

Six Absolutes Overview

A simple approach to
understanding biomechanics



Visit the office of any high school coach who handles the strength training program of his or her athletes and often you'll find

a textbook about biomechanics – and most likely that textbook hasn't been opened since college. The reason is not that the coach has mastered the

basic concepts of biomechanics and feels no need for an occasional review, but more often it's that the material is presented in a complex manner with



photo: Lisa Tenold

The Six Absolutes apply to lifting, stretching and sports techniques. The athletes here are Jazmyn Davidson (left) executing a perfect clean, Sheriann Decker performing the BFS hip flexor stretch (top), and Derek Watton (right) making a great catch. Davidson and Decker are from Hunter High School, and Watton is from McDonell Central High School.

foot-long science terms and mathematical equations – almost as if the writers of these books are *daring* you to learn. Such was the inspiration behind the development of the BFS Six Absolutes.

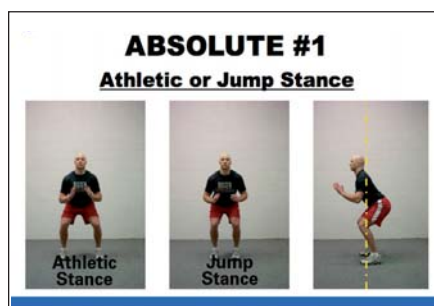
The creation of BFS Founder/CEO Dr. Greg Shepard, the Six Absolutes are six training principles that are amazingly effective in teaching perfect technique, not only in the weightroom but also in any sport. Coaches who learn the BFS Six Absolutes can dramatically elevate their athletes' strength and their own coaching ability.

Without keeping you in suspense, here are the Six Absolutes of perfect technique:

1. Use an athletic or jump stance
2. Be tall
3. Spread the chest (lock-in the lower back)
4. Align the toes
5. Align the knees (knees over toes)
6. Eyes on target

One reason the Six Absolutes are so effective is that they encourage all coaches to use the same terminology when teaching weight training and sport skills. After all, how can an athlete be expected to follow instructions exactly when the instructions they receive vary from coach to coach? Such confusion also goes against the concept of developing a unified program. Therefore, when teaching the squat, instead of one coach saying, "Make your chest big!" and another coach at batting practice saying, "Spread the chest!" both coaches will simply say, "Spread the chest."

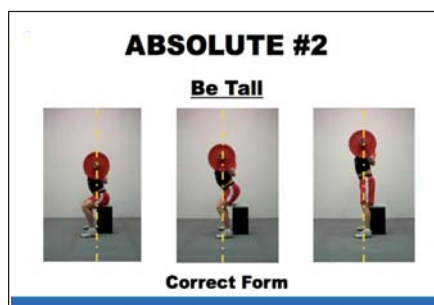
In future articles in this series we will look at each absolute in detail, providing examples of their use in weight training exercises and also sports techniques. For now, here is a quick overview of each absolute.



1. USE AN ATHLETIC OR JUMP STANCE

All sports require one or both of the same two basic stances – the jump stance and the athletic stance. We use the jump stance primarily when we lift from the floor with lifts such as the power clean, the power snatch and the hex bar deadlift. We use an athletic stance with lifts such as the squat or the rack position in the power clean (when the bar is caught on the shoulders).

All sports use basically the same stance. It doesn't matter if it's tennis, softball or a "ready" position in football; the stance is the same. It is imperative that we always squat from an athletic stance so we can access the strength and power we build from that stance. We want these gains meaningful and functional.

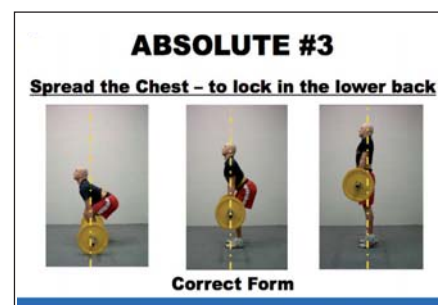


2. BE TALL

You need to be tall all the time, whether you're sitting, walking, sprinting, lifting or even stretching. You can't slump or lean forward outside your center of gravity and expect

to perform well. Being tall produces dramatic improvements in posture, improvements that will translate into better sport performance and reduced risk of injury.

