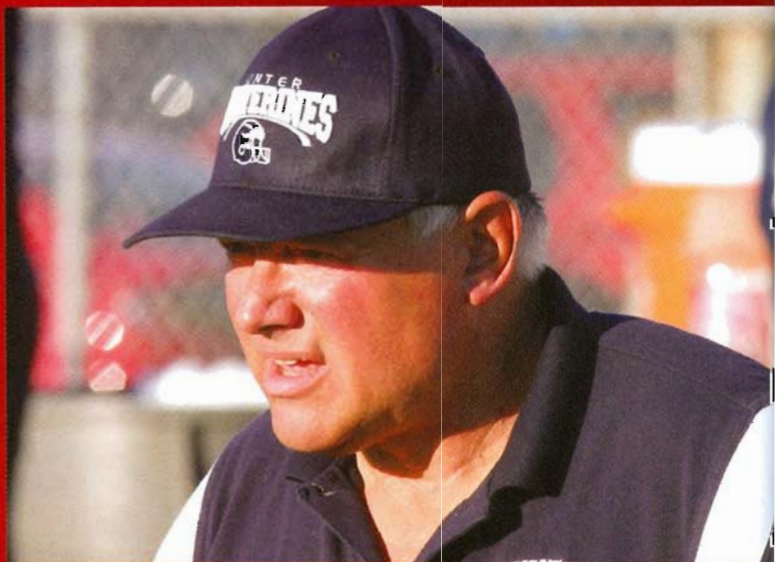


# In High Gear at Hunter High



"The Hunter line averages 270 pounds and they can move," says Coach Shepard. Chris Laloni takes full advantage of this massive hole. Laloni has 4.5 speed and averages over eight yards a carry.

*Reuniting with a former player to coach a winning season turned out to be a highlight of Dr. Greg Shepard's career*





Coach Wes Wilcken and Dr. Greg Shepard

One of the fascinating aspects of the game of football is that often there is fine line between winning and losing. Some call it luck. Indeed, a bad snap, missed tackle or one dropped pass can determine if you win a game or lose it, make the playoffs or clinch a state championship. At Hunter High School, the coaching staff found ways to make their own luck.

This story begins last March, when BFS CEO/ Founder Dr. Greg Shepard was preparing his weightlifting team, Team BFS, for the state championship on April 16. It would be a tough challenge to win the team title, as the perennial champions, the Hercules Barbell Club, had won the team title 20 years out of the past 24 years. To meet the challenge this year, Coach Shepard decided to visit Hunter High School in West Valley City, Utah, to see head football coach Wes Wilcken about recruiting some of his athletes for Team BFS.

Wilcken was an All-American tight end who had played for Coach Shepard when he was head coach at Granger High School in Salt Lake City, Utah, from 1976 to 1977. Says

Shepard, "I'm proud of Coach Wilcken – he's a great coach, better than I ever was. And just like a father who wants to see his son surpass his own accomplishments, it's rewarding for me as a coach to see someone I've coached reach greater heights and do a better job than I did. Coach Wilcken loves his players and they are very fortunate to have him as a head football coach."



Hunter High School is a relatively new school; the primary buildings were completed in 1990, and classes started that fall. Since then, enrollment has increased from 1,600 students to 2,200 in grades 10-12, with approximately 86 teachers. The school services a community consisting primarily of middle-class, suburban families, with approximately 28 percent of students coming from homes in which English is not the primary language. The school is also developing a tradition of winning in athletics, as evidenced by its state championship victory in football in 2003.

When Shepard approached the Hunter High School football players about joining Team BFS, there was so much enthusiasm that he was able to fill up most of the bodyweight classes. After just a few training sessions on the Olympic lifts during their regular weight training workouts, Shepard knew he had a team that would be a serious contender for a state championship. In fact, Shepard was so successful in recruiting that Team BFS has become one of the largest weightlifting teams in the country!

Two-hundred and eighty-pound Pauli Latu, an All-State lineman who bench presses 400, paves the way for 6-2, 200-pound running back Sotele. Sotele is graceful, fluid, has 4.5 speed and averages over eight yards per carry and power cleans 245 pounds.



