



Accepting the Challenge at Reedsburg High

The inspirational story of how a 0-33 team became state champions

For his first head coaching position, Brian Pottinger says he was interested in a challenge that would enable him to put his personal stamp on a football program. He got his wish with Reedsburg Area High School in Reedsburg, Wisconsin, which was enduring a 0-33 losing streak and an 9-39 record over the previous five years. And although Pottinger believed in his abilities and was passionate about making a difference at his new school, his methods were not exactly welcomed with open arms.

"To be honest with you, those first



#52 Keith Craker, #56 Tyler Keele, #28 Lucas Gudenschwager, #5 Jared Park, #62 Seth Brandt, #65 Colton Brott



#5 Jared Park, #30 Shane Rockweiler, #42 Mike Hayes



#62 Seth Brandt, #44 Travis Erbs



couple of years were rough,” says Pottinger. “I got a lot of flak from people in the community because they did not see any immediate results. They were resistant to change, but I was stubborn.” One of Pottinger’s changes was getting a lot of players on the field, not just those with the most physical talent.

“The community had the mindset that to put you in the best position to win, you had to play your good players all the time on both sides of the ball,” says Pottinger. One reason he was opposed to this strategy was the issue of fatigue. “You can be a really good player, but if you’re playing both sides of the ball, you’re going to get fatigued – and when you get fatigued, your technique

From 0-33 to State Champs!

goes bad and you also increase the risk of injuries. When you’re playing one side of the ball, you’re basically playing half a game.”

Pottinger also believes that by having to learn only one position, an average player can become a good player. “You only have to learn one thing.” But this was a new offense, a new defense and a new coaching staff, and Pottinger didn’t have a lot of great players. “We had kids who hadn’t been playing in years past, and now, all of a sudden, they are starters – we just didn’t have enough of a chance to develop them yet.” Further, there was one more issue Pottinger had to deal with, which was the attitude of the players.

In 2001 the football team moved into a bigger conference, and that's when the big losing streak started – and it led to a negative mindset among the players. “The kids had good attitudes and were hard workers – that wasn't an issue at all. But they had lost so many games that they felt they couldn't compete – they just didn't know how to win,” says Pottinger.

“We had to change that mentality.”

The BFS Difference

In addition to laying out his new game plan, Pottinger decided to revamp the weight training program with BFS. “What I liked about BFS was its structure, because I believe kids thrive on structure. They have a workout sheet ready for them when they

come to the weightroom; they know they start with the dot drill, and they know what their weights are. In the past, many of the kids were just going into the weightroom doing whatever. They didn't know how many sets they were going to do – they just threw on some weights. There was no structure, and obviously they were not seeing any gains.”

To help jump-start the team on BFS, Pottinger held a BFS clinic and a Be an 11 seminar. Pottinger also made a commitment to try to hold a BFS clinic every two years “because you're constantly getting new kids into the program, and because it's a good reference for the older kids.” Also, Pottinger has been campaigning to get coaches from more sports involved to unify the school. “Our other sports programs are slowly jumping on board, with more coaches becoming certified and more athletes participating. We truly feel like BFS has given us the mental and physical edge to compete at a high level.”

During the first two seasons Pottinger's teams won a total of eight games, so there was good progress being made and the community could see that the program was evolving. “That third year, 2008, we began to really hit our stride and ended up 10-4 and second in the state. We followed up the next season with an 11-3 record and the Wisconsin Division 3 State Championships.” And it looks like the winning tradition will continue.

“We played our state championship on Friday, and that Monday we had kids in the weightroom already – and I hadn't said anything about it. They did it completely on their own. The mindset has changed among our players, and to me that is really exciting!” BFS



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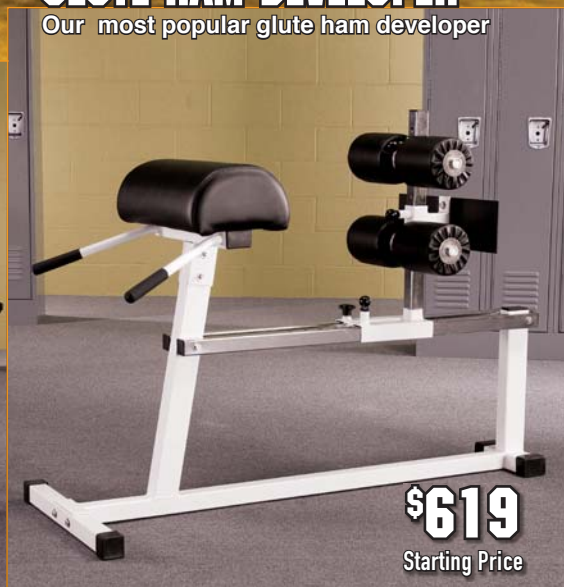


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