

How Husker Power began with Bob Devaney

1957



Danny Lundberg (L) and Epley (R)

My first lifting experience began in Danny Lundberg's garage in 1957 at age 10. His older brother had a set of weights in their garage. I was 12 when my dad bought me a set of weights. The set came with instructions on how to perform competitive weightlifting movements which is not what most athletes need to improve performance especially young ones.

1959



My First Set of Weights age 12

1962-65

Between 1962-65 my high school coach Hugh Morrison provided direction in physical education weight training class and as the head football and track coach at Alhambra High School in Phoenix, Arizona.



Hugh Morrison - my Football and Track Coach in high school.

I also picked up ideas from bodybuilder friend Pat Neve who was one of my high school classmates. Pat later won Mr. America and set a world record in the bench press at 480 lbs. weighting 180 lbs.



Pat Neve Mr. America

1962

So while I was in high school in Arizona the University of Nebraska hired Bob Devaney as the Head Football Coach and immediately became a force in the Big Eight Conference. Prior to Devaney's arrival, Nebraska football had seven consecutive losing seasons. Coach Devaney and his staff engineered an immediate turnaround with a 9–2 record in 1962 that included an upset victory over Michigan at Michigan and a victory in the Gotham Bowl at Yankee Stadium over the Miami Hurricanes.

1963-66

Coach Devaney followed with an even better 10–1 season in 1963 including a perfect 7–0 record in the Big Eight to claim the conference title and an Orange Bowl victory over Auburn. His success continued through 1966, with records of 9–2, 10–1, and 9–2.

1967

For the first time since Devaney's first season of 1962, Nebraska would not lead the Big Eight in total offense. The Cornhuskers had led the conference with 347.6 offensive yards a game in 1963, 348.5 in 1964, 404.0 in 1965, and 318.8 in 1966. The figure dropped again to 317.1 yards a game in 1967. Consecutive 6–4 seasons followed in 1967 and 1968 and Devaney became subject to a whispering campaign about whether he had peaked. There were rumors that some of his position coaches might be fired. Coach Devaney told them if anyone goes we all go.

Also in 1967 Bob Devaney was named Nebraska Athletic Director and served until 1993.



Nebraska Head Football Coach
Bob Devaney



Athletic Director Bob Devaney



1968

After helping Phoenix Junior College win two National Track Championships I accepted a scholarship for pole vaulting to the University of Nebraska in 1968. I had assembled a general knowledge of how and why I needed to lift weights. I had no idea my experience lifting would impact strength training at Nebraska or the rest of the country but it didn't take long for it to happen.

1968

Coach Devaney asked Offensive Line Coach Cletus Fischer, Assistant Track Coach Dean Brittenham, and Athletic Trainer George Sullivan to ramp up the winter conditioning program for football players. They created a very demanding eight station circuit of agility drills and running stations. With 40 minutes of continuous work the result was more endurance than more muscle. The only exception was the axe handle drill where the players were able to catch their breath until it was their turn to compete one on one with another player. Football coaches ran most of the stations but they asked me to run a station where the players would lift 47.3 lb. bars with cement cans on each end continuously for 5 minutes. Why did they ask me? Because I had lifting experience. Cletus asked me if I would allow them to film me demonstrating the drills so the players would see what and how to do the drills they wanted. The filming went well so they asked me to run one of the stations for them. Little did they know that in just a couple of years I would make major changes in the way Nebraska athletes trained.

1968

The winter program for Nebraska football players had too much focus on endurance. One of the stations was continuous running for 5 minutes. As the program evolved we put a much greater emphasis on building muscle to improve strength and speed.



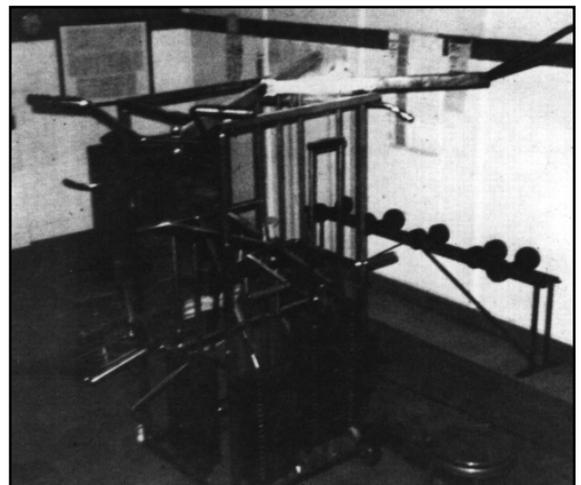
Some drills were in the dirt infield of the East Stadium Indoor Track



Schulte Field House

1968

The Schulte Field House Weight Room had steps leading into it from the athletic training room. This modest facility included a Universal Gym, a few dumbbells, one 400 lb. Olympic set, a leg extension machine and a squat rack. Most of this equipment was purchased when a health club in Lincoln failed.