Hunter High's Offensive Line: Preston Wood, Viliami Angilau, Pauli Latu, Ofa Filimoeatu and Fred Falepapalangi have been a dominant force in helping Hunter become one of the highest scoring teams in the nation.

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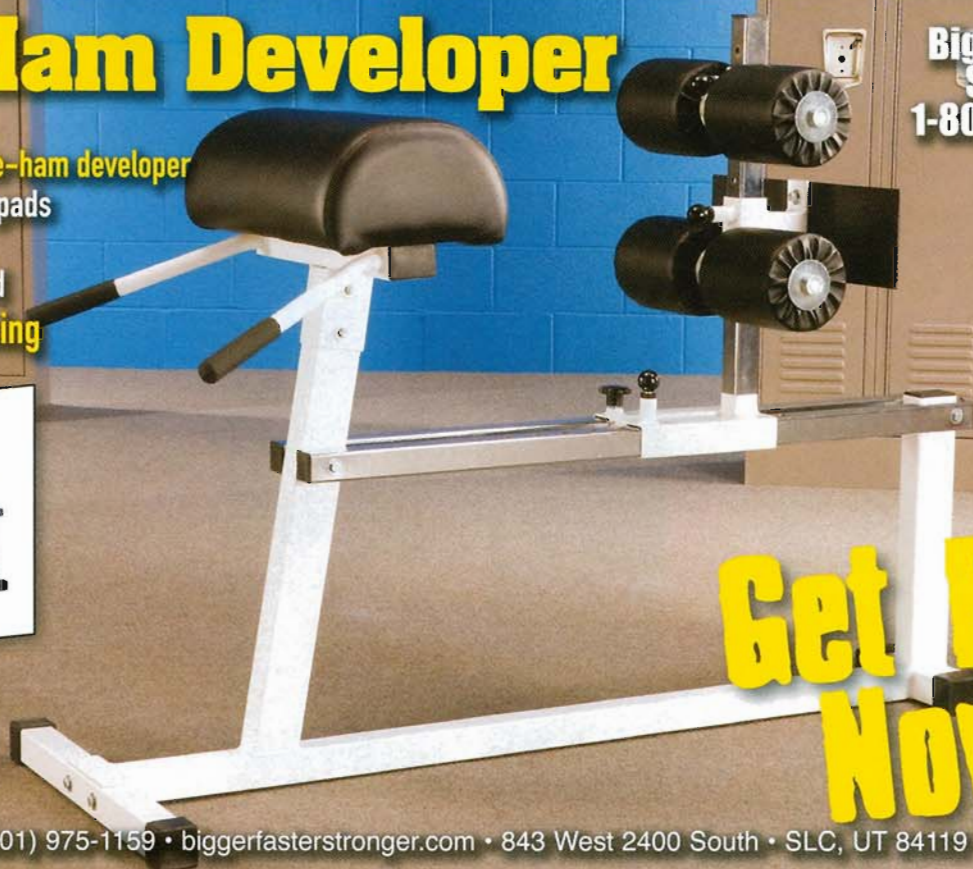
