Digital

In this special issue BFS revisits end and stories pertaining to the safety and necessity of youth training





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## Up Front Getting Young Athletes Off to a Strong Start

A look back at how BFS helps young athletes catch the vision of athletic success



By DR. Greg Shepard, BFS Founder

(Editor's note: Although this article on the origins of Coach Shepard's training methods was written 25 years ago, the ideas are still relevant today.)



Can we teach upper-limit, state-of-the-art training techniques in a coordinated manner in our school system, grades 4 through 12? Yes! If you think you can and are willing to listen and try, then you have indeed caught the vision.

The hardest part of catching the vision in grades 4 through 6 is first getting a coach to believe; second, getting administrators to believe; and third, getting teachers to spend the necessary 45 minutes per week. Yes, you heard right – just 45 minutes per week. You see, much of the work is done by the students at home. Here is how it works.

The complete grade school program covers strength, speed, agility, flexibility and plyometrics. The strength program consists of doing 50 push-ups and 25 sit-ups at home daily. The teacher merely tests periodically. Rewards such as certificates can be given out for achieving minimum standards and for most done, most improvement, etc.

Contests can be held among classrooms. The BFS dot drill can be done for agility – this, too, can be done at home. It takes only about 60 seconds daily and can be tested periodically. Stretching should be done daily at home, and kids can use the BFS 1-2-3-4 Flexibility Program.

Kids in grade school should be taught how to jump high and far. They should practice by doing 10 vertical jumps and 10 standing long jumps twice per week. These jumps also should be tested periodically. The last area to implement is

## Up Front

speed development, and the 8-point BFS speed technique system should be taught and should take 15 minutes per week. One week, a class could concentrate on keeping the head still and eyes focused straight ahead. The next week could 11th grader who has to unlearn many bad habits. focus on keeping toes straight; the next week, elbows at a right angle. Most grade school teachers should be able to handle this kind of program. If the district is fortunate in having a physical education specialist, then it becomes even easier.

## It's much easier to teach a 6th grader how to run than an 11th grader who has to unlearn many bad habits.

The important point to understand and believe is that a high percentage of kids will do this work at home. When you tell the parents that you are giving their children a chance to achieve their physical potential, and it's backed up by research, they will really get behind you and help. Each kid is supposed to do 50 push-ups and 25 situps daily. They take one minute to do agilities and 9-12 minutes to stretch daily while jumping twice per week. It comes out to less than 30 minutes per day. They can do everything during commercials in the living room. Hey, it just isn't that tough.

The next most important thing to understand is how to run and jump. Many are able to power how rapidly improvements can be made. In just clean 175 or more, bench press 200 or more and 30 days the results can be dramatic. It's much parallel squat 300 pounds or more. These atheasier to teach a 6th grader how to run than an letes have pride and a strong self-concept. They have established a strong work ethic to reach their potential.

When the students enter 7th grade, a formal weight training program can be implemented. The BFS Readiness Program is tailor-made for a middle school program. It can be done two or three times per week. Lifting sessions last only 15 to 20 minutes and emphasize technique, not the weight lifted. The push-up and sit-up program can be discontinued or left in for extra credit. Everything else remains the same.

The kids can stretch and do the agility drill at home. The jumping and running can be done easily at school. A physical education teacher can easily check up on kids once a week to see if they have been doing their program at home. Instead of throwing the kids a ball and watching them play basketball, flag football or softball, organize their program and do some teaching on how they can reach their athletic potential. It only takes about an hour of class time per week. Any teacher should be able to take the ball and run with it after seeing our videos.

The rewards are great. By the 9th or 10th grade, athletes coming into the regular BFS program are already flexible with quick feet. They know

Even the kids who've chosen not to go into organized sports have gained from the program. They've been taught how to run, jump and stretch. They are prepared to do most any recreational leisure time sport or activity.

By starting an appropriate training program early, you'll give kids an opportunity to become the best that they can be. Catch the vision!

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by any school, district or innd certifies your teachers and ouir whole staff, any one who instructs in the weight room, certified and on the same page regarding maintaining an effective and safe weight training program. Learn more



## What's Happening

## Reccomendations From the Mayo Clinic Notes from the BFS Total Program Camps and Certifications

Don't confuse strength training with weight lifting, bodybuilding or powerlifting. These activities are driven by competition, with participants vying to lift heavier weights or build bigger muscles. This can put too much strain on young muscles, tendons and growth plates especially when proper technique is sacrificed in favor of lifting larger weight.

For kids, light resistance and controlled movements are best, with emphasis on proper technique and safety. Your child can do many strength training exercises with his or her own body weight. Free weights and machine weights are other options.

#### \*Benefits of Strength Training For Youth

• Increase your child's muscle strength and endurance

• Help protect your child's muscles and joints from sports related injuries

 Improve your child's performance in nearly any sport, from dancing and figure skating to football and soccer

#### • Develop proper techniques that your child can too. continue to use as he or she grows older

## When to Begin Strength Training

In childhood, kids improve their body awareness, control and balance through active play. As early as age 7 or 8 strength training can become a valuable part of an overall fitness plan, as long as the child is mature enough to follow directions on proper technique. If your child expresses an interest in strength training, remind him or her that strength training is meant to increase muscle strength and endurance. Bulking up is something else entirely.

#### \*BEGINNING A STRENGTH TRAINING PRO-**GRAM FOR YOUTH**

• Seek instruction. Start with a class or coach who has experience with youth strength training.

• Warm up and cool down. Encourage your child • **Keep it fun.** Help your child vary the routine to to begin each strength training session with five prevent boredom. to 10 minutes of light aerobic activity, such as \*MAYO CLINIC © 1998-2015 Mayo Foundation jogging or jumping rope. This warms the musfor Medical Education and Research. All rights reserved. cles and prepares them for more vigorous activity. Stretching after each session is a good idea,

- Keep it light. Kids can safely lift adult-size weights, as long as the weight is light enough. In most cases, one set of 12 to 15 repetitions is all it takes. Resistance tubing and body-weight exercises, such as pushups, are effective options.
- Stress proper technique rather than focusing on the amount of weight your child lifts. Your child can gradually increase the resistance or number of repetitions as he or she gets older.

