

BIGGER FASTER STRONGER

BFS

June 2016
Issue #170
Digital

Women Ascending

*BFS Clinician Anne Shadle
Goes the Distance P31*

*Female Athletes of the Year
P6 and P10*

*All Womens
Review Issue*

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BFS Set Rep Log App

Phone Tablet Computer

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The image shows three devices displaying the BFS Set Rep Log app interface. The desktop screen shows a 'Workouts' page for the date range 'Jun. 29 - Jul. 5'. It lists exercises like 'Towel Bench (Mon.)', 'Box Squat (Mon.)', 'Glute Ham (Mon.)', and 'Lunges (Mon.)'. The 'Towel Bench (3x3)' section shows a table with columns for Set, Weight (lbs), Effort (1-11), 5 of 6 Absolutes?, and Reps. The table has three rows of data and a 'Total' row showing 635. Below the table is a 'Save' button and a section for 'Towel Bench Records by Rep'. The tablet screen shows the 'Shoulder Press (3x3)' section with a table for recording sets, weights, and effort. The phone screen shows the 'Shoulder Press (3x3)' section with a table for recording sets, weights, and effort.

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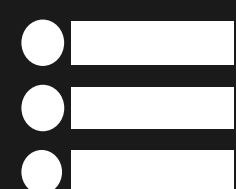
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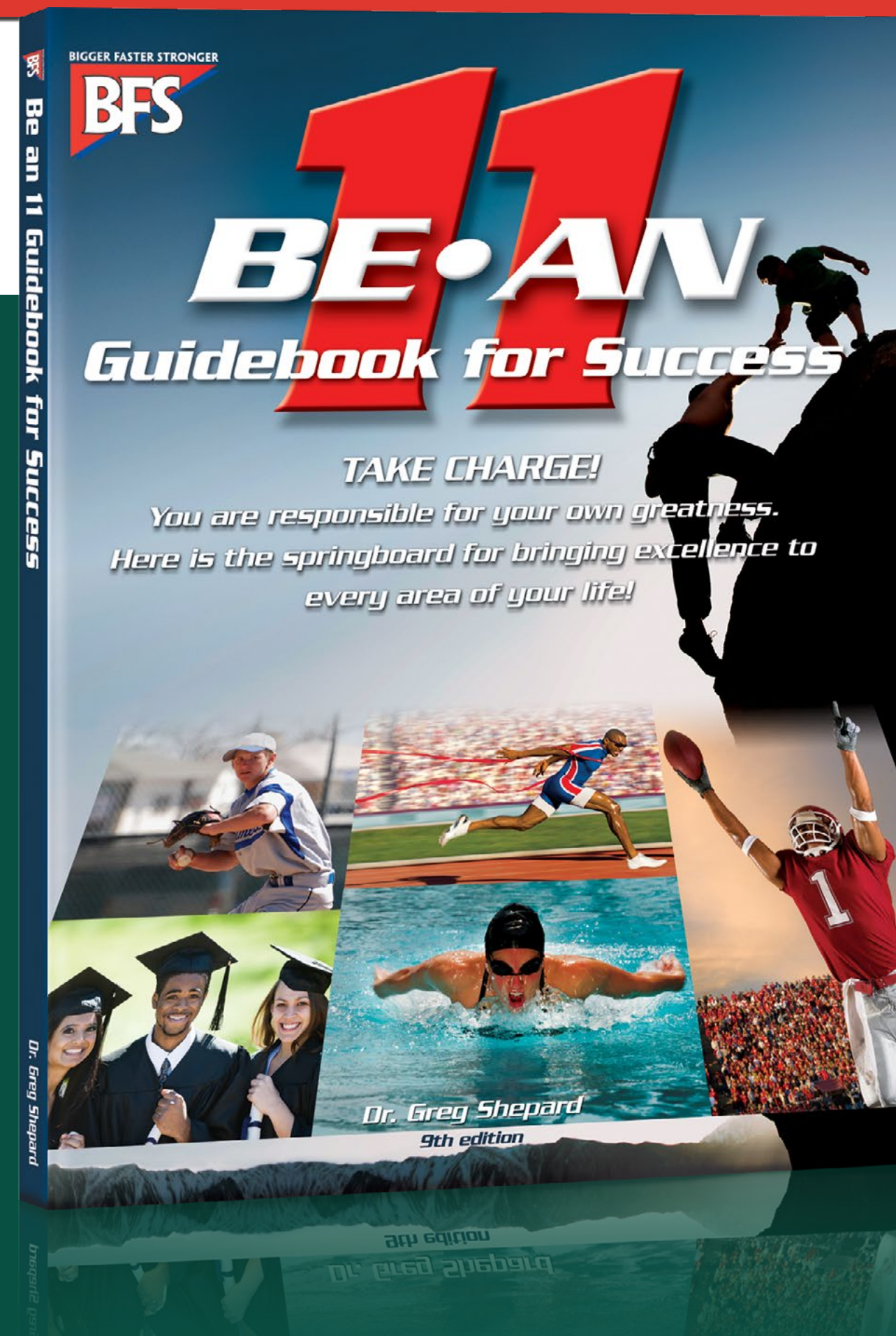
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Holly Holm: An 11 Experience



Originally published in January, 2016

Holly Holm's dominating win over Rhonda Rousey was unquestionably one of the biggest upsets in MMA history. It created renewed interest in the sport of boxing and created a paradigm shift in how female MMA fighters should train. But what particularly attracted our attentions at BFS was Holm's heavier before, during and after the fight.

Before the fight, Holm had nothing but praise for Rousey's fighting skills and dominate run inside

the octagon. In several interviews said that if it wasn't for Rousey's efforts to popularize women's MMA, their fight would never have happened.

Rousey said she was looking forward to the fight and was confident of a victory, but as the match got nearer the attitude changed. At the weigh-in, Rousey got into a scuffle with Holm and said accusingly, "All that respect all that everything,

all you being sweet, I see right now that it's fake and you're going to get it on Sunday." She topped that display during the fight by refusing to follow the tradition of touching gloves with Holm, a sign that many experts in the fight game saw as a display of poor sportsmanship.

Immediately after delivering the devastating kick to the head that ended the fight, Holm knelt alongside her opponent to see if she was OK. Then, after having her hand raises in victory by the ref, Holm embarrassed Rousey and said, "I really admire you for being such a great, dominant

champion. None of us would be here without you, so I appreciate you."

In an interview with Larry King after the fight, Holm was all class when asked if Rousey was a "bad sport." Holm took the high road, "Everybody has their own ways of dealing with their emotions in the sport."

Holm has every reason to gloat about her victory but has remained humble. She's a inspiring role model for young athletes and a classy representative of her sport. Holly Holm is a true eleven.

Kim Goss, MS
Editor in Chief, BFS magazine
kim@bfsmail.com

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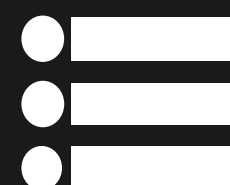


