

# Staying Strong at Schalmont High

Belief in the BFS Total Program has paid off for these New York athletes

It's been said "You can't go home again," but someone forgot to tell that to Michael DiCocco. In 1993 DiCocco graduated from Schalmont High School in Schenectady, New York. Now he's back as a social studies teacher and defensive coordinator for this school's Class B football team. He's seen a lot of changes at his alma mater since he became a student there 21 years ago, and in recent years those changes have been very good ones.

Prior to the 2009 season, the Schalmont football team had made the playoffs only four times in 20 years, and they'd had many seasons with only three wins. To change things around, five years ago they implemented the BFS program, and in 2008 their new strength in the weightroom was apparent on the gridiron – they finished with a 7-2 record. Unfortunately they lost in the first round of the playoffs, but they hit major milestones by winning their division, being ranked sixth in the state, and setting many school records. It gets better.

In 2009, under the leadership of new head football coach Joe Whipple and well established with the BFS program, the Sabres shocked the local football community by winning nine straight games. There's more: They won their division again, won their first playoff game in school history, and followed that by winning their sectional and regional titles. Says DiCocco, "BFS has been the most vital reason for our success, and we are looking forward to using it for our continued success!"

Photo by Times Union, Albany, NY



Vince Gallo



**Jaren Ramundo**



**Head coach Joe Whipple**

In 2009 Schalmont High School won nine straight games on the way to sectional and regional titles.

### **A Commitment to Winning**

DiCocco says that much of the credit for the turnaround of the football program is due to the efforts of athletic director John Gallo, who got the funding to improve the athletic facilities. He says having a top-class facility inspires kids to work hard. “The kids have more of a commitment to the off-season than I’ve ever seen with the school and since I started coaching here – not only from

kids attending workouts regularly, but attending off-season activities such as team camps.”

Another change that has made a big difference in getting better athletes on the field, according to DiCocco, is having kids become involved in the BFS program before they start high school. “Having the kids involved in BFS at the middle school level gives us an edge that we never had before. And I would

also like to say that this could not be possible without the support of the parents – they have been phenomenal in encouraging their kids to become committed to the football program.”

For DiCocco, attitude is key to working with young athletes. “We have been trying to foster a sense of pride in our athletic program. When the kids from the middle school put on a football T-shirt, they get excited. And





we encourage them to try to excel in everything they do, from the classroom to the athletic field. I know there are a lot of distractions with young people today – and you can't take away their cell phones and you can't take away their iPods – but when kids are involved in our program, they quickly develop a sense of maturity about what is important.”

DiCocco says he encourages his athletes to play as many sports as they possibly can. “We try to get football players to go out for track or baseball – we want the kids to be active – and we encourage them to lift in-season. And one result of this



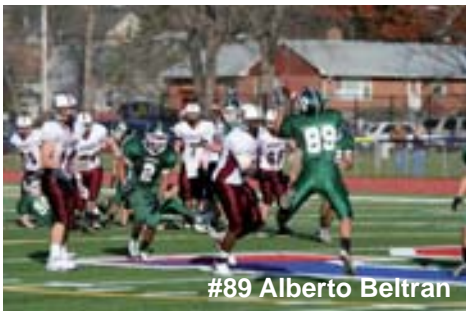
A weight training program that focuses on core BFS lifts year-round is key to the success of the Sabres.

commitment is less injuries on the field. We used to have a major problem with pulled hamstrings and groins, and they have not had either of these injuries in over two years by a single player. It's

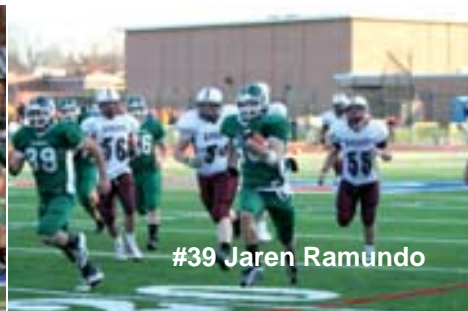
absolutely phenomenal, and that is a testament to the kids' work ethic and BFS.”

In contrast to the many down years that characterized the Sabres football program in the 1990s and 2000s, the Sabres have developed an attitude where they expect to win. Says DiCocco, “The kids are confident, not to the point of cockiness but to the point of excitedness. They understand that being on top means everyone is gunning for you

and they have to work even harder. And it helps that Coach Whipple is such a great optimist – he will not be satisfied until Schalmont High School can win a state championship!” BFS



#89 Alberto Beltran



#39 Jaren Ramundo



#36 Vince Gallo  
#51 Dalton LaTulipe



#44 J.J. Murphy  
#2 Jean Gomez  
#72 Shawn Schellenger

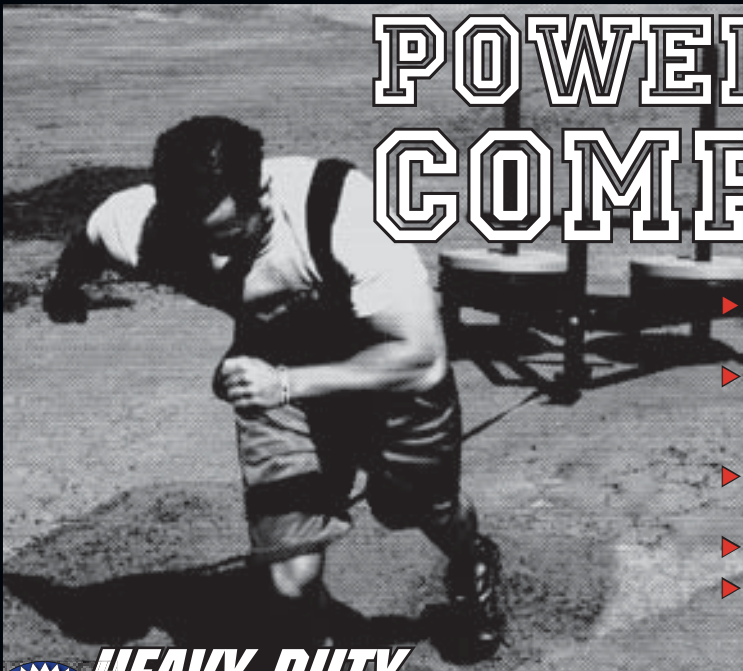


#89 Alberto Beltran





# POWER PAST THE COMPETITION



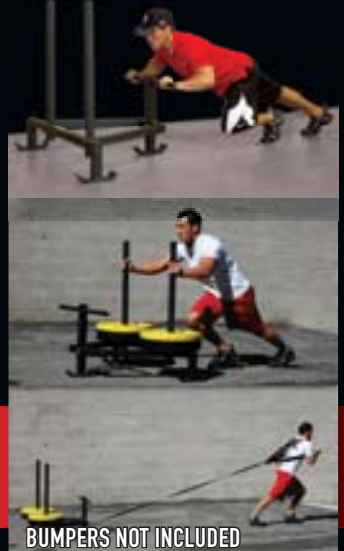
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