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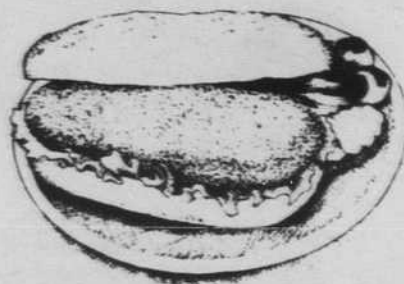
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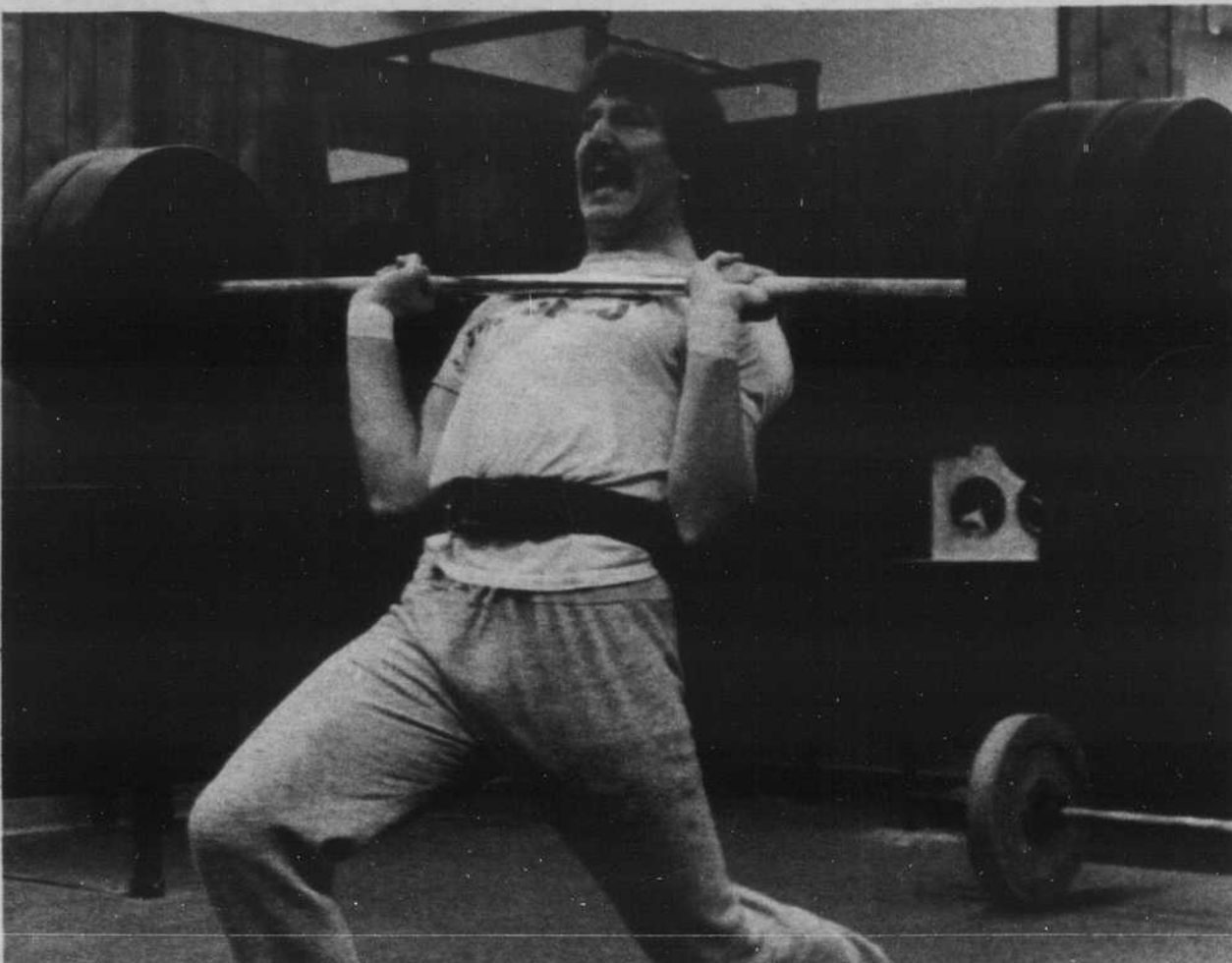


Photo by David Corey

Oregon quarterback Kevin Lusk is one of many Duck athletes utilizing the Autzen weight room.

Bigger and stronger

Weightlifting program
builds Oregon athletics

By Mark Evans
Of the Emerald

Like the ever popular big-guy-kicking-sand-on-weaking beach scene, the football bullies of the Pacific 10 Conference were simply bigger and stronger than the Oregon Ducks when Rich Brooks took over the head coaching position in 1977.

Now five years after Brooks established a year-round strength training program, the Oregon coach thinks his club can match up with anyone around — bicep to bicep.

"We've been at least stronger the last three or four years, and thus better able to perform on an equal basis with say a USC," he says.

Currently all the Pac-10 schools have such a program, but Oregon was the first to hire a full-time weight coach and to open it up to the other sports.

Vern Allers, an expert in the area of strength and conditioning, sets up and supervises the weight training program for all 500 varsity athletes at Oregon.

"I give them strength," Allers says simply. "Then it is up to each coach to see that it is used properly."

The facility, located at the east end of Autzen Stadium, is one of the finest on the West Coast. It's equipped with nine Nautilus weight training machines, eight lifting bars, more than 3,500 pounds of free weights and other strength apparatus.

Not surprisingly, football players pump more iron than any other athletes. The major emphasis in the ball players' training is free weight lifting,

with the Nautilus equipment used only as a supplement. "An athlete must use his muscles in weight or multiple joint lifting," Allers explains.

How successful has the strength training program been? One benefit is the decline of injuries especially in the neck and shoulder areas.

Another indicator is the weight records — the bench press, power cleans and squats — that are kept for each position. Allers pointed out that these continue to topple every year. "This year's team broke about 33," says Allers. "One wonders how far the human body can be pushed."

Brooks emphasizes the confidence gained through weight training. "When a player goes out and plays, it's hard to judge his improvement, but in the weight room he can gauge his efforts," Brooks says. "This instills confidence in him, which we hope carries over to the field."

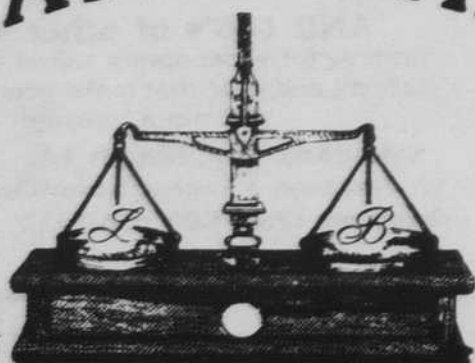
Brooks says examples of the impact the program has had include this year's most improved player, Steve Johnson ("He came in at 210 lbs. is now 240"), Steve Baack ("bench pressed about 200 his first year here, now benches about 380 lbs.") and Steve Brown ("could bench only around 175 and couldn't tackle that well, now he's benching close to 300 lbs.").

Allers develops programs that are specific to each athlete's sport and also position in that sport. Of particular importance with this individualized help is its value to the track team where there is such a wide variety of skills required with the various events.

"Though more emphasis for weight work is put on the field event athletes, it has helped the runners too, as witnessed by Alberto's (Salazar) success," Allers says.

Head track coach Bill Dellinger says, "It's hard to gauge how the program has added to our improvement, but naturally the stronger you are the better off you are."

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