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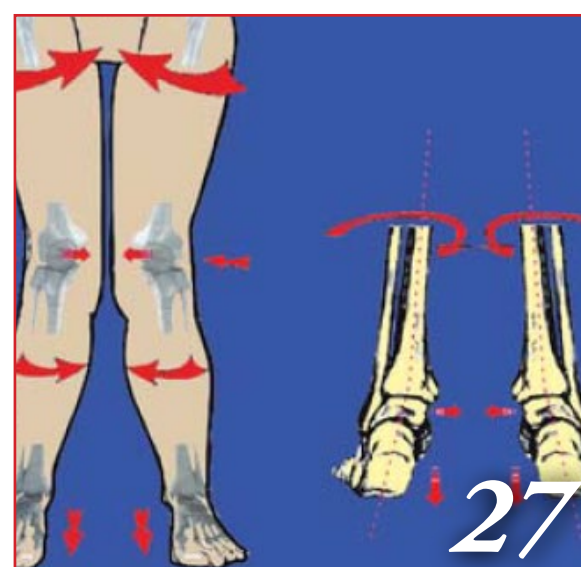
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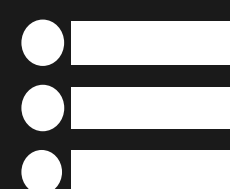
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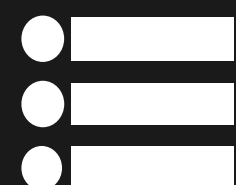
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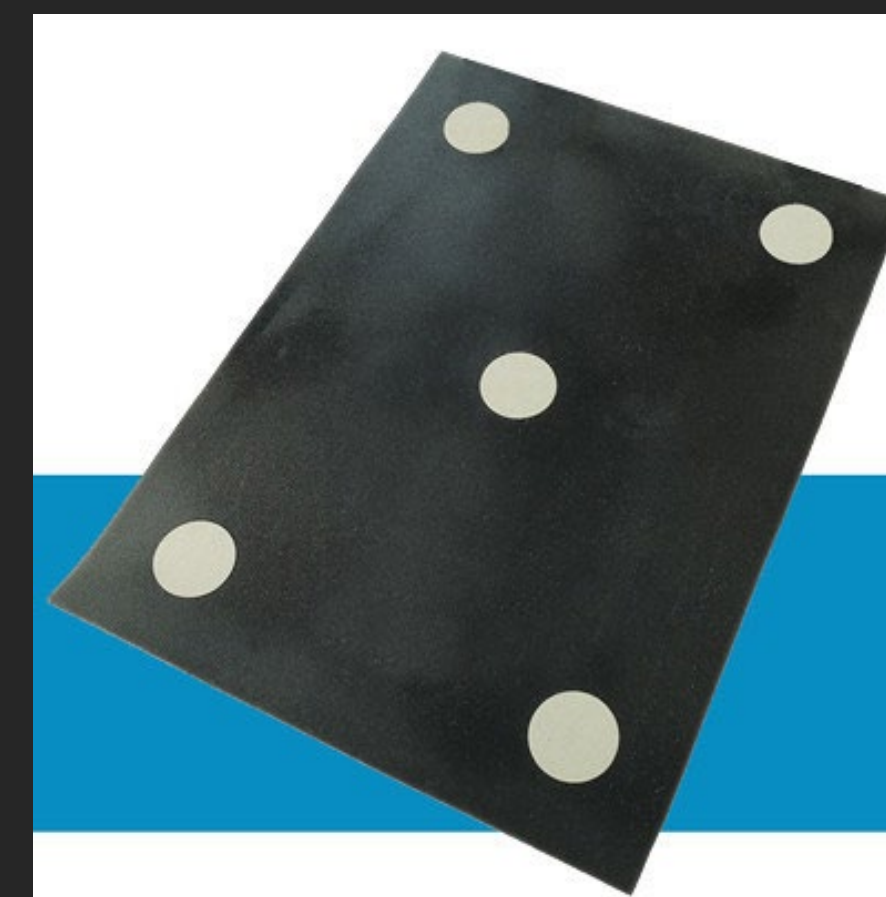
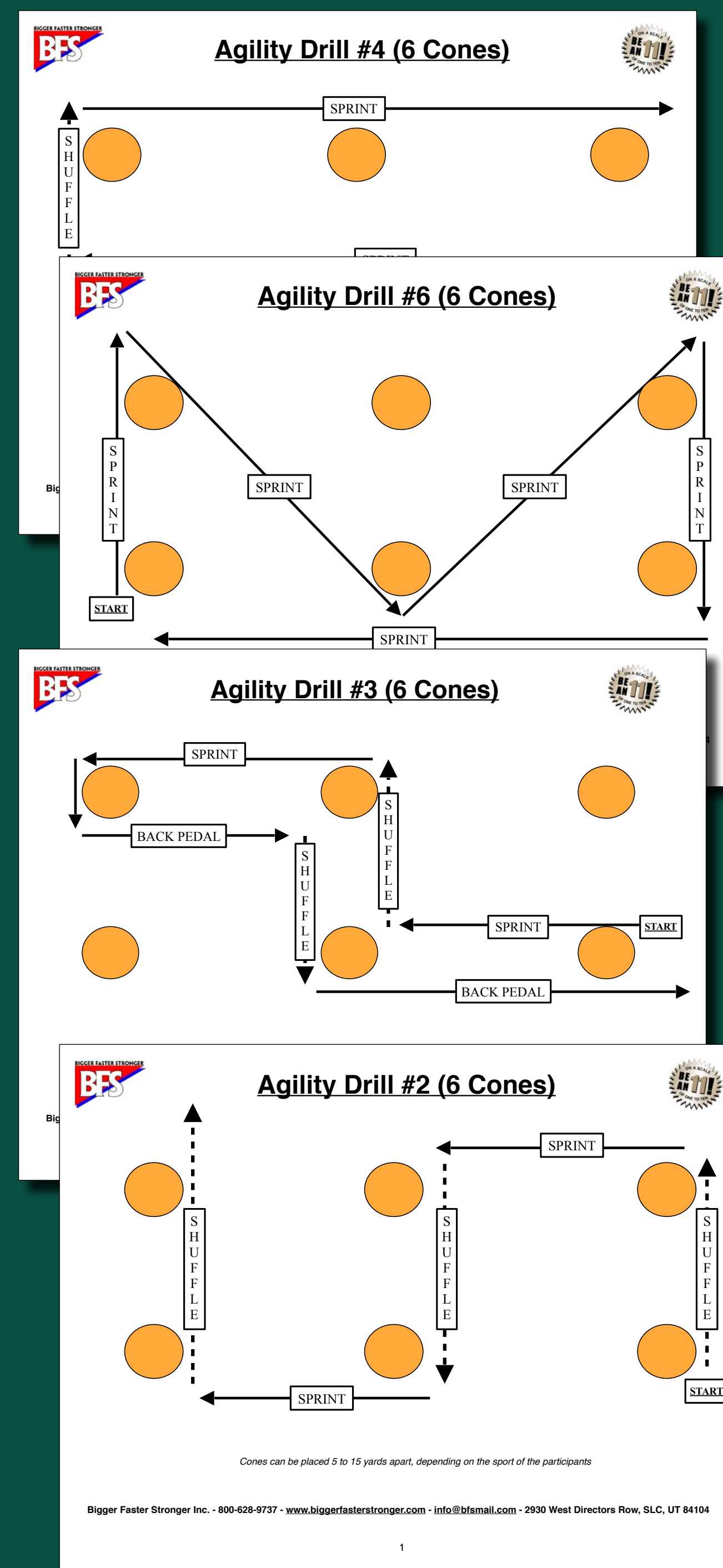
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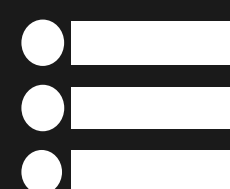
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2014 BFS High School Female Athlete of the Year

Abby Lealaimatafao is the winner of our most prestigious 2014 award

With athletic benchmarks being established every day in our high schools, it's extremely difficult for students to excel at the state level in any single sport. It's even more exceptional to excel in three sports while also achieving academic excellence and being active in community activities. Abby Lealaimatafao has done all this, and now she is being recognized as the 2014 BFS High School Female Athlete of the Year.

Abby is a senior in Freeburg, Illinois, at Freeburg High School, a school that was founded in 1904. Abby is the 11th recipient of this prestigious award for women, which was given out for the first time in 2004 to another exceptional track athlete, Sarah Cardinal. Unlike most sports awards, these BFS awards are given to athletes who also excel in the classroom and have proven themselves to be role models. On a scale of 1 to 10, the winners' accomplishments are worthy of an 11.

One reason for Abby's success is her commitment to hard work in the weight room that focuses on BFS core lifts such as the

Abby has been on the varsity basketball team since her sophomore year and on the varsity volleyball team for all four years. She has been the captain of both sports for both the 2012 and 2013 seasons.

BFS Success Story



Abby's hard work in the weightroom has produced these best lifts: power clean, 160 pounds; bench press, 145; parallel squat, 280; and hex bar deadlift, 315.

power clean and squat. Here are some of her numbers: power clean, 160 pounds; bench press, 145; parallel squat, 280; hex bar deadlift, 315. Of course, there are many other aspects of a balanced strength and conditioning program, such as sprinting and plyometrics. Her maxes include a 24-inch vertical jump, a standing long jump of 7 feet 6 inches, a 63-second dot drill, sprint results of 2.91 seconds in the 20-yard sprint and 5.26 seconds in the 40.

Although it's a trend for many athletes to focus on one sport in hopes of putting themselves in the best position to get a scholarship, Abby has taken a different path. She has been on the varsity basketball team since her sophomore year and

on the varsity volleyball team for all four years. Last year she made All Conference in both sports, and she has been the captain

of both sports for both the 2012 and 2013 seasons. Impressive, but track and field is where she displays the most power developed from her efforts in the weight room.

In the 2011-13 seasons, Abby made All Conference in the long jump, triple jump and shot put. She remains the conference record holder in the shot put, placing 6th in the event in 2013 and 9th in 2012. Her best results in outdoor competition are as follows: shot put, 40'5"; long jump, 16'2.00; and triple jump 35'7". For indoor compe-

tition, these numbers are 36'6.50; 15'7.50; and 33'2.50. Interestingly, she also runs the longer sprints; she has posted a 61-second split, in addition to making All Conference in the 4x400 for the past two seasons. With such versatility, it's no surprise that Abby is considering becoming a heptathlete in college.

Abby's parents are Tusi and Nancy Lealaimatafao, and they are justly proud of all their daughter's accomplishments, including her impressive academic achievements. Abby scored a 32 on her ACTs, has been named an Illinois State Scholar, and earned an ROTC scholarship for the Marine Corps. She is a member of the National Honor Society, vice president of the student council, an FCA leader, and president of Youth Ministry; last year she participated in a missionary trip. She also finds time to attend Science Club meetings and to serve as president of the Spanish Club.

Abby Lealaimatafao is a remarkable young woman who has embraced all the positive aspects of the high school experience. In this age of specialization, she has shown that it's possible to excel as a multi-sport athlete while also achieving academic success and serving her community. Role model Abby Lealaimatafao has certainly earned the honor of being named the 2014 BFS High School Female Athlete of the Year. 🏆

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Explore your options

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

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Be An 11: \$30 per student over 50
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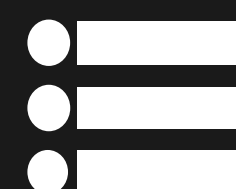
Package Details and Information: All camps and clinics offered come with implementation packages containing instructional materials, many worth more than \$3,000. For complete details on these packages and what you can expect from your camp, clinic or seminar visit www.biggerfasterstronger.com/camps. 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. Book early to lock in your preferred dates.

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2009 BFS HIGH SCHOOL FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Hannah Donnerberg is a country girl with a shining past and an even brighter future.