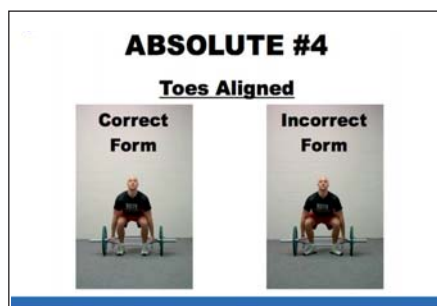
If an athlete is slouching, say, "Be tall!" Immediately, good things happen. If an athlete is bending at the waist with a rounded back, the quickest way to correct this problem is to say, "Be tall!" Fine-tuning comes with the other absolutes, especially keeping eyes on target and spreading the chest. All these terms are designed to help any athlete get into a correct and efficient alignment.



3. SPREAD THE CHEST

Spreading the chest and locking in the lower back work together, but you must visualize and coach both techniques. The lower back must *swoop* way in, into a concave position that exercise physiologists call the neutral spine. When athletes spread their chests, the lower back will start to lock in properly in a concave position.

Remember, you can use this same BFS absolute when coaching in any activity: running, jumping, stretching or sports practice. You will be a better athlete if the lower back is correct. You will be less prone to injury if the lower back is correct. And, all you have to do is say, "Spread the chest!"

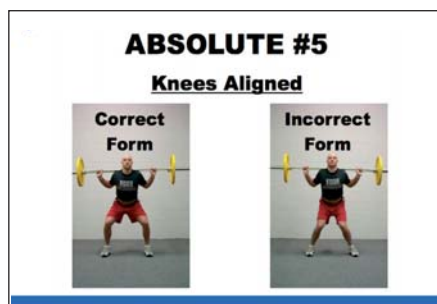


4. TOES ALIGNED

This may sound strange, but you should always strive to have the toes of an athlete aligned. What this means is that the toes should either be straight ahead (jump stance) or slightly pointed out for balance (athletic stance). We call this absolute *toes aligned*.

A total strength and conditioning program involves, of course, a lot more than just lifting weights. It also involves stretching, jumping and sprinting. The toes also need to be aligned correctly in all of these phases of strength and conditioning.

It does not take very long for an athlete to experience dramatic improvements in technique using the toes aligned absolute. Insist that all athletes act as assistant coaches and always coach their teammates when spotting or performing any phase of strength and conditioning. If your goal is to win, then all athletes and coaches must be unified in helping each other become great.



5. KNEES ALIGNED (KNEES OVER TOES)

The knees must be over the toes

at all times in the weightroom, in every phase of strength and conditioning, in every drill and in every athletic movement.

Many times the knees will be way forward in front of the toes. The athlete needs to learn to balance on the entire foot; the heels cannot come up. Be tall, spread the chest, eyes on target and sit with the hips well back. This will keep the knees aligned over the toes. Knees that are in perfect alignment will be straight from every position.



6. EYES ON TARGET

The eyes on target absolute is a useful tool in sports such as football. For example, it is late in the game and you are behind. You're on defense and you must create a turnover. Instead of tackling while your eyes are on the ball

carrier's chest, you could try switching to targeting the ball. At BFS clinics, athletes learn this absolute so thoroughly that by the end of the day all you have to do is say, "Eyes!" and an immediate perfect correction takes place.

Eyes on target is a great tool to use in the weightroom, especially with squats. When an athlete looks up at the ceiling while beginning the squatting movement at the top position, everything might seem comfortable and right. However, at the bottom position, things go bad. It is virtually impossible to look at the same point on the ceiling in the bottom position. Therefore, the eyes move, the head moves and the body moves out of position. Don't look down at the ground, as this can be as dangerous as tackling a ball carrier with your head down. Don't look up and don't look down, but stare intensely straight ahead and fix your eyes on a single point completely and totally throughout the entire lift.

Study these teaching points, write them down, post them on your weightroom, memorize them, and see the difference the BFS Six Absolutes will make. **BFS**



At BFS clinics, proper biomechanics is made simple using the Six Absolutes. Here BFS Clinician Jeff Sellers shows a young athlete how to apply the Six Absolutes to a core weight training exercise.