Schulte Field House weight room.

At Nebraska and other schools across the count this type of equipment was used for injured athletes. Lifting weights for healthy athletes was not recommended at this time.



My Pole Vault Coach

1968

Dean Brittenham was my pole vaulting coach at Nebraska. I had set the Nebraska pole vaulting record indoors as a junior in 1968. In the outdoor season I broke my leg then hurt my back and was red-shirted my senior year which led to time in the Schulte Field House weight room. Tom Osborne, an assistant football coach saw that I had been helping the injured football players and asked if I would help the entire team.

1969 – August 15th

Nebraska became the first school in the Big Eight Conference to hire a Strength Coach. According to research done by Dr. Ken Leisner, Bob Devaney became the first college athletic director in the nation to have a paid strength coach on staff when he hired me. At the urging of Tom Osborne, Bob decided to give the lifting program a try but he looked me in the eye and said, “If anyone gets slower you’ re fired.”



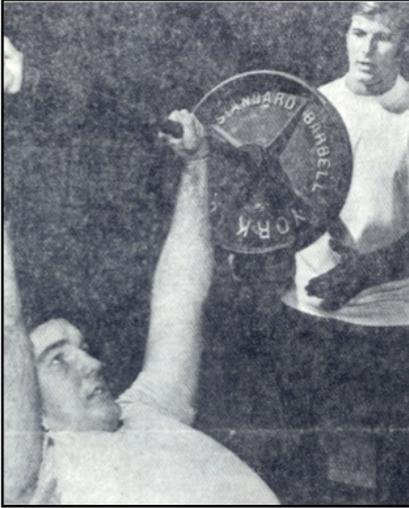
The Schulte Field House weight room located North of the football field was expanded by removing the center wall

I decided I needed to test the players on the 40 yard dash like the NFL was doing so I could show him the lifting was making the players faster. I knew it was important to show Coach Devaney that no one was getting slower. The problem was we didn’t have a stop watch. I borrowed one from the P.E. Department and we starting doing Performance testing.



1969

September 27 - Husker Power celebrated it’s first win. During my 35 year run as Head Strength Coach Nebraska won 356 gamers. Nebraska became one of the first schools in history to lift weights during the season..



Mike Beran #62 - Offensive Guard on the Incline Press.

Mike Beran, a guard was one of the most dedicated Huskers in history. As a freshmen he was 180 lbs. but played at 230 lbs. as a senior with a 360 lb. bench press.

Jim Williams became my first assistant strength coach but was hired away by Arkansas before he was offered a paid position at NU.

1970

March 1 – I started the 300 lb. Bench Press Club with linebacker John Pitts being the first Husker to officially bench press 300 lbs.

March 16th - A "school record board" was established for the Schulte Field House weight room.

A win in the game of the Century against Oklahoma put Nebraska in position to win it's first national title as Jerry Tagge powered Nebraska past LSU 17-12 and Nebraska began a string of Top Ten rankings that lasted twenty years.

1971

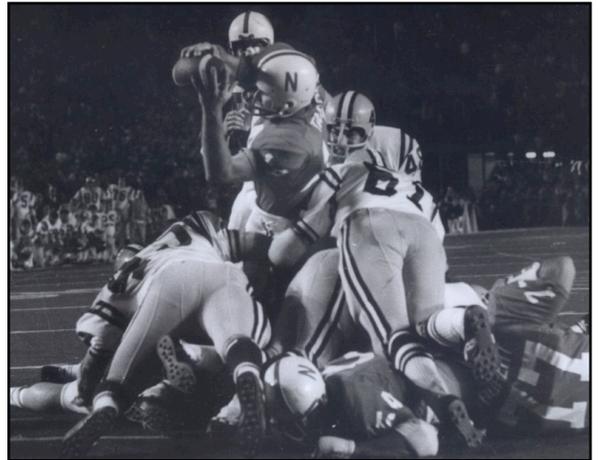
Nebraska won the National Championship in football with a win over Alabama in the Sugar Bowl.

1972

October 16 - A weekly newsletter was started titled "The Lifting News."

