ANSWERING THE TRANSFER QUESTION

BY DR. GREG SHEPARD

I believe transfer of skills from a strength and conditioning program to the athletic arena is not only possible but should be nurtured and stressed. You cannot be a totally successful strength coach unless you understand this vital principle. I live, eat, and breathe this principle of transfer in every phase of the Bigger Faster Stronger program. I believe in this principle with all my heart.

When writing this issue of the BFS Journal, I asked Art Venegas, UCLA throws coach, as well as track athletes in the UCLA weight room, how they felt about the transfer question. Coach Venegas stated, as he visually showed his upward thrust technique of the Shot Put, "We throw the way we Clean and vice versa so the transfer is easy. I use a simple straight forward approach. I believe a transfer of power can be carried over in the throwing events. I use it in my coaching, many coaches don't. I carry both the Snatch and Clean into the throw. I have a series of drills to accomplish that. We take advantage of our ability to transfer."

John Godina, 1995 World Shot Put Champion and past BFS High School Athlete of the Year, said without hesitation, "Oh, yes! Of course transfer can take place from Cleans and Snatches and my ability to throw. Definitely!"

Erik Smith, a leading contender for the Olympic team in the Javelin, answered, "Absolutely! Cleans and Snatches are great. When they are going good, my throwing goes good because I am a Power Thrower."

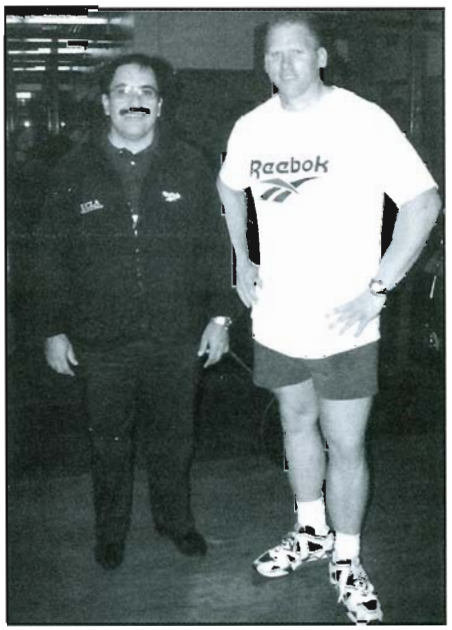
Mike Powell, world premier long jumper at 29-4 1/2, is now training with Coach Venegas like a thrower. I asked him in the middle of a workout, while doing Jerk Presses, how he liked this new form of training. He responded enthusiastically, "I'm lovin' it. It feels good!"

Over the years, I have interviewed many of our nation's top athletes: All-Americans, Heisman Trophy winners, Outland Trophy winners, Lombardi Award winners, world and national record holders and ALL have been nothing but positive about Cleans and/or Olympic type movements. Every time the question of transfer was discussed, each of these athletes believed in this transfer principle.

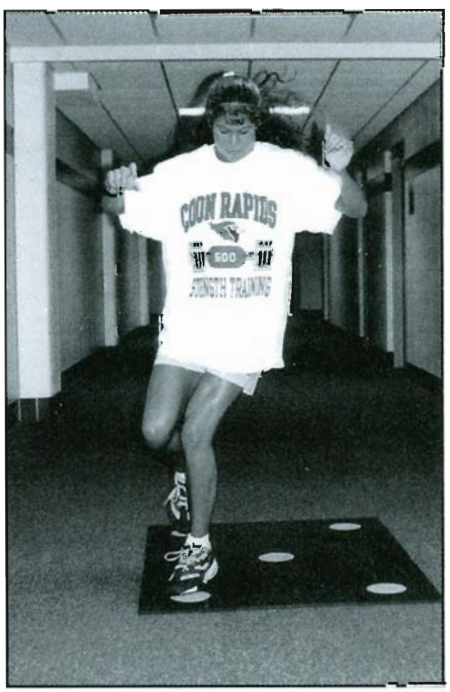
Now, for the first time, I will discuss in detail how this transfer takes place in every phase of the BFS Program:

THE BFS TRANSFER SYSTEM

The Warm-up - BFS Dot Drill:
Our Dot Drill, which is now done daily by tens of thousands of athletes, is basically an agility drill. It only takes about one minute and we use it as a warm-up. The overall benefits are superior to jogging laps or doing jumping jacks. I like the change of direction, the coordination and balance required during the Dot Drill. It also tests these skills with the right foot and then the left foot.



