



The 2009 season resulted in the Rebels' best win-loss record in a decade.

## Gridiron Rebels With a Cause

Berrien High School turned their team's struggles to triumphs



Strength Coach Tony Long

Let's get this straight from the start: Berrien High School in Nashville, Georgia, did not win one of its prestigious state championships this year. Nor will you see a photo of the Rebels' head coach and team holding up a conference championship trophy. What is newsworthy about Berrien High School is that they broke a 10-year tradition of losing. And losing big.

In the previous 10 seasons, the Rebels fulfilled the definition of "cellar dwellers," as they never finished anywhere close to a .500 record, and in fact only averaged 2.5 wins a year. In 2009, however, the Rebels gave

their fans reason to hope with a 5-5 record, their best since 1994. This is their story, but to tell it, you have to talk first about another high school football program.

Brooks County High School is located in Quitman, Georgia. They were featured in the Summer 2003 issue of *BFS* magazine. They had great success both on the field and in the weightroom, using the BFS program to enable 19 of their players to deadlift over 500 pounds and six over 600. Their motto was "Only the Strong Survive," and the coaches were head coach Ryan Branch and strength and conditioning coordinator Tony



Long. A few years later Long left for another school. But two years ago when Branch took the head coaching position at Berrien, Long decided to reunite with him and take the position of assistant football coach, along with Bud Marcrum, and also serve as the strength and conditioning coordinator. “Coach Branch called me and asked, ‘Hey, Coach, you want to get the band back together?’” says Long.

The first year they only won three games but had a lot of close games. Says Long, “We were about 10 points away from being 6-4. And this is a

tough region; of the four teams in our regions we probably have four every year that get ranked in the top 10 in the state. “Our program is hardcore – we push our kids hard, to the limit. And they really responded to it – it’s old-school BFS.” He says that they added a few training tools, such as a sand pit for speed drills and also some tires for some strongman training.

Long says that he believes that many of the programs they looked at did not consider the total athlete, focusing instead on just one component of conditioning. “We checked

out all the other programs, but we chose BFS. With many other programs no doubt you’re going to get big and bulky, but you can’t move. With BFS, we have the strength that we want and we have the speed that we need.”

One great testament to the effectiveness of their training is player T.J. Miller. Miller tore his right ACL when he got hit in the knee during a game, got it surgically repaired, and in a non-football-related incident tore it again. “He had a choice to have it repaired again and miss his senior year, or play without it. He chose to play without



**T.J. Miller**



**#55 Dustin Vickers**



**#10 Kal Simmons Atco  
#24 Jamaih Miller**

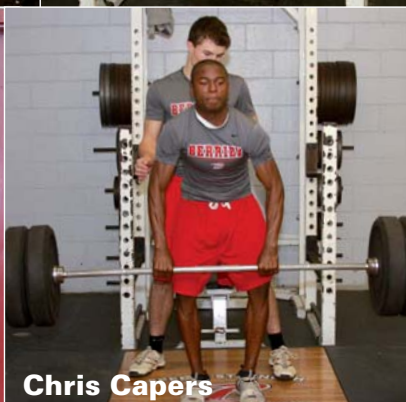




**Skyler Morris**



**T.J. Miller**



**Chris Capers**



**Larry Greene**

it, still power cleaned and squatted and did everything, and rushed for over 1,000 yards! There are a lot of colleges looking at him.”

The importance of weight training is emphasized with all athletes at Berrien, not just football players. “Every athlete is required to take a weight training class – if they can’t do it because of their academic schedule,

they do it after school. If they don’t, they cannot play a sport,” says Long.

Long says that he and Coach Branch encourage all athletes to play multiple sports. “Larry Green is one of the top 100 baseball players in the nation, and he has scouts all over him. He is a critical player on a team – he hits so hard and so fast that you just can’t react to it. Scouts tell

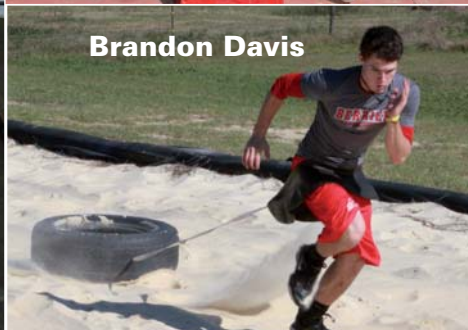
him all the time not to lift because they believe it will slow him down and make him bulky and he won’t be able to move, but we sat down with Larry and told him, ‘Our program is not like that – our program increases your speed, increases your flexibility and increases your strength. There is no way you can go wrong with what we’re doing.’” **BFS**



**Kent Beam**



**Quamane Jones**



**Brandon Davis**



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