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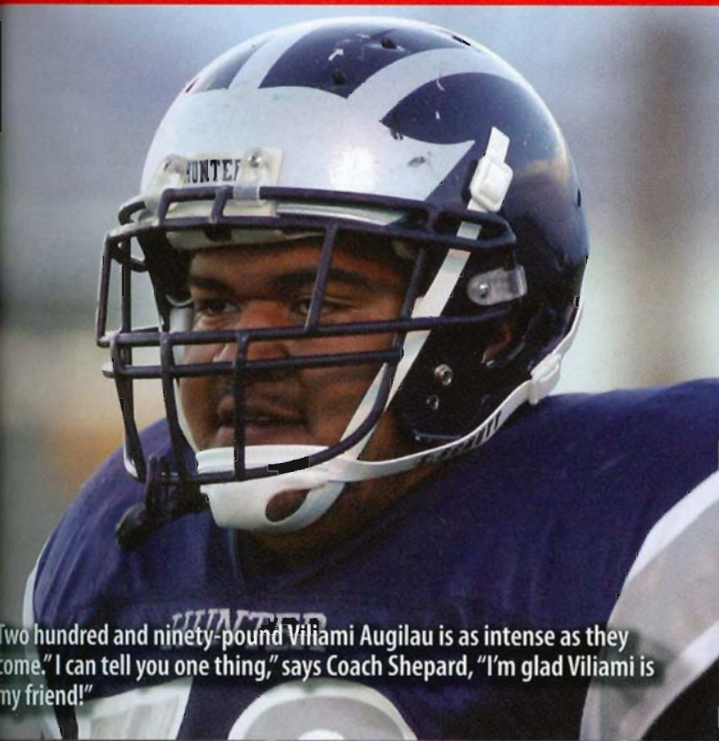
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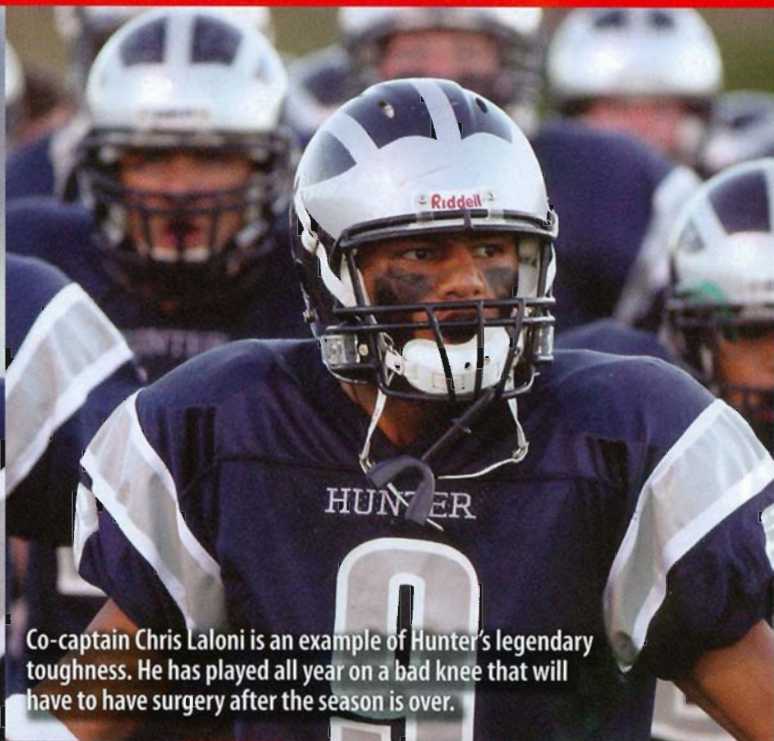
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Two hundred and ninety-pound Viliami Augilau is as intense as they come. "I can tell you one thing," says Coach Shepard, "I'm glad Viliami is my friend!"



