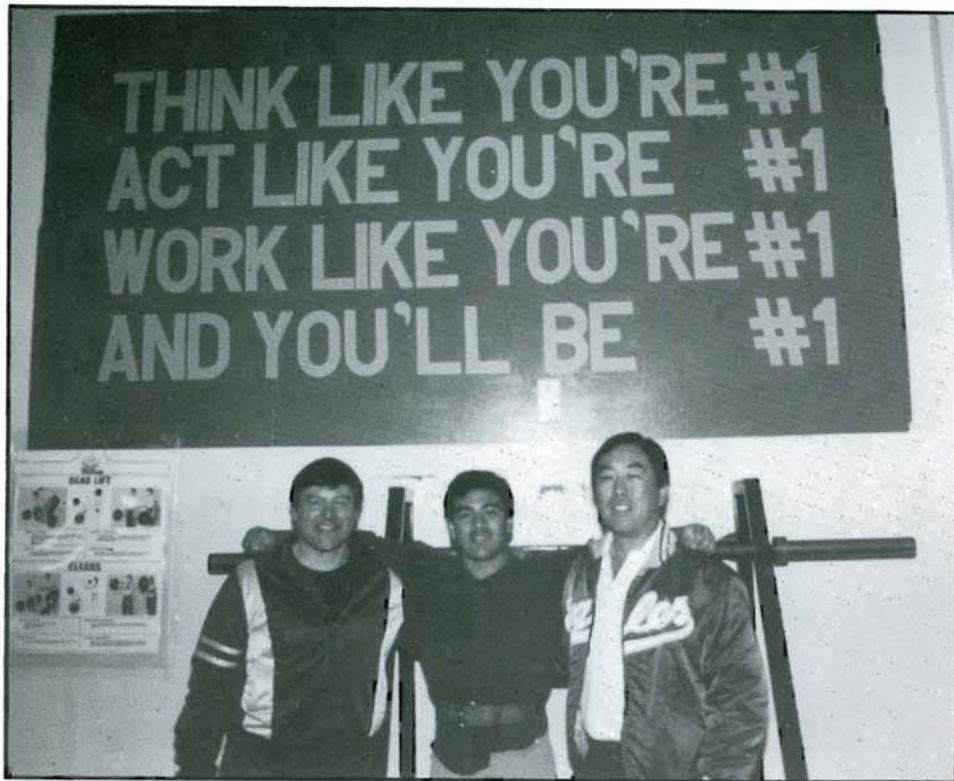


BELL HIGH SCHOOL A GREAT STORY FOR ALL COACHES AND ATHLETES



Pictured is L to R:
Greg Shepard, Eddie Cantu
and Head Football Coach Tosh Nitta

What a great day I had last month at Bell High School. It was an Upper Limit Day, with Upper Limit Attitudes by both coaches and athletes. Tosh Nitta is an Upper Limit Coach of the highest degree. I think we can all gain from their success story.

Bell High School is in Los Angeles and has the all year round school system. At any given month, 2700 students are enrolled at the school in grades 9 through 12. This last fall Bell went 11-1 and played for the L.A. City Championship.

Coach Nitta began coaching at Bell in 1973 and states, "I was spoiled back in those days. We had great speed and great success. However, I wasn't really that good of a coach. One year in 1974 we had a larger line than USC at 255 pounds a man. They were all white athletes. Our skill kids were black. Our middle linebacker ran 9.9 in the 100. We played in the city championship game twice but didn't win. Back then our type of kids were 70% white plus some blacks and Samoans. One year we had two blue chip tackles; one was 6-8½, 285 pounds and the other was 6-3½, 265 pounds."

Tosh continued, "Now we have had a massive change. We are over 90% Hispanic. The Hispanics are much smaller. This year our All-League Cornerback, Alphonso Foster was a Junior. He weighed 131 pounds. Our Cornerback, Juan Lopez was 124 and our Strong Safety, Gus Lopez was 135 pounds. The big guy at the other Cornerback position weighed 140 pounds. But those kids have only given up two TD's in two years through the air! We do have some bigger kids but we're short. Our defensive linemen are 170 or so pounds."

"I really had to search in every area to improve. I found out I really didn't know a lot about coaching. There were the X's and O's, all aspects of conditioning, handling kids, etc. It's a never ending process; that's why I have a BFS Clinic every year."

