

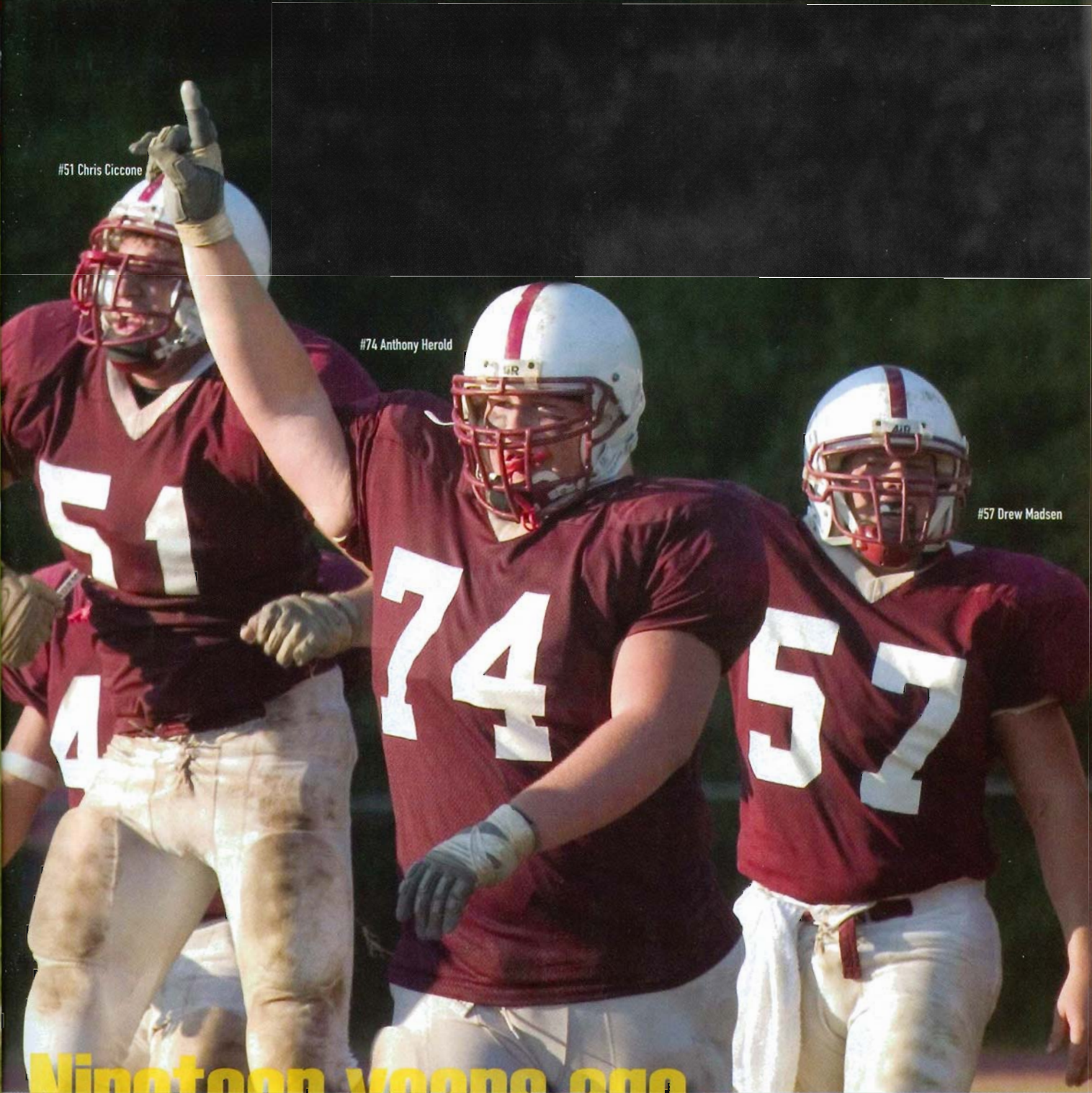
#44 Alex Parson

# PUTTING THE TEAM FIRST

## *at Lawrence High School*

**The Cardinals had a good strength program; they just needed to take it to the next level**





#51 Chris Ciccone

#74 Anthony Herold

#57 Drew Madsen

## Nineteen years ago

Nineteen years ago Rob Radice was a freshman at Lawrence High School, a Group III public school in central New Jersey. He played on the offensive and defensive lines for the Cardinals under head coach Ed Shirk and graduated in 1986. But although Radice's football playing days ended after college, he was always true to his school.