• **Supervise.** Adult supervision by someone who knows proper strength training technique is an important part of youth strength training. Don't let your child go it alone.

• **Rest between workouts.** Make sure your child rests at least one full day between exercising each specific muscle group. Two or three strength training sessions a week are plenty.

# **BEST VALUE FOR TEAMS THAT WANT TO WIN!**



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## Total Program Clinics & Championship Camps

**Exercise Instruction Character Education Coaches Sessions** Weight Room Safety Weight Training, Weight Room **Evaluation** 

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**4 Building Blocks are** the Foundation of the **BFS Camps Clinics and Certification program.** With two flavors of the Total **Program Clinic**, the character education benefits of the Be An 11 Seminar, and the Strength, **Conditioning and Safety** instruction of the WRSC you can find the combination that your program needs!

Bring BFS into your School

2 Day Total Program Clinic: Up to 12 hours of hands on strength & conditioning training for athletes & coaches, core lifts, aux lifts, speed, plyos, etc. Coaches-only break out session starts off the clinic to ensure you are able to immediately put the Total Program in use. **A BFS instructor will show** 

you how to unify your athletic program so athletes can progress year-round. The 2-day clinic provides handson instruction for every coach, teacher and student/athlete.

![](_page_8_Picture_7.jpeg)

Learn More about the Total Program at www.biggerfasterstronger.com

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**1 Day Total Program Clinic:** Up to 6 hours of Hands on Strength & Conditioning **Training for Athletes & Coaches, Core Lifts, Auxiliary** Lifts, Speed, Plyometrics, Flexibility, Nutrition, Program, etc... Coaches only break out session starts off the clinic

Be An 11: Up to 3 hours of Character Education, **Goal Setting, Team Building Activities**, Championship **Attitude Activities, Community** Support, Unification, etc... See page 24 of this magazine to learn how a Be An 11 seminar can inspire your teams and student body!

WRSC: (In-Service or Regional **Certifications Available) A BFS Weight Room Safety Certification provides a** minimum of 8 hours of Hands on Teaching Protocols, **Program Implementation Details, Safety & Liability Details, Weight Room Evaluation, Core Lifts, Auxiliary** Lifts, etc... WRSC includes one year of online video training support. See page 48 to learn more!

## **Explore your options**

Find a complete list of available camps clinics and certifications on page 7

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## Total Program Clinics & Championship Camps

## Start Your Championship **Journey With BFS!**

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Clinic

BFS Championship Camp & Coaches WRSC

2 Days, 50 Athletes & 5 **Coaches:** \$6980 Product # 800A Be an 11 Seminar • 2 Day Total Program Clinic • In-Service Weight Room Safety Certification

#### **Pricing and Savings**

RETAIL: 50 STUDENTS &	5 COACHES	PACKAGE
BE AN 11	\$2990	\$1495
2 DAY TPC	\$3990	\$3990
IN-SERVICE WRSC	\$3195	\$1495
IMPLEMENTATION PACK- Age	\$3500	\$0
TOTAL :	<del>\$13,675</del>	\$6980

#### **Save Over \$6695!**

WRSC: \$299 per coach over 5 Camp: \$40 per student over 50

#### Implementation package

Valued at over \$3,500 the implementation package contains equipment, instructional materials and ongoing support So you can take charge of your program immediately after your Championship Camp! Includes:

**Complete Weight Room Evaluation, 2D** weight room layout design, Set Rep Logs, Youth Training Bar Package, Total Program DVDs, Be An 11 books, camp t-shirts, 4 month magazine subscription for all athletes and students, WRSC Support for certified coaches and more!

#### Experience, Tradition, and Value:

The BFS Championship Camp delivers a winning culture to your school - in athletics and in life!

BFS Championship Camp 2 Days, 50 Athletes \$5485 Product # 800B Be an 11 Seminar • 2 Day Total Program

Pricing and Savings

<b>RETAIL PRICE: 50 STUDENTS</b>	PACKAGE
BE AN 11 SEMINAR \$2990	\$1495
2 DAY TPC \$3990	\$3990
IMPLEMENTATION PACK- \$2500 Age	\$0
TOTAL: <del>\$9480</del>	\$5485

**Save Over \$3995!** 

Camp: \$40 per student over 50

Implementation package valued at over \$2,500. Includes Set Rep Logs, Weight Room Evaluation, Total Program DVDs, Be An 11 books, camp t-shirts and much more

Be An 11, Coaches WRSC G 50 Athletes & 5 Coaches: **\$4735** Product # 800G

#### Pricing and Savings

RETAIL: 50 STU	IDENTS & 5 Coaches	PACKAGE
BE AN 11 SEMINAR	\$2990	\$2990
IN-SERVICE WRSC	\$3195	\$1745
IMPLEMENTATION Package	\$2500	\$0
TOTAL:	<del>\$8685</del>	\$4735

#### Save Over S3950

Be An 11: \$30 Per student over 50 WRSC: \$349 per coach over 5

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\$6480 Product # 800C

#### **Pricing and Savings**

			-		
RETAIL: 50 STUDENTS & 5 COACHES	PACKAGE	RETAIL PRICE: 50 S	TUDENTS	PACKAGE	
BE AN 11 SEMINAR \$2990	\$1495	BE AN 11 SEMINAR	\$2990	\$1495	
1 DAY TPC \$3490	\$3490	1 DAY TPC	\$3490	\$3490	
IN-SERVICE CERT. \$3195	\$1495	IMPLEMENTATION PACK-	\$2500	\$0	
		AUE			
AGE	μ Φ	TOTAL	<del>\$8980</del>	\$4985	
TOTAL:: \$12,675	\$6480	Save Over \$399	25		

#### Save Over \$6195!

Be An 11: \$20 per student over 50 1 Day Clinic: \$20 per student over 50 WRSC: \$299 per coach over 5

Implementation package valued at over \$3,000. Includes Set Rep Logs, equipment, Total Program DVDs, Be An 11 books, WRSC Support and much more!

