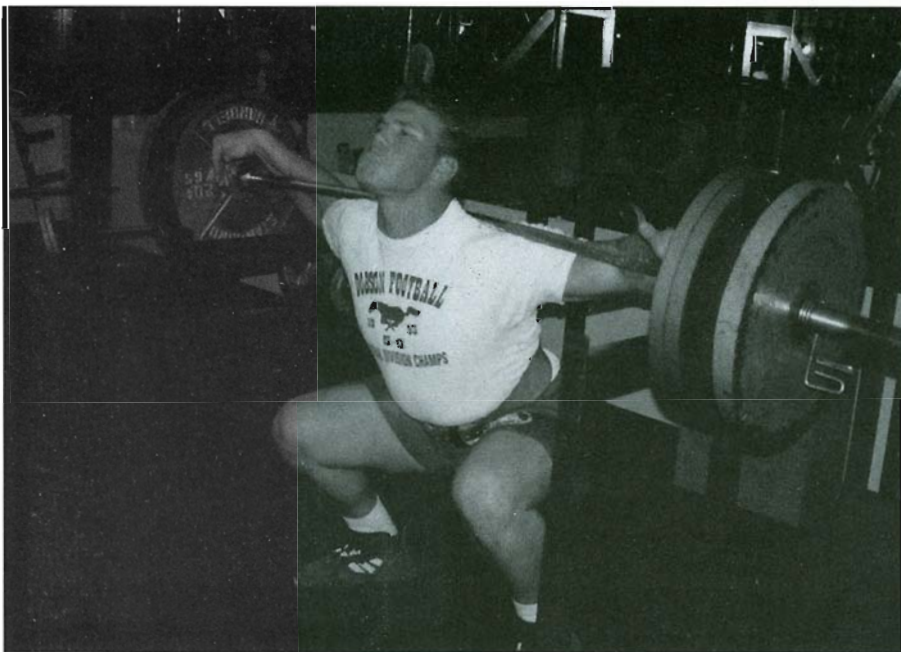
wrestling and track throwing the Discus 179 feet and the shot 53 feet.

Last April Tim went to Pittsburgh for the National High School Wrestling Tournament. He won all six of his matches to win the national heavyweight championship. He had the most pins in the least time: 5 pins in 17 minutes.

Tim's wrestling coach Russ

Winer beamed, "I had a grin that could eat a banana sideways. I've said all along that he was something extra special; he has something that makes him better than the best.

"He is a God-blessed athlete. The difference is others with that ability coast on it. He's stayed with it, worked with his ability and is



Tim is doing Parallel Squat reps with 405!

always striving to be as good as he can be. How hard he works is the standard by which we compare others who compete here."

Coach Mike Clark states, "Tim is a wonderful person. He's a hard worker in three sports but still manages to get in his 45-minute BFS workouts. Tim Benches 400 and Power Cleans nearly 300 pounds."

He will attend Scottsdale Community College while working to improve his academics. "Tim is so good that he might be able to go straight to the pros after junior college," Coach Clark speculated.

"The thing you have to understand is that when Tim was in grade school he was bigger than the other kids. They moved him up a grade once just based on his physical size. That didn't help him. I guess they didn't want kids his age intimidated by his size but it didn't help him in the long run."

Tim prefers to look at the bright side. "If I'd have been able to go to a four-year school, I'd probably have been red-shirted anyway. This way I can keep playing." After Scottsdale, Tim would like to play football and wrestle at Arizona State and then possibly play pro football. He's planning on majoring in law but one more vision pops up frequently. What about the olympics? "Well, maybe not next year but possibly the next Olympics after Atlanta."

Tim is now "Riding the High Places" with Upper Limit dreams and visions. That is how life is supposed to be. Tim's lesson to us all is to learn how quickly things can change in a careless moment with a good kid making a wrong choice. We thank Tim for sharing his experience and wish him well on his Quest For Greatness.....□