Co-captain Chris Laloni is an example of Hunter's legendary toughness. He has played all year on a bad knee that will have to have surgery after the season is over.



Shawn Asiata is a 235-pound, bruising fullback with great speed and good hands.

All Photo by Scott Helm



Quarterback Cade Cunningham was also on Coach Shepard's weightlifting team.

At the state championships, each official team roster was limited to just ten athletes — other team members could compete, but their results would not count towards the team title. Team BFS had a full team; Hercules Barbell Club had a full team. Lifting in front of one of the largest crowds to ever attend state championships, every one of Shepard's lifters won first place. And as if the state championship wasn't enough, two Hunter High School athletes, Raymond Mulitalo and Tuli Maea, broke all the state records in their weight classes! Everyone was fired up from the

team's victory. Coach Shepard, who had been preparing to announce his retirement again from coaching, found himself not yet willing to leave the kids from Hunter High.

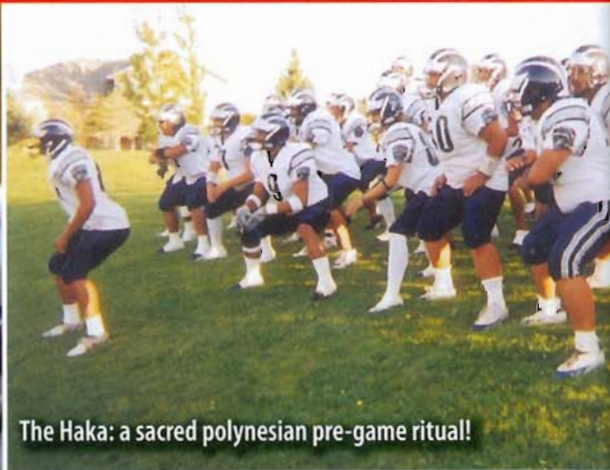
"The kids from Hunter High School had really gotten into the lifting," says Shepard. "They were enthusiastic young men and were extremely respectful to me, so I decided to talk to Coach Wilken about helping him coach his football team." This would be the first time Shepard had coached in 28 years.

### **Back in the Saddle**

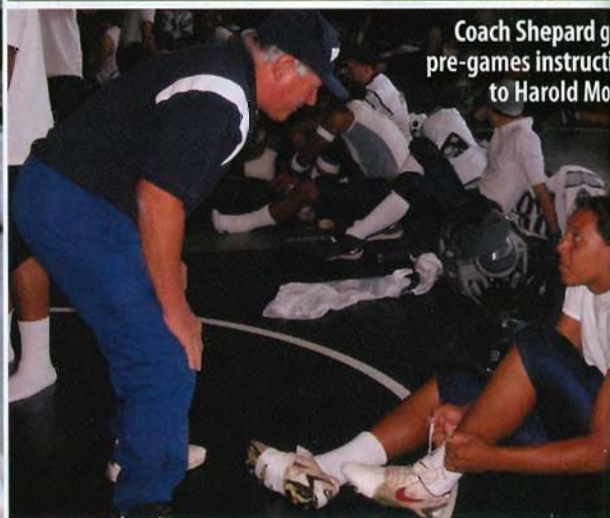
Because Coach Shepard is 63 and is deeply involved with ongoing business projects, he decided he'd better limit himself to helping with punt returns. Coach Wilken and Special Teams Coach Terry Cummings graciously accepted Shepard's offer, so on August 1 Coach Shepard started his first practice as an official Hunter High School football coach. Although he had promised himself to stick with just the punt return teams, Shepard soon found that he couldn't resist helping with the strength and conditioning program. "Working in the



225-pound fullback Juan Ayala, also one of the very finest linebackers in the state leads Soni Sotele.



The Haka: a sacred polynesian pre-game ritual!



Coach Shepard gives pre-game instructions to Harold Mo...