There are many factors that go into our selection of the BFS High School Female Athlete of the Year. The winner should excel at multiple sports, succeed academically, be of high character and work hard in the weightroom. This year, the young woman who epitomizes all these qualities is Hannah Donnerberg, a senior at Lakeside High School in Plummer, Idaho.

Let's start with Donnerberg's accomplishments in the weightroom. Although her first name is Hannah and she was born in Montana, that's where the similarities between her and Miley Cyrus end. Get this: Hannah is 5 foot 6 and can power clean 165, squat 275, deadlift 300 and bench press 205 – that's right, 205 pounds! Outside of competitive powerlifting, it's rare to find teenage girls with such impressive upper body strength.

Hannah is also a prolific athlete; she participates in volleyball, basketball, softball and track. This year Hannah's efforts helped the Lady Knights go undefeated in volleyball heading into the state championships, and enabled the basketball team to win their conference and regional championships. She is also optimistic about qualifying for several events in the state championships in

track (she competes in the discus, shot put and several sprinting events) and doing well in softball, which is a sport that the high school girls participate in through a local recreational and wellness center in Plummer.

Academically, Hannah carries a 3.8 GPA. When she graduates, she plans to attend the Montana Wilderness School of the Bible for a year, and during that period she will decide on her next step. "I'm still thinking about my options, and this school seems like a really good place to start to help me determine how I should continue on with my life." In terms of career aspirations, her strongest interest at present is in mechanical engineering.

Hannah's favorite sport is baseball, which she started playing when she was just five years old. "My brother Jacob is a year and a half older than I am, and he played baseball – and I always wanted to do what he wanted to do. So, when I was little, I was the only girl on our team." Later Hannah got into softball, and in high school she became involved in several other sports.

Hannah was never afraid of catching a baseball. David says that whenever they played catch she



Hannah's athletic abilities have helped Lakeside High School achieve exceptional success in many girls sports.

would beg her father to throw the ball as hard as he could – he would, and she would catch it every time and never move or flinch. “I remember when Hannah was three years old we went to a beach in New Mexico, and I was throwing the ball at her as hard as I could. People stopped along the beach watching this were upset at me throwing the ball at her so hard, but that’s just the way she liked it!”

All of the Donnerberg family is athletic; her

mother, Debbie, was a college scholarship athlete in track, and her father, David, wrestled and played football in high school. “My parents have always been an inspiration to me and have always encouraged me to enjoy sports.” Such genetics probably accounts for the fact that Hannah has always been strong. “I’m naturally athletic, and I’ve always been one of the strongest girls for my age. Also, I’ve always tried to keep up with my brother; and since he was older and bigger than me, I’ve always tried to find

ways to be stronger and faster than him.”

David says that Plummer is a blue-collar community, with everyone having a similar economic background. He believes that such an environment prevents the “pecking order” of class that tends to alienate some kids. “I think living here and attending a small school such as Lakeside has been really good for Hannah. All the kids know one another, and as a result their relationships tend to be a lot closer.”



Hannah's strict adherence to the BFS program has made her amazingly strong. Some of her best lifts include a 205 bench press, a 165 power clean and a 295 deadlift.



Outside of school, Hannah likes to act in church plays, fix jeeps, coach young athletes, and fish and hunt deer. Says David, "When Hannah was younger, my wife and I worked at a boys' ranch, so she has been around boys all her life. As a result, she just kind of got included in all of their activities."

Asked about how our 2009 BFS High School Female Athlete of the Year has achieved such suc-

cess, David says that his daughter has always been a natural athlete and "when she puts her mind to something, she gives it all she's got." Hannah concurs. "Ever since I was growing up, I've always wanted to push myself to be the best that I can be." With her great attitude and abilities, we know that even greater successes are in store for Hannah Donnerberg. 🏳️‍🌈



The Donnerbergs: (lt to rt): Debbie, David, Hannah, Jacob, and Jacob's wife, Mandy.

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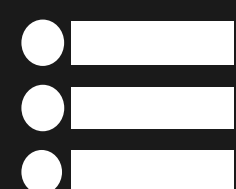
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Hunter High Experiment

When I moved to Salt Lake City in 2004 to work full-time as the editor of BFS magazine, I eventually realized that in order to write competently about working with high school athletes, I would need to do some fieldwork. In 2007 I found the perfect learning environment at Hunter High School.

Located on the west side of Salt Lake Valley in Utah, this urban school serves approximately 2,100 students in grades 10-12. I had an “in” at the school because BFS founder/CEO Greg Shepard had coached the football coach, Wes Wilcken, in the ’70s. As Coach Shepard was working with the football team, I decided to see if I could work with one of the girls weight training classes.

Heather Sonne, the women’s basketball coach at the time and now the athletic director, said she would be happy to have me as a volunteer with the Wolverine athletes and students. And I could not have asked for a better mentor.

“Heather Sonne is a masterful teacher and attends to any task given to her with great determination and vigor,” says Maile Loo, the principal at Hunter. “She is an excellent instructor, coach and athletic director and works tirelessly to accomplish all tasks requested of her! Her skills and integrity lend to the success of our physical education program and Hunter High School.”

Understand that I was not new to coaching, having been a strength coach for eight years at the

Air Force Academy. But there I was working with genetically gifted scholarship athletes; here I would be working with a mix of younger athletes and physical education students. It was a different world.

One of the first things I learned is that if you ask a high school coach when was the last time they worked 40 hours in a week, the response is generally laughter. With academic classes, practices, games and mass quantities of paperwork, a 60-hour work week is more the norm. And without the help of parents to help run the competitions and continual fundraising efforts, many programs would simply have to be cut. Now, more than ever, a high school coach must have a strong passion to help kids and must expect to sacrifice much of their free time.

At Hunter there were two weight rooms. One was a facility with resistance machines and cardio equipment that was used for the required physical education classes called Fitness for Life. The other was a weight room with free weights – a training gym for athletes – that was more my style.

Because I had a background in Olympicstyle lifting, I wanted to get the girls in this class into doing cleans. The problem was that the layout of the room wasn’t conducive to having a lot of athletes cleaning, because to move around, an athlete would often have to walk over the ar-

BFS Feature Story

Jazmyn Davidson (left)
and Lusia Angilau

Faye Vaovasa



Elissa Atiga

A share of the regional title in volleyball was part of the payoff for hard work in the weightroom for the Wolverines.

eas used for these lifts. If a lot of athletes tried to perform cleans and squats at the same time, it would simply not be safe.

As BFS does with its safety evaluations, I made a proposal to rearrange the weight room to establish a traffic lane around the room so that an athlete could move around without interfering with the workout of another athlete. It also established three large areas that would be designated for cleans and deadlifts. But the adage “Build it and they will come” doesn’t necessarily apply in high schools.

In the spring when I started volunteering at

Hunter, the athletes who signed up for the class were primarily Heather’s basketball players. Because there were fewer than 20 students, the class was at risk of being cancelled, as it was an elective. At the time, these athletes avoided heavy squats, and the words “power clean” and “pull-ups” were not in their vocabulary. So there was a lot of teaching that needed to be done.

That summer Heather and I tried to kickstart some interest in the class for the next year by holding summer workouts; unfortunately, only a handful of girls showed up and we had to cancel the program. Drat!

Girl Power, Hunter Style!

In the fall we started a new class and asked the volleyball coach, Pam Olson, to encourage her athletes to attend. As interest in the program grew, athletes from other sports such as softball started to sign up. We also added more extensive and intense plyometric and medicine ball training sessions to the workouts.

Now attendance was never below the 30s, and that summer 22 girls consistently showed up for the summer workout. And some of the older equipment was replaced with new BFS equipment. As for progress, I saw a few girls reach 135 pounds in the power clean, which is a great standard for a high school girl – plus, the weight is represented by a barbell with the big 45s on each side.

The following year the program really took off, and class enrollment was in the 50s. To help motivate the girls I brought in guest speakers, such as Team BFS weightlifter Maegan Snodgrass. Having a teenager such as Maegan clean and jerk 220 pounds really inspired a lot of girls to train harder. And Maegan showed up for one of the last days

of our spring class to present softball player Desiree Hoffman with an award T-shirt for being the 10th athlete in the class to power clean 135

BFS Feature Story



Many coaches are responsible for the success of the Wolverines' lifting program. Shown are athletic director Heather Sonne testing the vertical jump, Chloe Van Tussenbroek coaching the clean to Jordon Cedarstrom, and Maegan Snodgrass presenting a T-shirt to Desiree Hoffmann for being the 10th girl in the Spring class to clean 135 pounds.

pounds! We also saw volleyball standout Clotile Harris back squat 315 pounds to an 11-inch box.

That summer Heather allowed Maegan to help out with my teaching, and we also saw a lot of other athletes, especially from soccer, join the training sessions. In all, we had 92 athletes spend time in the weight room to get a head start on the next year's athletic program. We even had a member of the dance team in the class.

In the fall I decided to encourage the girls to start squat cleaning, as I believe it helps develop more dynamic flexibility. We also set aside 10-15 minutes every class period for stretching. Helping in both areas was high school junior Chloe Van Tussenbroek, a Team BFS member who not only competed in national weightlifting competitions but also was a Level 10 gymnast. Chloe, who de-

votes 30 hours a week to gymnastics training, was home-schooled at the time and thus was able to help out.

What's more, that fall the school found the money to purchase two BFS lifting platforms along with a half-dozen new Olympic bars – so, to change the popular expression from Field of Dreams, our motto might be “If they come, it will be built!”


