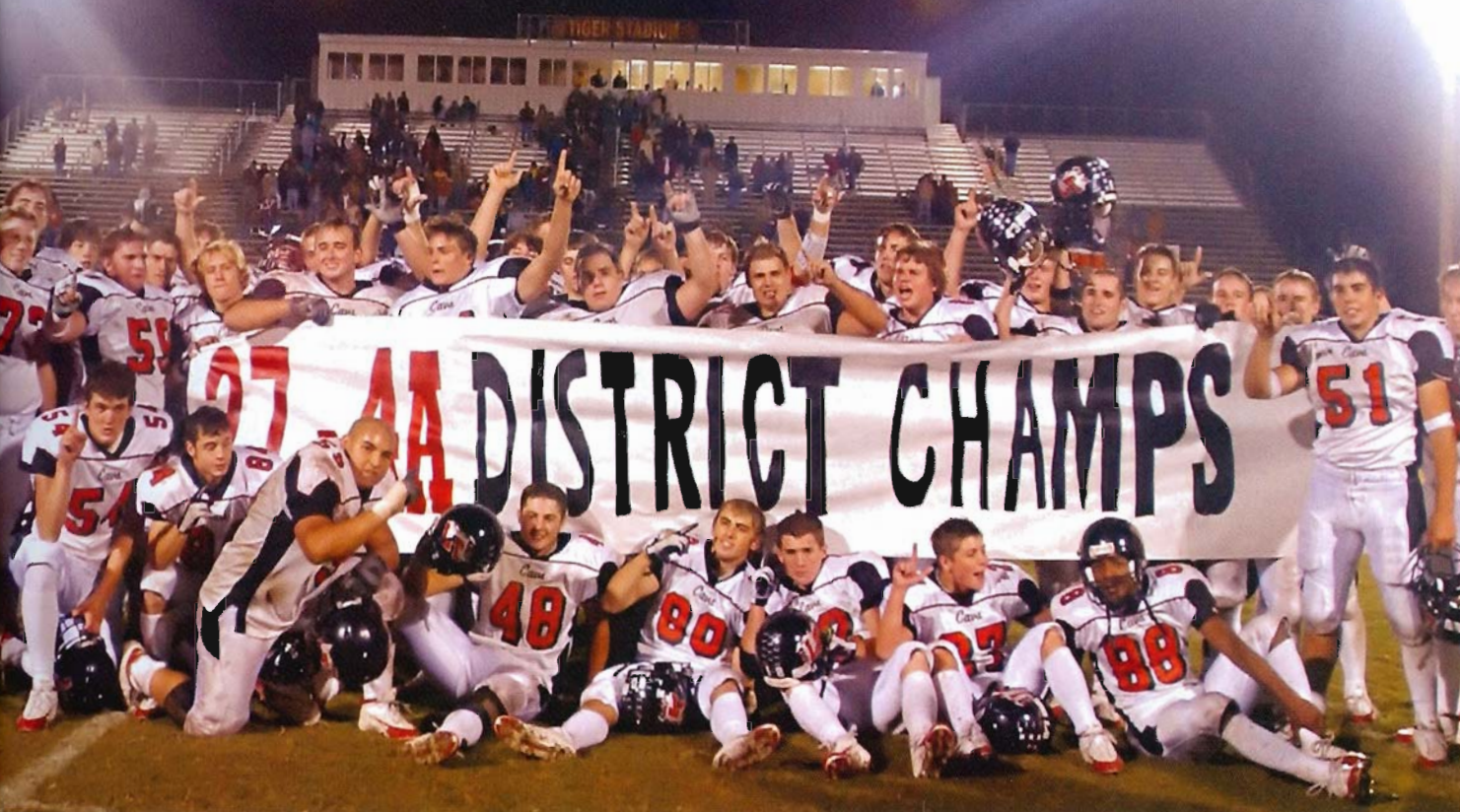


#10 Todd Reesing

From 1-19 to District Champs: Lake Travis High School

A cellar-dweller team produced its best season in 24 years



Who in his right mind would take on the challenge of coaching a high school football program that was 1-19 and had only two playoff berths in 24 years? Jeff Dicus, that's who. Three years ago Dicus accepted the job as head football coach at Lake Travis High School in Austin, Texas, and life has never been the same since.

