

# Mortimer Jordan HS: Softball Powerhouse

The remarkable story of a great high school softball team

Photos: Dennis Victory/KDPSportsphotos.com



The Blue Devils celebrate their second 5A State Championships in a row.

## 100-6

It's not often you see a win-loss record such as this, but that's exactly what Mortimer Jordan High School accomplished in winning their past two state 5A championships in softball and being ranked in the top ten in the country by *USA Today*. And this was the same team from Morris, Alabama, that just three years prior had finished eighth place in the state when Laura Rickman took over the program. Before getting into the reasons why, let's go over a few more numbers.

In 2008 the Blue Devils won 50 games, lost only four, and easily took the state title game with a score of 11-3. This year, amazingly enough, they were even better, as they broke an Alabama High School Athletic Association record by winning 43 games in a row and finished the season 50-2. In the state playoffs they outscored their opponents 37-12, and in the state title game again won easily 11-4. Such domination earned the attention of *USA Today*, which ranked them in the top ten in the country.

Although it may not seem possible, next year's Blue Devils team might be even better. Returning will be six batters who had averages of .395 or better, and their two best pitchers, who posted records of 26-1 and 23-1, will also



Coach Laura Rickman turned an eighth-place team into a state championship team with a 50-2 record.

be back. There is also another factor that will ensure success, and that is the return of Coach Rickman.

### The Power Factor

This remarkable turnaround story started when Rickman met BFS clinician Lance Neven at a convention held by the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD). Rickman said she “picked his brain and drove him crazy the whole week,” and that as a result she became so enthusiastic about BFS that she brought out Lance to her school for a clinic. Since then, Neven has been mentoring her to find ways to continue to improve her program.

In addition to coaching the softball team and serving as a physical education teacher, Rickman handles the conditioning program for girls athletics.

When she joined the coaching and teaching staff at Mortimer Jordan High five years ago, Rickman felt that their weight training program was a good one, but that she wanted to take it to a higher level that would provide her athletes the best opportunity to win. “I knew that I had girls at this school who had the potential to play in college, but I also believed that they would have to have a more advanced weight training program to reach this level,” says Rickman. I also believed that if we worked hard in the weightroom, it would give us an edge over everyone else.”

Because the BFS program emphasizes heavy lifting, especially with core lifts such as squats and bench presses, Rickman said that she needed to educate her athletes to dispel any misconceptions that the weight training would

make them bulky like a bodybuilder. “When I got them to understand their bodies and learn that they do not produce enough testosterone to look like males, they really started buying into the program. It also helped that they were seeing the results the BFS program was producing on the field.”

According to Rickman, the biggest differences the BFS program has made to her athletes’ performance is that it has improved “their hitting, their endurance, their speed to the bases, and has resulted in less injuries.” She also believes that the weightlifting has given them a “mental edge” that helps them finish strong in close games, and is a great team builder in the off-season.

Just as the Blue Devils play hard on the softball field, they also work hard in the weightroom to progressively become stronger. “We have girls box squatting

## BFS SUCCESS STORY

425 pounds – they have bought into the approach that they are only going to get better if they lift progressively heavier weights.” Likewise, Rickman says her athletes also work hard on the other aspects of the BFS program, such as the speed and agility work.

Because of such a strong commit-

ment to hard work, Rickman says that the team has earned the respect of their male counterparts. She says that the football coach also has developed an interest in the BFS program.

The motto for the Blue Devils is “Those who are busy rowing the boat don’t have time to rock it,” which

entails working as a team and avoiding bad habits, such as gossip, that would detract from their focus on winning. As for her advice to other coaches, Rickman says, “Success means more than just working hard on the field – you need to work just as hard in the weightroom.” **BFS**

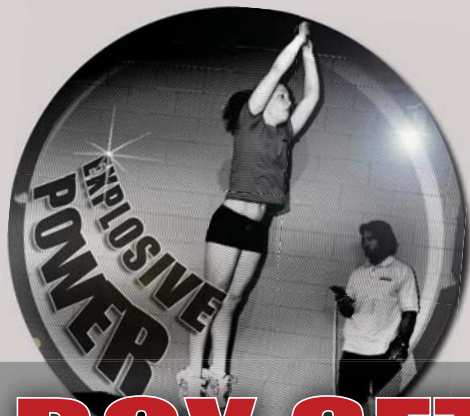


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