For the past 23 years the Cardinals' football program has seen some great seasons, some good seasons, and a few, well, not-so-good seasons. "At times we were 9-0, and at times we were 2-8 — we were up and down." When Radice took over the head coach position five years ago from Len

Weister, he inherited a Cardinals team that was just coming off one of those "down" seasons, as they had finished with a 2-8 record.

The following three years the Cardinals managed to win exactly half their games each year, but this was followed by a 4-6 record. Radice was perplexed—he knew he was doing a lot of things right, one of which was implementing the BFS program, but something was missing in his strength and conditioning program. And he figured John Rowbotham was just the guy to help him find it.



## Rediscovering BFS

A BFS clinician and son of BFS President Bob Rowbotham, John met Radice after the end of the 2003 season at the Atlantic City Mega Clinic in Atlantic City, New Jersey. They had several lengthy talks about the Cardinals' conditioning program, talks that helped Radice develop an action plan to take his program to the next level. "We were following the BFS program, but John pointed out that we really weren't doing it quite right." This year, Radice took his program to another level by bringing out BFS clinician Lance Neven for a BFS clinic.

What Nevan did was to help the Cardinals perfectly implement the BFS program and create unification of all sports. Among the problems they addressed were that the athletes were not warming up with the Dot Drill, not concentrating on flexibility, not spending enough time on technique in the power clean and not hitting the bonus reps in the program. Those changes, along with Radice's commitment to developing a unified school lifting program with BFS, made a big difference and resulted in the best testing results ever in school history.

"I just can't believe how well these changes worked," says Radice. "We had 33 kids bench over 200 pounds, 17 bench over 225 and 18 kids squat over 300 pounds. We also had four guys bench over 300 and squat over 500. "It was not just about making personal records but developing the confidence that came with it." Weightroom pride soon translated into team results.

"When we were 4-6, we were not as confident as we should have been going into games and we were not certain if we were going to be beat up physically," says Radice. "This year the players felt that they were going to be more physical than their opponents and that they were going to be competitive in every single game – they felt that they could compete against the best teams in the state." And although the Cardinals didn't win a state championship, the team achieved three more wins than the previous year, won the conference title and made the playoffs.

BFS Clinician Lance Neven was brought in to Lawrence High School to teach the value of unification.

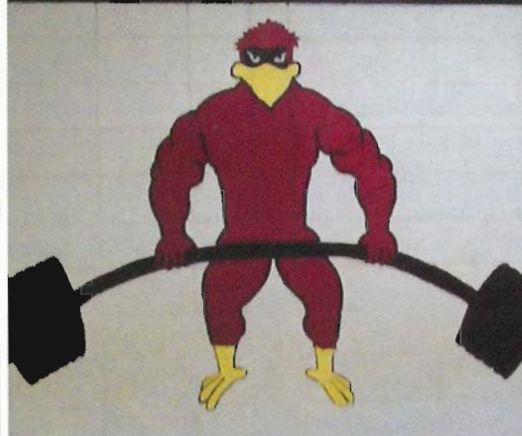




## RULES OF THE WEIGHTROOM



1. When lifting freeweights always use collars and a spotter.
2. Keep arms, hands, and long hair away from moving parts of machines.
3. Do not slam or drop dumbbells, free weights, or moving machine parts.
4. Return all free weights and bars to the appropriate place after each use.
5. Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.



As another plus, nine Cardinals of the 2004 team went on to play in college. Anthony Herald was one of those athletes. Radice said that as a junior, Herald lacked strength and flexibility and wasn't good enough to play varsity. "As a senior he followed the BFS program to a T, ended up being a starting tackle on the offensive line and had a great season. Next year Herald will play at a division III college in New Jersey. He never would have had a chance to do that if not for his lifting and conditioning program — it made him into a player."