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\$5190 Product # 800H

#### Pricing

10 COACHES
10 COACHES X \$399 - \$3990 +
Total CE100

10101: 22120

WRSC: \$399 per coach over 10 Implementation package worth over \$2,300.

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Learn More about the Total Program at www.biggerfasterstronger.com

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Be An 11 Seminar, 1 Day Total Program Clin-İC

![](_page_9_Picture_48.jpeg)

50 Athletes: \$4985

Be An 11: \$20 per student over 50 1 Day Clinic: \$20 per student over 50

Implementation package valued at over \$2,500. Includes Set Rep Logs, equipment, Total Program DVDs, Be An 11 books, and much more!

![](_page_9_Picture_52.jpeg)

**Product # 800** 

2 Day Clinic: \$30 per student over 50 Implementation package worth over \$1,500.

2 Day Total Program Clin-ic, Coaches WRSC 50 Athletes & 5 Coaches: **\$5735** Product # 800E

#### Pricing and Savings

	11195	i iichig ana ba
PACKAGE	STUDENTS	<b>RETAIL PRICE: 50</b>
\$3990	\$3990	2 DAY TPC
\$1745	\$3195	IN-SERVICE CERT.
\$0	\$2500	IMPLEMENTATION PACK- Age
\$5735	<del>\$9685</del>	TOTAL:

#### Save Over \$3,950!

2 Day Clinic: \$30 per student over 50 WRSC: \$349 per coach over 5 Implementation package valued at over

\$2,500. Includes Set Rep Logs, equipment, Total Program DVDs, WRSC Support and much more!

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Product # 800J

1 Day Clinic: \$30 per student over 50 Implementation package worth over \$1,500.

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#### Pricing and Savings

RETAIL	PRICE	PACKAGE
1 DAY TPC \$3	3490	\$3490
IN-SERVICE CERT. \$3	3195	\$1745
IMPLEMENTATION PACK- \$2 Age	2500	\$0
TOTAL: <del>\$</del>	<del>9185</del>	\$5235
Save Over \$3.05		

Save Over \$3,950!

1 Day Clinic: \$30 per student over 50 WRSC: \$349 per coach over 5 Implementation package valued at over \$2,500. Includes Set Rep Logs, equipment, Total Program DVDs, WRSC Support and much more!

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Be An 11: \$30 per student over 50 Implementation package worth over \$1,000.

#### **1200 DEPOSIT**

**Package Details and Information:** All camps and clinics offered come with implementation packages containing instructional materials, many worth more than \$3,000. For complete details on these packages and what you can expect from your camp, clinic or seminar visit www.biggerfasterstronger.com/camps. Here you will also find helpful hints and instructions on what you can do to prepare for your BFS clinics. All dates must be booked 30 days prior to clinic date.

## Combine your clinics and save! Call 800-628-9737 to learn about bringing BFS to your school

Book early to lock in your preferred dates.

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## The Complete BFS Position Paper: Getting Young Athletes Off to a Strong Start

## Strength Training for Young Athletes. The risks and benefits of having preadolescent and adolescent athletes train with weights

When someone starts lifting weights seriously, we often say that this individual has been "bitten by the iron bug." Just a few decades ago those who belonged to this group were primarily football players, bodybuilders and, of course, weightlifters and powerlifters. Now just about everyone, male and female, is infected with the iron bug. Basketball players lift weights to improve their vertical jump, sports medicine providers prescribe lifting to rehabilitate injuries, and even senior citizens hit the iron to improve their quality of life.

There are many ways to get strong. To this day rooms, and it's rare that any high school in this our military forces still rely on strenuous caliscountry does not have some type of facility for thenics, such as push-ups and pulls-ups, to preresistance training. pare our soldiers for duty. And there is no question that hard physical labor, such as working Further, exercise scientists have conducted clinin construction or doing chores on a farm, can ical studies that prove that any cardiovascular certainly increase strength and even add mushealth benefits that occur with aerobic training cle mass. But decades of research have proven can also be achieved with weight training. There that weight training is, hands down, the single also is research indicating that one of the most most effective way to build strength. With weight effective long-term solutions for preventing ostraining, whether it is with free weights or mateoporosis in women is to have them participate chines, the muscles can be targeted with specif-

![](_page_10_Picture_6.jpeg)

Left: Young athletes need to get a head start with the BFS Readiness Program.

Right: Having young women lift weights is one of the most effective ways of preventing osteoporosis. in later years Shown is Kelsey Weisheit, a former fgure skater who could clean 15 pounds over her bodyweight when she was 12 years old.

ic exercises and the resistance can be precisely controlled to achieve an optimal training effect.

In the field of athletic fitness, coaches know that weight training is the best way to improve an athlete's power, speed, flexibility and muscular endurance. Major colleges and professional sports often spend millions of dollars on weight

in activities that place a high level of stress on the bones during childhood and adolescence. So it's not a matter of if weight training is an effective way to achieve physical and athletic fitness but when it is appropriate to start lifting.

## The Medical View

One article that is often cited in support of the opinion that weight training is not safe for young people is the position paper on strength training published by the American Academy of Pediatrics 2. That article is not technically a research paper but is the opinion of a group of individuals – just as this BFS position paper is based upon the opinions of BFS coaches throughout the 33- year history of this organization.

After presenting their summaries of the research, the authors of the AAP paper concluded, "Preadolescents and adolescents should avoid power lifting, body building, and maximal lifts until they reach physical and skeletal maturity." Let's take a closer look at the consequences of following such advice.