"I saw the Lake Travis High School football program as a great opportunity," says Dicus. "Friends told me that this was not the type of job that anyone would want; but after looking into it, I became convinced the team had great potential. I knew it was going to take plenty of hard work, as well as support from

the administration and community, and that's what's exactly what happened."

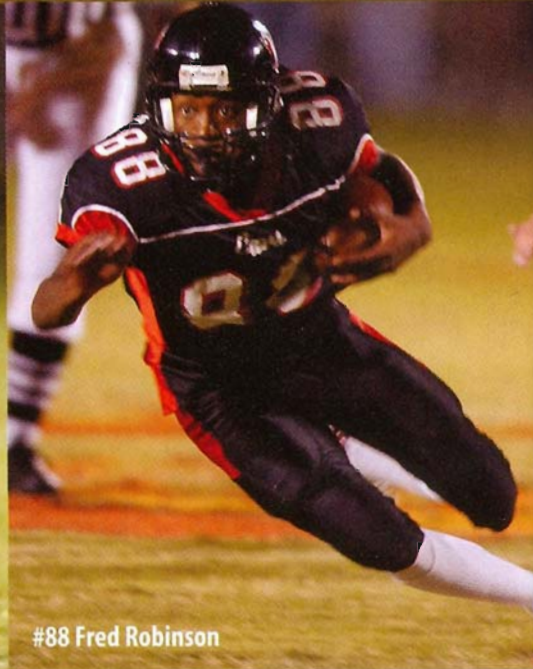
Dicus says his first order of business as head coach was to establish a new level of discipline within the Cavaliers' program. "I wanted to change attitudes and work habits. Before I got here the kids didn't have much structure going for them in off-season and in-season programs. I brought in a 12-month program, and everybody really jumped on it." Dicus says one reason he was able to sell his ideas so easily was that he was able to provide examples of his success in turning around other high school football programs that hadn't seen much glory on Friday nights. For

example, the year before Dicus took over the football program at Mission High School in Mission, Texas, the team had finished the season with a 4-6 record. After a year with Dicus as head coach, the team finished 14-2.

The key to success with young athletes, Dicus is convinced, is pride. "I think that was missing at Lake Travis before I took over. The kids didn't seem to connect with who they were and who they were representing." Dicus took a look around the school and figured that in their case, the cure for lack of pride would involve a lot of elbow grease. By the second week on the job Dicus had recruited 45 parents to help him paint the field house.



#14 Joshua Joseph



#88 Fred Robinson

Not only did he give the field house a new look, he ordered new uniforms, new shoes, a new record board, and chairs for the varsity kids in the locker room. "We changed the whole atmosphere, and we started treating our kids like champions — it changed their way of thinking, and I know it contributed to the success we started to have."

Dicus uses the BFS program for his athletes at Lake Travis, just as he has throughout his coaching career. He says that the major mistake coaches make when implementing a new workout system is failing to stress qual-

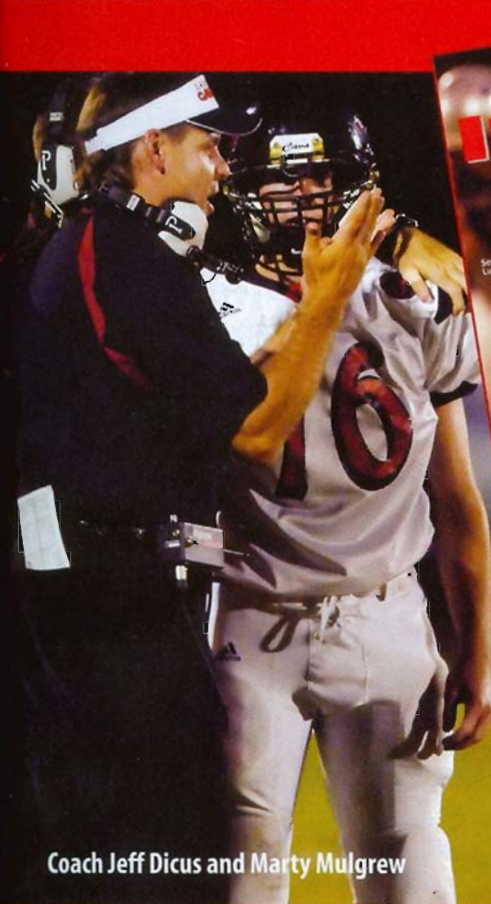
ity over quantity in training young athletes. "I've always been in charge of the strength and conditioning at every school I've coached at, and I see many coaches trying to do too much and not sticking to the fundamentals. For example, I don't believe kids should be in the weightroom over an hour and 15 minutes. If a kid is in the weightroom longer than that, we're working out too long."

