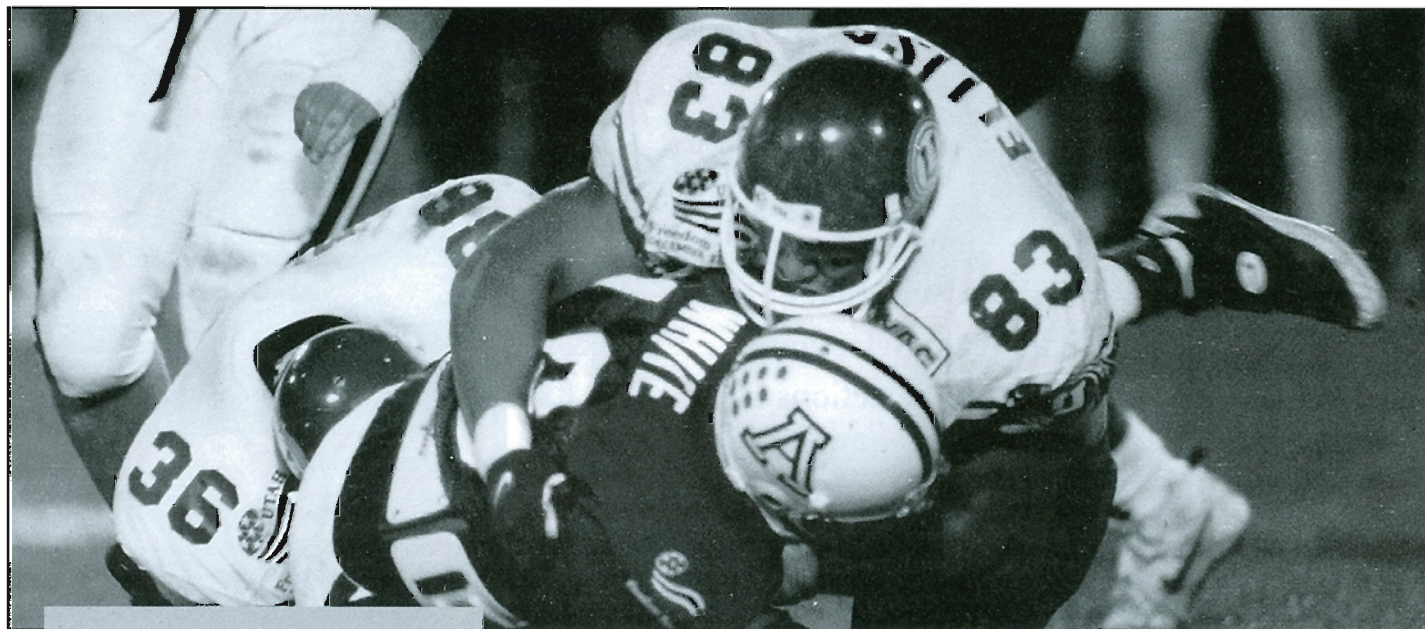


LUTHER ELLISS



"I haven't coached a better lineman than Luther in my 30 years of coaching. The guy's got everything. He has work ethic, leadership, character, ability, academics... there's not one thing missing."

**Ron McBride:
University of Utah
Head Football Coach**

By Dr. Greg Shepard

Luther Elliss was the first consensus All-American football player at the University of Utah in 30 years. Playing defensive end at 6-5 289 pounds, Luther was the 1994 Western Athletic Conference Player of the Year. He was the catalyst in the Utes' most successful season in history, which included a 10-2 record, a Freedom Bowl victory and a final No. 8 ranking in the CNN-USA Today poll, the first top-10 final ranking in school history.

Luther was an All-WAC Defensive End as a sophomore and as a junior repeated when he led the conference in sacks. He added 30 good pounds for his senior year in the off-season and moved inside to defensive tackle. Luther did it to fill a need for the team but it was also felt this would help his pro chances as well. Luther's presence inside altered opponents offensive game plans and they often double-teamed him or ran around him.

