

HOW 'BOUT THOSE

JAZZ

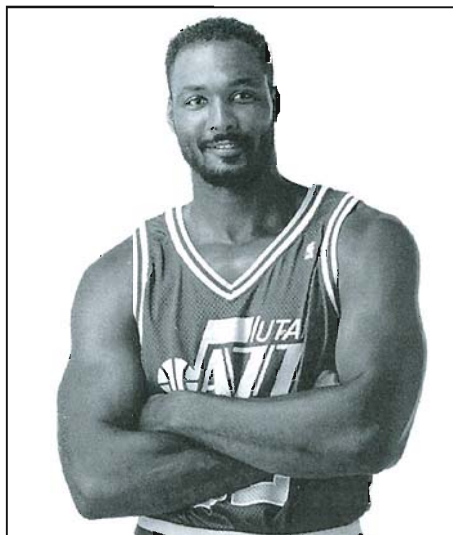
By Dr. Greg Shepard

"How 'bout those Jazz" is the familiar phrase that has echoed throughout Salt Lake City for years but at no time has the phrase been sounded louder and more often than this year.

Karl, the Mailman, Malone scored his 20,000th point last month putting him at about 19th place on the all-time NBA scorers list. If he stays healthy and wants to keep playing, Karl will probably finish in the top five in history. Karl never misses a basketball practice or a weight training workout. We play about 100 games a year which includes pre and post-season games. Karl has only missed two games in his entire ten year career. That may be his most amazing feat.

Karl has done this three times this year. We play a home game and Karl gets home about midnight. Then he calls Rick Anderson, BFS Vice-President, at 8:00 AM for a workout. Coach Anderson puts him through a tough one hour session and then Karl catches an afternoon plane and plays another game the following day. Head Jazz coach Jerry Sloan would never ask Karl to do that. Karl does it because he wants to win and be the best he can be. That's what we call being Upper Limit.

I asked Karl about lifting in-season for high school players and what would he do if he were a high school coach. He looked at me funny, "Of course we would lift. You'd have to be crazy not to train in-season or off-season." But Karl, what if a player



didn't want to weight train? Karl gave a serious reply with a scary tone, "Then, he wouldn't play for Karl Malone."

Karl isn't the only one to train with weights on the Jazz team. Everyone trains, even our guards like John Stockton and Jeff Hornacek. February, John also passed Magic Johnson as the NBA's all-time assist leader. John does about five exercises in the weight room on a consistent basis. His main goal is to keep lean and to prevent injuries. Next year John should also become the all-time NBA leader in career steals. I admire John most for his willingness to put the team first. If he were on a stretcher, you'd have to strap him in because he'd want to play. John would never be late for a practice nor would he ever say that he didn't feel well and miss a game. He has only missed four games in the last ten years and that perhaps is his most amazing stat.

Jeff Hornacek does the same type

of workout as John. Jeff, this season, set an NBA record with 8 consecutive 3-point shots. So much for weights screwing up your touch. In fact, the Jazz are one of only two NBA teams which make over 50% of their shots.

Coach Anderson travels with the Jazz on longer road trips. We do not want to miss any in-season workouts. Does it payoff? Well, the Jazz are 18-1 against Eastern Conference teams and at one point before the All-Star break, the Jazz had a 15 road game winning streak - the second longest in NBA history!

The bad news was Felton Spencer. Our hearts broke for him. Felton completely tore his achilles tendon. Coach Anderson was shaken, "What if we had stretched more . . . what if . . . what if." The Jazz trainer found that Felton had some old bone spurs on his heal and that was the contributing factor to the tear. Felton will be out a year. We hope he will be back at full strength as he has already resumed upper body workouts. We had led the NBA in the least amount of injuries 8 out of the last 9 years but that will not happen this year. You always have to have a little bit of luck too.

The Jazz and the players are committed to winning and to training hard both in the off-season and the in-season. The Jazz are leading their division and hope they can make it to the finals this year. They are tired of being a perennial good team. They want more. They want to be a great team and have the nation exclaim, "How 'bout those Jazz.".....□