

ST. IGNATIUS • USA TODAY #1 H.S. TEAM

By Dr. Greg Shepard

The St. Ignatius Wildcats are 77-3 over the last six seasons. They received the USA Today national high school football #1 ranking in 1989 and again this past season. They have also won the Ohio State Football Championship five out of the last six years. Sure, they have one of the most amazing records in high school history, but do they Power Clean? I decided to see for myself and meet Marty Eynon and head coach Chuck "Chico" Kyle. Coach Eynon serves as both the offensive line coach and strength coach.

I suppose nothing can prepare you for St. Ignatius. It truly was a remarkable experience and a pure joy to be around such a special place and people. I was literally overwhelmed. I was waiting alone in the coaches office watching a St. Ignatius highlight video on a non-school day. Coach Eynon had called two of his players to see me.

Suddenly, a lean 6-5 242 pound young man with short red hair strode confidently into the office. With a big engaging smile, he greeted me. "Hi, you must be Coach Shepard. I'm Mike Buzzin. Welcome to St. Ignatius." He extended his hand with a warm hand shake. Mike came across as a mature adult and exuded a special radiance.

"St. Ignatius is a one in a million type of institution," continued Mike who is going to Penn State on a football scholarship. "Academics are second to none, yet the athletics don't suffer. Our coaches care about you and your development. If you need extra help with a tutor, they'll help you with one. If your grades are down, they'll provide you with an early morning opportunity to study. Coach Kyle personally supervises and he'll be there at 7:30 am for two weeks. It's like an honor to be here. Our coaches will stay as long as it takes after school to help us get in

our workouts." That means many times after seven at night.

We then went to the mammoth 4,200 square foot weight room which was abundantly supplied with first class equipment. It's part of a \$3 million plus facility called the Jerry Murphy Fieldhouse. It contains an oval track, a multi-purpose wrestling room and two full basketball courts. Mike did some Power Cleans on one of five beautiful customized Power Clean Platforms. After doing 250 pounds, Mike said, "Power Cleans are important. It seems you can't do without squatting and power cleaning. As long as you lift technically correct, your in a position to do well." Just then Jeff Forgach entered who will be playing for West Point next fall. The stocky 6-0 240 pounder Power Cleans 270 and maintains a 3.7 GPA. He too seemed mature beyond his years and stated, "The Power Clean is the key to our program. It's good for any position and athlete for explosive power. It's helped my quickness off the ball. The Power Clean has had a big impact."

Jeff also had a loyal pride for St. Ignatius which was founded in 1886 as a Jesuit high school. Ninety four percent of its 1330 boys are Catholic. He said, "St. Ignatius incorporates the development of the whole person. Which is to say academically, spiritually and athletically. This school has really prepared me. I wouldn't be going to West Point without it." The average ACT score is 24.3 putting St. Ignatius in the top 1% in the nation. The average SAT score is 1061. Each year over 99% of its graduates go directly to college. The scholarships offered to graduates exceeded \$3.7 million.

Jeff closed his remarks by saying, "The time and effort put into the weight room and conditioning has made us feel more confident. We push ourselves to the limit so everyone feels like a winner. You

don't think about losing or being a loser."

Coach Eynon just smiled as his kids cleaned and talked to me. "The Power Clean is one of our major lifts. It's been a great asset to our kids, he said. "We test for a one rep max three times a year. I Absolutely believe a transfer of power can take place to the football field. It will help you explode through a man." Coach Eynon, who won the 1993 U.S.A. sports national football strength coach of the year award, has the players lift in-season with one heavy and one light workout. During the off-season, his Wildcats Power Clean twice per week from the floor. "We have done it this way for 7 years with no problems with an athlete's back," he stated.

Coach Eynon concluded, "I'm in a perfect situation." Indeed he may be. The kids know they have to toe the line or they are out. It literally is a privilege to be at St Ignatius. A tough entrance examination is just one of the entry requirements. The tuition is \$4,800 but about 33% receive some financial aid. The student-teacher ratio is 18:1 and all students take religion classes all four years. St. Ignatius is first and foremost a Catholic school. The challenge of educating young men goes far beyond them academically. They have set five goals for all graduates: To be intellectually competent, open to growth, loving, religious and committed to doing justice.

We thank Coach Eynon for sharing his Upper Limit haven and thank Mike and Jeff. They are two of America's finest. We also thank Coach Kyle for his inspiring leadership. Will St. Ignatius be able to ascend to another #1 national ranking in 1994? Coach Kyle contemplated and said, "High expectations are always difficult to handle but with proper focus and poise, the Wildcats can achieve any goal."