As far as how these classes affected performance, consider what happened in volleyball after attendance increased in our training sessions. Volleyball is one of the most popular sports in Salt Lake City, and the competition is fierce, with many girls playing on club teams in the off-season. This fall the volleyball team was co-Region champions, and Coach Sonne says that this was

unquestionably the most athletic team of girls she has ever seen. In fact, we had nine girls vertical jump 23 inches, with an all-time Hunter High School best of 27.1 inches by Luisa Angilau, who also power cleaned 150 pounds and appeared on the Sep/Oct 2009 cover of BFS.

And with so many of the girls doing full cleans, I expect to see at least 15 girls clean 135 pounds by the end of the school year, with perhaps as many as 10 doing 150 – they really are amazing. As for further incentive, I've raised money to send at least a half-dozen Hunter girls to the National High School Power Clean Championships in Las Vegas this May. We have several girls lifting nearly 200 pounds in this lift, so we should really be able to put on a show. I would like to thank Coach Heather Sonne for giving me the opportunity to work with these great young women. I'm proud of them and happy about the progress they've made and will continue to make. It has been a terrific learning experience for me, and I believe it has made me a better writer.

As for what's next for Hunter, currently Principal Loo plans to raise money to build a new, much larger weight room to accommodate the increased demand to be part of a great weight training program.



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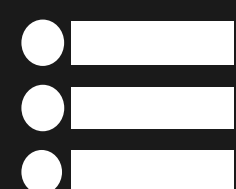
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The New Science of Training Female Athletes

The important gender differences we must understand



Coach Paul Gagné working with Chloé Dufour-Lapointe. Chloé is only 18 and placed fifth at the Vancouver Olympics in freestyle mogul skiing.

BY PAUL GAGNÉ STRENGTH COACH AND POSTUROLOGIST

Perhaps stemming from the belief that there should not be any limitations in what women are able to do, many coaches believe that there are no differences between training women and training men. After all, women can perform the Olympic lifts and run marathons and can certainly play any sports that men can. But in training women to play their best with minimal risk of injury, coaches must consider some factors relating to the differences between the sexes.

Let's start with anatomy. Because they have wider hips that are designed for childbirth, women have a lower center of gravity than men. So it's not so much stability that coaches need to be concerned about when working with women but mobility.

To be more specific, a women's wider hip structure affects the relationship between the femurs and the knees so that the upper thighs are not as parallel compared to a man's – the so-called Q-angle. To address this inherently more mobile albeit weaker structure, women need to spend more time on exercises that teach body awareness. A BFS dot drill is an example of a valuable

exercise to develop body awareness. In past decades, many girls would spend a lot of time skipping rope and playing hopscotch; these girls tended to become better athletes, and their learning curve for learning new skills was much faster. Times have changed, with young girls being overall less active; and as a result, in the two decades that I have been a coach I have seen an overall decrease in athleticism in young female athletes I've worked with.

Among the best exercises for developing body awareness in the lower extremities are single leg squats, lunges and what BFS calls power balance drills. For those athletes who cannot get into a full squat to perform the power balance drills, I use several boxes of various heights and have them squat to a box height that enables them to perform that segment of the movement properly. As they progress, I use a smaller box. I should mention that I have a BFS 3-in-1 box, and this works perfectly, as I can quickly and precisely adjust the height of the box.

A Question of Muscle

In looking at a given muscle's strength curve, the external range is considered the range from the fully stretched position to the point of half



The Dufour-Lapointe sisters (l-r), Chloé, Justine and Maxime. All have competed in World Cup freestyle mogul skiing events. Photos by Mike Ridewood.

contraction. The internal range is the fully contracted position to the point of half contraction. Performing a Swiss ball sit-up in which you bend backward and come partway up would be considered an external range exercise for the rectus abdominus; lying on your back and performing a pelvic tilt would be considered an internal range exercise for the same muscle. Overall, women tend to be more hypermobile than men; hypermobility may increase the risk of injury and affects performance, as it tends to make one hyperlax. One way to help control hypermobility is to perform more internal-range exercises. In their early stages of development, girls tend to avoid sports and strenuous physical activities that use the upper body. Whereas you see boys doing push-ups and chin-ups and playing on the monkey bars, you see fewer girls attracted to these activities. As a result, many women I work with

tend to have extreme discrepancies between their upper and lower body strength.

With the female Olympic skiers I've trained, I found that placing extra emphasis on upper body work when I first start working with them makes a dramatic difference in their

sports performance. If you follow through with this idea in the BFS program, the majority of the auxiliary exercises you do with women should be upper body exercises. Of special importance would be the muscles of the upper back that help stabilize the shoulder, such as the serratus anterior, which pulls the shoulder blades forward (such as when a boxer throws a punch). If you see a woman performing a push-up and her shoulder blades flare out abnormally (i.e., winged scapula), this may be a result of weakness in the serratus anterior muscle.

If a woman's arms are not as strong as she desires or as her sport requires, she will benefit from specialized exercises for the biceps and triceps – especially the biceps, as the long head of the biceps plays an important role in shoulder

stability. This brings a whole new meaning to the expression “Curls for the girls!”

A Question of Balance

One disturbing trend I've seen in Canada is the opening of many “boot camp” types of workout facilities that focus on very short workouts of high-repetition Olympic lifting movements, multi-joint exercises such as squats and plyometrics with short rest intervals, and short sprints. If you're already a good athlete and have no muscle imbalances, then you might do just fine with these types of workouts, especially if your primary goal is to improve body composition. But the fact is many of these programs have a high risk of injury. The facility where I train athletes is called the Sports Performance Center, which is located in Westmount, Canada. We recently had to hire two full-time physical therapists because we've been getting so many new patients among people who have been injured during these boot camp types of training programs.

There are many reasons why these workouts can be harmful, especially for untrained women. First, Olympic lifting is a sport; it's not training, and the movements are complex. It develops explosive strength, and its energy system is anaerobic/alactic power. The lifts should be performed for low reps, with sets maybe taking only five



Coach Gagné uses a variety of training methods with his athletes. Shown on left is Chloé, performing overspeed training, and on right is Justine, performing sled work.

seconds to complete. Performing 10 reps in a snatch or clean is not going to develop power – you could measure this decrease in power with each rep on a force platform such as the BFS Just Jump and Run system. Further, the complex nature of these lifts will cause the lifter’s form to break, and this can be very dangerous, especially in regard to the health of the spine. Treat Olympic lifting as a sport, not conditioning. Just as you wouldn’t take a baseball bat and try to hit 300 baseballs within an hour, you shouldn’t perform snatches, clean and jerks and their related exercises with high reps.

A major selling point of these boot camp programs I’ve seen is that they suggest that effective workouts can be completed quickly, such as within 20 minutes. This means that there is virtually no warm-up and no concentration on special exercises to correct muscle imbalances. Also, too often I’ve seen lazy coaching in which the participants could get away with poor form. This is a

serious problem, especially for women. If a woman athlete lacks shoulder stability and performs multiple sets of high-rep burpies, it’s very easy for her to dislocate her shoulders.


My workouts take an hour; and if I am training a young woman, the first 40 minutes might be spent on performing segmental exercises for the shoulders and abdominals, body awareness exercises for the lower body such as single-leg squats and power balance drills, and some medicine ball drills. Only then will I go into 20 minutes of energy system training that these boot camp workouts focus on. Just because a strength coach can get an athlete to sweat and even puke doesn’t mean that individual is a good strength coach.

A good strength coach, or “physical preparator,” as I like to refer to us, focuses on ways to increase performance and also minimize the risk of injury during training and during an athlete’s sport. BFS has put together a good model of training for young athletes with a balance of work for all athletic and physical fitness qualities. Plus, there is flexibility in the program to include special auxiliary work, such as the special segmental exercises I would have girls perform.

What about stretching? Because women tend to be more flexible than men, there is a common, but entirely mistaken, belief that women do not

need to stretch. Let me just say that women as well as men need to stretch to maintain healthy joints and achieve maximal performance.

Women need strength training as much as men do, perhaps more, but when you’re designing and supervising workouts, consider that girls mature sooner than boys. This means that they should be able to start handling maximal weights at a younger age. As a general rule, about 18 months after a girl has her first period, her growth plates are pretty much closed and there is little risk of causing damage that could affect growth. I should also mention that during the menstrual cycle an athlete may need to back off the volume of their energy system training due to changes the body goes through during this cycle.

I’ll conclude by saying that one of the biggest problems I see with the American coaching system is that sport coaches often don’t let strength coaches do their jobs. Just as I don’t tell my hockey players how to modify their technical skills for their sport, a sports coach should not be telling me how to design my workout programs. When we are dealing with the special needs of women athletes, it is particularly important that sports coaches and strength coaches work together as a team to help our athletes achieve physical superiority. 

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Breaking Barriers: Women in Strength Coaching

Strength coach Nikki Gnozzio is changing perceptions in her profession

Gnozzio took the physical tools and inspiration she experienced as an athlete in a college weightroom and transformed them into a career making other athletes better. A First Team All Mid-American Conference field hockey player at Ohio University, Gnozzio is now an assistant strength and conditioning coach at Providence College (PC), in Providence, Rhode Island. She chose to become a strength coach because she has always enjoyed lifting and was highly influenced by her own strength coach at Ohio, Sonny Sano.

“He always motivated me to train hard and enjoy the training for more than just preparation for my sport. I absolutely loved every minute in the weightroom,” Gnozzio says, adding that strength training is her calling. One of the things Gnozzio enjoys most about her job is that she gets to know and train almost every athlete on campus (of which there are over 300), something sport coaches don’t get to do.