U.C.L.A. Throws Coach Art Venegas (L) and 1995 World Shot Put Champion John Godina



Track phenom Amber Affeldt doing the BFS Dot Drill. She is now at Texas Tech on a track scholarship

Since we have standards (for example, 45 seconds is the All-American Standard), many athletes and coaches take the Dot Drill very seriously.

If athletes work on the BFS Dot Drill, they will improve. Many times this improvement is quite dramatic. Now, does this improvement have any real meaning to an athlete and his sport skills? Does this improvement have any correlation to improvements in change of direction on the football field? The volleyball court, etc.? If it does, how would you quantify the answer to these questions?

All I can tell you is I believe that investing one minute a day to do the BFS Dot Drill is worthwhile. When athletes improve, their self confidence improves. They believe they are quicker and more agile. They believe the wins will come easier. The coach can use Dot Drill times to evaluate his athletes.

Does the BFS Dot Drill have transfer ability? I believe it does but that seems to be a moot question. It is a safe exercise and quick. The benefits are great. It's worth one minute a day.

THE BFS 1-2-3-4 FLEXIBILITY PROGRAM

There are two significant reasons for our ability to transfer abilities and improvements with our flexibility program to not only other areas of strength and conditioning but to athletic performance as well. The first reason is simply just answering the question as to WHY we stretch. The vast majority of athletes and coaches at any level will state, "we stretch to prevent injuries."

Naturally we are concerned with preventing injuries, but the primary reason we stretch is for Speed and Jumping Power. You see, most athletes don't feel they will get hurt; therefore stretching, to them, is a low priority. However, you should see the eyes of these same athletes light up when you say, "If I could show you some stretches that would make you run faster and jump higher, would you be interested?"

Our stretches zero in on the areas of the body used in sprinting and jumping. This perspective moves stretching up to a high priority among athletes on the BFS program. They will stretch on their own at home. They will take it seriously and work hard on perfecting the correct technique of each stretch. Their intensity level will also increase.

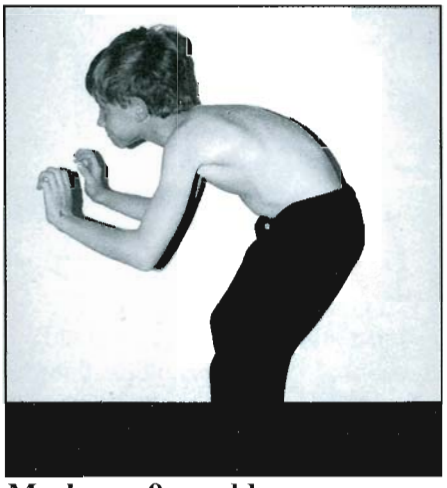
That leads us to the second reason for our successful transfer record. This reason is our near phobia for precise detail on the perfect execution of each stretch in relation to sprinting and jumping. Please note the photos of Amber doing the back-leg-stretch. When I see this stretch performed at any level, the head is usually down and the back foot is pointed outward. I want the athlete to look like a sprinter. I actually teach sprinting technique during this stretch.

I want the eyes straight ahead, the head upright and not forward or back, the lower back should be in a concave position, the chest should be spread, the hips thrust forward, the feet pointed straight, the back leg should be in a full extension position just like a sprinter and finally the athlete should press down on the back heel for the best stretch.

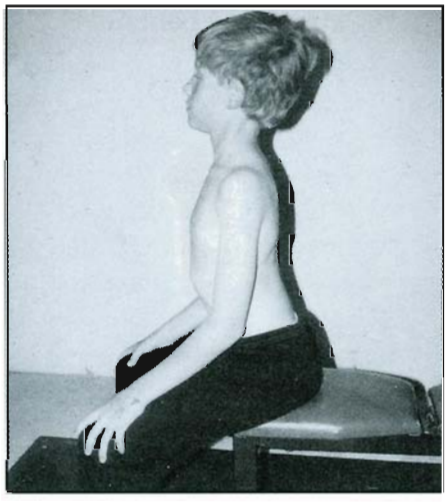
Now, when I take this same athlete out on the track to work on sprinting, he has already experienced a correct kinesthetic feel of sprinting. When a video analyzation of sprinting technique is experienced, the athlete has a clearer