One of the weightroom fundamentals Dicus stresses is breaking records. "We try to instill in our athletes that when they come in to work out, they are working to break records.

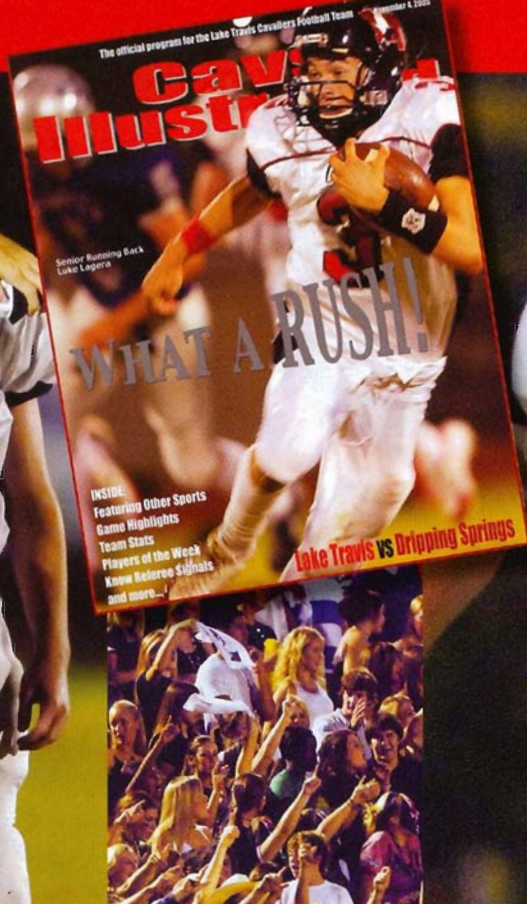
If we're doing sets of ten, on the last set we try to get 11; if we're doing fives, we try to get six; and if we're doing threes, we go for four. In everything we do we try to get a little bit more, and that mentality also has carried over to the football field."

From Worst to First

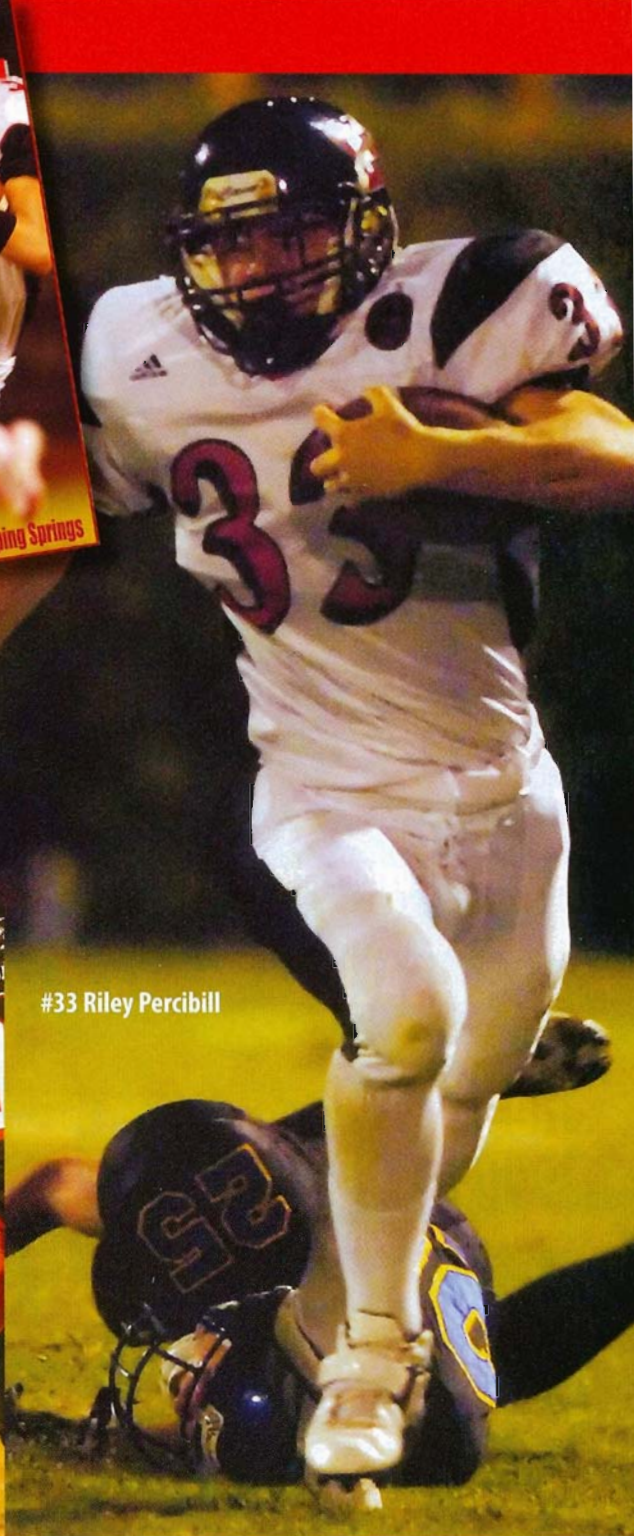
At first glance, the Cavaliers' first season with Dicus might not seem like much of an improvement: They finished 3-7. But a closer look at the numbers shows two crucial games were lost by only a total of six points — games that, had they won, would have gotten the