Although it depends upon the individual, "full skeletal maturity" may not be achieved until the age of 18 in males, and perhaps slightly younger for females3. The AAP opinion thus suggests that most male American football players should not lift heavy weights to prepare them for a strenuous contact sport such as football until they have

![](_page_11_Picture_6.jpeg)

graduated from high school. As for female gymnasts and figure skaters, who often retire in their early teens due to the expense of competing in these sports, they are in effect being told not to lift weights to improve their athletic performance until several years after they have quit the sport. Is this wise? We don't think so.

Suggesting that a high school athlete can play football but should not be allowed to physical-Besides the lack of logic in this recommendation, ly prepare himself for the stresses that occur in the conclusions by the AAP do not appear to cothe game simply does not make sense. Although incide with the research they cite in their article, as evidenced by these two comments: "Approprischool districts try to maintain an equal standard of competition by having athletes compete ate strength-training programs have no apparent adverse effect on linear growth, growth plates, against schools of approximately the same number of students, this is not enough to ensure that or the cardiovascular system...." and "....strength a reasonable level of safety will result between training in youth may stimulate bone mineralizaopposing players. Having a 6-foot, 225-pound tion and have a positive effect on bone density." lineman who power cleans 250 pounds, bench All we can assume is that this organization does presses 300 and squats 400 (lifts that are comnot want to assume any liability risk by promotmon in many high school football programs) ing weight training. After all, it would be difficult

![](_page_11_Picture_10.jpeg)

Nick Sellers is 11 years old and the son of BFS clinician Jeff Sellers. Nick is a multisport athlete who is getting a head start into high level athletics with a sound weight training program supervised by his father.

to prove in a court of law that a football player was injured because he was not physically ready to play a game, as opposed to that same athlete pulling a muscle in the weight room from lifting a weight improperly.

#### **Can Weight Training Stunt a Child's** Growth?

One of the major concerns about weight training for young athletes is about its potential to damage the epiphysial (growth) plates, resulting in a failure to achieve normal height. Addressing this subject in many of his publications and lectures was the late Mel Siff, Ph.D., an exercise scientist whose doctoral thesis examines the biomechanics of soft tissues. "It has never been shown scientifically or clinically that the periodic imposition of large forces by weight training on the growing body causes damage to the epiphysial plates," says Siff in his book Facts and Fallacies of Fitness. "It is extremely misleading to focus on the alleged risks of weight training on children when biomechanical research shows that simple daily activities such as running, jumping, striking or catching can impose far greater forces on the musculoskeletal system than very heavy weight training."

To illustrate his point, Siff compared the stress of squatting with that of running. "Suppose that one child runs a few hundred meters a day in some sporting or recreational activities. This can easily involve several thousand foot strikes in

which the reaction force imposed on the body can easily exceed 4 times bodyweight with every stride. Now let another child do a typical average weight training session with 3-5 sets of squats (say, with 10 reps, 8, 6 and 4 reps), with bodyweight or more for the last set. That bodyweight is divided between the two legs, so that, even taking acceleration into account, the loading per leg is bodyweight or a little more, while the spine is subjected to the full load on the bar. In other words, the legs and spine in controlled squatting are exposed to significantly less force than in running and jumping. Normally, exercis-4 year BFS athletes and Dulaney High School es such as squatting will be done no more than captains work out with Skyline UT teams in a Be An twice a week for a total of about 60 repetitions, 11 inspired leadership exchange program. while the running child will run every day and subject the body to those many thousands of shows that such activities can produce very large foot strikes. forces on many parts of the growing body?"

"It has never been shown scientifically or clinically that the periodic imposition of large forces by weight training on the growing body causes damage to the epiphysial plates,"

Siff also notes that bone density scans have proven that youngsters who do competitive weightlifting (i.e., the snatch and the clean and jerk) have higher bone densities than children who do not use weights, and that clinical re-"It does not require much scientific knowledge search has not shown any correlation between or computational genius to see that the cumuweight training and epiphysial damage. Further, lative loading imposed by simple running activian extensive Russian study on young athletes, ties on the lower extremities and the spine is far published in a book entitled School of Height 5, greater than the cumulative load of two or three concluded that heavy lifting tends to stimulate times a week of weight training. Does this now bone growth in young athletes rather than inhibmean that we are justified in recommending that it it. children not be allowed to run, jump, throw or catch because biomechanical research definitely As with muscles, bones because stronger in re-

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sponse to stress, and the activities that the highest levels of stress can encourage the formation of stronger bones. In on study involving 64 elite athletes in several sports (including swimmers, soccer players, runners and throwers), the athletes with the highest bone density in the femurs (upper leg bone) were weightlifters. 6 Further bones are better designed for resisting compressive loads, such as those that occur in the sport of weightlifting, as opposed shear forces that are more common in sports such as soccer.

One possible reason for the fear that weight training could stunt growth is that many of the participants in weightlifting are not very tall, and may even appear shorter than they are because they possess more muscle mass than many other athletes. But consider that in gymnastics, the average height of elite athletes has steadily declined in the past several Olympics because shorter athletes tend to be more successful in this sport. So saying that weightlifting makes you shorter because many elite weightlifters are short would be like saying that basketball makes you taller because most professional basketball players are tall!

