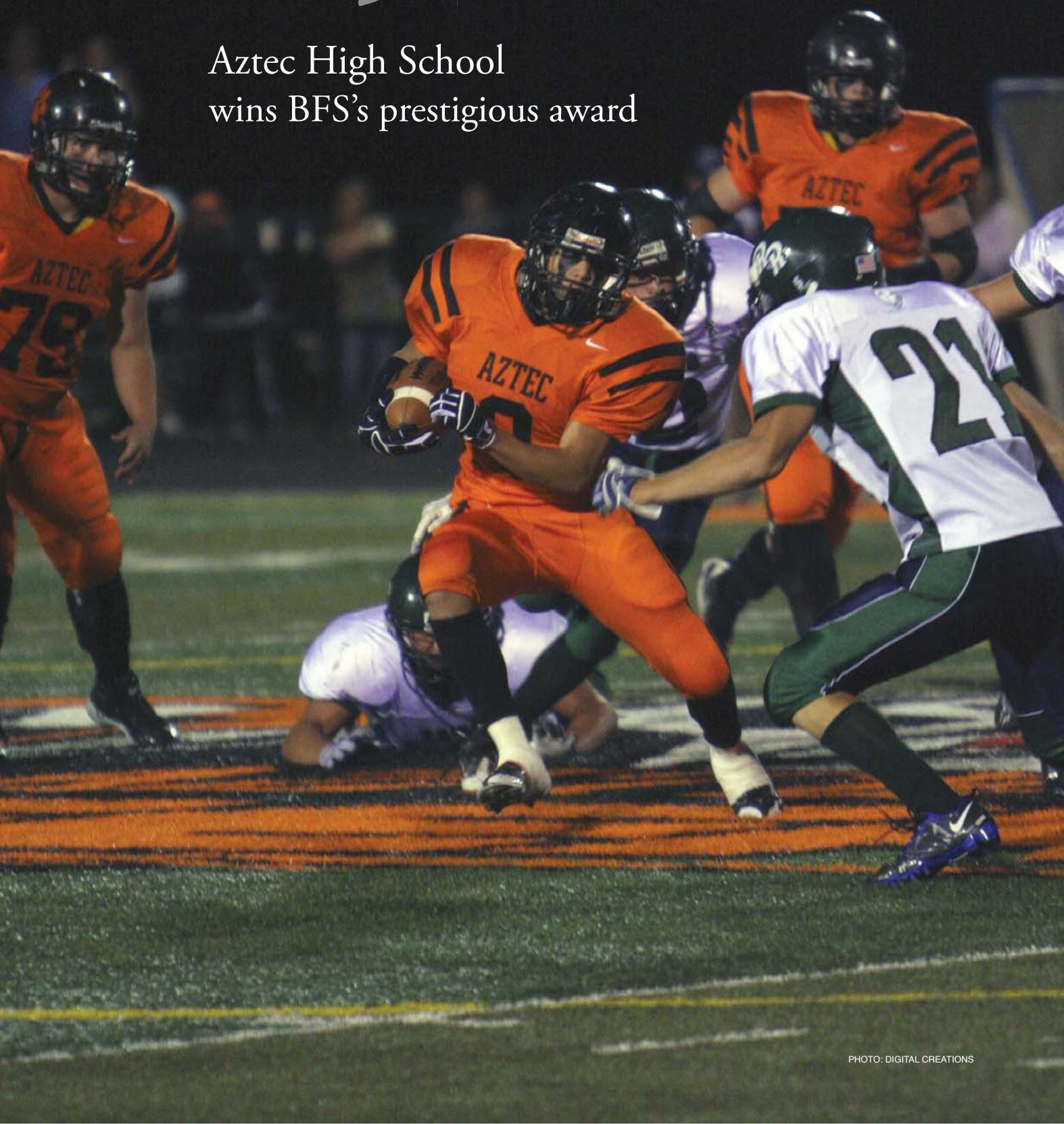


2009 BFS High School of the Year

Aztec High School
wins BFS's prestigious award



Aztec High School's motto is "Where the crossroads of academic excellence and opportunity meet." BFS concurs, and we are so impressed with Aztec High that we selected it as our 2009 BFS High School of the Year. The school is located in Aztec, New Mexico, in San Juan County, and has an enrollment of approximately 900 students in grades 9-12.

