

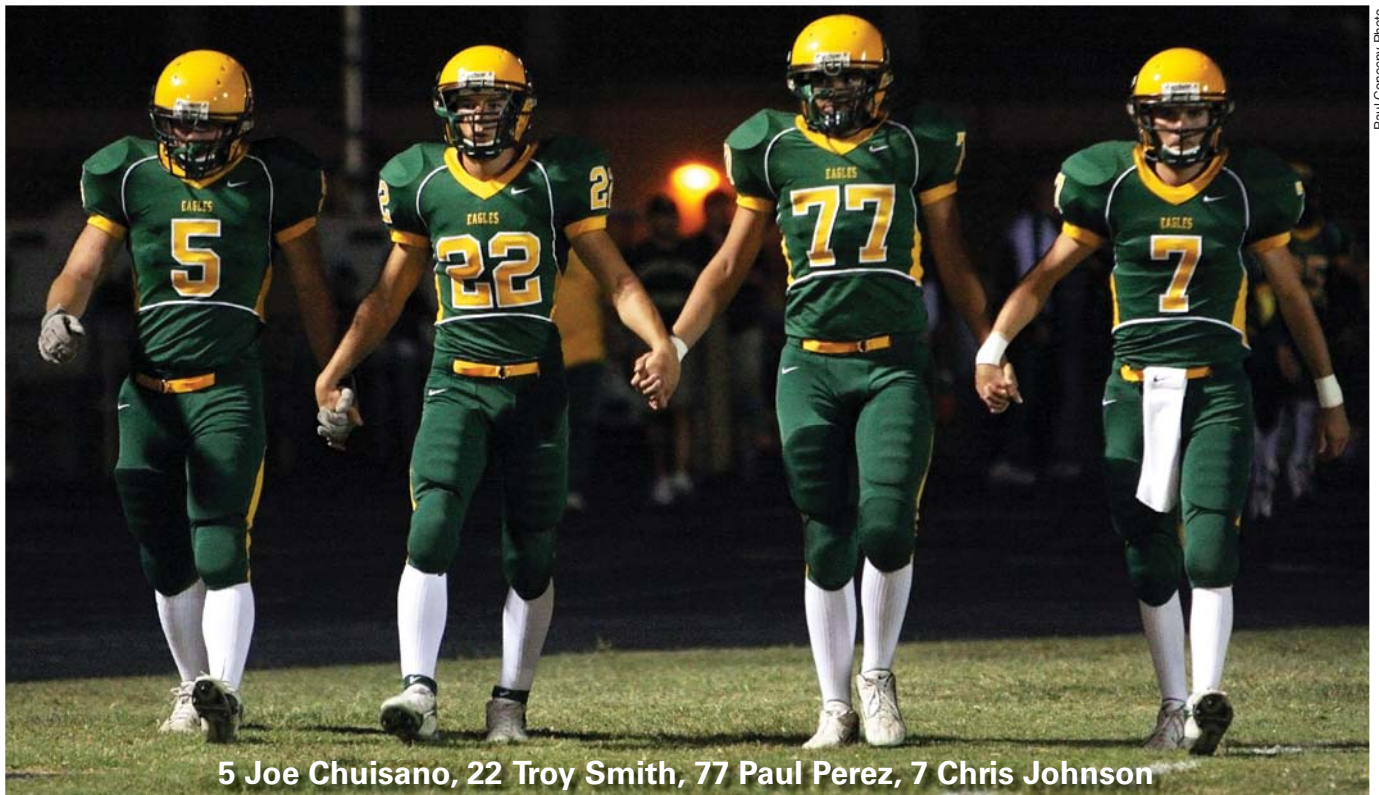


Joe Chuisano

Paul Conerey Photo

# Santa Rita High School *0-10 to 11-2*

Legendary coach  
Jeff Scurran had  
another Cinderella  
season



5 Joe Chuisano, 22 Troy Smith, 77 Paul Perez, 7 Chris Johnson

Paul Conerey Photo



Photo by Roger Freeborn

Head football coach Jeff Scurran gives his team last-minute advice and inspiration.

previously he started a junior college football program from scratch, led them to a bowl championship, and then announced his retirement. But last year after talking it over with his wife, Scurran decided he still had a passion for coaching. And passion he would need, as he decided to take over the struggling program at Santa Rita High School.

## The Resurrection of Santa Rita

Serving more than 1,200 students, Santa Rita is a high school in Tucson, Arizona, 60 miles north of the Mexican border. In March of 2007 Scurran took over this 4A-II school's 0-10 football program (1-19 in two years). To make matters worse, during the early summer 28 players on his roster were declared academically ineligible. That obstacle required them to attend summer school until 1 p.m., have lunch, and then study until 3. All 28 players earned back their eligibility.

The discipline continued into the

In 1978 Mohammed Ali decided to come out of retirement to challenge Larry Holmes, predicting in typical Ali fashion that his opponent would be "mine in nine." Ali couldn't make it to the 11th round. The following year Ali fought again, this time against newcomer Trevor Berbick, but lost in a decision. Many coaches and athletes, like Ali before them, simply don't know when it's time to retire. Coach Jeff Scurran has not reached that time, and in fact he appears to be performing better than ever.

A BFS veteran of more than 800 BFS clinics, Scurran has turned around five struggling high school football programs in his career – a feat that has made him a legend in Arizona. His secret, if there is one, is getting to know his athletes on a personal level to help them succeed not just in football but in all aspects of their lives. That being said, he is also a strict disciplinarian, as evidenced by the fact that in 2003 he had to remove 37 players from his ros-

ter because they were not willing to put forth the effort to become winners.

