



A section title and the first-ever nine-win season – 2012 was a great year for football at Sibley East High School.

# Showdown at Sibley East

BFS training took a team from middle of the pack to champs

BY **CHUCK HARTMAN, HEAD FOOTBALL COACH, SIBLEY EAST**

**E**very program wants to get to the next level. When I took over the football program at Sibley East High School in Arlington, Minnesota, in late spring 2008, we set out to move the program from a winless season to conference and section champions. We let the kids know it would take a lot of work and would not be easy.

We made some great strides and

jumped from two wins in 2009 to six wins in 2010. That was a good year, and *BFS* featured us on their cover. The 2011 season was a bit of a letdown. We only won four regular season games before making the play-offs and losing in the second round. I believe one reason for the drop-off was that our weightroom attendance was down. Some kids thought they could slack off and still achieve

the same results. This could not be further from the truth. When you have success in a conference like ours, everyone comes gunning for you the following year. Our kids found that out the hard way.

Sixth out of eight teams – that's where the conference coaches ranked us in the metro newspaper preview when it came out the Thursday before the season started. Sixth. We

knew we could do better.

We started the season off with a convincing win before dropping the ball...literally...with seven turnovers against a very good team. You don't win doing that. On the field we talked about how we would handle that loss and how we would handle any adversity.

I heard several seniors say, "This is 2012 and we won't lose again." The following week we backed that statement up and bounced back with a 56-7 win over another state-bound team, and a 49-18 win the following week. The passing/receiving combo of Brody Rodning and Tyler Bates led our Wolverine offense, and Erik Danielson and Brandon Ashton provided a strong ground game. Meanwhile, our defense, led by Ben White, shut our opponents down. White is only about 170 pounds and doesn't look that strong, but he's very quick and explosive from doing power cleans and squats. Those wins moved the Wolverines to a 3-1 record and a showdown with another improving 4-0 team. They jumped out to an early lead, but the Wolverines erased that after halftime, winning 28-15.

The following week was another showdown victory for us in another fourth-quarter win, which is where our commitment to strength training and conditioning paid off. Down 12-7, we scored late in the game to win 15-12 and move into a tie for first place.

I should mention here that we strength-train all season long using the BFS system. Many of our kids broke records for their squats and cleans two or three times during the football season. That's motivating.

In the next couple of weeks the Wolverines won games in the second half (again) 29-19, before racing out to a 41-0 win over rival LeSueur-Henderson. This win earned the Wolverines a share of the Minnesota River Conference Title and a bye in the first round of the playoffs.

After a convincing first-round win we faced a very good team from Waterville-Elysian-Morristown High School. W-E-M is always one of the best teams in the state, a very well coached group that plays hard. They were coming off a tragedy in the community and played with a lot of emotion. In the end we won 21-15. We had another exciting comeback

win in which Erik Danielson, who has a 500-pound-plus squat and a 260 power clean, raced 68 yards for the go-ahead score. Brandon Ashton iced the game with a conversion run on the fourth down, and the Wolverines became section champs for the first time in school history.

In the second half of that game we won the battle on the line of scrimmage. Seniors such as Miah DuFrane and Alex Battcher really got the job done up front. The following week we lost to a very good team (two-time defending state champs). They have a huge commitment to strength training. Our guys train hard, but their kids train at a level we aspire to. We know there is another level to attain, and we will use this season as fuel in the off-season to get us there. We know it will not be easy in our conference or in the playoffs – that's why we have to prepare harder than we ever have before. More commitment from more guys is what is needed to get back to State.

## The Upper Limit

This fall we raised the bar for future Wolverine teams. Our nine-win season is the most wins in school



Coach Hartman gives last-minute instructions to his Wolverines before the big game, then gives quarterback Brody Rodning instructions during the game.



history, the section title was also the first in school history, and our MRC title was the first since 1997. People have been asking me what the key to this season was, how we went from middle of the pack the year before to champs this year. While there are many factors involved, certainly strength training is a major reason.

We have a player category we call “Bad Wolverine,” and an athlete gets in there by hitting certain strength and speed levels. This year we had four starters achieve that status: Erik Danielson, Shayne Danielson, Miah DuFrane and Cody Swenson. It’s a hard club to get into, and we have never had that many guys in it at the same time. At only 175 pounds, Swenson set a school record with a 280-pound clean in the summer before his senior year. Another key was that we believed in what we were doing and continue to do so. I know people throw that word “believe” around a lot, but we really mean it.

“We Believe!” became a slogan late in the year as we lived out our dreams. In the off-season I met with the juniors regularly, and they wrote down their goals. Two of those goals were to be conference and section champs. I kept those papers and showed them to the kids later in the season when it became apparent we would be playing for those goals. Strong leadership from our seniors and captains was a huge factor this year. These guys made an investment, and when you make an investment, it matters. Winning on Friday nights matters now at Sibley East. **BFS**



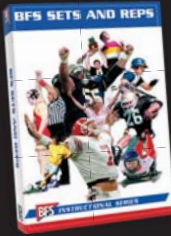
After improving from two wins in 2009 to six wins in 2010, Sibley East appeared on the cover of the May/June 2011 issue of *BFS* magazine.



Sibley East team captains (l-r): Tyler Bates, Steve Haefs, Miah DuFrane, Ben White

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