It's a great time to be an Aztec Tiger, as the athletic program has made strong showings in all its sports. The football team has been in the state championship game in three of the last six years. Last year the softball team took third in state and won state in 2005; the boys track team were district champs in 2005, 2006 and 2008, and the girls won this title last year; the girls basketball team is always strong and won a state championship in 2005... Whatever your sport, if you're a Tiger, then you're bound to be part of a winning program.

A major factor in the success of Aztec athletics is community support, says head football coach and physical education teacher Brad Hirsch. "This is a mainstream type of town, and when it's football season you'll find it's *Friday Night Lights*, with great attendance at our football games – the town pretty much shuts down on game night."

But more than just being fans, the community provides great financial support for the football team by providing funds for upgraded facilities, says Hirsch. "We just opened a new athletic complex and concession stand, and last year put in a new turf field." Hirsch says that although there is always a concern about budget cuts due to the state of the US economy, the school has "not

yet felt that budget crunch" because the community has supported them by passing school bonds.

Hirsch came from a school that had over 3,000 students, and he says that in that environment athletes often focused on one sport. Not at Aztec High. "We encourage our kids to play as many sports as they can, and if they are not playing a sport, we want them to continue lifting with the BFS



program." Hirsch says that all their athletes lift in-season, with some coming in as early as five in the morning to train, and also in the summer. And it's not just football players who lift in the summer. "We'll have cheerleaders, soccer players, basketball players.... Pretty much every sport is represented in the summer program."

Aztec High School first implemented the BFS program in 2003, primarily with the football team. That first year they were in the state championship game, and the football team's success inspired other teams to get with

the program. "Prior to 2003 we saw that our weight training program was not going in the direction we needed it to be at – athletes were coming in and doing their own thing. In 2002 one of our physical education instructors saw that the BFS program had the type of structure we needed and suggested we give it a try," says Hirsch. The assistant superintendent, Kirk Carpenter, agreed, and with the help of the booster club got the funding to purchase some BFS equipment and educational materials. "Every year we've been upgrading the program." Case in point: This summer the weightroom went completely BFS, replacing several old machines that got little use with more power racks, barbells, bumpers, and a special section devoted to auxiliary lifts. And the weightroom staff has increased: In addition to Hirsch, the primary weightroom coaches are Anna Straus and Mike Felicetti.

Being successful in athletics is great, but to be nominated for the BFS High School of the Year a school needs to encourage all students to integrate the BFS system into the physical education program. And that is exactly what has happened at Aztec High School. "We went from maybe seeing 10 kids a day using the weightroom to the point that we now have an average of 250 kids a day using our weightroom – about one third of the school population!" In addition, Hirsch says they have started implementing the BFS Readiness program in the nearby middle school. "We wanted to give them a good understanding of what their high school coaches will be teaching them. We're not concerned about how much weight they use, and most



The support of the community has enabled Aztec High School to build a great BFS weightroom.

of the lifting is done with PVC pipes or the 15-pound Alumi-Lite barbells, but we do want them to be aware of the fundamentals of proper lifting and spotting.”

To ensure the safest possible program, anyone using the weightroom at

Aztec High School has to go through the Readiness program to prove to their coaches and PE instructors that they understand not just proper lifting technique but also how to spot. They also must wear proper lifting attire – no jewelry or sandals are allowed in the Aztec

weightroom. They view the BFS safety video and are acquainted with the information on the BFS safety posters. Hirsch says that it will usually take about four weeks of Readiness training before anyone is allowed to start on the regular BFS program. Also, the school encourages the

Approximately one third of the student body uses the Tigers weightroom every day.



2009 BFS High School of the Year



PHOTOS: DIGITAL CREATIONS

The Tigers football team started the BFS program in 2003, and since then have appeared in the state championship game three times.

coaches and physical education instructors to get BFS certified. Says Hirsch, “I was certified in 2007, and now we have six coaches certified in BFS.”

Because breaking personal records is key to the success of the BFS program, the school has established

motivation boards that combine a total of a student’s best performances in the power clean, squat, deadlift and bench press. “We even have a few girls in the 800-pound clubs, which has really pushed the boys to lift harder, and for that matter even the students who are

not participating in a sport.”

With such an exceptional athletic and physical education program based upon the BFS principles, Aztec High School was our obvious choice for the BFS High School of the Year. Congratulations on a job well done! **BFS**

Success in the weightroom has led to success in numerous sports, both boys and girls, at Aztec High School.



PHOTOS: DIGITAL CREATIONS

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