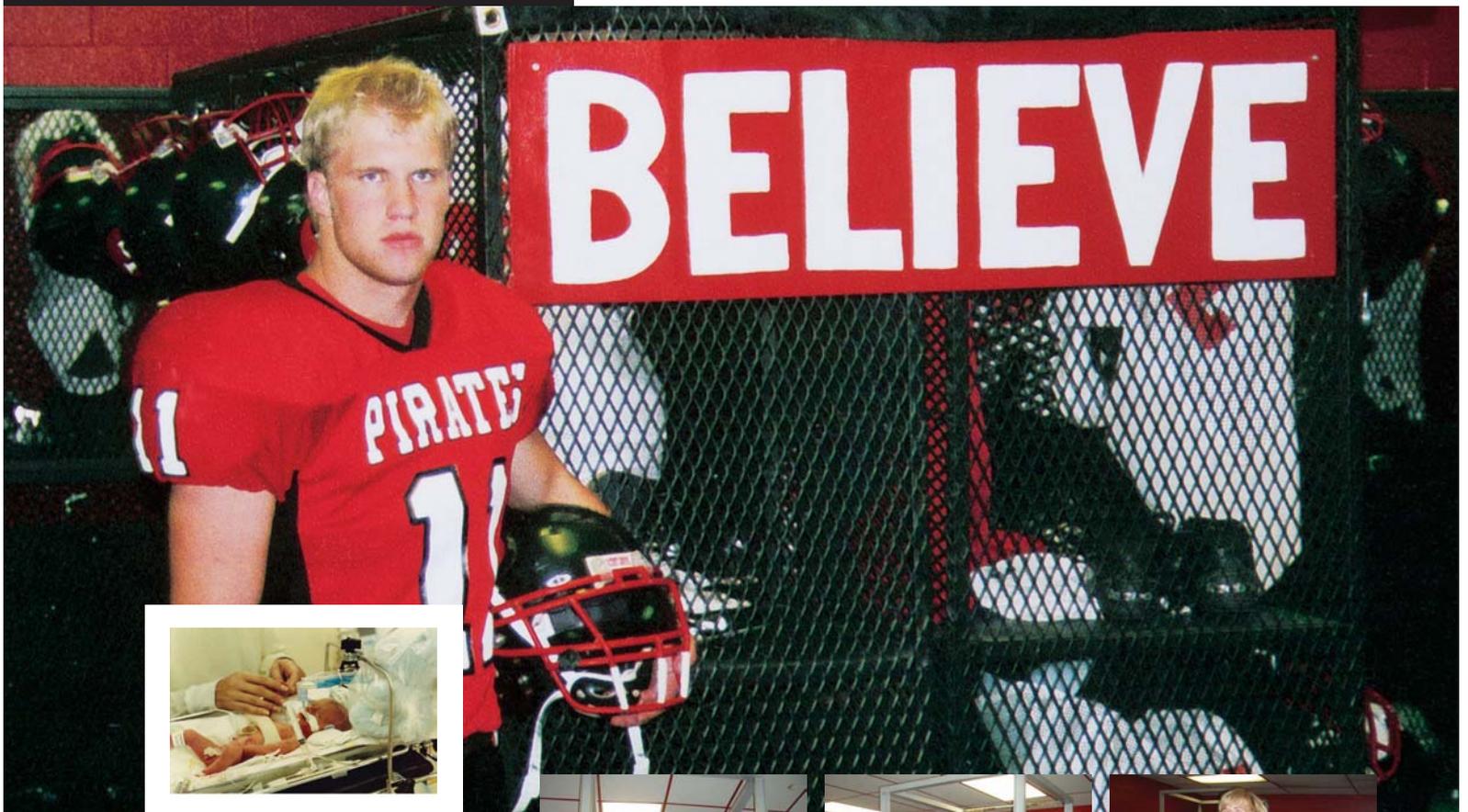


The Positive Life of

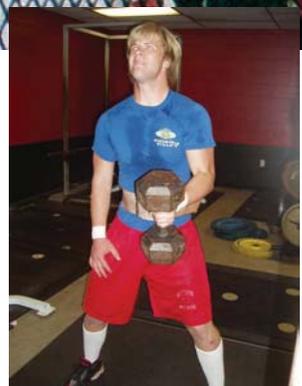
BY KIM GOSS

Brett Marsal

Defying the odds has become a habit for this amazing young athlete



Brett weighed only two pounds, four ounces, when he was born and suffered numerous medical problems.

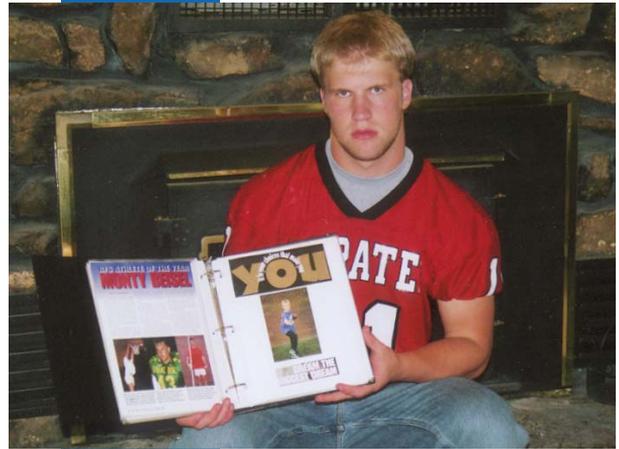


Kelly and Frank Marsaln have raised two amazing athletes in Beau and Brett.