Poor technique. No transfer will take place. Little or no stretching benefit

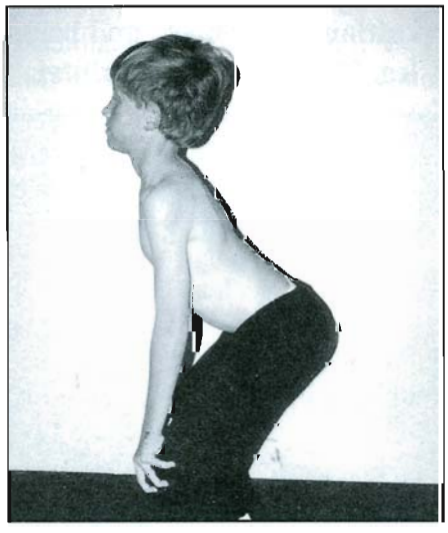
Almost Perfect. Amber should have her arms straight. Transfer can take place in Sprinting. Notice the upright position, lower back, and back leg. She looks like a sprinter.



Mark, my 9-yr. old son, assumes a real poor basketball stance



Mark demonstrates how to get into a great Power position sitting on a bench.



Next: Hands on Knees

understanding of what he is seeing and how to correct mistakes.

There can be no doubt that a transfer of some kind takes place. I am totally confident that our BFS stretching system gives us a distinct advantage. We are seemingly preoccupied with the idea of transfer.

THE BFS TRANSFER OF STRENGTH AND POWER

We have two main areas of concentration to accomplish an easy transfer of Strength and Power, developed in the weight room, to the arena of competitive athletics. The very first aspect of our transfer system is to establish a POWER POSITION. Some coaches refer to this posture as a "Ready, Athletic or Hit" position.

The first day of weight training or training for any sport should be spent teaching a perfect POWER POSITION. I don't care if you are working with 4th grade football players, 7th grade volleyball players, 10th grade basketball players or college athletes, you need to make sure every athlete can assume a perfect POWER POSITION. You teach this position on the field, court or the weight room.

My observation is that a great percentage of young athletes (grades 4 through 12) cannot get into a perfect POWER POSITION. Try this as soon as possible. Go to a football or basketball camp. The coaches will order their kids to get in a "Ready" position. Drills will be performed. However, the coaches most likely will not correct the kids who don't understand how to get into this position. Their hips will be forward with a rounded back. I would guess that at junior high basketball clinic you would find half with problems or a typical high school football team would have 20% of it's players with problems. This means they can't perform at an optimal level and they are more likely to be injured. (Please study the photos of my nine-year old son, Mark)

Getting athletes to experience a correct POWER POSITION is easy. Have your group of athletes sit in bleachers or in chairs.
Assume an "Athletic Stance" or "Squat Stance". Now "Sit Tall" "Spread the Chest" and lock-in the lower back. Sitting on a bleacher makes most hard learners easily feel the correct position.

The second step, if needed, is to stand on the field, court or weight room. Say, "Hands on Knees." The elbows should be locked. Let the lower back sink in assuming a concave position and spread the chest. Finally, keep that position and move the hands from the knees to a "Ready Position." I wouldn't let an athlete play or lift until he/she could assume this position with perfection.

Now, when your athletes Squat, Clean, Tackle or Jump, they will be in great position and should significantly reduce their chances of injury.

ATHLETIC/JUMP STANCES

The second aspect of our transfer system is to concentrate on two kinds of stances. The "Athletic Stance" and the "Jump Stance." These are the two stances we use in our BFS approach. The "Athletic Stance" is used in Squats while the "Jump Stance" is used in the Clean, Snatch, Trap Bar or Dead Lift.

Athletes who Parallel Squat use a wide variety of stances like body-

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building, or powerlifting stances. I have read 50 books on strength training. They all say the stance should be about "shoulder width apart." To me, this is not precise enough. These books also say the toes can be pointed out slightly for balance. So does mine but with strict limitations. When our athletes begin their downward descent on a squat, they must be in that perfect "Athletic Position" at the halfway point. Thus it must be for a transfer to take place the way we want it.

