



Ice Jets

Melt Stereotypes



In a world where rude rules—especially at the hockey rink—this Dallas team dares to be different

by Kim Goss

Did we really need American pop idol Justin Timberlake exposing Janet Jackson at the Super Bowl to prove that our moral fiber today is barely a thread? Football—at the Super Bowl, of all things! Now, if it had happened at a hockey game. . . . There, you might expect something like a full-scale riot with team members beating each other senseless to get a closer look, only to be buried beneath a barrage of crazed fans believing that the guys in front stood up just to block their kids' view.

It's true that hockey, on the professional level, may not be

doing much currently to deserve a better reputation. However, hockey athletes, coaches and true fans recognize that the guts that it takes to play an aggressive sport like hockey are not the ones spilled on the ice. It's a tough sport that requires tough training. That very toughness is what makes competing in hockey—and competing well—such an accomplishment. Of course, if you are somehow able to combine maturity with toughness in an athlete, you'll have a player who is prepared to be tested beyond the limits of his training.

That fact may not be played

up in the pros, but it hasn't gone unnoticed in Dallas, where the Ice Jets embrace honor and statesmanlike behavior above jaw-grinding nerve and a gladiator attitude.

The Ice Jets Take Off

The Ice Jets Hockey Association program started two years ago when Paul Taylor and Karson Kaebel, two recently retired professional hockey players, and businessmen John Searfoss and Ralph Searfoss decided to start a hockey





Stefan Noesen

Photo: William Snyder

Worth area that the Ice Jets were developing kids and making good players great and average players better in a short time through correct training methods. By the following year the number of participants had grown to 150.

program. “Paul and I wanted to give something back to hockey, and we felt that through our experiences with so many different coaches and trainers we could bring all those training philosophies together. We wanted to teach kids the sport of hockey in depth and also make them better athletes,” says Kaebel.

The initial turnout for the first Ice Jets program was good, with about 40 kids participating. From there the word got around the Metroplex and the Dallas-Fort

According to Kaebel, there is a misconception about hockey that strength training and other forms of dry-land training are not important. “When I grew up, the only dry-land conditioning I did was some upper-body strength training, nothing like what we’re doing with the Ice Jets. I think the Europeans coming over in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s really changed hockey,” says Kaebel. “In the old days you came to training camp to get in shape; nowadays NHL players

train 12 months out of the year.”

One nationwide characteristic of hockey now is that the sport has changed so much that it’s difficult to play the sport part time.

“Athletes are becoming specialized at a fairly young age, so to play four or five different sports today is tough because the competition is so high. We’ve found that by the time athletes turn 12 years old, they probably need to specialize in hockey or pick other sports, and they need to do weight training, plyometrics and sprint work—the type of training the Ice Jets do.”

One training approach that the Ice Jets don’t believe is effective is the use of intensive training camps that many rinks hold in the summer. “The workload at these week-long, intensive camps is unrealistic,” says Kaebel. “Working four-, six- and eight-hour days and telling kids that this is what they have to do to play professional hockey—nobody in their right mind could ever work that hard, and there’s no quality repetitions.”

“Another problem with the camps,” Kaebel adds, “is that kids may learn some things but they’ll seldom get much better because there’s not much continuity among



Tyler Hope squats as he is spotted by his father.



All Weightroom Photo: Sasan Mehrabanzad

Arya Mehrabanzad performs the power clean, a core lift in the Ice Jets hockey program.

the camps. There are so many different trainers who all have conflicting opinions about stride work and types of dry-land training—some still don't believe in weight training. So the kids who attend several of these camps don't know what to believe."

Consistency of training is not a problem with the Ice Jets; the athletes make steady progress over time with a dedicated team that no one camp could offer. Parent Glen Noesen has a son, Stefan, who plays on the Ice Jets. Says Noesen, "We have played in other associations in Dallas, and the Ice Jets Hockey Association is the only one that truly focuses on skills development and imbeds the off-ice conditioning and training into the core of their hockey development philosophy. Also, the Ice Jets employ only professional coaches who have played hockey at very high levels and know what it takes to develop these athletes." As a side note, Stefan is one of the most talented athletes on the team; and although he is only 10, he can power clean bodyweight and deadlift double bodyweight!

Glen and Stefan Noesen represent one important aspect of

the Ice Jets program: Parents are encouraged to participate in the organization. Kaebel notes, "Our parents are very involved in our program, and it's very rewarding for the coaches when the parents are there supporting their kids. Our parents know what the program is, they respect the coaches and they give the coaches room to do what they need to do. The Ice Jets are like a family, and we need both player and parents—it all works together."

Another philosophy of the Ice Jets concerns travel. As the program was being created, the coaches agreed that the practices and dry-land training were the first priorities, not traveling to distant

competitions. "Traveling all over the United States, eight to ten times a year as some of these youth teams do, was not the best use of our players' time or money. It would be better to spend money on getting more practice on the ice," says Kaebel.