## Is Weight Training Dangerous?

Risk of injury is another area of concern for some coaches and parents. In this regard, it's instructive to look at the many studies that have measured the rate of injuries associated with weight training compared to other sports. For example,

a study published in the November/December concussion when he fell onto a weight after los-2001 issue of the Journal of American Acadeing control, and another was bruised when he dropped a weight onto his upper back. In neither my of Orthopaedic Surgeons 8 cited research showing that in children of ages 5 to 14 years, case has there been any evidence of a long-term the number of injuries from bicycling was alconsequence. In short, there seems to be no ramost 400 percent greater than from weightlifttional case for continued widespread anxiety ing! Also, in a review paper on resistance training about weight training or weightlifting in chilfor prepubescent and adolescents published this dren." year in Strength and Conditioning Coach (Vol. 9, Russian sport scientist Vladimir Zatsiorsky in his No. 3) 9, author Mark Shillington reported in a book Science and Practice of Strength Training screening of sports-related injuries in school-age had this to say about the potential for injury in children that resistance training was the nomweight training: "The risk of injury for a wellinated cause of 0.7 percent (or 1,576 injuries) coached strength training program has been escompared to 19 percent for football and 15 pertimated to be about one per 10,000 athlete-excent for baseball. Further, the primary cause of posures," with an athlete-exposure being defined injury in the studies we've examined is improper as one athlete taking part in one training session technique. or competition. "Compared to tackle football, al-In the United Kingdom, a study by Brian P. Hamill pine skiing, baseball pitching, and even sprint 10 showed that of the 22 sports surveyed, soccer running, strength training is almost free of risk." had the highest injury rate, with 6.2 injuries per The simple truth is that weight training and the 100 hours of exposures (6.2%), followed by rugcompetitive lifting sports are among the safest by with 1.92 injuries per 100 hours of exposure activities an athlete can participate in, and this (1.92%). The lowest injury rate was in the sport fact is known worldwide.

of competitive weightlifting, with a .0017 rate. Siff said that it is ridiculous to condemn many In discussing competitive weightlifting in their sporting activities solely because of presumed country, the authors noted the following: "Britincreased risk of injury. "Many school sports place ain's Schoolboy Championship has been staged the bodies of youngsters in danger – it is the naannually for at least 18 years and has involved ture of sport and, if one is going to take part in some 54,600 competition lifts (maximal or nearany physical activities, no matter how well conly so) and at least 54,600 lighter but still heavy trolled, there is going to be a greater risk of inwarm-up lifts. In this period one boy suffered a jury than if the kids sat in front of the TV," says

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Siff. "On the other hand, the sort of heavy loading imposed on the child's growing body may well equip it better to cope with the normal physical stresses of life, as is suggested by research which reveals a high incidence of back pain, spinal dysfunction, osteoporosis and arthritis among people who are sedentary."

Although using lighter weights as recommended by many fitness and medical organizations seems the safest way to train, physics suggest otherwise. According to Siff, the lighter weights "can be accelerated more rapidly than heavier loads or in ways that deviate further from the body than heavy loads. This means that movement under these more modest conditions can produce much greater forces on the body, which is precisely what we are trying to minimize. We must not fall for the fallacy that training with heavy weights necessarily imposes greater forces and torques on the body. This simply is not true."

Although there is an emphasis in strength and conditioning programs to develop the core muscles of the body to develop stability, it's obvious to anyone who has ever performed a heavy squat that many of these so-called "core" muscles must work extremely hard to fight disruptive forces that occur during this exercise. Further, exercises such as the Olympic lifts (snatch and clean and jerk) and their many variations teach the athlete how to effectively control high impact forces,

just as a boxer learns to "take a punch" or a skier learns how to adjust their body position to maneuver on a course. As a bonus, exercises such as the Olympic lifts develop a high level of overall body coordination, which can help when learning new sport skills.

## A Question of Supervision

Whether you look at research studies, practical After earning a degree, the coach should then foexperience or the basic laws of science, the fact cus on becoming certified through organizations is that properly supervised weight training is such as BFS to learn the most current methods safe for kids and can help prevent injuries and of training for athletic fitness. One such program increase performance. It's not risk free, but it is is our Readiness Program, which is designed to certainly safer than most sports. To minimize the teach the basics of weight training to young athrisk, BFS holds clinics not only to teach young letes, particularly those in middle school. athletes how to lift and spot properly but also to instruct coaches in how to teach proper tech-At BFS, we believe that a properly supervised nique. As the proverb goes, "Give a man a fish and weight training program is appropriate for young you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and athletes, and that the best time to start teachyou feed him for a lifetime."

When looking at the issue of having young athletes weight-train from a legal perspective, coaches and teachers named in lawsuits must provide evidence that what they were doing was professionally correct according to current standards and that the injury was unforeseeable. For this reason, BFS recommends that anyone in the field of exercise instruction obtain a degree, whether it is an associate degree or a four-year degree in such areas as human performance and sport sciences, physical education, adult fitness

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or exercise science. Such an education would help a coach determine when an athlete is ready to advance into heavy weight training, as the fact is that athletes often mature at different rates. Thus, a 13-year-old girl may have the physical maturity of an 11-year-old girl, whereas another 13-yearold girl may have the physical maturity of a 15-year-old girl.

At BFS, we believe that a properly supervised weight training program is appropriate for young athletes, and that the best time to start teaching proper weight training, lifting and spotting techniques is in middle school. We also believe that the preponderance of research available on this subject shows that weight training does not present a high risk of injury, especially to the growth plates of young athletes. Finally, we believe that as our young athletes strive to achieve the highest levels in competitive sports, they must participate in serious training at a younger age than the champions of the past. For young bodies to handle the stress of this training safely, weight training is essential.

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# Is Weight Training Safe For Kids?

### BFS uncovers the facts and fallacies about weight training for young athletes. By Kim Goss

Just about everyone in this country has participated in some type of resistance training, whether publicly in a health club or school, or privately with home gym equipment. And with good reason. Decades of research have proven that weight training is the single-most effective way to build strength and prevent injuries. That's why I find it puzzling that many coaches and parents are reluctant to have young athletes participate in strength training.