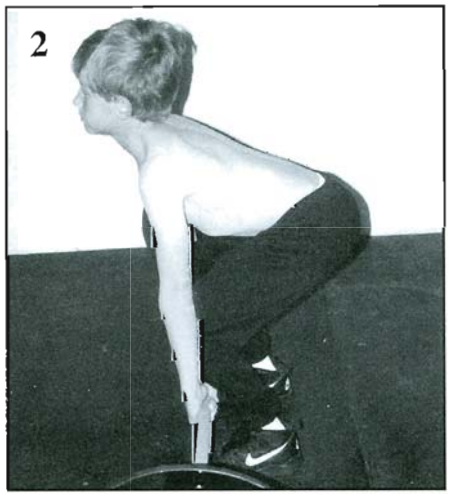
If you build leg-thigh-hip strength outside the parameters of the positions used in athletic competition, you are asking for trouble in two areas: transfer and injuries. Simply put, you must groove your strength and power in the squat from a perfect "POWER POSITION" and from an "ATHLETIC STANCE."

Athletes who Power Clean or Snatch also use a wide variety of stances. The Olympic Lifting Club Coach Manual states, ". . . use a hip width foot position with the toes turned slightly out for comfort." I don't say this is wrong for Olympic lifters but I think using a "Jump Stance" with toes straight ahead is superior for any sport that involves sprinting and jumping.

At the beginning of a Power Clean or Power Snatch from the floor, athletes should assume a "Jump Stance". The same would be true for these lifts from a "Hang Position".

The bar is never jerked off the floor but is lifted in a controlled manner. I believe those who think the Clean, Snatch, Olympic Lifts or Ballistic Movements are dangerous don't understand this principle. They generally don't do these lifts themselves and don't coach them. Therefore, I suppose, they believe the bar is jerked from the floor caus-

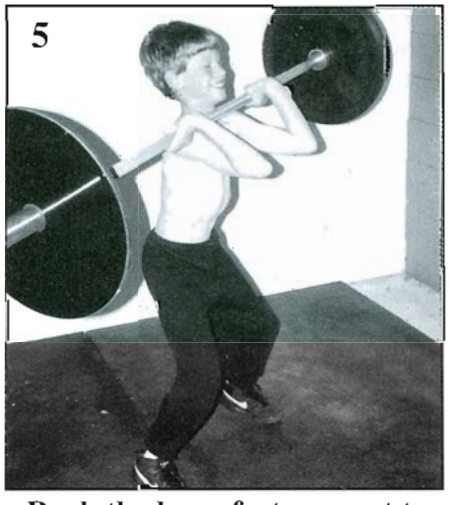
Toes straight - jump stance



Hips Down - straight back

Bring the bar into the Power Position

Now jump, Mark's jump is pretty good but his elbows and chin should be higher



Rack the bar - feet pop out to an athletic stance

Mark, a 4th grader, plays organized football: QB, Basketball, Soccer: Goalie, Baseball, and has his own set of custom golf clubs. Mark does a Pre-Readiness BFS Program about twice a month. It's his decision as to when.

ing a great risk to the lower back. However, since the bar is started off the floor with control, it poses less risk than curls to the lower back.

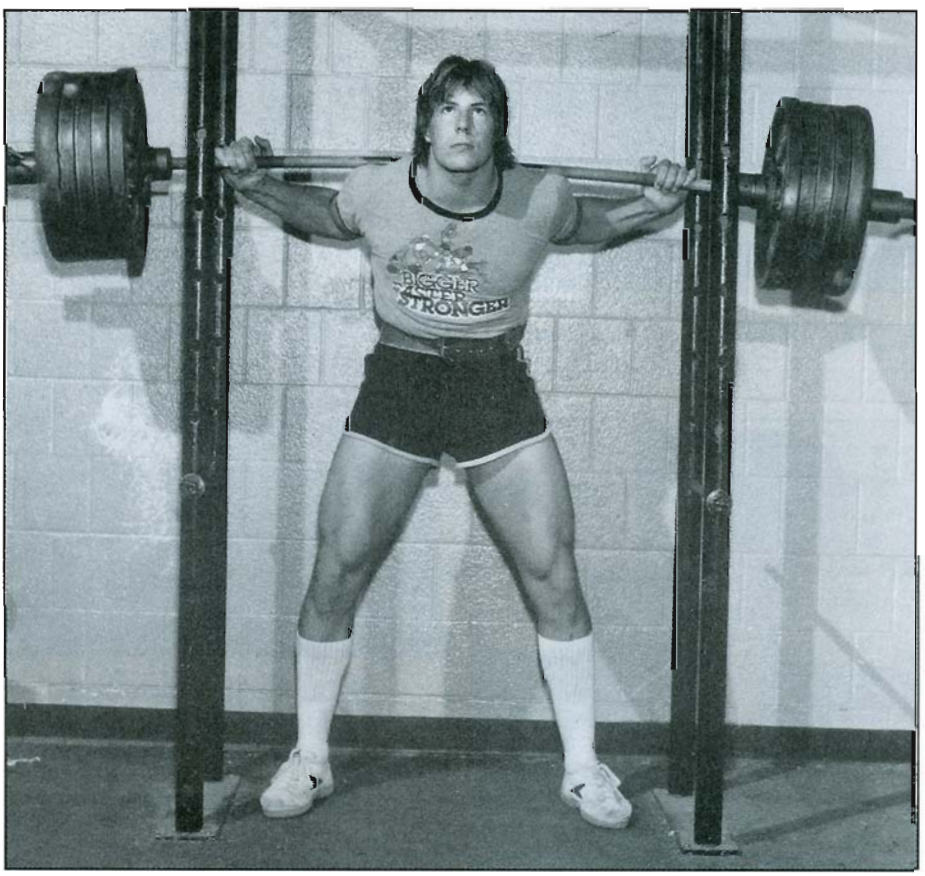
Momentum continually builds and when the bar is raised several inches above the knees, the athlete jumps as explosively as possible. He does an all out vertical jump with a heavy weight. It is the overload principle in action. The better you get at jumping with a weight, the higher you jump vertically or the farther you can go on a Standing Long Jump. You should coach these lifts from the very beginning for the transfer benefits.

