

Interviews With The Big Eight Conference **Back Squat In The Training Program**

By Tom Cross 1994 NSCA College Coach of the Year

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI STRENGTH COACH - DAVE TOUB



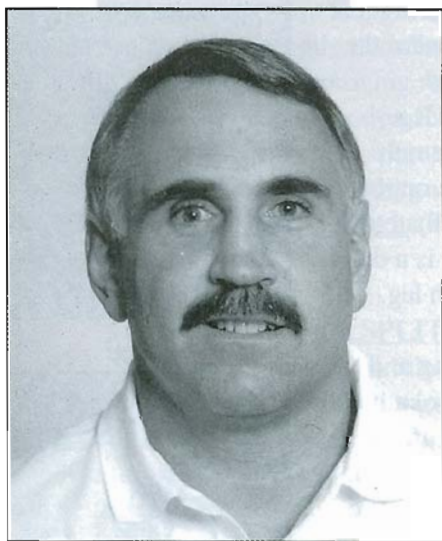
"We believe in it! People who are not doing the back squat are missing the boat!" These words from Coach Dave Toub leave little doubt about the place of the squat in the Tigers training program. "We like to squat everyone 1 day a week and work very heavy. We insist on top of thigh parallel to the ground. Our 2nd squat day will include Front Squats and Extended Squats for linemen. For others, we do lunges of all types, one leg squat down from a box, and Speed Squats at 50-60% accelerating up with the feet leaving the ground. We teach the athlete how to keep the bar in contact with the shoulders for safety reasons on this exercise."

"Most of our training for the injured is done on a unilateral leg sled."

"Most of our off-season squat training is done at 85% and up, with the knees wrapped. Injuries have not been a problem. We continue squat work during the season at a considerably lower intensity."

COLORADO UNIVERSITY STRENGTH COACH - E. J. 'DOC' KREIS

Editor's note: 'Doc' has his PhD. in Exercise Physiology and is an assistant Athletic director at Colorado University. He has studied sports science extensively around the world.



"Tom, the squat is **THE** lift. Yet, we must be mindful it is the means to an end, not the end in itself. Those who fear squats do not understand them or do not hear what is being taught. Many fear squats, keeping them one of the **BEST HIDDEN** secrets of total athletic training. Conversely, many world class athletes have discovered the secret & use it as part of their training program."

"At Colorado, we back squat two days a week, front squat two days a week, and Split squat one day a week. Our football team, when they practice, do not practice running plays one day and passing plays another day. We squat every workout! It is part of a balanced program which also includes agilities, running, and a variety of speed improvement activities."

"Hip strength, stability, and flexibility require the muscles of this region to work through their full normal motion so we require the top of the thigh parallel to the floor. This depth not only promotes growth and strength in the hips, but in all of the athlete's body. Good technique also includes lifting the chest first and driving the hands into the bar to engage more shoulder and chest activity. We also do step down work to promote single leg eccentric strength."

"Tom, you have been in our training sessions. A balanced program is beneficial to total development and injury prevention. I repeat, the squat is **THE** lift!"

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IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY STRENGTH COACH

MATT McGETTIGAN

At Iowa State University, all football players are "squatting" two days per week, according to new coach Matt McGettigan. "We must get to parallel, even if we must sacrifice some weight" said Coach McGettigan. "We teach a deep squat, emphasizing control on the descent and acceleration on the way up."

Much of the off-season squat work is quite heavy. More emphasis will be placed on speed and power as spring football begins. At this time, front squats will be used one day per week.

For injured athletes at Iowa State, they use the lunge in various forms, step-ups, and a single leg down from a box. The squat movement is "the" lower body exercise in the athletes training program. Major emphasis is placed on good technique, good depth, and acceleration while coming up.

KANSAS UNIVERSITY
STRENGTH COACH - FRED ROLL

"Tom, I like a low bar parallel squat with the torso upright. Even better, I like doing the jump squat, which we use on our second day. This is great sports work in connecting the lower and upper body and it helps to develop the acceleration, breathing, and torso strength for football. We insist on going top of thigh parallel to the floor. This position develops the hip strength expect."

"On our jump squat, we use 30-40% of 1 RM and teach keeping the bar touching the shoulders. It is a safe but very dynamic and explosive movement. We also use Front Squats, lunges of all types, and single leg down from the box. If I could only do one lift, it would be the Power Clean. The Squat is 2nd choice in my program. However, it forms the foundation of strength necessary for the Power Clean."