Having been involved in strength coaching and competitive weightlifting for almost 30 years, I've seen the gradual acceptance of weight train-

ing as an essential conditioning tool for athletes. young athletes engage in but also that lifting Coaches know that weight training can improve might stunt growth. Unfortunately, misplaced fears and lack of understanding of the true efan athlete's power, speed, flexibility, body comfects of early training are doing many young peoposition and muscular endurance. Further, exercise scientists have conducted clinical studies ple a great disservice. Hopefully, after examining the following evidence, you will agree with the that prove that any cardiovascular health benefits that occur with aerobic training can also be preponderance of research that shows weight training is a must for the serious athlete. achieved with weight training. When it comes to training children, however, there are widely dif-The clock is ticking fering opinions.

First, it's important to review the reasons why Some parents and coaches fear not only that young athletes need to lift weights, especially in weight training and competitive barbell sports such BFS core lifts as the power clean and the carry far greater risks for injury than other sports squat. The primary reason is simply that more is

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## BFS Program

expected from today's athletes, and this requires practicing their sports harder and longer at an earlier age.

My own conditioning program for skaters uses BFS core lifts such as the clean and the trap bar deadlift. These are "economical" exercises, meaning that they work many muscle groups simultaneously, reducing the time my athletes need to spend in the gym. This is important, as many of my skaters spend as much as 15 hours a week on the ice and several hours a week in ballet and other forms of dance. When performing the clean and jerk, for example, skaters will strengthen all the major muscles used in jumping. To achieve a similar training effect with conventional exercises, an athlete would have to perform a leg press, back extension, calf raise, upright row, biceps curl and military press-and even then they would be missing a few muscles.

In addition to their practical advantages, such Olympic lifting variations as the power clean enable the muscles to contract faster (so skaters can jump higher) and to control impact forces (to land more difficult jumps). However, if I were to use the protocols set by many medical authorities, I would not be able to use weightlifting programs such as BFS until after most of my athletes had retired.

## The Bigger They Are ....

One of the major - and unfounded - concerns

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Improper lifting technique is the prima- When she was 11 years old, figry cause of injuries in the weightroom. ure skater Sakiko Oga could clean 80 pounds while weighing only 61 In this photo Erin, who won several championships in Texas and competpounds. Photo Credit: Eric Varian ed at the novice level, demonstrates perfect form in the jerk. An honor student at Shelton School in Dallas, Erin wants to pursue a career in trauma medicine. Photo Credit: Reg Bradford

![](_page_18_Picture_9.jpeg)

Figure skaters at Kristen Hasselmei-Kelsey Weisheit, who has competed er's level often spend 15 hours a in the Junior Nationals, demonstrates week on the ice. Weight training will excellent technique in the clean. help them handle the stress of such When she was 12 years old, Kelsey was able to clean 15 pounds over her Credit: Reg Bradford training. Photo Credit: Matthew Georbodyweight after only a few months of gopulos training. Photo Credit: Reg Bradford

about weight training for young athletes is that it could cause damage to the epiphysial (growth) plates.

Although injury to the epiphysial plates may "It has never been shown scientifically or clinicause bone deformity, there is little risk of this occurring with weight training compared to most cally that the periodic imposition of large forces sports. As for the risk of weight training stuntby weight training on the growing body causes ing growth, premature closing of the epiphysial damage to the epiphysial plates," says Siff, in his

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#### Strength is a central component to any sport at any age

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Children who compete in weightlifting have higher bone densities than children who do not use weights. A great bone builder is the trap bar deadlift as demonstrated by Eric Varian. Last year Eric competed in the Junior Nationals in pairs skating. Photo Credit: Reg Bradford

![](_page_18_Picture_21.jpeg)

Heavy weight training has been a vital part of the training of these teenage figure skaters from the Dr Pepper StarCenter in Plano, Texas. Photo

plates is related primarily to hormonal influences, not injury. Addressing this subject is Mel Siff, Ph.D., an exercise scientist whose doctorate thesis examined the biomechanics of soft tissues.

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## BFS Program

book Facts and Fallacies of Fitness. "It is extremely misleading to focus on the alleged risks of weight training on children when biomechanical research shows that simple daily activities such as running, jumping, striking or catching can impose far greater forces on the musculoskeletal system than very heavy weight training."

To illustrate his point, Siff compared the stress of squatting with running. "Suppose that one child runs a few hundred meters a day in some sporting or recreational activities. This can easily involve several thousand foot strikes in which the reaction force imposed on the body can easily exceed 4 times bodyweight with every stride. Now let another child do a typical average weight training session with 3-5 sets of squats (say, with 10 reps, 8, 6 and 4 reps), with bodyweight or more for the last set. That bodyweight is divided between the two legs, so that, even taking acceleration into account, the loading per leg is bodyweight or a little more, while the spine is subjected to the full load on the bar. In other words, the legs and spine in controlled squatting are exposed to significantly less force than in running and jumping. Normally, exercises such as squatting will be done no more than twice a week for a total of about 60 repetitions, while the running child will run every day and subject the body

strikes."

"It does not require much scientific knowledge or computational genius to see that the cumulative loading imposed by simple running activities on the lower extremities and the spine is far greater than the cumulative load of two or three times a week of weight training. Does this now mean that we are justified in recommending that children not be allowed to run, jump, throw or catch because biomechanical research definitely shows that such activities can produce very large forces on many parts of the growing body?"

It should be obvious then that there is nothing wrong with running and other normal activities of childhood, and therefore no reason to disallow activities of lesser impact, such as carefully structured programs of weight training.

Siff also notes that bone density scans have letes, published in a book entitled School of proven that youngsters who do competitive Height, concluded that heavy lifting tends to weightlifting (i.e., the snatch and the clean and stimulate bone growth in young athletes rathjerk) have higher bone densities than children er than inhibit it. who do not use weights, and that clinical research has not shown any correlation between Two possible reasons for the fear that weight weight training and epiphysial damage. Furtraining could stunt growth are that weightther, an extensive Russian study on young athlifters tend to possess more muscle mass than

to those many thousands of impulsive foot

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## **BFS** Program

other athletes and that smaller athletes are attracted to the sport. In gymnastics, the average height of elite athletes has steadily declined in the past several Olympics because shorter athletes tend to be more successful in this sport. But saying that weightlifting makes you shorter because many elite weightlifters are short would be like saying that basketball makes you taller because most professional basketball players are tall!