PC’s strength program is designed so that athletes do a team lift at least once a week, with additional small group or one-on-one training sessions to work on each athlete’s particular needs. This means Gnozzio trains the men and women equally, and she says that having confidence in her knowledge of exercise science and technical experience

performing and teaching the more difficult lifts have allowed her to excel as a coach.

Being a female strength coach is a somewhat unique situation; a recent report found that nearly 85 percent of Division 1 strength and conditioning coaches are male. However, Gnozzio’s co-assistant at PC is a woman, Natalie LaSalle.

PC head strength coach Ken White says that he hired both women because they were the best candidates for the job. White provides a strong base of support for his assistants by mentoring, teaching and encouraging them to excel in coaching the athletes.

“Coach White instilled in me a confidence to believe in what I am doing and to try to improve a little bit every day,” Gnozzio says, adding that her experience negotiating the demands of being a student-athlete has helped her to connect and relate to her athletes. “Knowing what it is like to be midway through the season, lifting, taking exams and staying on top of the little personal life you have, is something you can’t learn from a book but is extremely valuable when designing a strength program,” she says. This ability to coach athletes with compassion, along with her education (she holds a BA in Sports Management and an MA in Coaching Education, and she did course

By Kim Goss

You could call them your secret weapon. Or your quiet iron. They are strength and conditioning coaches, and they work tirelessly to provide the building blocks to get athletes bigger, faster and stronger and to keep them injury free.

Nikki Gnozzio is one of those coaches whose influence reaches beyond training her athletes to reach new levels of physical excellence. Like many strength coaches, Gnozzio helps build mental toughness, camaraderie and teamwork among her players while giving them skills to excel in a future career, whether in the athletics world or outside of it.

BFS Program



Gnozzio is shown working with Gates, along with (l-r) Abrams, Laura Veharanta (ice hockey) and Fletcher.

work in counseling), her technical knowledge of basic strength movements and her ability to power clean, snatch, squat and bench press impressive weights means she can “walk the talk.” Anyone who may have questioned her expertise is soon won over by the effectiveness of her methods in the weightroom. Effectiveness of female strength coaches found that mentorship and technical knowledge are two factors that are helping women successfully cross the gender barrier in the college weightroom. The study also found that although women have an increasingly important presence in the weightroom, they are still very much a minority and, unfortunately, advancement opportunities are scarce.

The main concern for a female strength coach in the NCAA is the difficulty in advancing to a position as head coach, particularly at schools that have a football program, since the head strength coach typically works with the football team. Gnozzio mentions her goal is to be a head strength coach someday, but she adds that there are currently no female head strength coaches except at all-women schools. Still, Gnozzio thinks it is a reasonable goal if she finds an athletic program that is as supportive as the one at PC. “Every generation of females in this industry needs to keep doing their part to reach gender equity,” she says, acknowledging that it won’t happen overnight and “will require time, perseverance and hard work.”

There are select instances of female head strength coaches. For example, in 1984 Meg Ritchie-Stone was hired as the head strength coach at University of Arizona, making her the first woman ever to be appointed as head strength coach of a Division 1 university. Presently, Andrea Hudy is head strength coach for the University of Kansas men’s basketball team and holds the title of Assistant Athletic Director of Sports Performance, making her essentially a head strength coach, although there is a male director of the football strength program at KU.

Another obstacle for female strength coaches in the NCAA is the view that male teams will perform best with a male strength coach. Correct or not, a study on Division 1 athletes’ attitudes toward male

and female coaches found that the male athletes would prefer working with a male strength coach no matter how qualified the female might be. “The results were very disheartening and made me nervous,” Gnozzio says about her feelings after she read the article in college. “Luckily, in my personal experience it hasn’t been a problem,” and she adds that what it really comes down to is athlete coachability and the respect that athletes have for their coaches.

Gnozzio suggests that making athletes comfortable training with a male or female coach depends on finding a coaching style that will fit each athlete and team. “If we as coaches are genuinely there to improve our athletes, they have no problem accepting us and using us as a tool to help them reach the next level,” Gnozzio says.

The authors for the study on gender preference, Magnusen and Rhea, suggest the responsibility to change male athletes’ perspective toward female strength coaches lies with athletic departments to help diminish bias towards female coaches. Magnusen and Rhea also suggest that male athletes be exposed to female strength coaches earlier in their sport experience – both valid suggestions.

The responsibility lies just as much with the women who want to be coaches. “I know I have a better chance of changing what I do than what other people do,” Gnozzio says, suggesting a very proactive method of change. “A lack of women in any

field can be based on how females perceive a position, not just on how men perceive the field to be.”

There’s no doubt that as more and more girls grow up strength training in programs such as BFS, they will develop the technical skills and love for being strong and fast. With this background and the growing presence of women coaching in college weightrooms, girls and young women will feel the freedom to pursue a career in strength coaching. By looking at how the personal training industry has evolved over the past decade, it’s clear that women have a passion for fitness and strength. 🏳️‍🌈

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So You Want to Be a Strength Coach

Interested in pursuing a career in strength and conditioning at the college or high school level? Here are a few tips to join the women who are leading the way:

1. Start lifting in a program such as BFS at a young age so you learn to perform and teach the more technical lifts such as the squat, power clean and snatch correctly.

2. Train regularly and develop your own strength and conditioning so that you can “walk the talk.”

3. Get a college degree in the exercise sciences. This is essential if you want to be a college strength coach. You will need to become a certified strength and conditioning specialist (CSCS) through the National Strength and Conditioning Association to get a job at a university, and a prerequisite to take the test is a BA.

4. Volunteer or intern with a high school or collegiate strength program as soon as you can.

5. Plan to get a graduate assistanceship in the strength and conditioning program at the university you go to for graduate school. This is an important step to getting a full-time position as an assistant.

6. Try to find a mentor coach who has successfully coached athletes. Learn from them and cultivate the mentor-mentee relationship.

7. Develop a network of coaches, sports administrators and, especially, other women who

also have a passion for excellence in sports and strength coaching.

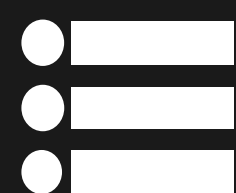
8. Once you have a BA, get a master’s degree in the exercise sciences or a related field. All strength coaching positions prefer you to have an MA, and getting one will put you on a level playing field with male candidates for jobs.

9. Go to coaching seminars and conferences. Although it may be intimidating to be one of a handful of women out of hundreds of men at a training clinic, the experience is critical and you will be forging the way for other women.

10. Show your passion for training and for coaching. A commitment to excellence and hard work and a love of helping athletes will go a long way to establishing yourself as a coach.

11. Have confidence in your abilities and don’t let anyone discount you in the strength and conditioning field because you are female.

12. Understand that strength coaching requires hard work and long hours. It’s not uncommon to start coaching athletes at 6 a.m. and not finish until 7 or 8 at night during the school year. On the other hand, you may get summers off, or work much shorter hours when many students are away from campus.





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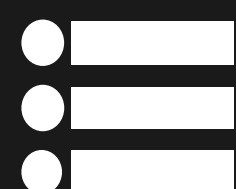
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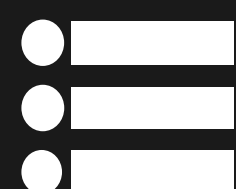


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Preventing ACL Injuries in Women Athletes

Valuable advice for reducing the risk of incurring this devastating injury

BY KIM GOSS

Women athletes in sports such as soccer, basketball and volleyball are up to eight times more likely than men to suffer ACL injuries.

Although virtually all the barriers to women playing sports have been broken, a belief persists that women athletes are seemingly fragile creatures who have to be treated special. This is nonsense. But there is one area of vulnerability that bears a closer look: the ACL.

The ACL is a knee ligament that connects the lower and upper leg bones. It prevents the shins from moving excessively forward, and prevents excessive rotation and angulation of the knee. The ACL can be injured when the knee is twisted, bent sideways or bent backward – and the risk of injury is higher if two or more of these actions



occur at the same time. Interestingly, about 70 percent of ACL injuries are from non-contact activities.

Men and women are both susceptible to ACL injuries, and injured athletes can find themselves unable to practice or play for the entire season. However, in sports such as volleyball, basketball and soccer, it has been estimated that, compared to men, women can be up to eight times as likely as men to injure the ACL. The American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine reports that each year more than 20,000 high school girls suffer serious knee injuries, most involving the ACL.

One of the theories as to why women seem more prone to ACL injuries is that a woman's wider pelvis changes the alignment of her lower extremities so that the upper thighs angle inward more than a man's and therefore make it weaker. Other theories take into consideration a woman's hormonal makeup, such as higher levels of estrogen, and possibly poor jumping ability (such as landing on straight knees) and poor running technique due to inferior coaching. And as I'll explain later, the higher incidence of ACL injuries may be partially attributed to a failure of some coaches to train women athletes as effectively as male athletes with ACL strengthening exercises.