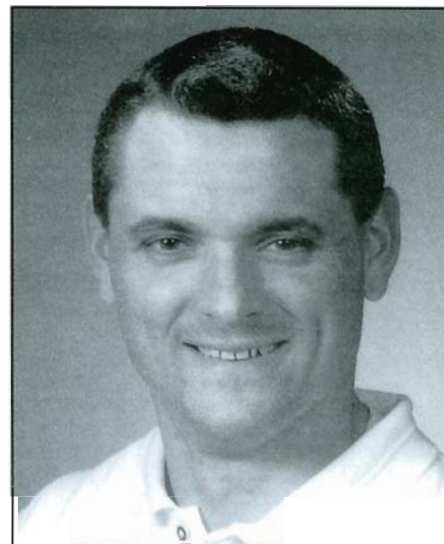
"I think it is important to keep variety and variation in the program. We squat two days a week in the off season and always stress our agilities and running for a balanced program. We use the hip sled, safety bar, and box work for those with injuries. Squat exercises and variations are extremely beneficial for every athlete, regardless of the sport."

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
STRENGTH COACH - ROD COLE

Rod Cole is currently the strength coach at KSU. When asked about the football's squat program, he had this to say: "We are using only the safety bar in our football back squat program at this time. This is done out of concern for the low back. The safety bar squat is easier and therefore quicker to teach. It allows athletes with less than perfect form on the straight bar to work harder and safer. We insist on the top of the thigh parallel to the ground. The depth is even more important with the safety bar and the hips coming back the way we do."

"We use front squats to increase flexibility and total torso strength. Also as spring ball approaches, we use speed squats with 40-50% working on accelerating from the hole. We do continue the safety bar squat during the season."

On an additional note, the hip sled, leg press, single leg box squat, and step-up are variations used in training the injured athlete.





OKLAHOMA UNIVERSITY
STRENGTH COACH - JOE JURASIC

"Tom, if we were limited to one exercise for football, the squat would be it! It is our 1st exercise on Monday and Thursday. For safety reasons we believe in a 10-12 rep warm-up at 40-50% of 1 RM before getting into the scheduled workout. We teach the top of the thigh parallel to the ground, keeping the heels flat. We make rather dramatic variations in our workouts to 'shock the system' into positive adaptation."

"Following the squat workout, we use the Hip Sled for added flexibility and endurance. I believe this lower intensity work is beneficial in helping the athlete develop the hip strength so important in football. Sometimes we use the bear squat and for some athletes we do front squats to promote range of motion."

"Most of our training for the injured athlete is done on the Hip Sled. We do no single leg training for football, preferring to place major emphasis on the back squat as our #1 lower body exercise."

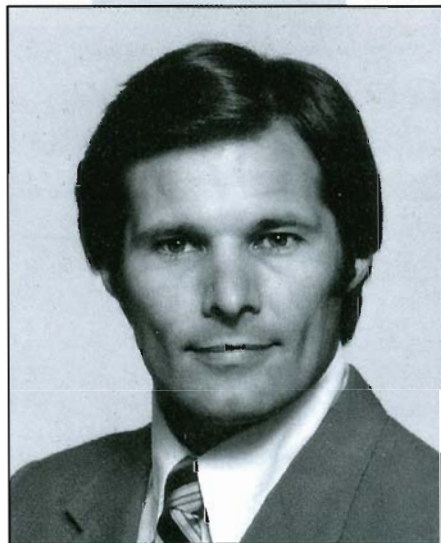


OKLAHOMA STATE
STRENGTH COACH ROB GLASS

Coach Rob Glass has been at Oklahoma State University for eight years. He says, "Tom, it is the best single exercise for developing the football player. We squat the 'big' guys two times a week and the 'small' guys one time." They teach the femur parallel to the floor and often use a bungee cord to assist the athlete knowing the depth required. "The cord is a great tool on test day" Coach Glass reported. "We have taken out the guesswork on where they must be."

The small guys do front squats and step-ups on their 2nd squat day. At OSU they also use the extended or snatch squat especially for linemen. It is a great developer of torso strength and body balance. While coaching at Tulsa University, I found pro scouts particularly impressed upon learning a lineman was doing the extended squat exercise.

For the injured athlete, Coach Glass likes the Bar Squat where possible. Some injuries call for step-up or step-down variations. They also make a point during injury rehab to lighten the weight and improve technique.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
STRENGTH COACH BOYD EPLEY

The Parallel Squat with free weights will develop tremendous jumping power and speed improvement. The Cornhuskers go down until the middle of the thigh is parallel.

Isolating muscles such as doing leg curls and leg extensions for core lifts will do little in helping athletic performance. You need exercises that utilize multiple joint action. Squatting with free weights requires the stomach and back muscles to stabilize the torso isometrically. This allows the leg and hip muscles to become the prime movers in the squatting action.

Editor's Note: Boyd Epley is the dean of college strength coaches. Not only is his Nebraska Strength and Conditioning Program become legendary but his innovative ideas have had a world wide impact. The information above is from Nebraska's excellent video: "Strength Training For Power." I recommend it for anyone's library.