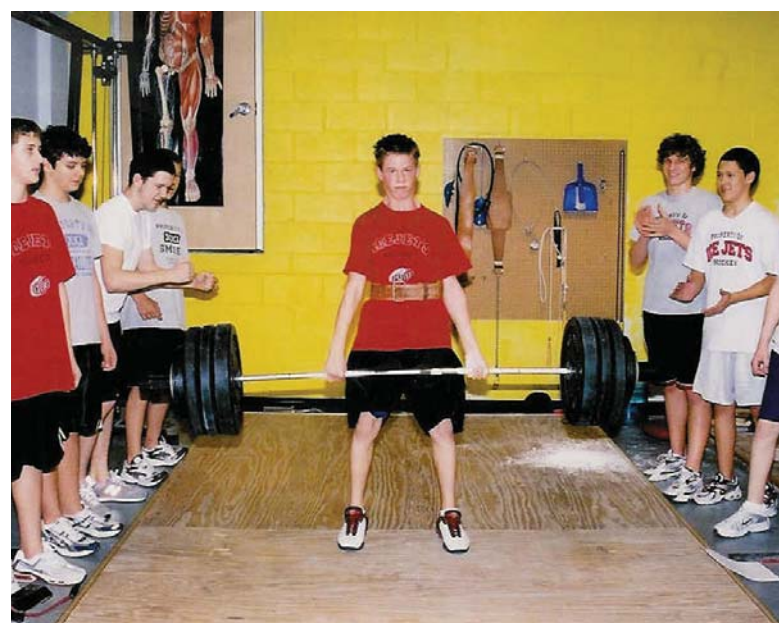
When the Ice Jets do compete, they frequently try to play teams that are several years older than they are. Explains Kaebel, "It's one of the unique



Photo: William Snyder



John Wickman performs a glute-ham raise while holding a medicine ball.



Chris Schnurr deadlifts a personal record as he is cheered on by his teammates.



Mike Molge performs a chin-up with added resistance.

aspects of the Ice Jets program. We believe that the only way to get better in the game is to compete against players who are bigger, faster and stronger than you so you are never in your comfort zone. A lot of coaches in youth programs want their teams to win every game. We want to win as much as the next team, but that's not our focus. If you're playing against competition that you're always beating, it's difficult to improve. In this sense, we don't mind losing because in the long run losing is going to make our athletes better."

Although older athletes in the Ice Jets program undoubtedly would excel in high school hockey programs, Kaebel says this additional play is discouraged after an athlete's freshman year. "High school hockey has just exploded in this area, but the elite players here are playing in Midget AAA or Junior A Hockey programs. That's where you're going to find your top-notch competition and get seen by college scouts—college scouts are not going to come watch a high school hockey game. We tell our players that it's fine to

participate in high school hockey as a

freshman, or maybe even as a sophomore, but then it's time to move on."

Gearing Up for Greatness

Throughout the season the coaches test their athletes throughout the program on speed, strength and jumping ability, and continually develop these qualities with dry-land sprint drills, weight training and plyometrics. "We find that athletes in our program often make dramatic changes in speed and strength, and we believe it's because we are very specific in what we want."

In terms of training details, the Ice Jets perform dry-land training three times a week, and lift weights two to three times a week. The coaches implement a proven training formula that offers a variety of innovative advanced dry-land training regimens such as on-ice overspeed sprint intervals, plyometrics, strength and speed training, dynamic balance and conditioning the anaerobic threshold capacity. Stretching is performed in groups, and at the Plano facility once a week the athletes take a 30-minute, hockey-specific stretch class taught by Erika Dove, a former ballerina with extensive experience in teaching stretch classes.

The Ice Jets weight training takes place in two Texas locations, the Blueline Ice Complex in North Richland Hills, and the Dr Pepper Star Center in Plano. The Plano on-site facility has several pieces of BFS equipment, and the Blueline on-site facility has all BFS equipment.

Both weightrooms emphasize free weights and core BFS lifts such as power cleans, hex bar deadlifts and bench presses. Auxiliary lifts include push presses, snatches, incline presses, glute-ham raises, chin-ups, fat-bar curls and various single-leg exercises.



Coach Ericka Dove helps David Ashton during the group stretch class.

Beyond Slap Shot

When asked if the movie *Slap Shot* has created any misconceptions about how hockey players behave, Kaebel replied, "Yes, not only on the ice but off-ice too. If you look at who is dominating this sport it's the Europeans, and these athletes are not dropping their gloves and fighting every shift—they're playing skillful power hockey. Hockey has established zero tolerance policies about unsportsmanlike behavior, and you find that at the college level there's no fighting allowed."