### The Numbers Game

Risk of injury is another area of concern for some coaches and parents. In this regard, it's instructive to look at the many studies that have measured the rate of injuries associated with weight training compared to other sports. For example, a study published in the November/December 2001 issue of the Journal of American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons cited research showing that in children aged 5 to 14 years, the number of injuries from bicycling was almost 400 percent greater than from weightlifting! Also, in a review paper on resistance training for prepubescent and adolescents published this year in Strength and Conditioning Coach (Vol. 9, No. 3), author Mark Shillington reported in a screening of sports-related injuries in school aged children that resistance training was the nominated cause of 0.7

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## **BFS** Physical Education The Coach and The Courts:

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## A legal expert's advice on reducing injuries, and the risk of lawsuits, when working with kids.

At a weight lifting competition last year I met a colleague who had recently accepted a job as a high school strength coach. With an impressive competitive background in Olympic lifting and a graduate degree in exercise and sport science, he exemplified the definition of "over qualified." But when I asked him how his job was going, I was shocked when he said he had resigned when rity." he was told to stop teaching freshmen such basic core lifts as the bench press, squat and power clean.

The problem occurred when one of the school's coaches decided to push this policy after finding a position paper by the American Academy of Pediatrics that said, "Preadolescents and adolescents should avoid competitive weight lifting, power lifting, body building, and maximal lifts until they reach physical and skeletal matu-

Although this represents a radical policy, it's another example of the decades-long conflict between strength coaches and members of the

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medical community. Some of the heated debates have questioned if weight training makes athletes muscle bound, damages their knees and causes chronic lower back pain. Although most of these issues have been resolved, the one that has continued as strongly as ever is whether or not weight training is safe for children.

On the side of the coaches are many peer-reviewed studies, many of which are in a position statement and literature review about youth weight lifting that can be downloaded from USA Weightlifting's website, usaweightlifting.org. There are also the opinions of many respected sport scientists, such as the late Mel Siff, PhD, one of the most respected experts in the field of exercise science.

Although most of these issues have been resolved, the one that has continued as strongly as ever is whether or not weight training is safe for children.

Said Siff in his book Facts and Fallacies of Fitness, "It is extremely misleading to focus on the alleged risks of weight training on children when biomechanical research shows that simple daily activities such as running, jumping, striking

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## **BFS Physical Education**

or catching can impose far greater forces on the musculoskeletal system than very heavy weight training." Siff added that it is "ridiculous" to condemn many sporting activities solely because of a presumed greater risk of injury. "Many school sports place the bodies of youngsters in danger – it is the nature of sport and, if one is going to take part in any physical activities, no matter how well controlled, there is going to be a greater risk of injury than if kids sat in front of the TV."

Despite the support of many sport scientists and peer reviewed research, the warnings by many members of the medical community have many coaches reluctant to encourage young athletes to lift weights. We live in a litigious society, and the controversy surrounding this subject is enough to make any coach or school administrator hesitant about giving athletes an early start in the weight room. Is such extreme caution justified? Can coaches have children lift weights without putting themselves, or their organizations, at an exceptionally high risk of legal action? To learn the answer, I turned to Dr. Marc Rabinoff.

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## The Interview

Dr. Marc Rabinoff is a professor in the Department of Human Performance, and Sport at Metro State

College in Denver, CO. He has served as an expert witness in over 280 legal cases involving weight and fitness training injuries, as such understands both the causes and the effects of injuries.

**BFS:** How many lawsuits against coaches have you seen that involved kids injured while lifting weights?

**Rabinoff:** I've probably testified over 75 times in court cases involving weight training accidents, and of those, about 10 involved either a physical education teacher or a coach in a weight room at a high school or middle school setting.

**BFS:** What were the primary causes of those lawsuits?

**Rabinoff:** They involved what I call the "Big Three": 1) Failure to supervise,2) Failure to warn, and 3) Failure to instruct. I haven't seen many lawsuits as a result of equipment failure, but I have seen many examples of misuse of equipment,which comes back to poor instruction or lack of supervision.

**BFS:** Were the weight training injuries primarily caused by free weights or machines?

**Rabinoff:** About 95 percent of the litigations hasn't happened, it doesn't mean that it won't I have done are related to machines. My conin the future. clusion after 25 years of testifying is that most **BFS:** The recommendations from the Ameripeople know that if you drop free weights can Academy of Pediatrics are rather extreme. you're going to get hurt, so we tend to be real-Why do you think they took that position? ly cautious about using them. With machines, **Rabinoff:** I haven't read the entire paper, but most people think that nothing could happen my best guess is that they are erring on the to them, so they become less safety conscious side of caution with a global statement that too and tend to use more weight than they should.

**BFS:** So would you say it's a mistake to assume that if the administrator at a middle school wanted to make their weight room safer, the only thing they would need to do is buy machines?

Rabinoff: Yes – that's my point. What makes a weight room safer is avoiding the Big Three. A weight room should always be supervised with qualified weight specialists who will pro-

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**BFS:** There are hundreds of organizations that offer certifications in weight training, most of which only involve passing a true/false, multiple choice test. Are these certifications being challenged in the courts?

**Rabinoff:** I would prefer that any certifications involving strength and conditioning have a practical portion to ensure that coaches know how to teach these activities. I haven't seen any of the certifications being questioned in a court of law as to their validity, but lawyers are becoming very sophisticated. So although it hasn't happened, it doesn't mean that it won't in the future.