The athlete keeps the bar moving explosively as high as possible and then racks the bar. The Clean is racked at the chest while the Snatch is racked overhead. Many coaches want the feet to stay in place during the rack phase. I believe in popping the feet out to the side to a perfect athletic stance. There are two advantages for an athlete in using this style. First, you can Clean or Snatch more weight and second, you can learn how to balance a heavy weight from an athletic stance which, in my opinion, has more transfer benefits with all power sports.

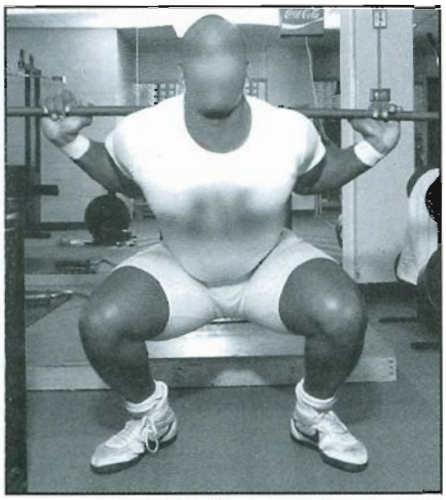
A great strength coach would defend his style of racking the Clean or Snatch, without moving the feet in the following manner. The most important part of these lifts is the jump phase so it doesn't matter how you rack the bar. I agree the jump phase is the most important, but I like racking to an athletic stance as explained in the above paragraph.

Athletes should come back to the jump stance to lower the weight back to the floor. This is crucial as this keeps the knees in straight alignment. Unfortunately, most athletes do not do this.

This football player should use this stance while squatting.

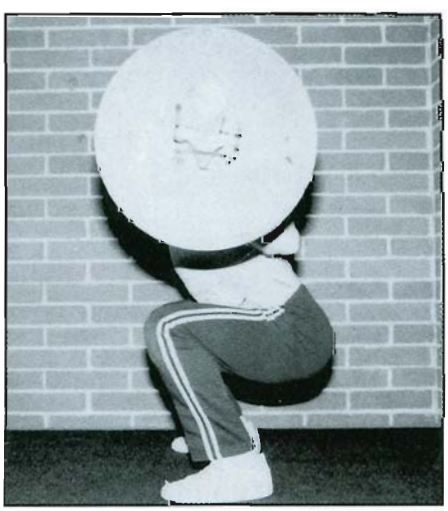


An Athletic Stance - toes out slightly



This Division I player does not have an athletic stance. Too narrow & toes are pointed too far out.

This 800 lb. Squatter is a powerlifter. His toes are pointed out and his Stance is too wide for for an athlete.



This is a perfect Lower Power Position for this Athlete.