Coach Jeff Dicus and Marty Mulgrew



#4 Jesse Brookshire




#33 Riley Percibill

team into the playoffs. The following year was a different story, an even better story.

In 2004, led by junior quarterback Todd Reesing, the team finished 8-3 and won the district championship for the first time in school history! Many post-season honors followed, with Reesing winning the Texas Class 4A Player of the Year, wide receiver Fred Robinson earning 2nd team all-state, and running back Luke Lagara receiving honorable mention all-state.

At the time of this writing, Lake Travis is 7-0 and is looking to challenge for the state championship. What's more, Dicus says he has five legitimate Division 1 players, including running back Joshua Joseph, who transferred to the school mid-season when Hurricane Katrina destroyed his family's home in New Orleans. Despite learning a new offense, Joseph made an immediate impact on the team, scoring two rushing touchdowns and two receiving touchdowns in his first game.

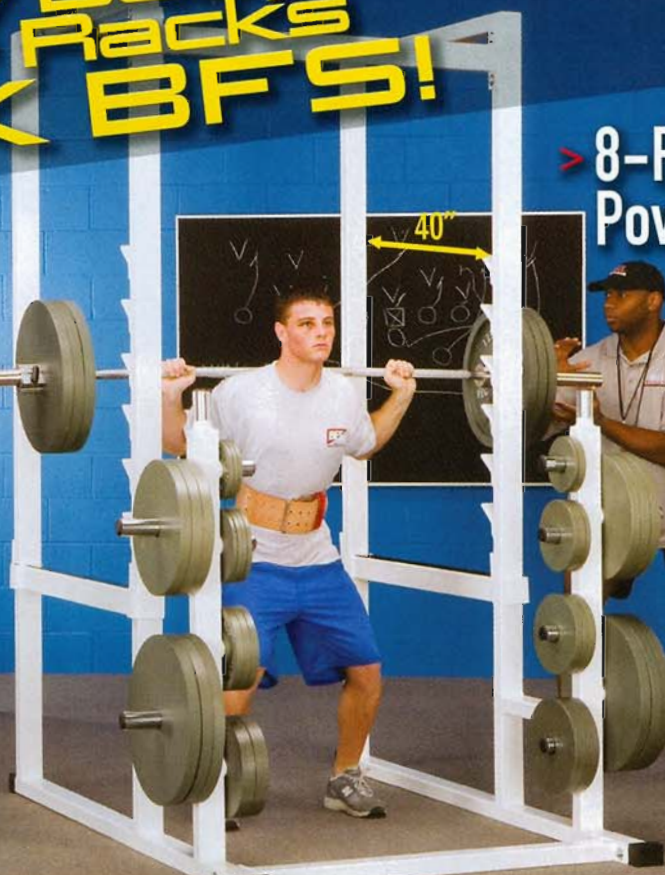
Regardless of how this season ends for the Cavaliers, Dicus is pleased to see that his teaching has had positive effects in other aspects of his players' lives. "The work ethic we teach in the weightroom has definitely carried over into the classroom. The kids understand that this is a complete program, and that we are concerned about them not just progressing as football players but also growing as persons. This year we have 27 seniors, and they are absolutely the best group of kids I've ever been around." 

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