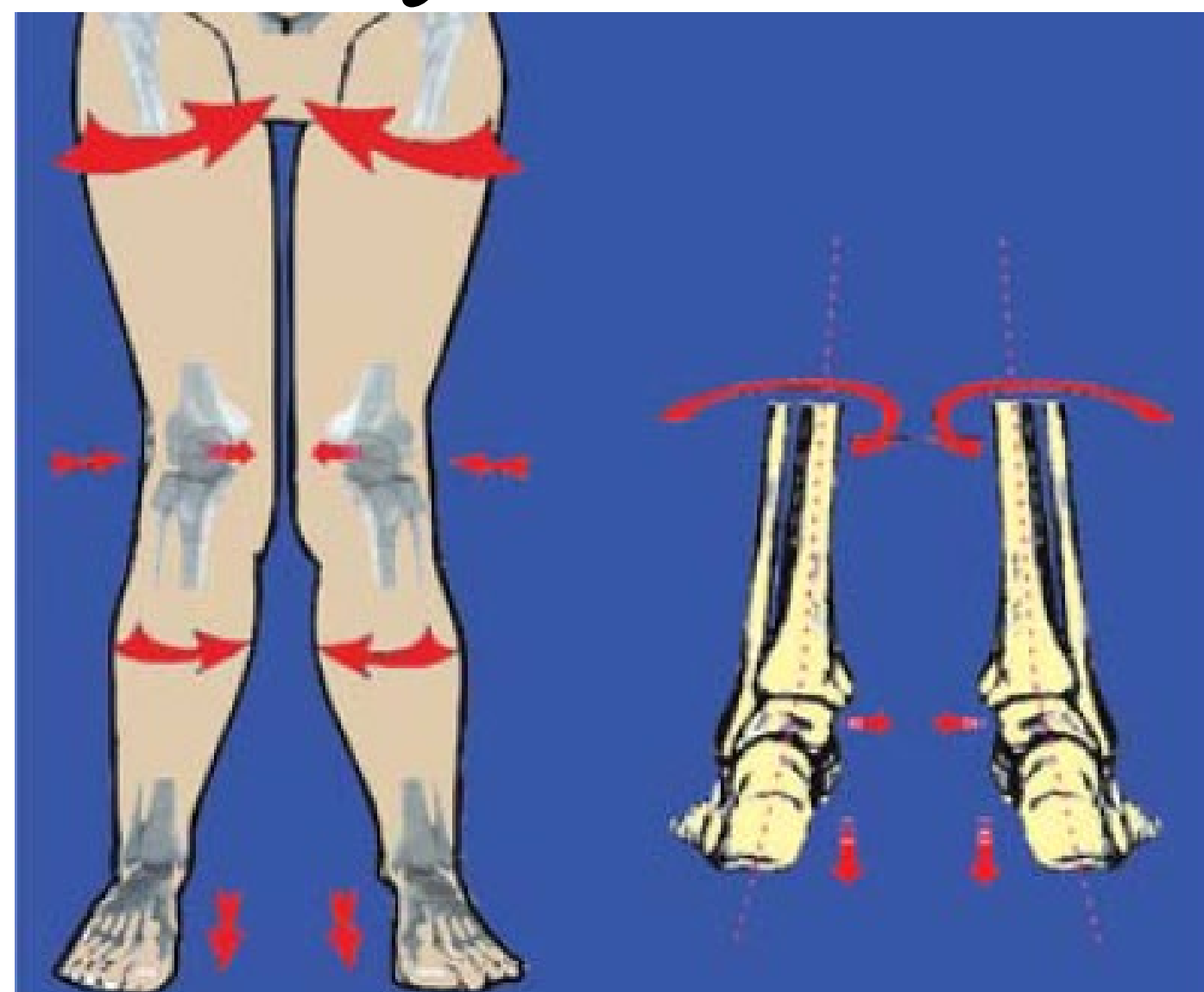


FIGURE 1. A valgus foot causes the knee to buckle inward, a condition that could easily cause a tear to the ACL.

Two key exercises to prevent ACL injuries are squats and glute-ham raises.



Although a complete, detailed discussion of all the ways to prevent ACL injuries is beyond the scope of this article, there are two methods that can significantly reduce the risk of suffering from this injury. The first is attention to proper posture, and the second is a properly designed strength training program.

The Posture Factor

Paul Gagné is a posturologist who is considered one of Canada's most accomplished strength coaches; he works with hundreds of professional athletes in sports such as football and hockey that involve a high risk of knee injuries. Gagné and his associate Jay Kiss operate a sports medicine clinic in Canada and have developed a reputation for keeping athletes healthy.

"One of the keys to preventing ACL injuries is to look that increases tension on the ACL." Shown in

Figure 1 is an athlete who displays valgus feet; as a result, her knees buckle inward, a condition that could easily cause a tear to the ACL. Regarding the BFS Six Absolutes, this athlete will find it difficult to adhere to the principles of knees aligned and toes aligned.

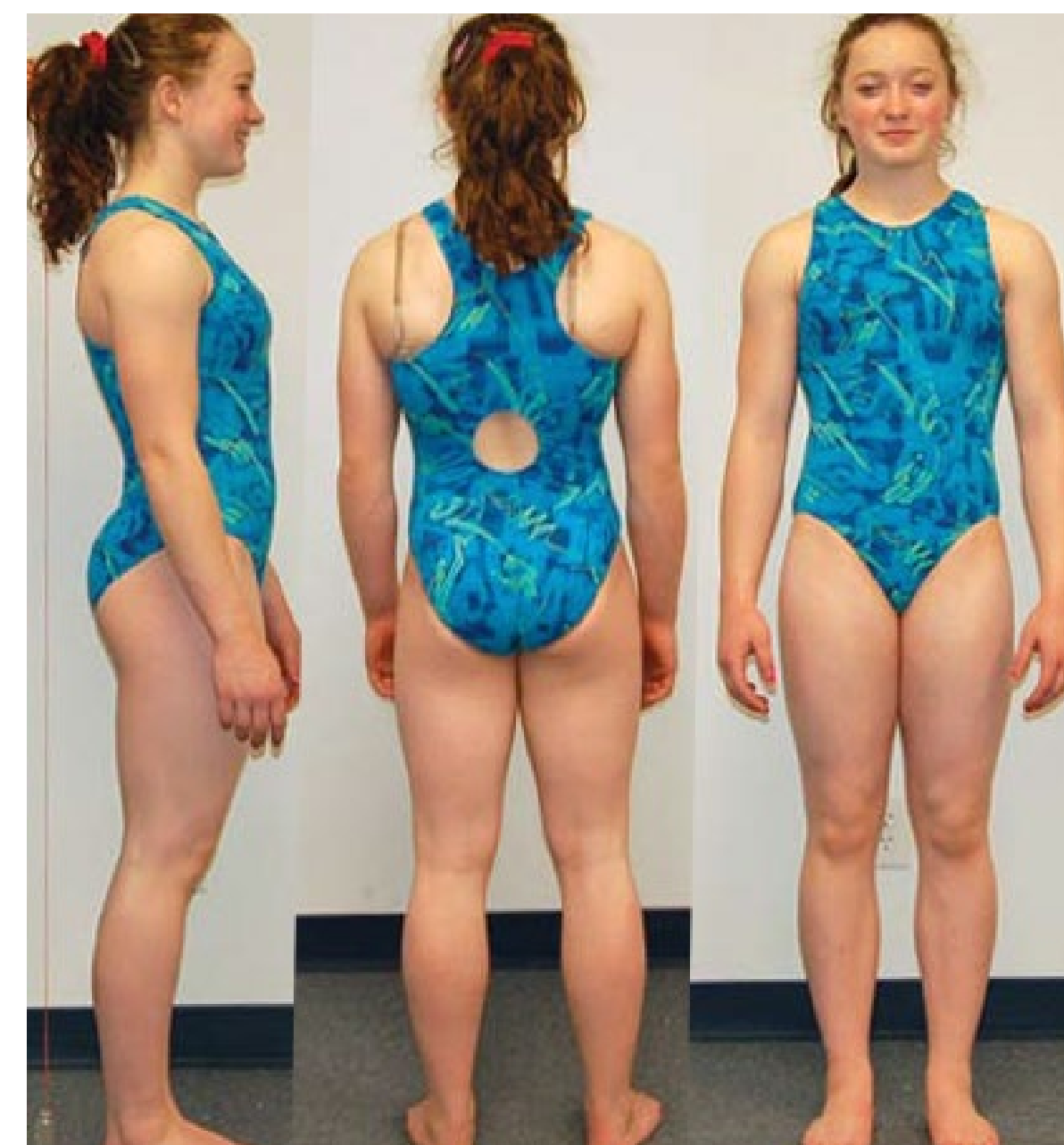
To correct this condition, along with other major postural problems, Gagné says his first task is to see if the feet can be corrected with postural insoles. The design of these insoles is based upon the work of J. P. Roll, a neuroscientist who twice won the highest award given in his field. Although some cases may require referral to a podiatrist for custom orthotics, often all that is needed is a pair of these simple insoles, which consist of a quarter-sized battery placed inside a thin insole. "By stimulating the nerves of the feet, which often become desensitized from the wearing of shoes, the batteries encourage the body to return to a more natural posture," says Gagné. "So,

in addition to aligning the lower limbs so that there is less likelihood of an ACL tear, the upper body posture is also improved."

Figure 2 shows the significant changes in posture from wearing insoles for two weeks. Consider that at what is going on with the feet," says Gagné. "If the arches are fallen, a condition we call valgus, that will cause an unnatural internal rotation of the foot, ankle, knee and hips this is a Level 10 gymnast who trains approximately 25 hours a week.

"Performing the popular core conditioning protocols used in the States would obviously have little effect on improving her posture because she already had exceptional levels of flexibility, balance and abdominal strength," says Gagné. "But when I gave her the insoles to correct the structural problems with her feet, her posture improved quickly and dramatically." In fact, Gagné

FIGURE 2: Besides increasing the risk of ACL injuries, structural problems with the feet such as valgus feet also result in postural problems that can affect performance and increase the risk of many other injuries. However, the use of postural insoles can often resolve these problems quickly, as shown here by these before and after photos taken one and two weeks apart. Also, it should be noted that besides improving this athlete's posture, reforming the arch also increased this athlete's vertical jump by two inches in just two weeks!



notes that within the first two weeks of using the insoles, the changes that occurred in this athlete's arches caused her vertical jump to improve two inches!