In spite of this, Luther finished

second on the team in tackles with 78 and led the team in tackles-for-loss with nine. Defensive line coach Kyle Whittingham called Luther's play "spectacular" and that he made the move to defensive tackle without missing a beat. Luther has been projected as a possible late first round draft pick.

Luther has some awesome marks in the weight room: Parallel Squat-650, Bench Press-550, Power Clean-





Luther has a 33" V.J.

353, Incline-375, Vertical Jump-33 and a 4.8 forty. Now, you may ask yourself. How did the University of Utah ever get this phenom to sign on the dotted line? Well, this is what makes football interesting, fun and worthwhile. Luther's story is a classic Upper Limit road to success. So, sit back and enjoy it.

Luther grew up in the small community of Mancos which is in the southwest corner of Colorado away from just about everything. His graduating class was only 24. Luther participated in sports all year round from 7th grade on. He played football, basketball and was a multi-event track athlete. Since Mancos is near an Indian Reservation he was always being mistaken for being an Indian or a Mexican-American. Such is not the case. Luther's mother is full Samoan and his father is Caucasian and he only weighs about 160 pounds. Obviously, the Samoan genes flowed through Luther's body although he is much taller than the average Samoan. Anyway, Luther turned out wonderfully both physi-

cally and spiritually.

Luther was only 5-9 as an 8th grader but then the hormonal juices began to run amok. By the next year, Luther stood 6-4 and weighed 210 pounds. It was because of this accelerated growth spurt that Luther suffered from Osgood-Schlatter's disease which just means that his muscles and bones grew rapidly and at different intervals. As a result, Luther did not play football in his 9th grade year. Luther developed into a 6-5 235 pound senior. He played forward on the basketball team averaging 20 points, 15 rebounds and 8 assists per game. He threw the shot 50 feet, the discus 170 feet, ran the 400 meter in 61 seconds, long jumps 19 feet and high jumped over 6-2. In addition, Luther maintained a 3.5 GPA and was on the student council. Luther never really lifted weights in high school, although he did do a 285 pound Bench.

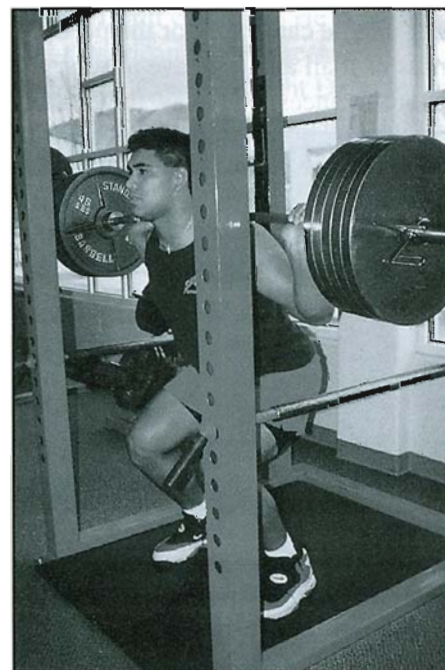
Mancos High School made the playoffs in both Luther's junior and senior year but they lost in the first round. Since his high school only had an enrollment of 100 kids and way away from any big cities, recruiters were not beating on Luther's door. Luther remembered, "Colorado recruited me but then backed off. The only thing I thought was to maybe play some junior college basketball. Colorado State showed some interest and Wisconsin invited me for a recruiting visit but my mother said that was too far away. Then Utah Coach McBride recruited me. The staff treated me really well. Coach McBride felt like family. He said they were 4-7 but that the program was on its way up and he wanted me to be a part of that success. It was perfect." Part of the deal was to get Coach Majerus to promise to let Luther play basketball. (Rick Majerus is the head bas-

ketball coach for Utah)

Luther was a boy scout and involved in a group called "Teens Against Drugs." Luther never drank or did drugs in high school. "My parents were a big influence," Luther said. "They asked me not to drink, smoke or do drugs. I'd be at parties but just say no thank you. I pressured my friends to stay away from it. A lot of my friends changed. I kept telling them 'all you are going to do is feel bad the next day.' My parents brought me up to be respectful and love God. Their approach was to love me into doing the right thing. They always gave me a choice and did not dictate absolute rules. I always honored my parents."