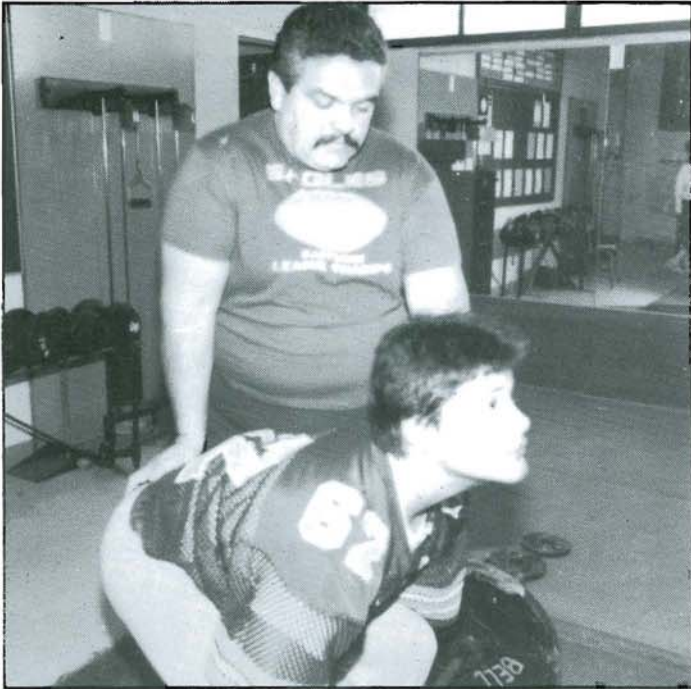
"As far as our conditioning program, we test in the four BFS lifts, the 15 and 40 yard dash, a shuttle run, and a one minute jump rope. We work 5 hours together per week but we tell the kids to get an additional 5 hours on their own. For our fat kids, we have a special running period at 6:15 a.m. Our average attendance is 12-15 kids a day 4x per week."

I asked Coach Nitta about academics at Bell. He responded, "The L.A. School Board set the standards 4 years ago in extra curricular activities. You have to have a 2.0 grade point average and not fail any class." Tosh looked up and with a wry smile laughed as he said, "Texas adopted our plan recently." He further stated, "It hurt us 3 years ago. I don't think it will hurt us again, simply because we stay on top of it. At our school, 65% of our student body is ineligible but because of football there is a lot more desire to do a good job in the classroom. We only lost 3 of 80 kids last year. We give Scholar-Athlete awards. We do have a language barrier but we work at it hard."

"We have a fabulous faculty here and they really work with the kids. I'll get notes all the time from teachers about any athletes who might have a problem arising. Every 4 weeks we get a progress report. I give every teacher a special form to fill out. If any athlete is creating a problem or has a problem, I take care of it immediately. We have a great tutorial system. The kids seem to really respond to our strict guidelines and rules."

"Our principal gives us great support. She says she's not a football fan but she gave us financial and spiritual support."

When I was in the Bell High School weight room, I asked the kids who had a B average. One-third raised their hands. I asked Steve Taylor, a big 6-1½, 236 pound Sophomore who happened to be white about the high school. Steve said, "It's a good school. I wouldn't move. I like it here." Continued on Page 5



Coach Ed Elias spotting Freddy Reyna on the Dead Lift.



Bell Football Players Stretching.



Going Wild with Enthusiasm at the end of Rick Anderson's Clinic.

"Coach Nitta," I asked, "Tell me about your record as a head coach."

"Well Greg," he answered, "the first year we were 1-8, the second 2-5-2 and the third year 7-3-1 and made the playoffs. I then read about BFS and had Rick Anderson come for a BFS Clinic. One hundred kids paid \$8.00 each for the clinic. I felt really good about this because our kids generally come from poor families. After the clinic, the kids pulled me aside and said, "Coach we're not going to lose for you."

"The next year we went 11-1 and had Rick back again. So finally, this year we won the Championship for the first time in 10 years. Our QB, Eliud Pacheco who is 5-9 and 195 (a little fat) led us to that Championship. He was the 2-A player of the year. For the City Championship we were ahead at halftime, gave up only 6 first downs but lost 21-18."

"After the first clinic, I've told everyone it was the best single day I've had as a coach. It was the best single thing for our kids. It was our turn-around. Rick was so great and positive. It's changed the whole approach to kids with some of our assistant coaches. The mental attitude is absolutely amazing. We now believe we are winners. We have 46 squad members back with 29 lettermen. Our dream is still alive."

Again, what a day! We came to inspire but received inspiration! Tosh Nitta turns adversity into prosperity at every turn. He has taught us and I hope our readers many valuable Upper Limit lessons. Our best wishes to Coach Nitta, his coaching staff and the athletes at Bell High School.

WE GOOFED!
In our article about Leland Melvin from the University of Richmond we stated that it was a Division II School. Wrong! It is a Division I-AA School. Our apologies.



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