Although postural insoles are the fastest way to improve posture, Gagné says that there are many simple exercises that can also help improve the structure of the foot. Check out the archives section of the BFS website for articles about these exercises: Use the keywords "ankle" and "flat feet" in the search function.

The Strength Factor

In 25 years of coaching athletes, including eight years as a Division I coach and five years working with elite figure skaters in my private gym in Dallas, I have never had a female athlete suffer an ACL injury, either in the weightroom or in competition. Perhaps there is some luck involved

here, but I believe that I created some of my own luck by training female athletes pretty much the same as male athletes with my focus on full squats, power cleans, and back extension exercises that include the glute-ham raises. Gagné agrees. "If you ask me what the two best strength training exercises are to prevent ACL injuries, I would say full squats and glute-ham raises – but you have to do them correctly."

"With the squat you must squat low enough or you will create excessive shearing forces on the knee," says Gagné. "If you don't squat low enough, you will not effectively work the glutes and the VMO, a quadriceps muscle that crosses the knee joint and plays an important role in stabilizing the knee." Regarding the wide-stance squats used by many powerlifters, Gagné says this style emphasizes the adductor muscles of the legs and therefore may be considered a valuable auxiliary exercise, but this style does little for improving

knee stability.

Asked why he is such a fan of the glute-ham raise, Gagné replies, "The hamstrings assist the functions of the ACL, so it's especially important for women athletes to perform additional hamstring exercises in their workouts. I like the glute-ham exercise because it involves the knee at the same time as the hip – you might say it is a more functional exercise because this is how the lower body works in athletics."

Although it's true that women athletes appear to be more susceptible to ACL injuries than men, there are many steps a coach can take to minimize the risk. At the very least, make certain that women athletes are given the same attention in the weightroom as men and that they are encouraged to train not just hard but smart!



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Dr. Marc Rabinoff
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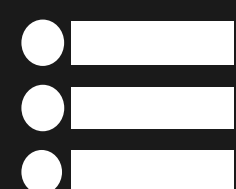
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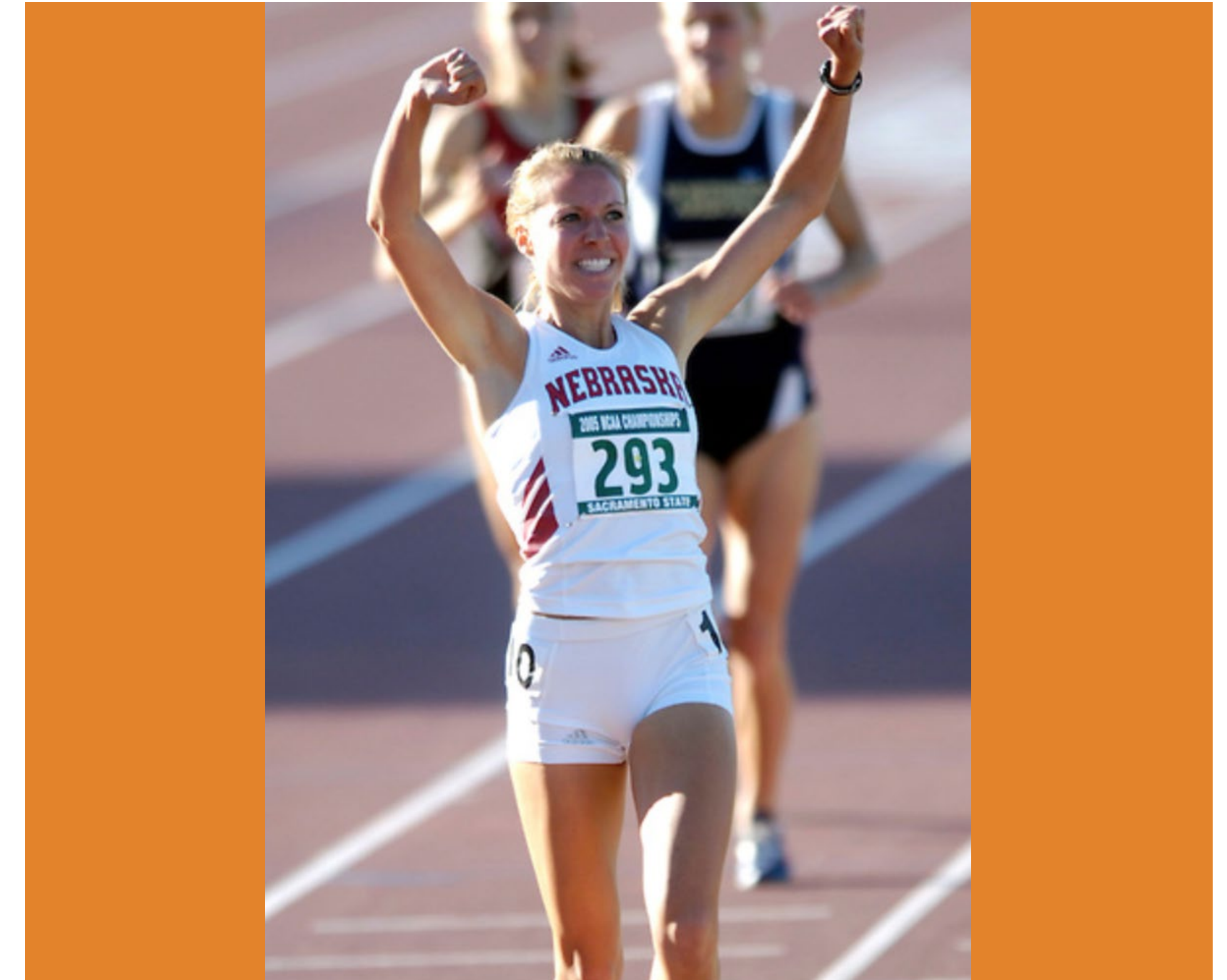
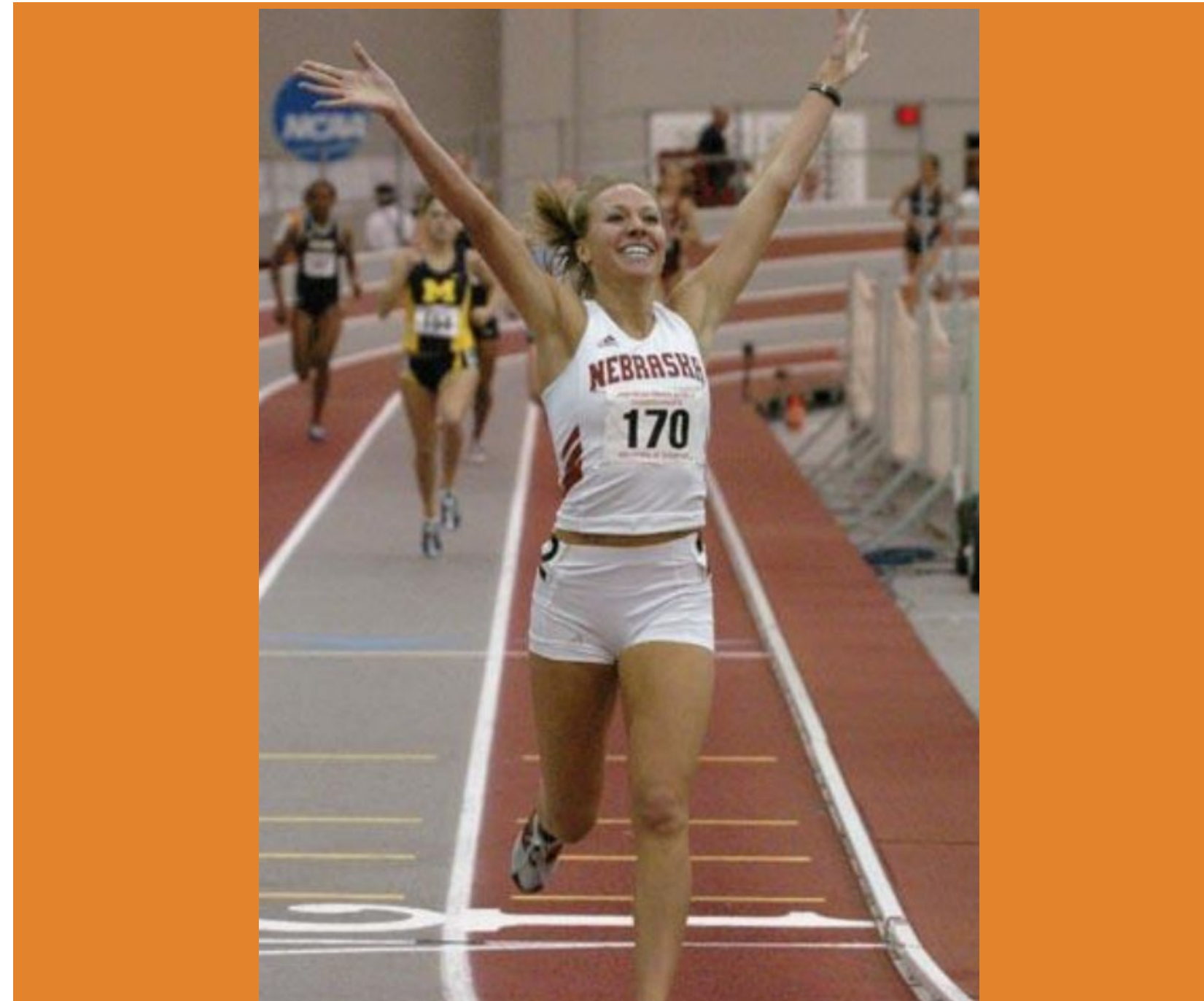
BFS Clinician Anne Shadle Goes the Distance



One of the qualities of being an Eleven is “a willingness to continually to raise your personal bar of excellence.” Anne Shadle, Ph.D., is such an individual, and her efforts to improve herself and set the highest goals in all aspects of her life has put her at the top of our list for new BFS clinicians.