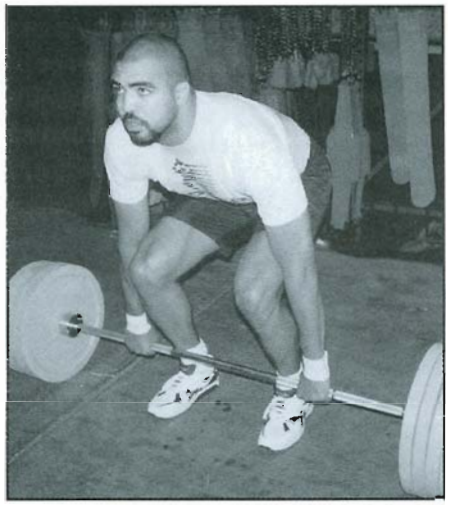
TWO ADVANCED COACHING SECRETS FOR POWER CLEAN/SNATCH TRANSFER

I demonstrate two advanced coaching secrets for Power Clean/Snatch transfer at every BFS clinic. I gather all the coaches around a Power Clean platform. I state, "I will do one rep with bad technique and then one with good technique. I will repeat this sequence three times. Your job is to figure out what I am doing wrong."

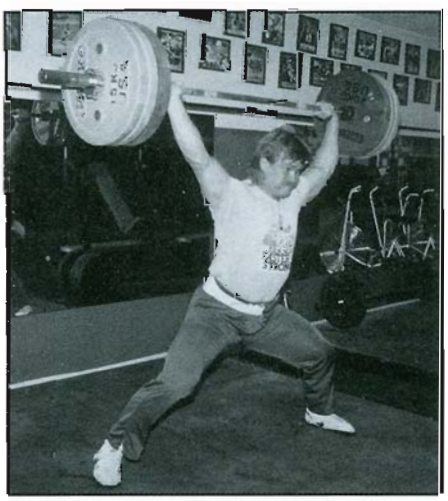
This first secret can mean 20-50 pounds on a maximum attempt. This mistake is very common with athletes whose technique seems quite good to most coaches. Only about three coaches out of 100 will notice this mistake. That's why I call it a secret. Then, when I tell them what it is and repeat the mistake it becomes quite obvious.

The first mistake is dipping the chin for just an instant before the rack phase of the Clean. Keep the chin up throughout the entire lift. It is best to focus the eyes on a point high on a wall. Coaches, before you teach this secret to your athletes, watch them Clean. You will be amazed as to how common a mistake this is, especially with your better athletes.

The second advanced coaching secret is even harder to discover. It is rare to find even one coach out of 100 to guess correctly the mistake after my demonstration. I have been to Top Ten Division I football schools who really emphasize the Clean. One school in particular was making this mistake with all their athletes. If you make this mistake, the ability to transfer explosiveness to jumping power is completely lost.



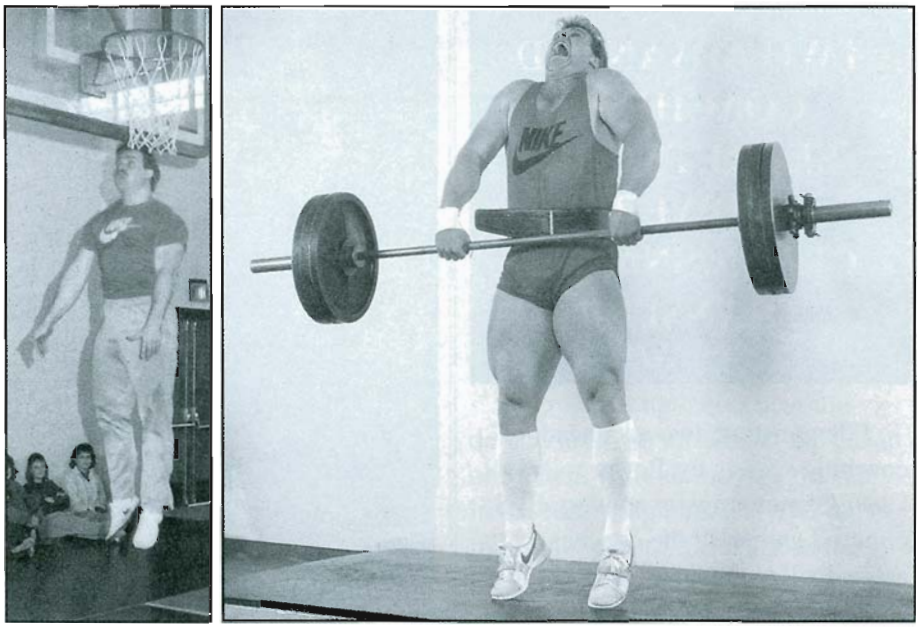
JAZZ Center Felton Spencer showing correct jump stance on clean with toes straight.