As for the Ice Jets' approach to off-ice behavior, Kaebel says there is no cussing and they teach their players to be respectful to the referees, their opponents and their teammates. The same high standards apply to the coaches. "None of our coaches cusses or is verbally abusive to their players, and on the road they are respectable people. Our coaches know they are role models for their athletes, and it's vital to teach our athletes at a young age that a hockey player is not a bum. Number one, he or she is a good person, and number two, a good hockey player. BFS

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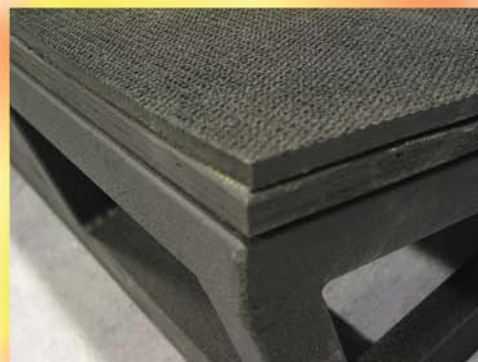
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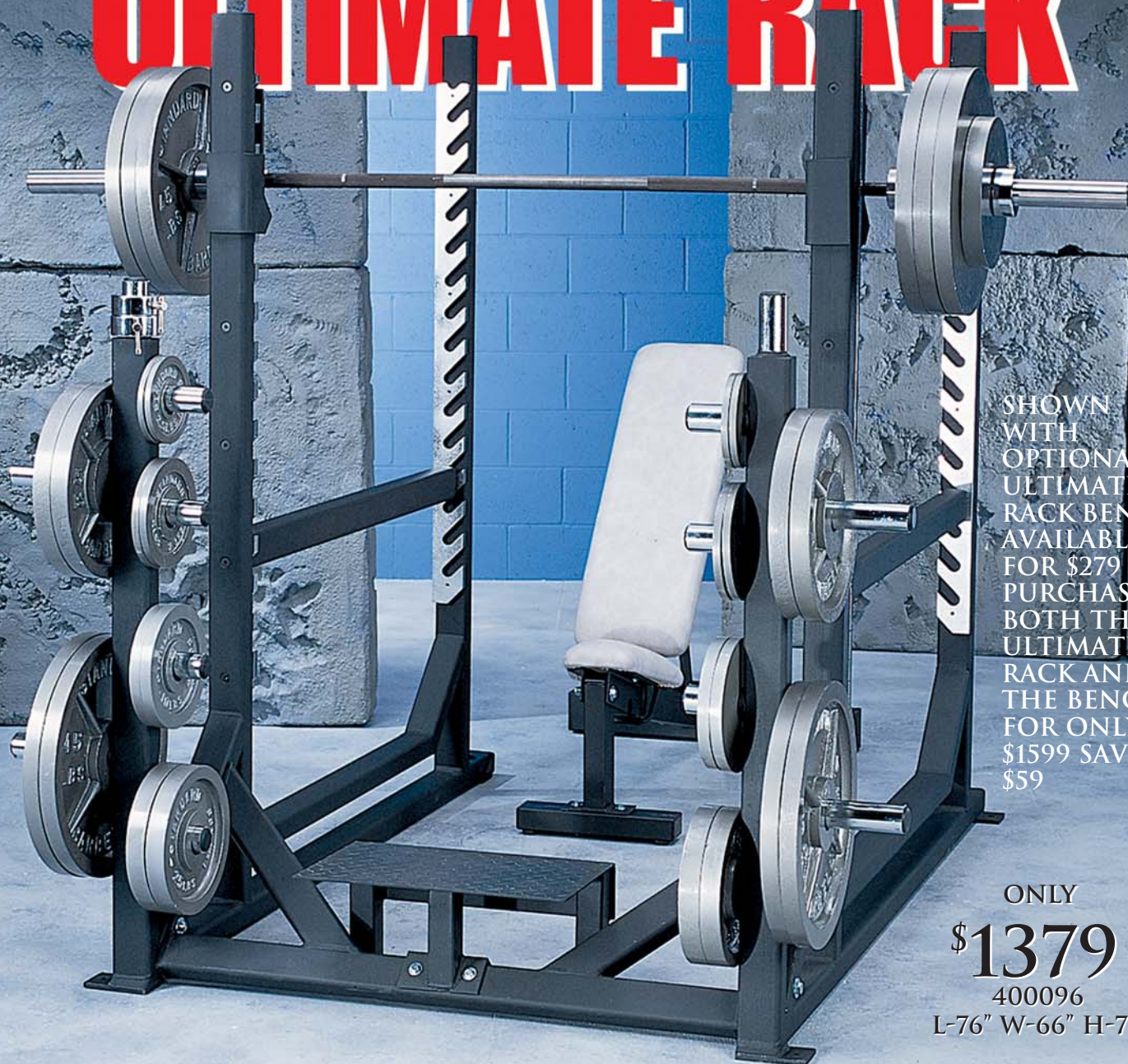
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