Shadle entered her first cross-country competition in the eighth grade at the urging of her friends. Shadle was a dancer in junior high school, but soon discovered that she loved distance running even more, describing it as her “release from the world.” Her father recognized her daughter’s passion, and started coaching her and kept working with her throughout high school.





Shadle was a three-time Big 12 Champion, a four-time Big 12 All-Academy Team member, and competed in the 2008 Olympic Trials.

The father-daughter team was a good one as she became a six-time state champion in both track and cross-country. Such talent earned her an athletic scholarship in 2001 from the University of Nebraska, a track and field powerhouse.

In 2005, her senior year with the Huskers, she was the surprise winner of the NCAA National Championships in the indoor mile in the 1500 meters, finishing with a time of 4:38:23. She followed that with the rare accomplishment of winning the outdoor championships in the same event, proving that her indoor victory was no fluke. Her time of 4:11.47 was nearly two seconds faster than the runner-up and more than 15 seconds faster than her personal best as a junior. She also was reached a national level in the

steeplechase, an event she says is like a merge between cross country and 5K and is a challenge “that just beats you up.” Her best time in this event was 10:32.

Shadle finished her athletic career with the Huskers as a two-time All-American, a three-time Big 12 Champion, a four-time Big 12 All-Academy Team member, and an eight-time All Big 12 Conference Team member. She broke numerous school records, and still holds three of them. But completing her NCAA career didn’t mean that Shadle had crossed her last finish line as an athlete.

Reebok picked up Shadle to run for them professionally for three years, training with the Missou-

ri team when she could but also training alone when she had conflicts in her schedule or when she felt she needed to break to be alone with her thoughts. Shadle’s discipline and talent enabled her to compete in the 2008 Olympic Trials. Asked to describe her approach to competition, Shadle says she calls it “honest,” going to the front early and racing hard to stay there.

As a student, Shadle earned a bachelor’s degree in exercise science at the University of Nebraska, then transferred to the University of Missouri. She served as an intern with Dr. Rick McGuire in Missouri’s Department of Intercollegiate Athletics’ Sport Psychology program, working with athletes in several sports. She also helped to create the leadership team for the Department’s Social

BFS Program



Shadle was a three-time Big 12 Champion, a four-time Big 12 All-Academy Team member, and competed in the 2008 Olympic Trials.

Responsibility initiative, a program that focused on encouraging and empowering student athletes.

After completing a master's degree in counseling psychology, she went on to earn her Ph.D. in health education with an emphasis in sports psychology. Her research focus was developing an understanding of the psycho-emotional challenges, preparations and responses of Olympic champions. In other words, she wanted to learn why the best athletes win.

As an educator at the University of Missouri, Shadle taught an undergraduate course called, "Psychological Perspectives of Sport," taught a

master's-level course in applied sport psychology, and co-taught a masters-level sports psychology course. She also developed a gender issues in sport course for the college's online master's degree program in Positive Coaching. As if that wasn't enough to fill her plate, in 2007 Shadle began serving as an event leader for the USA Track and Field Athletes Advisory Committee.

It was while attending South Sioux City High School in South Sioux City, Nebraska, that Shadle learned about the BFS Total Program. "A BFS clinician came to our school, set up our weight-room, and taught our coaching staff how to implement the program," says Shadle. "I liked the BFS program, and thought it helped me stay healthy and set up a strong structural foundation for my future athletic career.


Distance runners often have reservations about lifting weights, but this wasn't the case with Shadle's high school coaches. "The message I got from my coaches was that performance is all about the strength-to-weight ratio." She says that not only did the BFS program fulfill her goals of being a faster and stronger runner, but also helped keep her injury-free. "Weight training for a distance runner is much more than just strengthening bones," says Shadle.

"Research has shown that athletes who level weights develop stronger tendons and ligaments,

and that weight training can help balance hormones and improve recovery ability," says Shadle. "A lot of track coaches try to increase the volume of their distance runners to improve performance, but they can't handle it. BFS makes you structurally strong so you can deal the greater volume of training."

After college Shadle reintroduced to BFS through Dr. Peter Gorman, a pioneer in concussion research who developed the BFS Balance Training Protocols. As she goes through the program she didn't realize how much detail goes into it. "The attention to detail on what equipment to use, how to use it, and how to structure workouts – every aspect of the program is extremely detailed. I was also impressed with their long history of success in the industry."

Shadle says her message to young people is that a key to success in any sport is to become a well-rounded athlete, which requires participating in a strength and conditioning program that addresses all aspects of athletic fitness. "With a foundation of general training you have the physical tools to become any single sport."

Anne Shadle is a true eleven, and we have no doubt that she will become an outstanding BFS clinician who will inspire young men and women to achieve their goals. 

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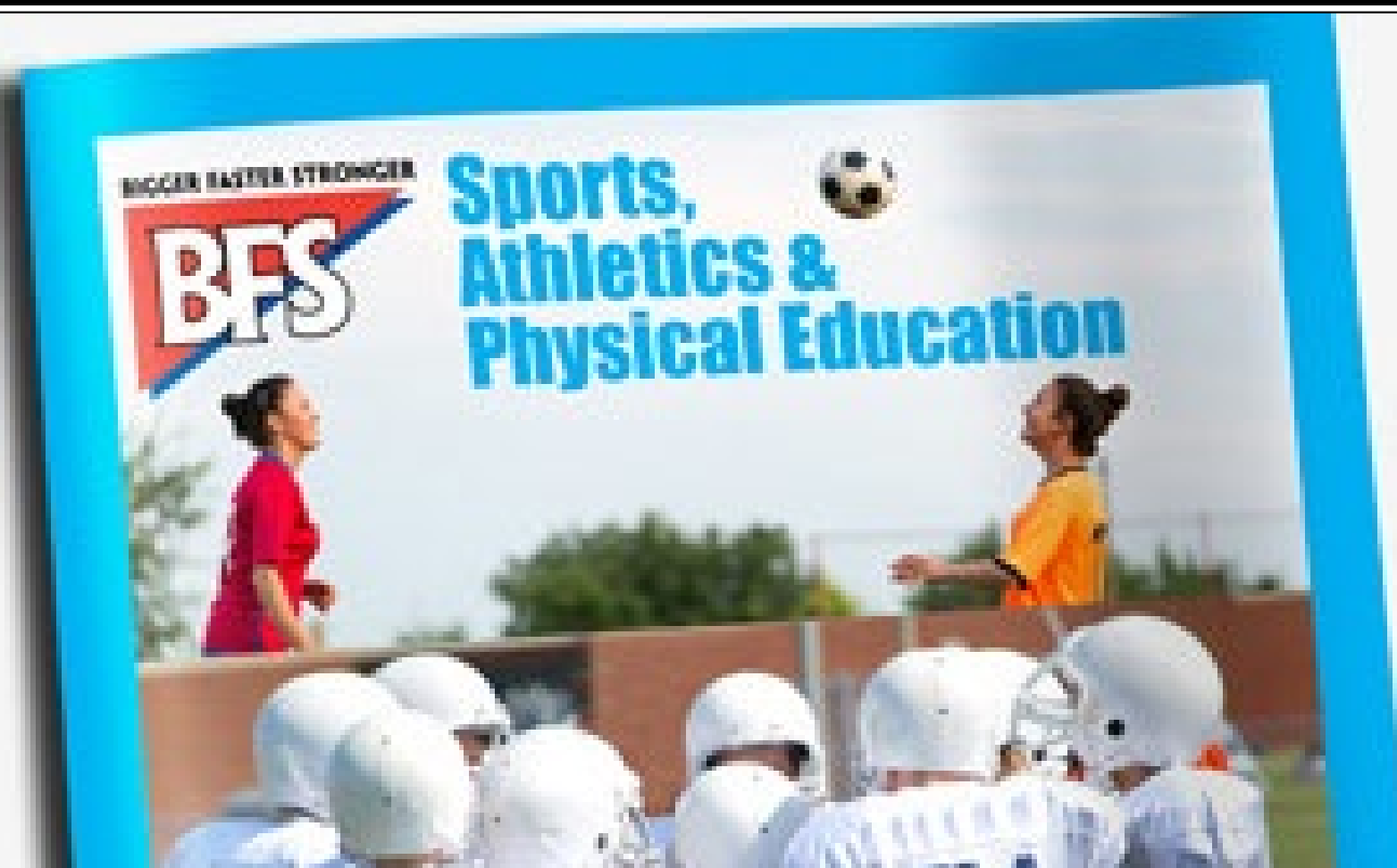
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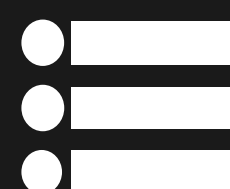
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