**Rabinoff:** I haven't read the entire paper, but my best guess is that they are erring on the side of caution with a global statement that too many people might be moving children into hardcore training on weights before they are capable of doing it. But I seriously doubt that they were suggesting that, say, a 17-year-old high school football player on a state championship team shouldn't be doing squats.

## **BFS** Physical Education

**Rabinoff:** Absolutely, and age is just one factor involved in determining when it is appropriate for a child to lift weights and to what degree.

**BFS:** What about banning certain sports? If gymnastics has the highest injury rate of any sport, why not just ban the sport entirely?

**Rabinoff:** That's an argument I've heard my whole career, that schools should take away the sports that cause the most injuries. My response is that when you do that, the next sport in line moves up and that becomes the high-risk sport. Eventually, as you keep banning sports, all you'll have left are checkers and chess! I'd like to add that gymnastics is not, as many people believe, the sport with the most injuries, but the injuries we see in gymnastics are the most catastrophic ones. You might only see one injury on a high school gymnastics team in five years, but that injury might be a broken neck. So it isn't just the number of injuries that scares school administrators, it's the severity of those injuries that causes them to try to cut those sports in their curriculum.

**BFS:** What about the idea of having athletes play with injuries? Often football players with minor injuries will go back into a game – how should coaches deal with these situations to avoid lawsuits?

**Rabinoff:** There should be a series of checks and balances in athletic programs with a series of people who should have their say on whether an athlete is ready to come back: athletic trainers, team physicians, the athlete's personal physician and the coaching staff. All of these individuals should be involved in determining

whether an injured athlete can be allowed to play or practice, and at what level.

**BFS:** What about athletes who don't tell coaches they are hurt so they can continue playing? What liability risks do these athletes present to coaches?

**BFS:** Can you give us a rough idea of what a **Rabinoff:** We obviously can't control when an lawsuit costs? athlete is injured and doesn't tell anyone, and **Rabinoff:** The last time I checked, the averwe often see athletes at the high school level hiding injuries so they can play. That is where age lawyer fee in the Denver area was about \$250 an hour, and most law firms would require the coaching skills come in, such as watching a \$5,000-\$10,000 retainer on these cases. And to see if an athlete is breathing too hard or fallif it's a more serious case, such as for a quading down more often than they should. And this includes watching them in the weight room: if riplegic, those numbers could run into six figan athlete can squat 300 pounds and then sud- ures. denly can't squat 200, there's obviously a prob-**BFS:** Is there any general advice you have to lem that must be addressed.

**BFS:** Is it necessary to have parents involved in all injuries that occur to athletes?

**Rabinoff:** If the child is under the age of 18, **Rabinoff:** First, realize that you can't avoid the coach has no choice but to involve the parlawsuits, because people are always going to ents. The child really has no legal standing – blame other people. What you can do is minithe parents do – and you cannot treat a child mize the chances of being involved in a lawsuit, and you can improve your chances of winning if without parent approval. Also, the more the parents know about the severity of the injury, the you get sued. The absolute best way to minimize the chances of being involved in a lawsuit less chance they will push their children into doing something they are not physically ready is to do the things necessary to prevent athto do. BFS: Is it a mistake to believe that once letes from being injured in the first place; because if you don't have an injury, you don't a child is injured, a parent can quickly and easily win a lot of money in a lawsuit? Rabinoff: have a lawsuit! First, winning a lawsuit can take years, and a law firm will not invest the time and effort to defend someone unless they are pretty sure they have all the necessary elements of a lawsuit. These elements include establishing a duty and determining if there was a breach of that duty.

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And if the defendant has insurance, it's very rare that the insurance company would settle a lawsuit early because it's to their advantage not to settle because the plaintiff might tire out or not have enough money to continue with the case.

help coaches minimize their risk of being involved with litigation, especially when it comes to training children?

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Dr. Marc Rabinoff Professor, Human Performance and Sport Department, Metro State College Denver, Colorado

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3 (3+ reps)	185 😫	9 🔁		3		3 (3+ reps)			$\checkmark$	3	130	7
Total	635			4		Total	0			_		
3x3 record Save	999			6 7 9 10		3x3 record	0				130	7
Towel Ben	ch Records by	Rep		148		Save					>	Û
No records re-	corded.					Ohaul	-		Den			
Rep #		Weigl	ht (Ibs)			Snoul	der Press H	lecords by	кер			

26

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You can't break records if you don't keep records!

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#### About Us

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![](_page_27_Picture_17.jpeg)

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## **CERTIFICATION SEASON 2016**

Cert. Date	Early Registration Discount Code	Location	City	ST
4/2/16	0416RGAR	Siloam Springs HS	Siloam Springs	AR
4/16/16	0416RGMI	Manchester HS	Manchester	MI
4/16/16	0416RGMA	Beverly HS	Beverly	MA
4/23/15	0416RGMD	Dulaney HS	Timonium	MD
4/23/16	0416RGSD	Northern State Univ.	Aberdeen	SD
4/23/16	0416RGKY	Marion County HS	Lebanon	KY
4/30/16	0416RGMN	St. Olaf College	Northfield	MN
4/30/16	0416RGNY	BFS Science Lab	Mahopec	NY
5/14/16	0516RGWI	Ripon College	Ripon	WI
5/21/16	0516RGIL	Knox College	Galesburg	IL
6/4/16	0616RGTX	Ferris HS	Ferris	ТХ

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![](_page_28_Picture_7.jpeg)

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Packed with valuable stories on successful teams, BFS

*Magazine* is your resource for motivation, training and inspiration.

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![](_page_28_Picture_13.jpeg)

fective for training the developing young athlete, regardless of their sport or gender.

For 40 years *BFS Magazine* has been a publication dedicated to helping athletes succeed through strength training and character development. So whether you are a BFS WRSC certified coach, a magazine subscriber or an individual athlete, you can trust that BFS is committed spreading our knowledge to help you get the most out of your athletics and your life

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