November 20 – I was asked to assist Dr. Bob Robertson and Dr. Ken Rose with an NCAA study on the seasonal fluctuations of performance. Testing was conducted in Nebraska's East Stadium research lab.

I was starting to experiment with circuit training and determining the effects of changing the rest interval between sets etc. for different sports. We didn't have room in the Schulte Weightroom in the North Stadium but we were are to build a 1400 sq. ft. Circuit Room in the newly opened South Stadium. Circuit training would later be shown to produce tremendous muscle gains if the rest interval was correct between sets.



Tagge crosses goal line for Nebraska's first championship against LSU.

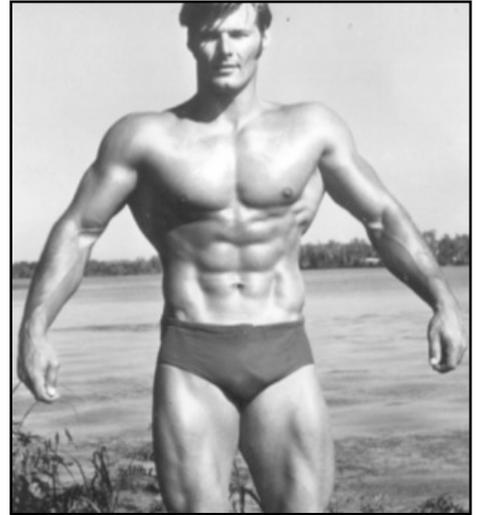
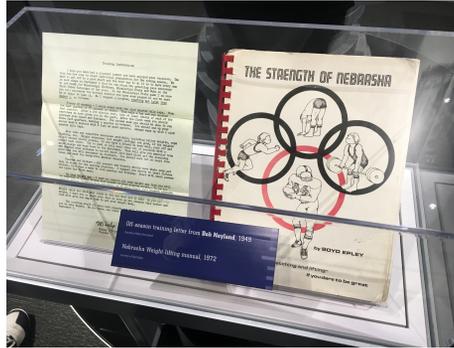


Coach John Sanders is shown in the new South Stadium Circuit Room with his Baseball team

1972

I completed my Master's Degree in Education, retired from competitive weightlifting and bodybuilding as Mr. Mid-America and three time Mr. Nebraska to concentrate on building Husker Power for all sports.

My 1972 Strength of Nebraska Training Manual would later be included in the College Football Hall of Fame in Atlanta



Mr. Nebraska 1970, 1971 and 1972



Coach Tom Osborne



1973

Tom Osborne is named Head football Coach.

His 25 year career would generate 255 wins and three national championships but more importantly his impact on everyone that played or coached for him was immeasurable. He changed my life in so many ways. I can't thank him enough for all he has done for me.

1973

April 3rd - NU Basketball begins a lifting program for the first time.

Astro Turf off the field installed in the North Field House

1974

The Lifter of the Year Award was developed for Football with center Rik Bonness winning the first two years. Bonness was 188 lbs. as a freshman and 220 lbs. as a senior with a 4.6 forty yard dash. He drove 50 miles three times a week all summer to train at Nebraska.

1974

I put in a wellness program for ladies in the athletic department and coaches wives which included a Body by Boyd t-shirt.

1974

Guy Ingles and I were asked to run the Nebraska Football Camp. Then we hired Randy Borg, Maury Damkroger, John Dutton, Rich Glover, Monte Johnson, Steve McKelvey, and Daryl White to coach the high school players attending camp.

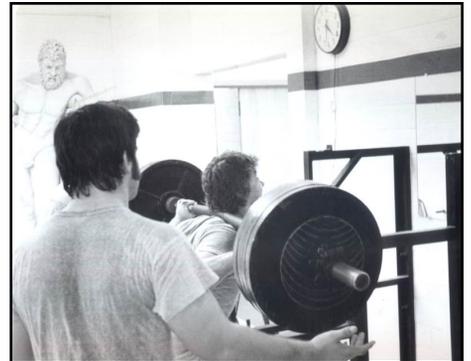
1975

January 20th - Bruce Conger was the first NU wrestler to bench press 300 lbs.

March 10th - Dave Gillespie became the first I-Back to bench press 300 lbs.

The University of Miami hired me to design their football weight room.

Merlene Ottey one of the greatest female athletes in Olympic history was a Husker.



Rik Bonness won the Football Lifter of the Year in 1974-75



Merlene Ottey

1975

Dr. Aleen Swofford was hired as the first Women's Athletic Director at Nebraska and I was asked to introduce strength training to all eight women's sports.

