

MERCED HIGH

5 YEARS
TO THE TOP
1984 and 1985

Won Only 6 games

1986 YEAR I

7-4

1987 YEAR II

4-6

1988 YEAR III

13-1

1989 YEAR IV

14-0

1990 YEAR V

14-0

#1 In California

#5 Nationally



Coach Mark Speckman in hat with Coach Phil Riggins addressing team before practice. Coach Speckman is only 5-11 which gives you an idea of the overall squad size. All Merced Photos by Marci Steinberg

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Mark Speckman is one of the great Upper Limit Coaches in America. He had two BFS Clinics and made the most of them as his teams climbed to a number one California ranking and one of the top five or ten schools in the nation.

Coach Speckman was born without hands but he never let that obstacle slow him down. He played soccer, basketball and started in football in high school at only 155 pounds. Coach Speckman wore a hook until he was 15 years old and then rebelled. However, with that hook he learned to play the trombone which he still plays today. His love for football and music landed him a college scholarship. Speckman played at Menlo J.C. for two years and then finished his career at Azusa Pacific. He started in all 40 games and the biggest he ever got was 195 pounds.

How did he play linebacker without being able to wrap up? "I think it made me better because I had to make solid hits. I developed the forearm flipper technique and would hit and bounce," remembered Speckman. He even had 4 or 5 interceptions. "You just gotta find a way to do it," Speckman sagely revealed.

Merced High School is huge at 3400 students but that is deceiving from a football stand point since none of the 800 Asian student population plays. However, the ever optimistic Speckman says that this is now changing as they get more assimilated into our American culture. Right now Merced is about 35% White, 35% Hispanic and 10% Black.

This year only one lineman was over 200 pounds and in spite of their record, Division I Scholarships don't come too often. They've only had six in five years but four of those came this year. Maybe folks are starting to realize the ability of the Merced players because of going 41-3 over the last three years.

Now sit back and enjoy the Merced story in Coach Speckman's own words. He typed it out on his computer. Mark Speckman just found a way.

FIVE YEARS TO THE TOP

By Coach Mark Speckman

In 1986 I was hired to come to Merced H.S. as head football coach. Merced High School is a large school of 3400 students located in central California. Its' football history had few shining accomplishments, and they had only won 6 games in the 2 seasons before 1986. When I looked at the job I saw the potential for an outstanding weight program. There were two weight rooms with one being for machines and one for free weights. I was given the authority to set the weight rooms up as I saw fit. I made the free weight room the football room and worked a schedule out so football could use it 5 times a week. So the first thing we did was get a room to work in and call our own.

Continued on next page.

MERCED H.S. 5 YEARS TO THE TOP



Jr. Defensive Lineman Mario Mancia Overpowers Ball Carrier. He Squats 330 and Benches 255



Sr. Wingback #28 Frankie Zamarippa Runs Sweep in 44-7 Quarter-final Playoff Victory over Vacaville. Frankie Has Won Several Power Meets in 148 lb. Class.



Swarming Merced Defense against Archrival Atwater H.S. In 48-13 Victory.

One problem I had was I knew absolutely nothing about weightlifting. Being born without hands made it impossible for me to lift free weights. I was able to play football and used Nautilus weights to train myself. Prior to my coming to Merced H.S. I was Head Football Coach at Gilroy H.S. There I struggled to give my players a productive off-season program. I received the Bigger Faster Stronger magazine and book and began to utilize their system. I totally agreed with their philosophy of free weights vs. machine weights. I now had the knowledge I needed to be competent in my coaching and give our players a chance to win.

The first thing we did at Merced H.S. was get a BFS clinician to come to our school and train our staff and players. I can vividly remember Rick Anderson coming to our school and doing just a super job of teaching technique and enthusiasm. Like most schools that are building, our kids had a poor work ethic. They liked to bench and that was it. Summer workouts were sparsely attended. The BFS clinic helped to launch us to a new level. Rick was also instrumental in planning how to set up the most efficient weight room possible with our facilities.

That first summer in '86 we instituted a mandatory workout schedule. The players were in terrible shape and we felt that all players needed to pay a price to prepare. If they were not excused by a coach they had to attend. We made a conditioning course and said those who didn't make the course in a certain time would be cut. It was the first and last time in 14 years I ever cut, but the point had to be made. In August, 30 players failed the test. They hadn't attended in the summer and were in terrible condition. Then and there I cut them. THE MESSAGE WAS SENT. WE WERE SERIOUS ABOUT CONDITIONING AT MERCED H.S.