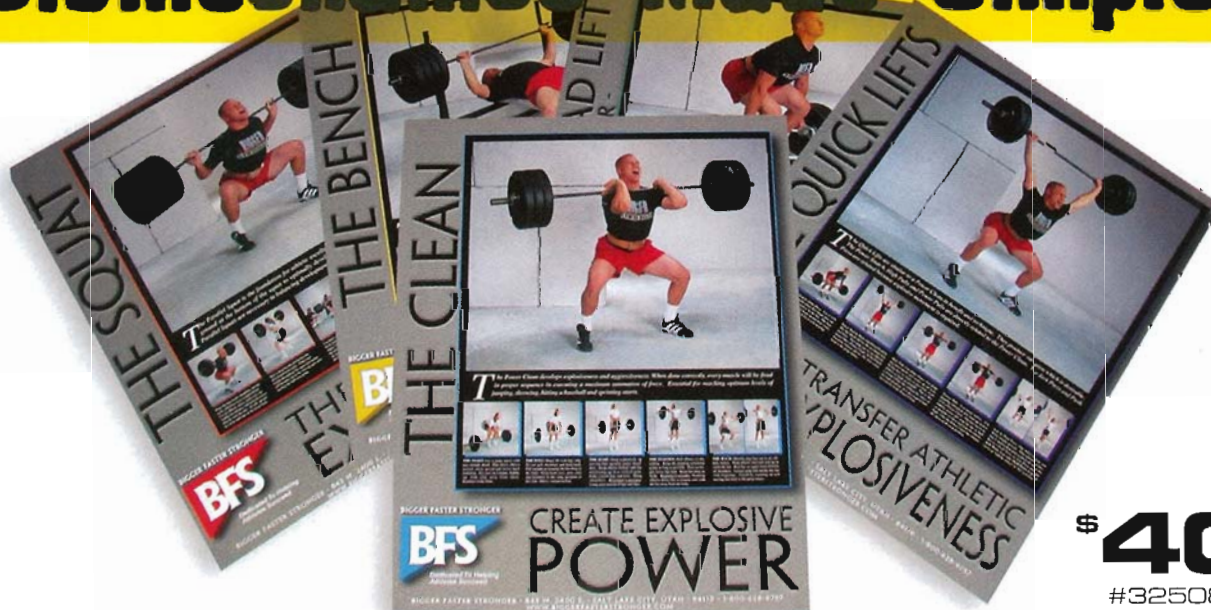
This season, wrestling, baseball, and girls' basketball and softball will be joining the football team in using the BFS program. Says Radice, "That was the rationale for bringing in Coach Neven at the clinics, to sell the BFS program schoolwide and have the athletes in season all using the same core lifts. The biggest problem I have is when athletes don't perform the core lifts and instead use workouts from muscle

magazines, which don't have anything to do with athletics."

Although Radice has been exposed to other workout programs, especially those being used in Division I colleges, he doesn't consider them appropriate for the high school environment. "At the high school level, one, you don't have that much time to spend in the weightroom and, two, you're not dealing with division I athletes — you're usually dealing with beginners or maybe a few kids who might play at the division III level." Another issue is the fact that kids in high school mature at different rates. "I have freshmen who are on the regular BFS program, but I have a couple of sophomores who are still on the readiness program just because they're not ready to jump into a heavy weight program."

Another key factor in a successful weight training program is motiva-

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tion and participation. "Our participation since implementing the BFS program has just gone through the roof. When I took the program over I had maybe 20 kids participating in the weight training program; this year I have almost 85 and the kids are training 12 months a year – I'm just thrilled about that!"

Despite the numbers of athletes training with weights, Radice says safety has not been an issue. "I've been supervising the weightroom in the spring and the summer for the last five years, and I haven't had one serious injury in the weightroom." As for injuries on the field, Radice says he hasn't had a serious injury on the football field in the last two years and that the overall injury rate has gone down.

Now that the missing elements have been identified in his strength and conditioning program, Radice is certain that the athletes and team sports at Lawrence will continue to reap the benefits. "I think that first of all the kids need to know that what you're teaching them is a

good system since there is so much information out there about lifting weights and how to get yourself physically ready to play sports. It's a matter of convincing them they'll see gains and won't have plateaus because the sets and reps change each week. They are thrilled when they are breaking records, and they know that by working hard in the weightroom they are going to play at some level."

Besides developing better athletes, Radice says he strives to develop character among his athletes. "We tell our athletes to ask themselves how their behavior will affect the team. Are they being unselfish, are they putting the team first, and how are their decisions going to affect the team? At Lawrence High School no one player is bigger than the team."

The same goes for the team's coach, that is, if you're Rob Radice. If your strength program doesn't work for the team, hey, you change your program. It's all about putting the team first. **BFS**



Keith Kent performs the BFS towel bench press



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