1976

The Bob Devaney Sports Center opened which included a 1700 sq. ft. weight room for Olympic sports. Isokinetic equipment was used for women to introduce them to the benefits of strength training but I quickly changed to free weights to produce better strength gains.

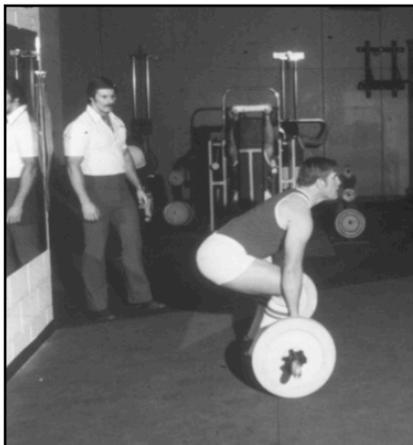
March 8th - Peggy Liddick was the first female to make the Lifting Newsletter.

Steve Bliss, my third assistant was hired by Miami to run their new weight room. In October Miami and Bliss came to Lincoln to play the Huskers in Lincoln. After becoming Miami's first strength coach, Bliss later became Ohio State's first strength coach.

Mike Arthur, my fourth assistant and the first to be paid sets the world record deadlift at 545 lbs. at 132 lbs. bodyweight. As far as we know Mike was the first paid Assistant Strength Coach in the country. Mike would become one of the top strength coaches in the nation staying with the Huskers his entire career. Mike Arthur proved to be the most important hire in my career. His interest in research allowed our programs to be cutting edge. Mike's contribution to Nebraska's success was largely because he was the bridge between research and application.

Rod Horn wins the Lifter of the Year as a 260 lb. freshman. He power cleaned 342 lbs., snatched 237 lbs., squatted 560 lbs, at 6'4.5". Rod was known for eating a loaf of bread and drinking a gallon of milk each day.

Rod Horn lifting in Circuit Room in 1976



The equipment was eventually replaced with free weights



Boyd with former Assistant Steve Bliss of Miami



Mike Arthur set the world record deadlift

Head Coach Rick Forzano of The Detroit Lions hired me as his Head Strength Coach but a week later Tom Osborne convinced me to stay with the Huskers. He said, If you stay with me I'll always be there for you. That's all I needed to hear.

1977

February 28th - Lawrence Cooley becomes the first Husker to bench press 400 lbs. and ties I.M. Hipp for Lifter of the Year. Cooley was 6' 240 lbs.

February 28th - Sophomore I-Back Richard Berns vertical jumped 33" on his way to 36.5" as a senior to lead all Huskers.

March 14th - QB Earl Everett lead all QB's on the vertical jump with a 33.5" jump. Lineman Barney Cotton posted a very respectable 31".

Mike Arthur won the AAU Collegiate National Powerlifting Championship.

I judged the Mr. America contest in Santa Monica, CA. and turned down an offer to become the National Physique Chairman.

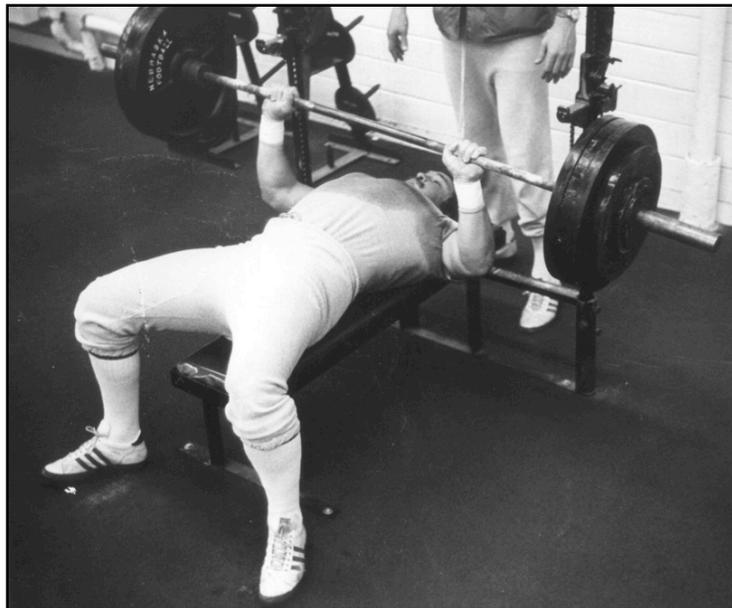
I was later inducted into the Mr. America Hall of Fame

1978

July 29 - The National Strength and Conditioning Association was founded in Lincoln, Nebraska. The University of Nebraska has had a big influence on the success of the NSCA. My staff, Mike Arthur, Bill Allerheiligen, and Gary Wade hosted the event. Nebraska AD Bob Devaney was the featured speaker and Husker All-American tackle Kelvin Clark provided singing entertainment to the 76 charter members and I was elected President.