That 1986 team was extremely talented, the best pure



All Out Hustle Is Exemplified By Starting Linebacker #44 Brian Holt Who is 5-3 175 lbs. He Squats 340 and Benches 275.

YOU JUST GOTTA FIND A WAY!

athletes I've had in my five years at Merced High School. We went 7-4 losing a heartbreaker in the first round of the playoffs. It was Merced's first playoff appearance in 8 years. We were excited about the positive strides we had made and felt we'd turned the corner.

In 1987 our off-season and summer programs were improved. Our players were getting the hang of the BFS core lifts and agility drills. However, I remembered hearing Rick Anderson say that once the kids really started to improve and bought into the program we'd have to "lock the weight room doors". We were still running around trying to get our players to be accountable. The '87 season was a disappointing 4-6. We'd lost several close games and still felt our attitude needed to improve.

In the off-season between 1987 and 1988 we redoubled our efforts. We had a chance to bring Stefan Fernholm in to speak to our team and he really helped excite our kids about the power clean and plyometric jumps. We had asked for two years to get our weight room painted and been told the paneling in the room couldn't be painted. My coaches and I got fed up with that answer and on our own bought black and orange paint and painted the room over Christmas break. The administration has learned to live with it. Pictures, school records, a stereo and motivational charts helped to improve the atmosphere of our room. We entered a few powerlifting meets and our players loved the competition. You could feel the excitement build for the 1988 season.

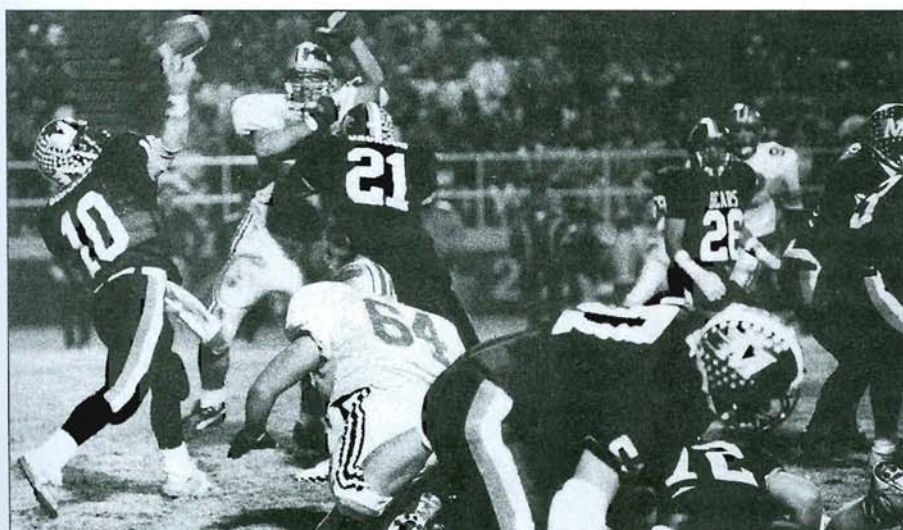
One big problem we had was that the senior class had won only 5 games in their three years of football experience. They had been 0-10 as sophomores. Despite these problems, our work ethic was good, we were in great shape and had a fantastic season. We broke the 1951 school record of 11 consecutive victories. We won the



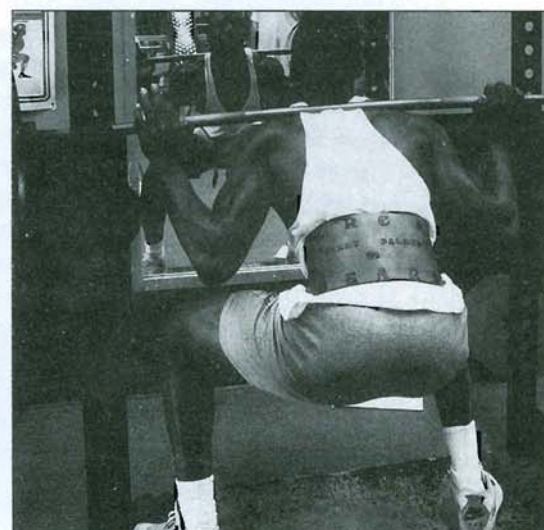
The Merced Weight Room: Where The Way Is Found!