In our March/April 2005 issue of *BFS* you'll find a tribute piece about Scurran, reflecting on his many years of successful coaching. Four years

Want to see the Eagles in action? You can, by simply going to their Maxcast site: [www.maxcast.com/SREAGLES](http://www.maxcast.com/SREAGLES).



**5 Joe Chuisano**

**63 Chris Mayer**

**80 J.J. Holliday**

**25 Tamarin Jones  
10 Matt Sanchez**

**80 J.J. Holliday**

**6 AuBura Taylor, 74 Reggie Ewesuedo, 78 Jaquari Kountz**

weightroom and the practice field. “Turning around a football program like we had here at Santa Rita all starts with an ethic of hard work,” says Scurran. “If you don’t have that, you have nothing. I know some coaches win because they have some talented players, but at some point that’s going to catch up with you.”

On the physical side, Scurran

immediately installed the BFS program with his players at Santa Rita. “We try to hit all these four areas equally: speed, plyometrics, flexibility and strength. “First of all you have to work on speed. Speed kills. If you want to get faster, you’ve got to run. You’ve got to know how to run. You have to work on plyometrics and on flexibility. Nobody is going to out-condition us – we can

play with the same intensity in overtime that we play in the first quarter. That’s something I learned when I coached college teams – you prepare them for five quarters, not four.”

Another key to Scurran’s program is lifting hard during the season. “During the season we want to get stronger; we don’t want to maintain,” says Scurran. “Our kids lose weight

during the season; that's going to happen. But while they are losing weight, they will be getting stronger; and you've got to like that because when that happens, our athletes can really fly around the field."


Despite the obstacle of taking over a program in February, he was able to finish the regular season 9-1 and earn a shot at Scottsdale's Coronado High School in the first round of the 4A Division II state playoffs. This was a game for the books. Behind 17-19 at the half, Santa Rita's Eagles found themselves in even more trouble at 17-31 in the fourth quarter. But the Eagles fought back, making it to overtime. The play of the game came at fourth-and-goal, and then tailback AuBura Taylor rushed his fifth touchdown of the night, followed by Chris Mayer's extra point, to seal a 38-37 victory.

"Somebody is watching over us," said Scurran after the game to reporter Steve Gall of the *Tucson Citizen*. "We're undersized in every game but we come back every time. I'm so proud of the team."

Next up was Prescott Valley's Bradshaw Mountain High School in the quarterfinals. Led by J.J. Holliday with five catches for 99 yards and AuBura Taylor with 197 yards on 27 carries, the Eagles continued their amazing run with a 34-20 win. In summarizing the game, Holliday said it was what Scurran calls "EPEP," which stands for "Every player, every play."

Undefeated Mingus Union High School of Cottonwood, Arizona, was the only obstacle left for the Eagles to go into the state title game, but the semifinals game was where their amazing ride came to an end. Playing in

the mud and rain, which negated their speed, they fell 35-7.

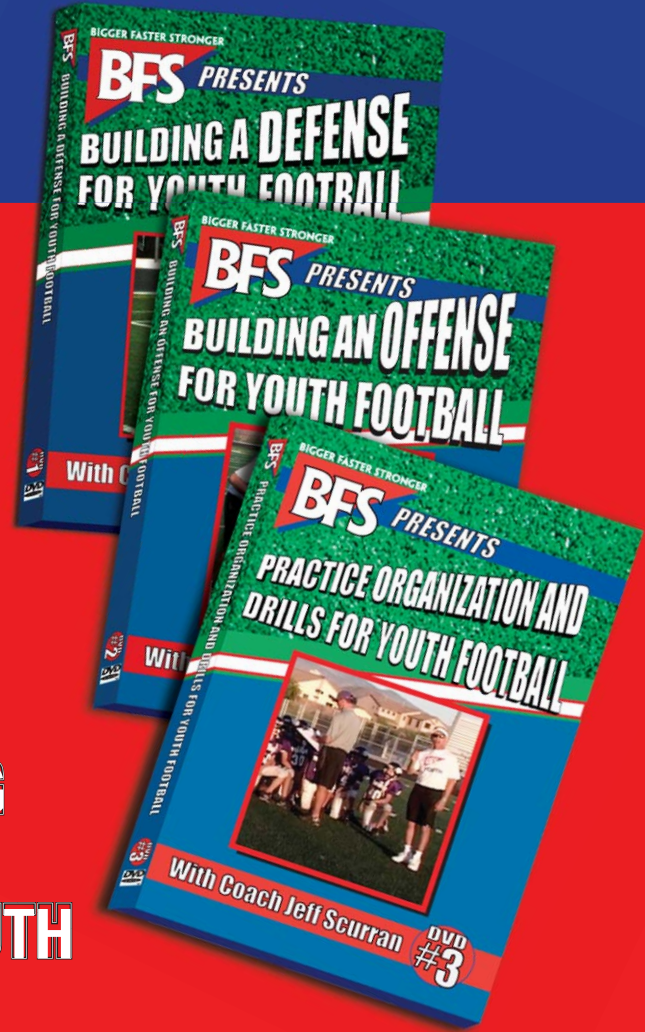
Scurran is justifiably proud of his team's hard work in turning around their record, but he also acknowledges that his role as coach comes with heavy responsibilities: "If they don't see you as a positive fixture in their lives, it's just another negative and it's going to turn them off to sports. You've got to be a friend to them, a parent to them, and tell it straight when they need it straight. If you don't get into the lives of these young people, if you don't help them take care of their problems, then you don't have any chance of being long-term successful in this profession. Everybody has X's and O's; what's hard to get is a passion for working with young people, and taking care of them so when they go out on the field they can enjoy that football experience." 

Coach Jeff Scurran and his Eagles achieved one of the most remarkable turnarounds in high school football history, turning around a 1-19 team and winning their first-ever league championships and playoff win in school history.



Photo by Roger Freeborn

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