All Photo by Scott Helm

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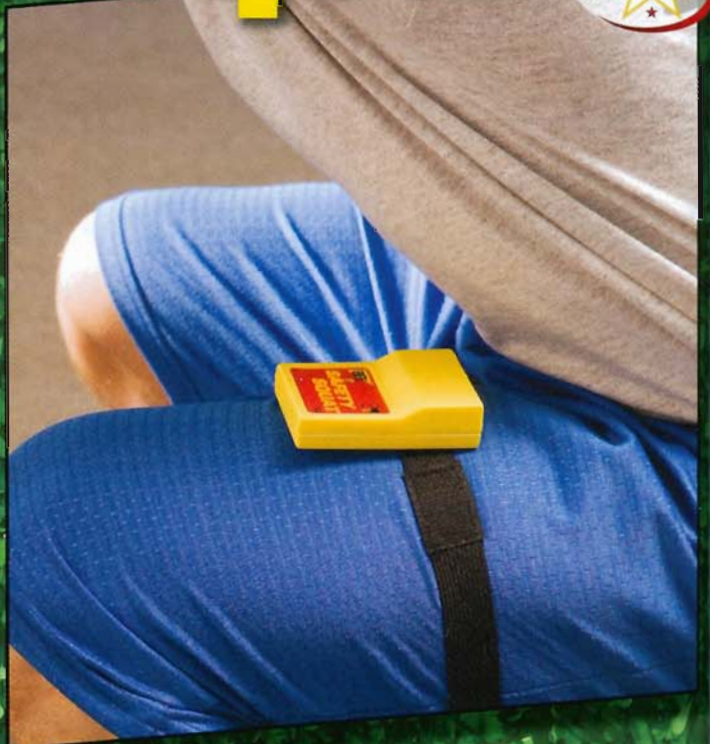
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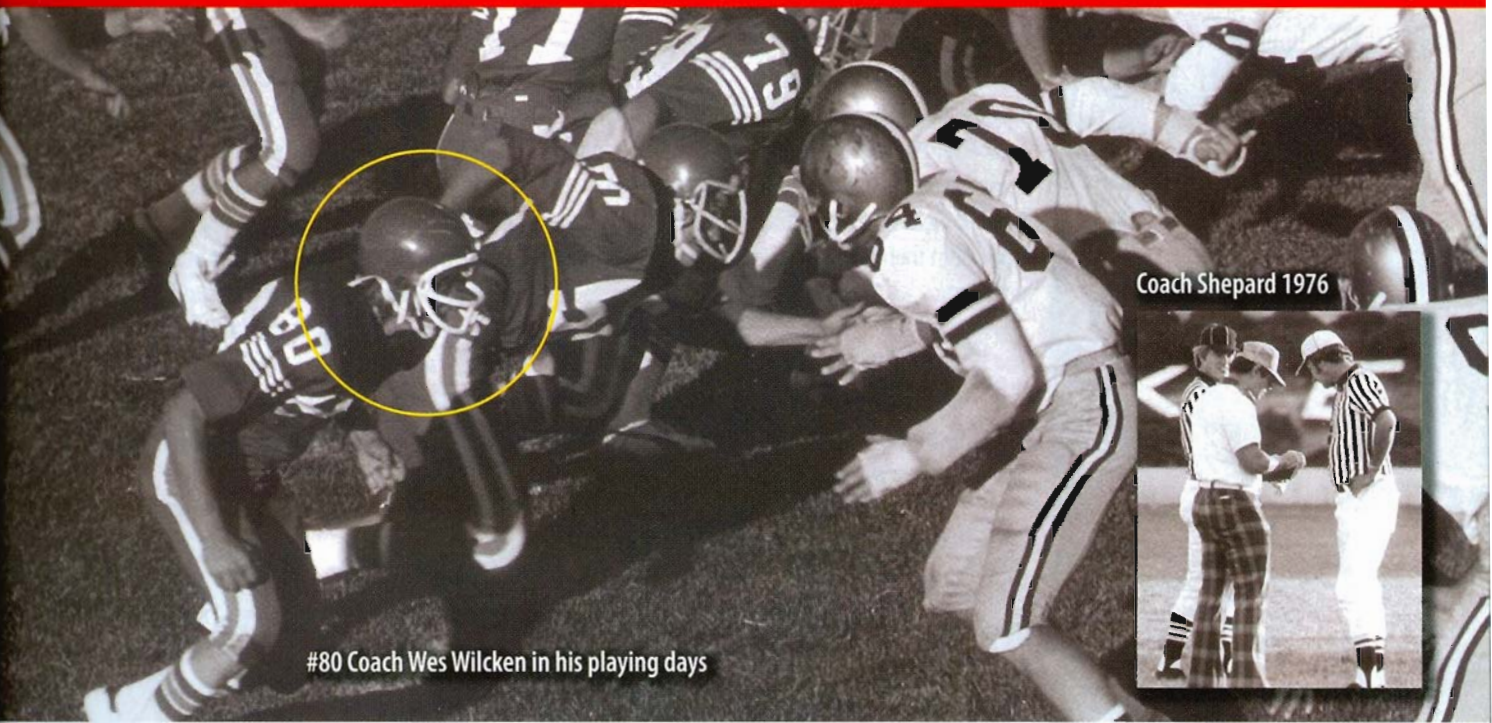
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#80 Coach Wes Wilcken in his playing days

Coach Shepard 1976



weightroom was a wonderful opportunity, because it meant I'd be personally coaching the BFS program again. And I'm happy to confirm, by golly, the BFS system still works!"