I was commissioned by AMF to create an entire line of strength training equipment.

September 29 - Husker Power celebrated 100 wins in football with a victory against Penn State 42-17.



Middle Guard Lawrence Cooley was the first Husker to bench press 400 lbs.



Nebraska strength coaches help start the NSCA (l to r) Jim Williams, Gary Wade, Mike Flynt, Dave Redding, Mike Arthur, Boyd Epley, Steve Bliss and Bill Allerheiligen.

1979

July 16th - Stan Wentz provided much needed air conditioning for the Schulte Field House weight room. The 20 ton air conditioner cooled the entire first floor for the first time since it was built in 1945.

I requested lifting equipment at the Orange Bowl practice site but was forced to bus the players to the Miami Dolphins when the equipment did not meet the needs of the team.



Jane Lilyhorn becomes Jane Epley

1979

December 1 –Jane Lilyhorn becomes Jane Epley. The best decision I ever made by far.



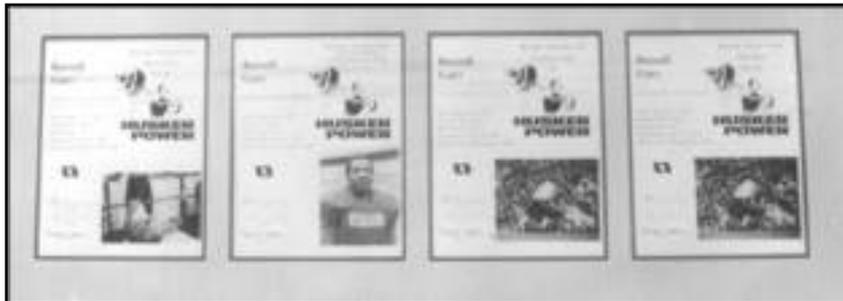
Equipment provided by Orange Bowl for Nebraska



Air Conditioning added to the Schulte Field House by Stan Wentz

1980

Russell Gary a defensive back was the first Husker to hold all school records for his position which helped him become the football Lifter of the Year.



Russell Gary first to set all four position records



National Transportation

Nebraska became the first school to take a portable weight room to a bowl game. Lanny Fauss of National Transportation was the first to help us transport the strength equipment and a few years later Seward Motor Freight handled the move.

Nebraska became the first school in the country to have a National Strength Coach of the Year - In 1980 when I was presented the Paramount Cup by the National Strength and Conditioning Association at it's third national conference in Dallas.



America's first strength coach of the year - 1980



Reebok Endorsement

I was asked by Reebok to endorse their brand. Reebok later became the official shoe of the NFL.

Nebraska became the first school in the country to have lifting programs computerized for each individual using the Strength Disk developed by Mike Arthur.



Mike Arthur developed the Strength Disk



Dean Steinkuhler on Hip Sled

The first ever "Hip Sled" led to the development of an entire line of unique equipment for the Huskers including portable equipment for use at the bowl games. Prior to AMF the schools were dependent on what equipment was available for sale to health clubs or weightlifting gyms. AMF allowed Nebraska to custom design equipment for athletes.

1981

Huskers training at Orange Bowl using portable setup of equipment designed AMF designed for Nebraska and transported to the bowl game and set-up under the stadium by my strength staff.



Strength Coach Randy Gobel drove the semi-tractor trailer to the Orange Bowl.

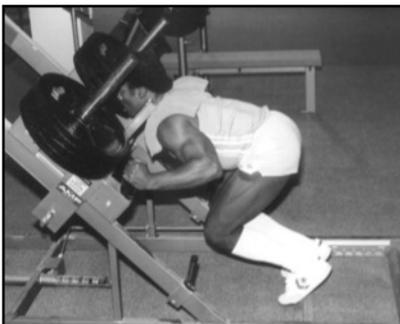
Some of the portable equipment I was able to have AMF develop for Nebraska bowl games included:



Squat Rack



Portable Pulley stands



Leg Sled



Chest Press Machine



Tricep Machine