Wide Receiver Ron Harris On Bench

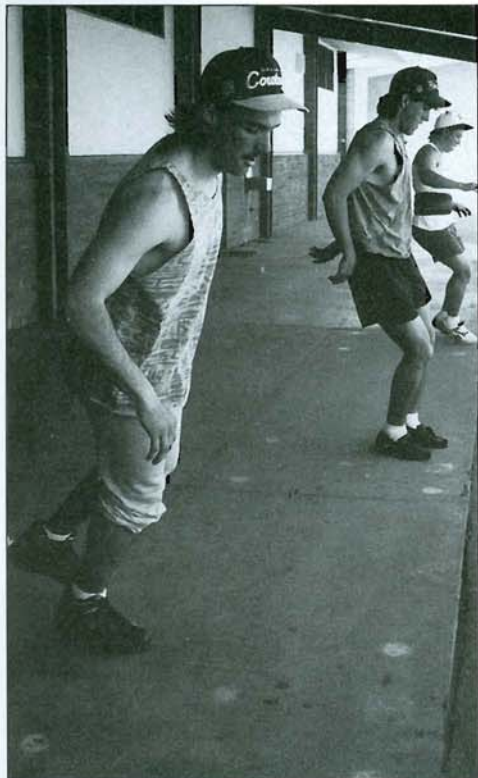


Ray Gonzales Launcehs Pass In Semi-Final Game Against Lincoln High School. Merced Won 23-7

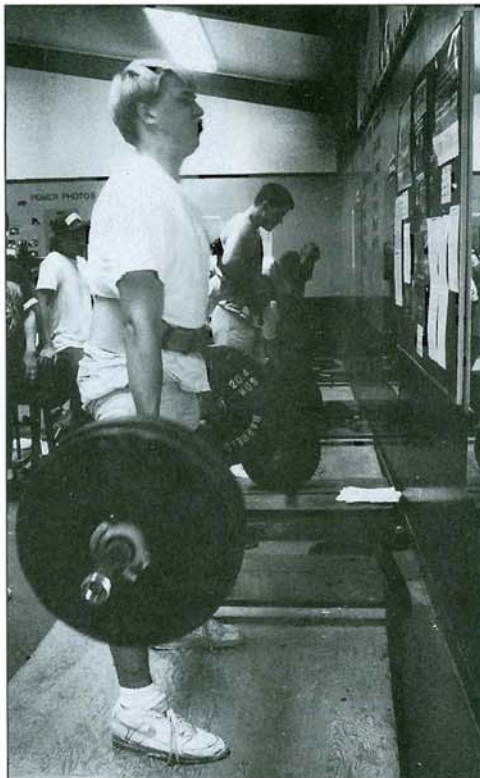


Junior Linebacker Demetrius Peterson

LOCK THE WEIGHT ROOM DOORS



Merced Players doing BFS Dot Drill



Power Clean and Dead Lift Stations



Jr.Center Dan Castro on Peg Board

league title and were 13-0 going into the section championship. We lost an exciting game to Davis-Yolo 33-25 and ended the season knowing we had the potential to be a Section Champion.

After our successful season, our players were really motivated to work hard and go that extra effort to win it all. More and more kids squatted 300 lbs. or more. It became routine for our players to achieve the "varsity" marks put out by BFS and many were well above them. We entered and won 3 power meets. Our agility drills, plyos, and dot drills were being done consistently and with great technique. I am a firm believer in writing your workout down and our players for the most part were diligent in this regard. We were seeing great results in the weight room.

The 1989 team went 14-0 and won the schools first Section football championship. We defeated Nevada Union H.S. 31-29 on a last second field goal. It was a great victory in every sense of the word. We finished the season ranked 2nd in Northern California, 3rd in the state of California and 18th in the nation. More and more kids were coming out and we were really on a roll. We now had to literally "Lock the weight room doors to keep our players out", as Coach Anderson had predicted.

The 1990 team won 3 power meets prior to the season. We were truly Bigger, Faster and Stronger than we'd ever been. We completed our second consecutive 14-0 season and beat Nevada Union 21-12 in a rematch for the Section Championship. We were selected the State Team of the Year by Cal-Hi sports which does all the California rankings. In California, we don't have a true state champion like many states. Just like the colleges, you are ranked. We earned the State team of the Year title based on the strength of our schedule which saw us play 5 undefeated teams and many ranked teams. We were ranked 5th in the Country by E.S.P.N.'s poll and 10th by the U.S.A. Today's poll. We have won 43 of our last 44 games at Merced High School.