So off Luther went to the big city and the big university. "I saw all these big guys and said 'wow'. I had always been the big fish in the little pond," exclaimed Luther.

Luther started out as a tight end but the coaches liked his aggressiveness and switched him to defensive end during his freshman year. He worked his way into a starting posi-



Luther Has a 650 lb. Parallel Squat

tion for the last game which was against BYU. "That was a wake up call," grinned Luther.

Luther is a business management major with emphasis in commercial recreation and tourism. He carries a 3.0 GPA and is on line to graduate in his fifth year. Luther is committed to graduating, "You can't play football forever."

Now, who is bigger than Arnold, faster than Arnold and stronger than Arnold? Who uses Kindergarten Cop as his hero? If you didn't guess, it is none other than Luther. I couldn't believe it but it sure was refreshing. Luther wants to teach kindergarten after his football career is over. I asked him about coaching and he just smiles quietly, "No, I don't think I have the personality to be a coach. I have always wanted to teach at the kindergarten level. I didn't think the pros would want me. I just love working with kids. I do it every chance I get. I want to help out the community." I want you to know Luther is very sincere and if Pro football does happen, he and his family will have a nice nest egg and he can teach for the pureness of it all and not have to worry about finances. Anyway, that is the

"I haven't coached a better lineman than Luther in my 30 years of coaching. The guy's got everything. He has work ethic, leadership, character, ability, academics. . . there's not one thing missing. Some guys might have ability, but will be missing something else. But Luther has the whole package. There is no question, he'll play as long as he wants in the NFL."

Ron McBride: University of Utah Head Football Coach

dream.

Luther started the first game of his sophomore year and it was against Nebraska. "I was scared and nervous," smiled Luther again. "But I did Okay and held my own."

In the weight room, Luther jumped fast. "People accused me of being on steroids," Luther exclaimed in disbelief. "I lived with Coach Daub in the weight room. I told my parents that I was staying at the university for the summer so I could

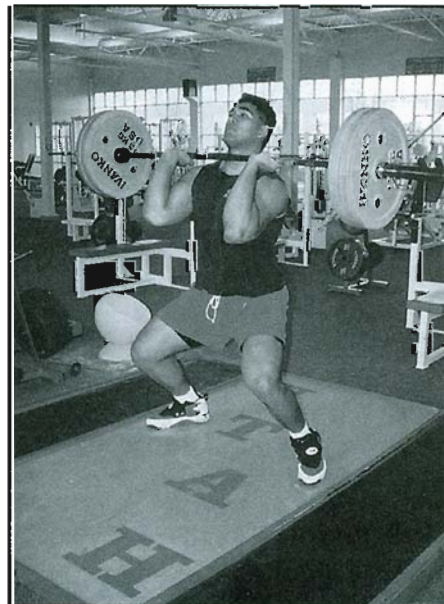
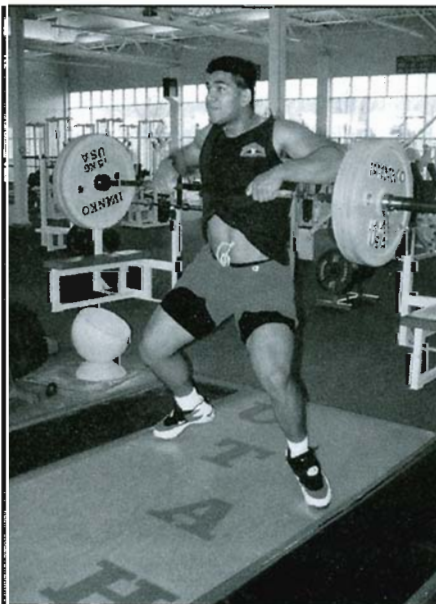
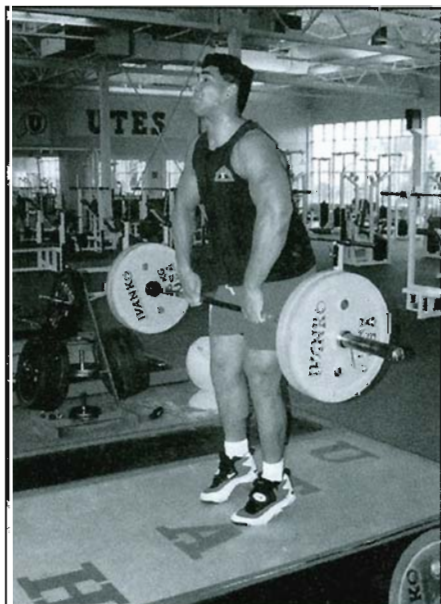
prepare."