Shepard saw immediate improvements among the Wolverine football players, especially in the BFS core lifts such as the squat and power clean. "The BFS program is about gaining strength and breaking records," says Shepard. "It's not that way with our opponents – they settle for maintaining or even not working out at all." Says senior and co-captain Jesse Miriam, "When Coach Shepard told me we were going to lift in-season I was very happy because I love to lift!"

Although year-round training is key to the success of the BFS program, Shepard's one exception was in insisting that his players *not* work out during two-a-days, as he felt that it could cause overtraining. He told them, "It's just too much to ask and it's not going to work – trust me on this. We'll get back in the weightroom after two-a-days."

When the team was able to return to the BFS program, Shepard again did what nobody expected – he took it easy on them! In the first workout he had them do just one set of five with light weights; and in the second workout, two sets. The next week they were into the full

BFS in-season program. "I did the workout this way because I didn't want to make them sore, as some coaches would try to do in this situation," says Shepard. "I wanted them to get used to lifting again, perfect their form, and reinforce their spotting techniques."

Senior and co-captain Juan Ayala says that one of the key improvements that Coach Shepard made to the strength program was to organize their workouts better so that each time they came into the weightroom they knew exactly what to do, and this resulted in a stronger work ethic. "Coach Shepard also taught us to worry about the team, instead of yourself," says Ayala.

By week five Shepard saw that many of his players were stronger than they had been at the beginning of August. And by the end of the regular season, almost all his players were stronger in all the BFS core lifts. "We broke a lot of records and we made a lot of strength gains in season – that's the BFS way!" And even better, the benefits of their training carried over to the football field – by the ninth game of the season they had lost only one game, bettering the previous year's record of 7-4.

Just prior to the eighth game of the regular season, the father of one of the players from

the opposing team called Shepard to talk about weight training, and he let it slip that his son's team didn't lift during the season. Says Shepard, "The last time their players had picked up a weight was the first of August, so in my weekly motivational talk with our kids I told them, 'We are absolutely stronger than the team we're going to play tonight – and that's a fact! We've gotten stronger going from point A to point B, and now they are below their original point A. And because we haven't been content to just maintain, our offensive and defensive lines are going to blow them out of their shoes – and you can take that to the bank!'"

Shepard was right: The score was 28-0 at the half. It was a blowout.

Hunter High School finished the regular season with an 8-1 regular season record and was ranked as high as second in the state for several weeks. At the time of this writing the team is looking forward to the playoffs, the first two games of which will be played at home. Shepard's on-field coaching efforts paid off as his explosive punt-return team blocked or caused bad punts numerous times, with three being returned for touchdowns or near touchdowns. The "Hit Squat," as the punt-return team is called, is also an extreme threat on returning punts for touchdowns.



Sotelo squatting  
Laloni spotting



Juan Ayala:  
Hex Bar Lift

**Reflections of Love**

One special thing Coach Shepard did to motivate the Wolverines was to have the team write and use a creed. He posted the creed in the locker room, and was pleased to learn that many of the kids had posted it in their bedrooms. The Wolverine Creed is as follows:

- I am a Hunter Wolverine!
- I am a warrior and a member of a team whose goal is to win the state championship.
- I will always place the goal first.
- I will never accept defeat. I will never quit.
- I will never leave a teammate behind.
- I will walk, talk, think, and act like that successful person I want to be.
- I am willing to always work and perform at an Eleven pace. I stand ready to engage and defeat every opponent.
- I will live with honor both on and off the field for my team, my community, my family, and most of all myself
- I AM a Hunter Wolverine!

