



Photo:King County Journal

After 12 undefeated seasons, one of the best-ever high school football teams finally met its match

High school football teams seldom get the attention of the national media, but De La Salle High School in Concord, California, is not your typical high school football team. With 12 straight undefeated seasons, a 151-game winning streak that dates back to December 7, 1991, the Spartans have been the surest bet in sport—that is, until they met Bellevue High School on September 4, 2004.

In front of a crowd of 24,987 in Qwest Field in Seattle, Washington, the Warriors scored 39 points to the Spartans' 20. Equally impressive was the way they won. Bellevue never had to punt or throw a single pass, and they held a team that had a history of winning by an average margin of 38.2 points to a game that was scoreless in the second half.

One of the stars of this historic game was J. R. Hasty, a running back and linebacker who is the son of James Hasty, a former NFL player and the defensive coordinator of Bellevue. The first time J. R. touched ball he ran 74 yards on a kickoff return for a touchdown, and by the end of the game he had scored 4 more and had run a total of 271 yards.

Bellevue Head Coach Butch Goncharoff said

that last year his players were in the weightroom a week after they had won the state title—their third such title in as many years—so determined were they to prepare for this game. "You don't beat De La Salle in August," said Goncharoff, "you beat them in June." Hasty could be considered a role model for such thorough preparation, as evidenced by his personal bests of 350 pounds in the bench press, 500 pounds in the squat, and 4.5 in the forty.

For more insight into how Bellevue was able to defeat De La Salle, BFS contacted Blaine Davidson. Davidson has been with Bellevue for two seasons as its football strength and conditioning coach and as an assistant football coach.

According to Davidson, the Bellevue coaching staff requires athletes to complete a minimum of 85 workouts before they can suit up and play in the first game of the season. Most of the players fulfill this requirement by the end of the spring ball season, with the majority achieving between 100 and 170 workouts during the off-season.

The weight training program is periodized to develop, says Davidson, "a solid foundation of motor

skills, core strength, power, explosion and speed movements for football. Along with a holistic, full-body approach, we feel the many different variations of cleans and squats provide the power and explosiveness needed to be dominant on the field. Of the big core lifts, we view cleans as the most transferable to the field."

"Our team's strength has improved considerably this year due to the hard work, dedication and intensity the players bring to the weightroom," says Davidson. "Our average clean for the Varsity and JV team is 226 pounds. E. J. Savannah, starting RB/TE/LB, holds this year's top honor with 275 pounds. E. J. is an all-league, all-state, pre-season Navy All-American player with numerous offers from Division 1 schools." Other notable seven-month increases include the following:

- Griffin Bennett (starting OL/DL): Squat - 275 to 425, a 47 percent increase
- E. J. Savannah (starting RB/TE/LB): Clean - 205 to 275, a 34 percent increase
- Steven Schilling (starting OL/DL): Clean - 205 to 260, a 27 percent increase
- Trevor Carpine (OL/DL): Clean - 170 to 245, a 44 percent increase

As important as weight training is, Bellevue uses additional means to achieve physical superiority over its opponents. "The strength and power gained in the gym are incomplete without creating athletic awareness, functional movement pattern efficiency, and trainability and recovery ability to enhance work capacity. The result has been better total speed, acceleration, deceleration and improvement of the team's explosive potential." Examples of some of Bellevue's training methods include plyo boxes, band work, pull and push sleds, agility ladders, hill running, cone drills and dynamic stretching/stability work.

Proper nutrition is another key to Bellevue's success, and Davidson says the team's nutrition program was developed by Dr. Susan M. Kleiner, PhD, RD, FACN, CNS. Says Davidson, "The kids and parents have benefited tremendously. You can't fuel a finely tuned engine with regular gasoline. If you want to perform at your peak, optimize your performance and reduce your chance for injury, you must fuel your body with top-grade nutritional fuel."

As for special motivational methods to encourage his athletes to train harder and to not miss workouts, Davidson says he uses goal setting (educational, personal and athletic) and affirmation writing. These methods challenge Bellevue athletes to


- Be accountable to their team members and themselves;



Photo: King County Journal

- Create a culture of hard-working, passionate players working together toward common goals; and
- Consistently review what they're striving toward individually and as a team, and to be "real" about what is working and what isn't working.

In post-game interviews, De La Salle Head Coach Bob Ladouceur said when he saw videotape of Bellevue during the summer, he felt confident his team would win, but that "the team we saw on tape wasn't the team we played out there tonight." These words are a credit to the level of Bellevue's preparation in the off-season.

When asked if he was actually relieved that his team's winning streak was over, Ladouceur replied, "As I've said before, we never tried to talk about the streak. I'm all for everybody playing good football and getting better. If our level of play helped Bellevue prepare and raise their play, that's great. I think there should be lots of kings of the mountain, not just one." 

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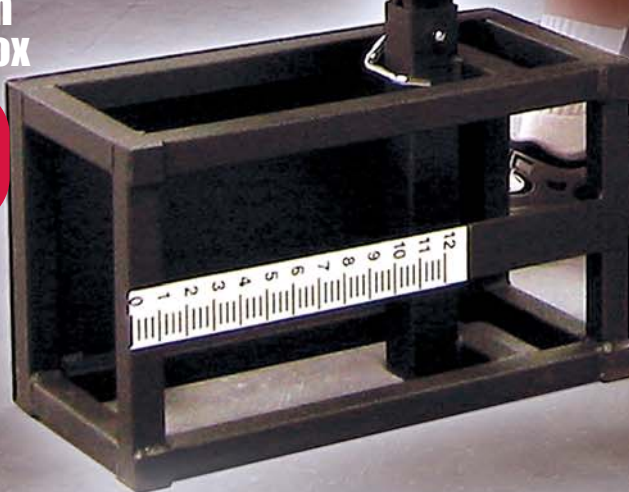
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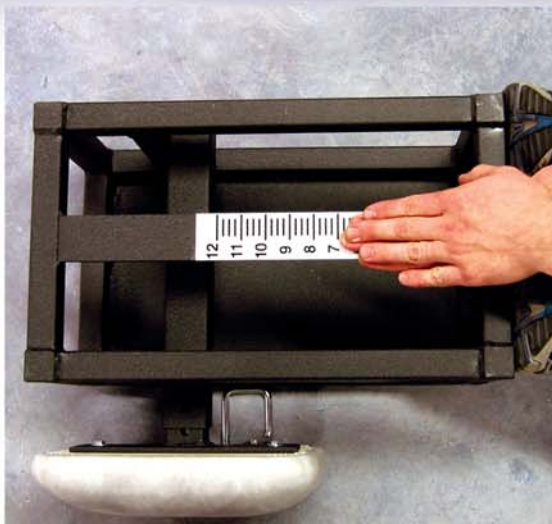
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