We had 33 players Squat over 300 lbs. before Easter vacation. Our players are average size wise. We are like many other schools who are sleeping giants around the country. Our facilities aren't great, we have plenty of problems to overcome. One of our key, was to lock on to a program of strength and speed and coach the heck out of it. We have modified the BFS program to suit our needs and facilities. But the core lifts remain the same as does the agility. Our players believe they will succeed and that's the key to turning a program around. In 3 seasons we have played 42 games. We have had only 2 serious injuries that caused a starter to miss any games. I feel this is directly related to our weight training and conditioning program. We eagerly await the challenges of defending our state title in 1991.

**MERCED
HIGH
5 YEARS
TO THE
TOP
YOU'VE
GOT TO
FIND
A WAY**

THE BFS 5 lb. TRAINING PLATES

IDEAL FOR BEGINNERS

Full Size 5 lb. Plate
Allows Anyone To
Assume Proper Position.

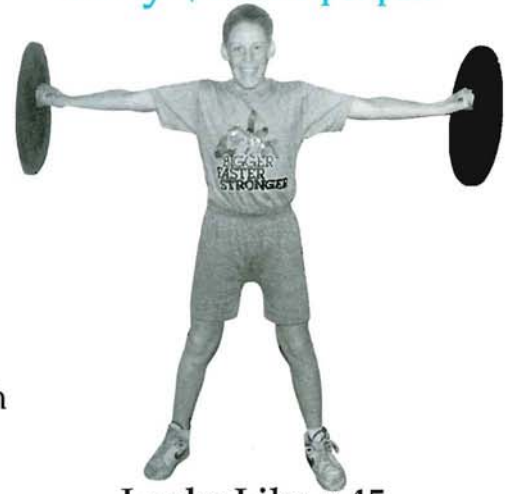


Same Dimension
As A 45 lb. Plate

They're Solid!
They're Tough!
You Can
Add Regular
Olympic Plates!

"Great Technique is absolutely essential on the Power Clean and Power Snatch if you are going to gain the ultimate in explosive power. The New BFS Training Plates will help any program or any individual at any level."

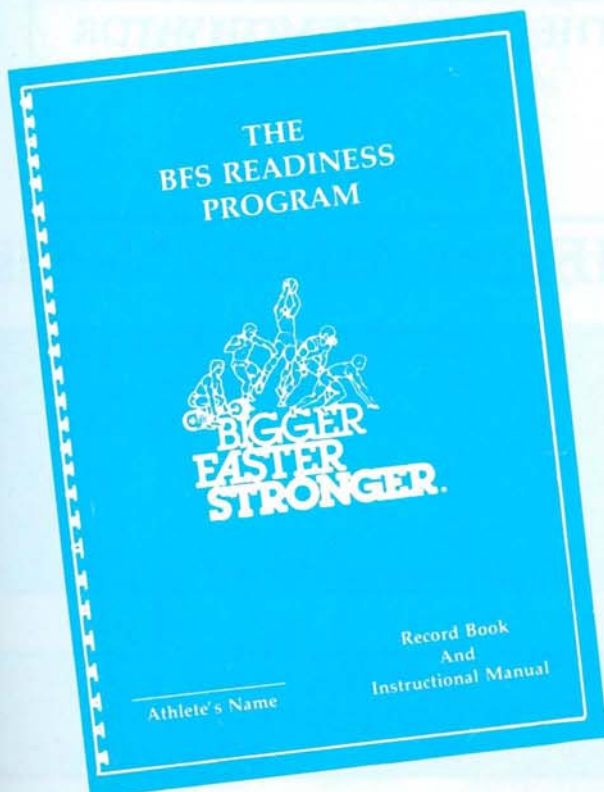
Only \$59.00 per pair



Looks Like a 45
Weights only 5 lbs.

Call Toll Free
1-800-628-9737

READINESS PROGRAM RECORD BOOK AND VIDEO



THE BFS READINESS PROGRAM

Our BFS Readiness Program has met with great success for five years. This pioneering program emphasizes the importance of Great Technique. In fact, you cannot increase in weight until the athletes perform every rep with the approved technique guidelines. This prevents excessive loads from being placed on young frames. An easy way to get an edge on your opponents in high school is to prepare and motivate the junior high athlete. The BFS Readiness Program does just that! Each athlete should have the Record Book and see the Video. It will help a class, or an individual, visually understand what to do.

Dr. Greg Shepard, BFS President

BOOK COST:

One: \$4.00
2-9: \$3.00 Each
10-25: \$2.50 Each
Over 25: \$2.25 Each

VIDEO COST:

\$49.00 Purchase
\$25.00 Rent
CALL
1-800-628-9737