Stefan's demonstrates a Power Snatch with his feet way too wide. This is not an athletic stance.

You discover the first mistake by watching the chin. The second mistake can be discovered by zeroing in on the knees. After a coach has taught an athlete reasonable technique, then you can become a great coach by watching the chin and knees.

It really is simple with the knees. They should completely and fully



Stefan demonstrating jump phase of the Clean. Photo at left shows Stefan, 6-1 270 lbs., jumping. He put his ear on the backboard from a stand at a BFS Clinic. Notice the body similarity between the two photos. We use the overload principle by getting into a jump position with weight and then jump. Can we transfer? Of course!

extend exactly like the knees would do on a maximum force vertical jump. Most athletes do not do this. Most athlete's knees are bent throughout the entire lift. Do not mistake quickness for good technique. Just because the feet come off the platform does not mean a great jump has been executed. Do not take your eyes off the knees. It is easy to be tricked into thinking everything is fine when in reality it is disastrous.

I did a BFS clinic for a great high school football team. They had an All-State junior running back. Everyone was in awe at his strength and technique on the Clean. He could take 275 pounds and rack the bar in a low squat position just like an Olympic Lifter.

I shook my head and told the kid he had huge problems. You see, when an athlete Squat Cleans, he will invariably concentrate on getting into a quick low squat position rather than fully concentrating on the jump phase. Very little transfer was taking place with his technique.

I told him to Power Clean the weight and not Squat Clean it. He thought for sure he wouldn't be able to do as much. I laughed to myself because I knew what was going to happen.

We concentrated on a fully extended jump. Boy, was he surprised. In 15 minutes this 200 pound junior running back Power Cleaned 300 pounds!

Power Cleans/Snatches can be done very safely. Wonderful transfer can take place to all Power Sports. Huge improvement can be made in a short time. EXPECT A MIRACLE!

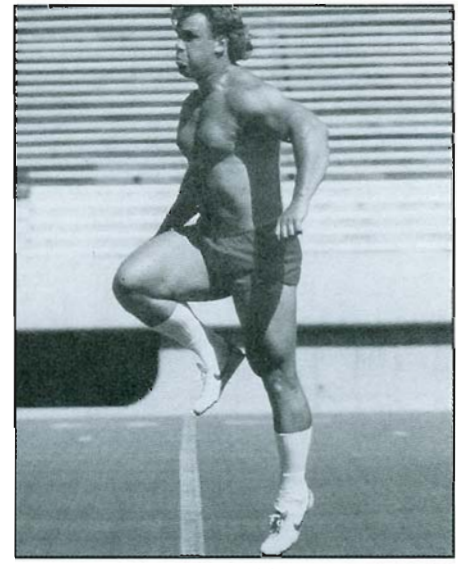
HANG CLEANS AND TRANSFER

Are Hang Cleans just as effective as Power Cleans from the floor? In theory, perhaps. However, it has been my observation that the jump phase of the Hang Clean is more difficult to execute than doing Power Cleans from the floor. I have seen a number of good high school and college athletes Hang Clean a lot of weight by swinging the bar up to the rack position in a circular type motion.

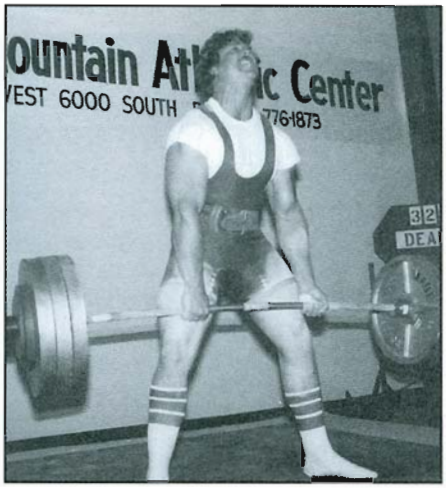
The objective of seeing how much you can rack should be secondary. The primary objective should be to get a great jump with every Power or Hang Clean.

The reasoning by most coaches for doing Hang Cleans instead of Power Cleans from the floor is safety. They claim Hang Cleans are less stressful to the lower back. However, if an athlete begins the upward movement from the floor in a controlled manner without jerking, there really is no safety difference.