Luther has some unique ideas on practice. "I love to practice. I have a great time. It's fun. It comes down to attitude. You have got to feel good about what you are doing. If you think about faking an injury to get out of practice or if you are thinking about just getting through practice, you will never get what you need. To me, life is and will be like that.

"Everyday I say, 'Today is going to be a great day.' I look for the positives. I try to work on my weaknesses. I always try to analyze how I can do better. At first I was weak on my legs so Squats were really important. Free weights help me the most. I believe the most important lifts are the Parallel Squats, Power Cleans from the floor and Incline more than the Bench Press. I also love to do plyometrics especially the box jumping. For auxiliaries, I do a lot of Tricep work.

"To be successful, you have got to spend a lot of time and dedicate yourself to the team and to yourself. You can't talk about it. You have got to do it. Work hard for everything you get. If you ever think you

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Luther and Strength Coach Dwight Daub

are there, you'll get passed up. I work out twice a day right now. There is no time to rest.

"You should always strive to be better. Pay attention to detail. It's the little things that help you to be successful. Do extra. Watch film." During the season, Luther watched film nearly two hours everyday. He continued, "I tried to pick up tendencies or weaknesses of my opponents. How much pressure was on his down hand? Where was his back foot? I wanted to know in advance

"Working with Luther over the past 4 years has been the epitome of college athletics. Luther has the complete package as a college athlete. His work ethic, intensity and willingness to be coached, has made working with him a great experience. Possibly the best thing about Luther is that he is a genuinely good person."

Dwight Daub
Strength Coach
University of Utah

what to expect. That is as important as a big bench. We have guys that are super strong but can't play that well. They don't pay attention to detail like they should or work on their weaknesses. However, the most important quality is being a team player not an I player."

Luther has kept his values while away from home. It easy to go with the flow and party like other colleges students but Luther continued to think for himself. I asked Luther if had ever had a drink in college. He hung his head a little and with an embarrassed smile admitted that he had a little champagne on his wedding day. He continued, "My room-

mate is my cousin and he full Samoan. He doesn't drink either. Actually, there's a lot of guys on our team that don't drink. Anyway, everyone respects your decision. I've never touched any drug in my life and that includes steroids. Why do something that could affect your health."

Luther has strong convictions about putting life into its proper perspective. "I believe academics are the most important part of why I am here at the University of Utah. You can only play sports for so long. But, to me, the most important thing in life is my family. Naturally my parents are important but now, I also have my own. I have been married since last June and we have a baby boy on the way." He grinned again. "I can't wait."

"My belief in God and spiritual values are the other part of life which makes it complete. I don't pressure people about religion but I am a Christian (Methodist). I believe in moral values and community involvement."

We thank Luther Elliss for his Upper Limit example. He is a true All-American in its purest sense. We thank Coach Dwight Daub for his contribution and wish both continued success.....□

LUTHER ELLISS' PROGRESS CHART

Year	Height	Weight	Bench	Incline	Clean	Squat	V.J.	L.J.
Fall 91	6-5	245	315	250	-	-	26.5	8'6"
Spring 92	6-5	256	355	285	264	500	29.5	9'
Fall 92	6-5	257	385	315	296	525	28.5	9'
Spring 93	6-5	257	425	325	308	550	30.5	9'1"
Fall 93	6-6	262	450	335	308	600	31	9'1"
Spring 94	6-6	277	475	335	328	605	31.5	9'2"
Fall 94	6-6	289	550	375	353	650	33	9'2"

