



## You don't have to be an athlete at Paris High School to enjoy the benefits of BFS

**A**s the bodyfat levels of Americans continue to rise and create havoc with our health and quality of life, most high schools are concerned about their students getting enough exercise. One school having trouble with enrollment in its weight training classes is Paris High School in Paris, Illinois. But the problem here is not about getting enough students to enroll and participate in their classes – it's figuring out ways to accommodate all the kids who want to train.

**The weight training class at Paris High School is so popular that last year one third of the entire school tried to enroll!**

“The weight training class has become so popular that last year about one-third of the entire school tried to enroll,” says Mick Roberts, a physical education teacher and head football coach at Paris. “We've had to limit the class to just juniors and seniors because we only have one class. Everybody else who wants to lift has to do so before school, at 7 a.m., when I open up the weightroom, or after school. I

hope to be able to add two or three more classes in the near future.”

Such enthusiasm wasn't always the case. When Roberts first came to Paris High School four years ago, technically they didn't even have a weightroom. “Our football and track complex was a separate facility that was about a quarter of a mile from the high school and inside the





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football locker room." For Roberts, such an arrangement just wasn't good enough.

## Setting Up Shop

When Roberts signed on at Paris four years ago, his first order of business was to bring the weightroom back to the high school campus. "Not only did we want to utilize the weightroom in a classroom setting for non-athletes, we also wanted our athletes to be able to use the weightroom before and after school. This was not possible with our off-campus weightroom, especially with our younger athletes without driver's licenses."

The first facility Roberts was able to acquire at the school for a weightroom was an auxiliary gymnasium with a tile floor. Because the few pieces of weight training equipment he had from the off-campus weightroom were in bad shape, Roberts set about trying to raise money for new equipment. With help from the school booster club, and student fundraising activities that ranged from selling candy to cleaning up cemeteries (!), eventually the school was able to raise \$25,000 for equipment. "We went with equipment that would set us up best to do the BFS program, and I insisted on getting power racks for safety reasons."

With his on-campus weightroom in place, Roberts proposed a weight training class like the one he had taught at his previous school. His proposal

was approved during his second year, and it's been going strong ever since. "We call it *Advanced PE*, but it's actually Bigger Faster Stronger," says Roberts. "We just made minor changes to make it fit the requirements of our curriculum."

"Bigger Faster Stronger is the best high school training program I've ever come across because the kids constantly see improvement and because it gives immediate feedback. We don't see plateaus with our kids, and I think that's one of the biggest pitfalls of many high school weight training programs. In other programs there are cycles of ups and downs and plateaus, whereas with the Bigger Faster Stronger program kids are continually motivated because they

constantly see improvement."

The use of the weightroom is equally divided between boys and girls, and athletes are especially anxious to sign up for it. "The nice thing about this class for our athletes is they can get their weight training done during the



day. Multi-sport athletes don't have to worry about staying late or coming before school, and they can get their workouts 12 months a year.

Robert's initial weight training classes begin with watching BFS videos and introducing the Six



**Record boards and wall murals, as shown in the top two photos, help motivate students and athletes alike. At bottom, many former athletes at Paris High School are serving in Iraq and are continuing to use the BFS program at their base.**

Absolutes of perfect technique, followed by hands-on teaching of the lifts and proper spotting techniques with the empty bar. “They have to show us they can perform the lifts and spot properly without any weights before they get into the program.” Such attention to safety, Roberts says, is one reason he hasn’t seen a single injury in the weightroom since he’s been at Paris.

Although the students learn how to design their own BFS workouts, Roberts uses the BFS Beat the Computer program when the students first begin their regular workouts. “One of the reasons we went to the Beat the Computer program was that it was so simple – I just had to enter the students’ maxes into the computer. It also prints out reports so the students can see their progress during the class.”

This is Roberts’ 20th year as a coach, and he has seen firsthand the growing problem of childhood obesity. Much of the problem, he says, is due to simple inactivity among our young people. “I hate to use the word lazy, but that seems to be the trend; and often the only exercise some of these kids get is what we have them do in our classes. There is a lot of debate about why kids are so inactive, but I will say that video games seem to be a major factor contributing to this problem.” Another issue is poor nutrition.

Robert’s approach to nutrition is to begin by encouraging the kids to eat well. “Some kids are always trying to take the shortcuts with supplements such as creatine, and we try to discourage that – getting stronger is something you just can’t take shortcuts on. We also tell our kids to stay away from caffeine and cut down on sugar. Teenagers all across the country drink too much soda and eat way too much junk food. It’s a major concern for me, both as a physical education instructor and as a coach.”