In addition to giving them the Wolverine Creed, Shepard did other things to motivate his players

and ensure that they developed character. For example, during the first week of practice Shepard noticed that use of the F-word was very prevalent among his players. That Saturday he spent 30 minutes with the team addressing that topic. "I guess my message must have hit home, because for the whole season the use of that terrible word has not been a problem, either with the JV team or the varsity," says Shepard. "I have talked to the referees during halftime about it, asking them, 'How are we doing on the F-word?' and they tell me, 'Coach Shepard, the players on the other team are using it, but not your players.' I was very pleased to hear that."

Asked what advice he would give to other coaches who work with young men, Shepard referred to a book written by Jeffrey Marx, *Season of Life*. "I used this phrase from the book with our players. 'I asked them, 'Do you know what my job is?' No one answered, and many just looked at me with a blank stare. 'My job is to love you, and to help you with your dreams and goals. Your job is to become great young men.' That message really helped the relationship the team and I have, because they know I'm sincere and proud to say that I love them.'" **BFS**

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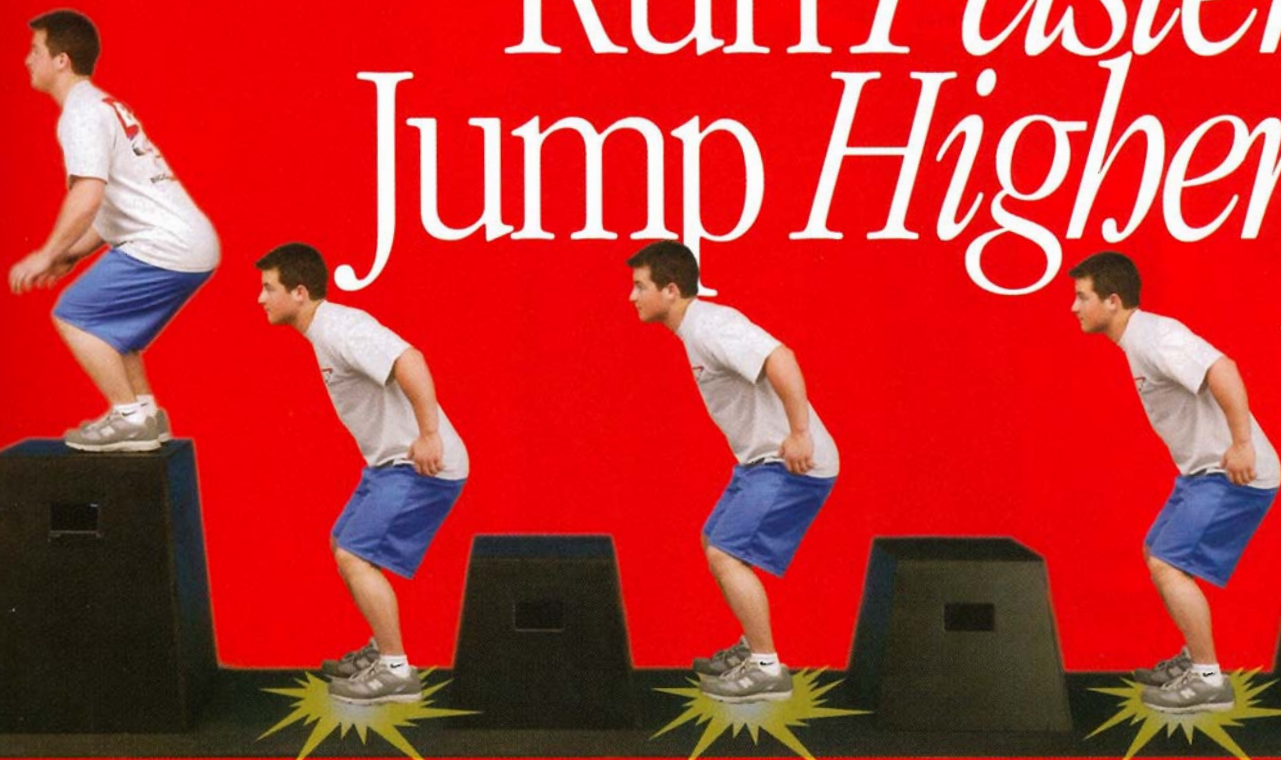
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