I recommend Power Cleans from the floor over Hang Cleans because the ability to transfer the jump phase to power sports is easier. I do like Hang Cleans as a variation that can be done along with Power Cleans. I also believe Hang Cleans are a little easier on the body than Power Cleans and can understand if a coach wanted to do Hang Cleans during the season. Always remem-



Stefan Bounding: This transfers explosive power



This stance is OK for powerlifting but we Dead Lift from a Jump Stance.

ber, however, to emphasize and concentrate primarily on the jump phase no matter which style is chosen.

THE BOX SQUAT AND TRANSFER

The Box Squat is one of our Core Lifts used on our Squat variation day. I recommend doing the Box Squat for five reasons. One of those reasons has to do with transfer. No other exercise can develop the hips and hip tendon strength like the Box Squat.

The Box Squat is done with the idea of simulating hip action on a block, tackle or on any lower body power movement. The athlete squats down under control on a padded Squat Box. The weight is taken partially from the feet to the hips by a slight rocking motion. The athlete rocks back and then surges forward and up. Now instead of just slowing down once the athlete gets past the "sticking point", the athlete keeps accelerating on the upward drive.

When you block or tackle someone, you don't slow down, you accelerate. At the last part of the lift, you don't stop flat footed as in a

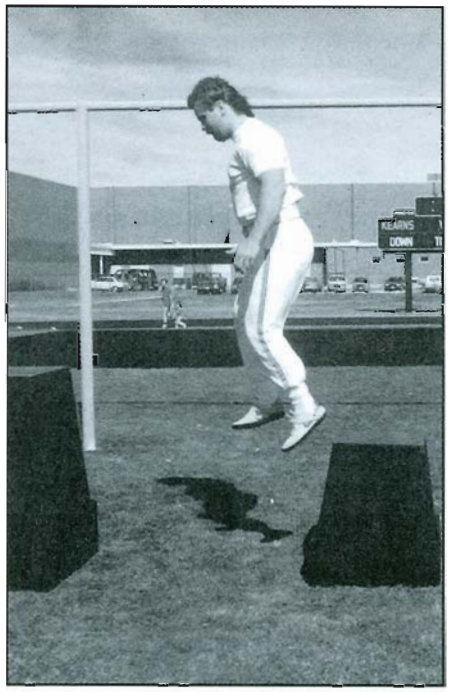
Pro basketball player Gary Trost settles back on his hips slightly, then drives forward and up. At the last second he comes up on his toes culminating in a maximum summation of force.

regular squat. You keep surging upward attempting to rise up on the toes, just as you would in a block, tackle or any lower body power movement.

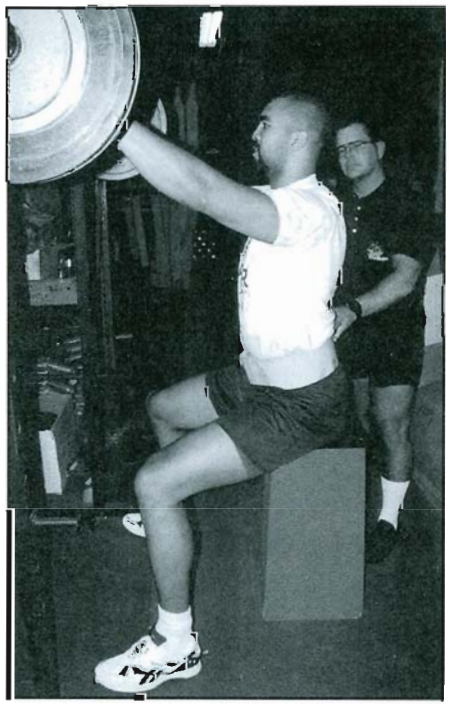
Sometimes when the weight is very heavy, the athlete may not be able to rise up on his toes but he should always have the feeling of doing so.

Can this simulation of athletic movement of the Box Squat be transferred to power sports? I believe so. I do know this . . . some great coaching for any sport, but especially football, can be done as the athlete trains on the Box Squat. Not only can the basic athletic position be reinforced, but how to deliver a correct block or tackle with power can be taught.

Throughout the many years I have done the Box Squat, I get the feeling that this lift is instrumental in athletes throwing or hitting farther. I believe in the Box Squat's transfer ability. It would make a very interesting research study...❑



After moderate box jumping drills, athletes often get their best vertical jumps. Is this not Transfer?



Coach Anderson making sure Utah JAZZ Center Felton Spencer's lower back is locked in on the Box Squat.