

Adam became a starting center for the Air Force Academy, and played in the 1995 Copper Bowl.

STILL GOING STRONG:

Adam Edwards

BY KIM GOSS

From college football star to Division I strength coach, Adam Edwards has never lost sight of his BFS roots

Most athlete profiles that appear in *BFS* magazine are snapshots of a few years of an athlete's life: an outstanding football season in which an athlete rushed for 2,000 yards and led his team to the state championship...the captain of a volleyball team who inspired her teammates to take their success to the next level...or perhaps a baseball or basketball player who overcame physical limitations to stand above all others. With Adam Edwards, however, we

didn't want to do just a snapshot of his athletic career – we wanted a photo album.

Adam Edwards is special to BFS, as we have followed his career for nearly 20 years. Our president, Bob Rowbotham, was introduced to Adam in 1988 when he gave a clinic at Southern Nash Senior High School, where Adam's father, Lawrence, was a teacher and former head football coach. Adam was in the eighth grade at the time but would be attending Southern

Nash for high school. Lawrence wanted Adam and his brother, Aaron, to get a head start on their conditioning program by attending the clinic.

During that clinic, Rowbotham stayed with the Edwards family, and he found that Lawrence had set up a BFS gym in their garage, along with plyometric boxes so they could do box jumping in the backyard. "The Edwardses were an incredible family, and Adam was willing to commit totally to making himself great." And that he

did.

Adam began his freshman year at Southern Nash as a 5-foot-9, 160-pound freshman but worked hard in the weightroom and became a 6-foot-1, 220-pound senior who could bench 365, power clean 300 and jump like a kangaroo. Playing center, Adam helped his Firebirds rush for a single-season record of 4,700 yards and contributed to the track team's success with a personal best in the shot at 52.10.

Academically, Adam finished fourth in his class of 281 students and earned himself an appointment to the US Air Force Academy, where I was a strength coach at the time. "The foundation that the BFS program gave me was certainly was an edge coming into the environment here," says Adam.

By his senior year Adam became the starting center for the Falcons, despite being one of the smallest Division I centers at only 234 pounds bodyweight – a tribute to the speed and quickness he developed through the balanced training program promoted at the Academy. His strength improved considerably, with maxes that included a 390 bench and a 325 clean.

One of Adam's fondest memories in college was playing in the 1995 Copper Bowl against Texas Tech. "My role was blocking Zach Thomas, who



At a BFS clinic in 1992, BFS President Bob Rowbotham with Aaron (left) and Adam Edwards.



Adam's new family, wife Sarah and daughter Lillian.

was an inside linebacker for Texas Tech – this was quite an opportunity, as he went on to be so successful with the Miami Dolphins."

After graduation in 1996, Adam stayed on one more year at the Academy as the offensive line coach for the junior varsity team. While coaching he developed an interest in furthering his knowledge in strength and conditioning, eventually earning a master's degree in exercise science.

For the next three years Adam served as a communications officer at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. "I was in charge of a deployable communications unit, providing support for the B-52s." In 2000 he was selected to serve as an instructor at the Air Force Communications Officer Training School at Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi.

You *Can* Come Home Again

In August of 2002 Adam, now a captain, returned to the Air Force Academy to serve as a strength coach. Among the sports he worked with were boxing, cheerleading, diving, golf, lacrosse, men's basketball and women's swimming – eventually he even found himself teaching unarmed combat as a physical education instructor. And to prove that he still practices what he preaches, last year he entered a weightlifting competition and exceeded his college maxes with a 264-pound snatch and a 336-pound clean and jerk!

When Adam learned that a civilian strength coaching position was going to be available in 2005 due to the expansion of the weight training facilities, he separated from the Air Force in July of that year. In that position, Adam's responsibilities with men's basketball

FEATURE STORY



increased in that he now travels with the team and handles the pre-game warm-up. And although men's football gets far more national press coverage, the Air Force men's basketball team is becoming a favorite with the press. And with good reason.

Prior to 2005, the Falcons men's basketball team had developed a reputation as the "cellar dwellers" of their conference, racking up 25 straight losing seasons. But in a remarkable turnaround, in 2004 under new head coach Chris Mooney they finished 22-7 (12-2 in the Mountain West Conference) and earned a berth in the NCAA Tournament, a feat the Falcons had not been able to accomplish in 42 years! That success continued in 2005 with an 18-12 record (9-5 MWC) and in 2006 under Coach Jeff Bzdelik 24-7 (12-4 MWC) and another

Now a strength coach at the Air Force Academy, Adam stresses a balanced program that includes Olympic lifting movements, medicine ball throws, and auxiliary exercises with dumbbells.



AFA photos courtesy AFA Athletic Media Relations Office

berth in the NCAA Tournament.

Adam believes that one reason for their success was introducing the Princeton offense and recruiting athletes specifically to play that offense. Explains Adam, "Coach Jeff Bzdelik demands the same level of energy on both ends of the court." He adds that on defensive, in which the Falcons have led the MWC in scoring defense for the past three years, "Coach Bzdelik stresses having active hands and feet, moving into good positions, and having a lot of communication."

From a conditioning standpoint, Adam says one focus of the team is to maintain their strength throughout the season. He also says that because they have a larger staff than in the past, there's a lot more hands-on coaching in the weightroom. "Instead of saying, 'Here's your program – go ahead and do it,' we now use the approach of 'Here's your program and I'm going to take you step-by-step through it.' That approach develops a lot more adherence to the workout. As for special basketball exercises, Adam says he will prescribe some work with dumbbells and chains, but adds, "You don't see my basketball team flipping tires – we're relatively conventional here with our training."

Regarding advice he would give to high school coaches, Adam says that athletes must take a balanced approach



Jacob Burtschi

to strength and conditioning. "I see some incoming basketball players who have been really focused on the strength but are not able to move really well. Sure, it's great to be strong, but if you can't move from point A to point B, you're not going to be able to use that strength."

Adam spends a considerable amount of time talking to young people about the benefits of the Air Force Academy. Here's his sales pitch: "Having a degree from the US Air Force Academy carries a lot of weight in the job market, obviously. But being an alumnus of the Academy, I like to talk about the bond in the association of graduates – the fact that you have a shared background with other graduates. Pretty much everywhere you go you're going to run into an Academy graduate, and that bond extends to the other military academies as well, as they recognize what went into obtaining that degree. And as for the character that you'll build while you're at the Academy, you can't really put a price on that."

Adam Edwards exemplifies everything that BFS stands for – as an athlete, and as a person also. We hope his story will inspire others to follow his lead. **BFS**

Adam's primary responsibility is handling the conditioning program of the Air Force Academy Men's Basketball Team, which has become one of the Cinderella stories in Division I sports.



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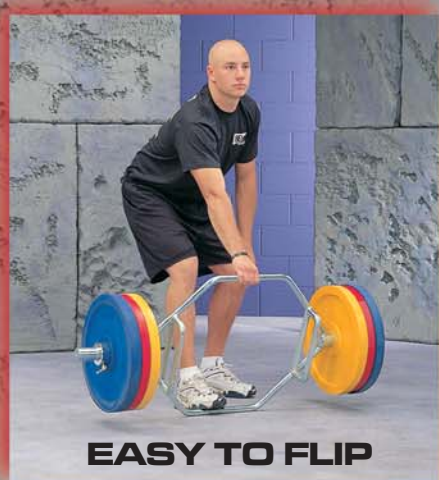
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