## Moving On Up

Construction of a cafeteria two years ago forced Roberts to move his weight training gym to two classrooms, each approximately 20’ by 40’, which he modified by knocking out part of the wall between the rooms to give more open area. “It’s a better setup for us because it is more secure and has air conditioning,” says Roberts. “We also put in a rubber floor, painted some school logos and record boards on the wall, so it’s actually pretty nice.”

Roberts is especially proud of his record boards, which he developed for the girls as well as the boys. “The first record board I did was for the boys, and after I put it up the girls got interested. The weights on the record board were too high for the girls – there aren’t a lot of girls out there squatting 450, for example – so we decided that the girls should have a board of their own.” In addition to

recording the core lifts such as the squat and power clean, the boards include the BFS dot drill.

“When Rick Bojak did our clinic, we told him one of the things we were concerned about for our athletes was quickness. Coach Bojak suggested that we emphasize the importance of the dot drill with our athletes, and we did this by making it a competitive event, with times posted on the record boards. It certainly made our athletes work harder at it.”

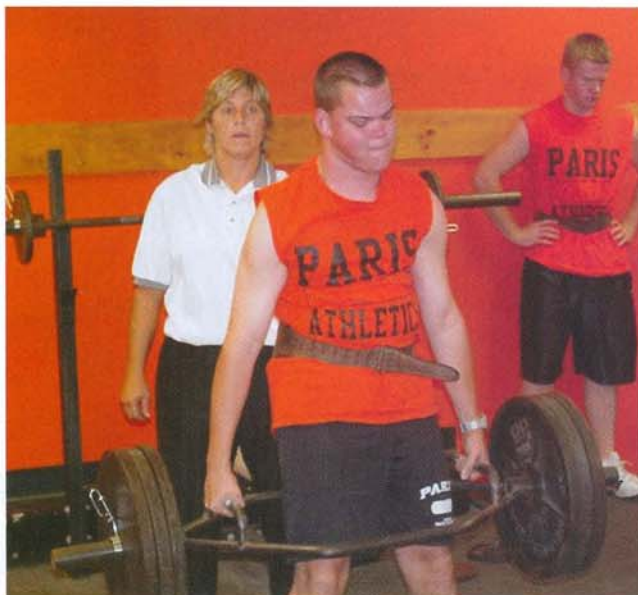
The success of the dot drill also inspired Roberts to purchase a BFS plyo ramp. “It’s a regular auxiliary exercise for the boys and girls.” The results? “In football this year I noticed our big kids had much better lateral movement, and it appears to be really beneficial to our basketball and baseball players. Another benefit is that it’s a great ankle strengthener – our athletes haven’t had any trouble with ankle injuries.”

Although few athletes from a single high school make it to the college gridiron, Roberts has found that those from Paris High School often have an advantage over other athletes. “I’ve had a couple of my players play IAA football – actually there are several of them playing right now – and I know their strength coaches. They were amazed at how much stronger my kids were compared to many of the kids coming out of other high schools.”

## A Tradition of Inspiration

It seems every teacher has a great story of a student who surpasses their expectations, and Roberts is no exception. Take, for example, A.J. Scheiner. “A.J. has been blind since birth, and when he first came to the school the administration didn’t want to put him in regular physical education classes because they didn’t think he could do much. They enrolled him in my weight training class, and my assistant Marline Terrell worked with him.

“I had my doubts about A.J. learning how to power clean, but now he power cleans – he even does




One of the most inspirational students at Paris High School is A.J. Scheiner. Blind since birth, he can squat 235, deadlift 370 and even does power cleans and box jumps. Assistant Coach Marline Terrell, shown here, has worked extensively with A.J.

box jumps with someone holding his hand,” says Roberts. “The only thing he doesn’t do is the dot drill. He’s also adding quite a bit of muscle and can squat 235, deadlift 370 and has worked up to 210 in the towel bench; when he started, he couldn’t even do one push-up. A.J.’s success inspires other kids, because here’s a kid with a definite physical disability who is really working his tail off and making gains.”

In addition to current students such as A.J., there are many Paris graduates who are inspiring Roberts’ students. “There’s a National Guard unit deployed in Baghdad right now that has nine soldiers who once played football for me. Our football players proudly wear stickers on their helmets to honor their commitment to our freedom.” What’s more, Roberts is still helping some of those soldiers with their workouts.

“Several of the men contacted me back in April because they had started working out again at their base gym and they wanted a workout from our Beat the Computer program. I printed off about three months of workouts and mailed them to Iraq; they just love that BFS program!”

Mick Roberts has been working hard to get high school students bitten by the weightlifting bug, and his efforts have made a difference. “I’ve

seen tremendous results from the class, and not just in those who participate in sports. Weight training is an activity that these kids can do all their lives, and it has a positive effect on their physical fitness and self-esteem. It’s the perfect fit for our physical education program at Paris High School and a great way for the students to maintain their fitness beyond their classroom years.” 



**Coach Mick Roberts**