

Lutheran High North: Small School, BIG Punch

A commitment to unification has paid off for these athletes from Houston

When it comes to state educational systems, it's not true that everything is bigger in Texas. But it is true that sometimes smaller can be better; just ask the students and staff at Lutheran High North, a small private school in Houston, Texas.

Lutheran High North came to our attention when they decided to bring out BFS vice president John Rowbotham for a Be an 11 seminar and a Total Program clinic in August of 2006. With nearly half of the 300 students attending, along with kids from the feeder middle schools and many parents, the clinic certainly made an



impact at LHN. For example, their Lions football team had gone 1-19 the previous two years, but in 2007 they improved to 7-3 (two of the teams they lost to made the final four) and they made the playoffs. Other sports also did well, such as the girls softball team, which got into the final four, and the girls volleyball team, which reached the elite eight.

Rowbotham was so impressed with Lutheran High North that we decided to give athletic director Alex Payne a call and ask him to discuss his success with BFS and share with us the private-school experience.

BFS: First, tell us about this amazing turnaround in your football program.

Payne: Two years ago we got a new football coach, Erik DeHaven, so the program got some fresh blood, so to speak. And as the new AD, one of the first things I did was to bring BFS to our school. Coach DeHaven

thought it was a great idea, so we brought out Coach Rowbotham and had all our athletes attend.

BFS: What are some of the advantages of attending a private school?

Payne: There's the high quality of the education here and the fact that a lot more attention goes to each

student; also, we are able to get the kids involved in a lot more activities than public schools generally do. At Lutheran North, we also promote the idea that you can get a quality education along with a meaningful ministry.

BFS: Do you find that in some of the larger schools often kids don't get



#24 Aaron Gillory,
#60 Justin Morgan



Head Football
Coach Erik DeHaven



The Lions turned around a 1-19 program to a 7-3 record this year and a place in the playoffs.



Erica Thompson

Christina Banta



Stephanie Bonura

Nicole White, Hannah Brockermeyer, Ellie Murdock

Last year the girls softball team made the final four, and the girls volleyball team made the elite eight.

enough personal attention?

Payne: You bet! We get kids who transfer in because they and their parents felt that they were just a number in public school. I know every student here – I can tell you the name of every single student, from the band kids to the choir kids to the kids who play football. With a small, private school,

teachers have the opportunity to build more personal relationships with their students.

BFS: How many of your kids go on to college and get scholarships?

Payne: Last year 96 percent of our graduates went on to college, and we had \$1.6 million in scholarship offers to these students. Many of the remaining students enlist in the military.

BFS: If one of your students is interested in playing sports at the college level, is it difficult for them being from a private school?

Payne: No, we don't find that at all. One of our kids who graduated from here two years ago is now play-

ing at the University of Houston – he made the traveling squad as a freshman. We have four kids on our football team who got offers from Division I schools, and we have others who are considering smaller colleges and playing football there.

BFS: Is it easier for an athlete to get looked at now, what with combines and other events that college scouts endorse?

Payne: Absolutely. If a kid has talent, speed and strength, they're going to get looked at. Plus, our coaches do a good job of getting the names of our kids out there to the college coaches and making sure they are involved in those activities that will



J.T. Thomas

increase their opportunity to play at the next level.

BFS: Do you promote the idea of the multi-sport athlete?

Payne: We want our kids to be involved in several sports. Our basketball coach, Dr. Jan Lohmeyer, is very supportive of his kids playing football – he believes football makes his players more aggressive on the boards. All five of his starters play football. Same thing with our girls, as you'll see the same girls who play volleyball also play basketball and softball.

BFS: Do you have any advice for someone who is considering becoming an athletic director at a private school?

Payne: Obviously, if you want to go into this profession, you have to enjoy working with athletes. And to be honest, there are certainly some things that can drag you down as an athletic direc-

tor, such as long work hours and poor officiating, but there are also a lot of positives. Our graduates come back to visit Lutheran High North, almost on a weekly

basis, and tell me about their lives. I can't describe the feeling I get seeing these young people grow into successful, mature adults. That's what keeps me going. **BFS**

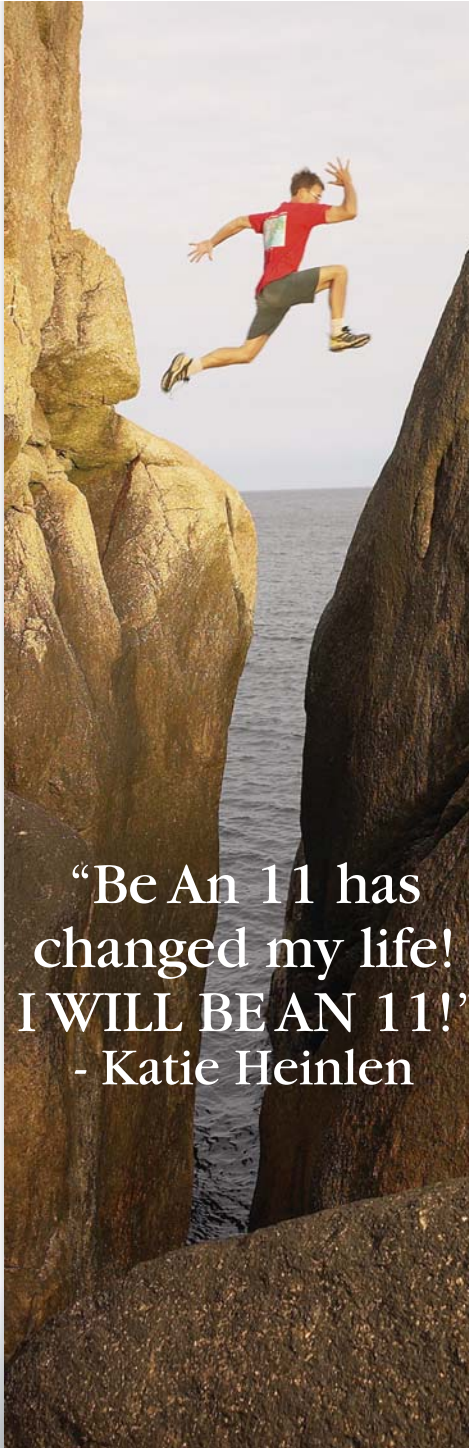


Aaron Gillory

The Lions have implemented the BFS program and encourage not just performing each lift with perfect technique but also using proper spotting techniques.



Rocky Faurot



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