In 1987 Brett Marsaln was born prematurely, weighing just two pounds, four ounces. He was diagnosed with a brain hemorrhage that was graded a level three on a scale of four, and his parents were told that there was a 40 percent chance that Brett wouldn't survive. In fact, Brett's mother, Kelly, recalls that their close friends waited to bring gifts for the baby because they were afraid Brett wouldn't make it.

Despite the risks of operating on a premature baby, Brett had brain surgery to deal with the hemorrhage. After the operation the neurosurgeons cautioned Kelly and her husband, Frank, that there



Frank Marsaln started a notebook for Brett when he was young that helped inspire him to fulfill his dreams.



Brett's work ethic and positive attitude have enabled him to become an outstanding athlete at Locust Grove High School in Locust Grove, Oklahoma. His goal is to play football at the University of Oregon.

Award winners at the 2005 Locus Gove High School Football Banquet, left to right: Pete Braden, Dustin Rice, Michael Houser, Jake Collins, Brett, and Nate Roberts. Brett received the Iron Pirate Award.



was a high probability that Brett would suffer mental retardation, cerebral palsy and severe learning disabilities. Competitive sports, of course, were the last thing on their minds.

After spending 10 weeks in a neonatal intensive care unit, Brett was released from the hospital. He weighed only four pounds and had to be hooked up to a heart monitor 24 hours a day. And the pessimistic attitude of the doctors, which was not shared by Brett's parents, seemed to be playing out. Over the next several years Brett needed seven more brain surgeries, along with two surgeries on his ears, one surgery to repair a hernia, and surgeries to remove his tonsils and adenoids. Despite such intense measures, Brett successfully pulled through every operation and astounded doctors by showing no signs of any mental limitations!

For the next several years the only major concern the Marsalns had about Brett's health was a shunt that was implanted in his head to deal with his battles with brain hemorrhaging. The shunt limited his physical activities, especially those that involved contact. By the time Brett was in the fifth grade, the doctors determined that the shunt could be removed, and if the risky operation were successful he could increase his

range of physical activities. If he didn't have the operation, he would have the shunt for the remainder of his life. The family decided Brett would have the operation, and it was successful. "At first I was nervous," says Kelly, "and every time he would complain of a headache we would panic, but in the long run it was a good decision to have the operation."

When Brett entered the seventh grade he weighed 110 pounds, could bench press 50 pounds and had a six-inch vertical jump. Though their son wasn't exactly a standout physical specimen, Frank and Kelly knew too well what Brett had gone through and were just happy that he had proved the doctors wrong and had the prospect of living a normal life. It was at this time Brett told his parents that his goal was to play football at the University of Oregon!

Defying the Odds

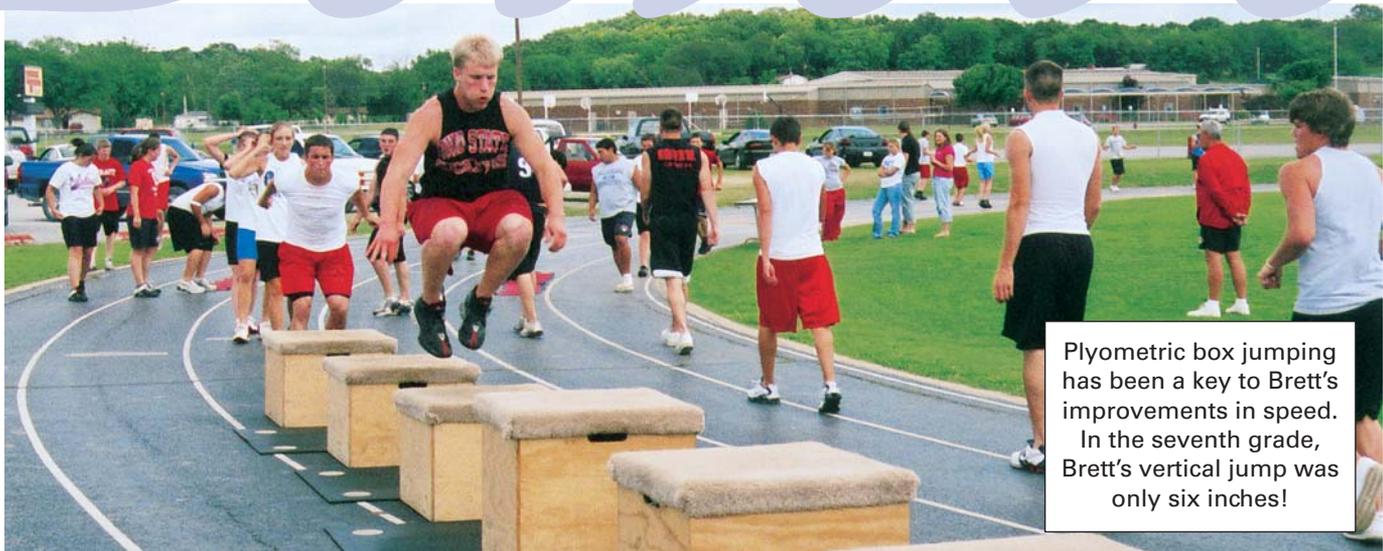
Frank Marsaln knows sports. He was drafted out of high school to play professional baseball with the St. Louis Cardinals, played for a few years, got back into college and played pro football with the USFL Tampa Bay Bandits. He started coaching in 1985, and in 1993 was introduced to, and became hooked on, the BFS program. Based on his suc-

cess with the program, Frank decided that BFS would also be the best way to train his son.

"I've always said that it's the fundamentals that make a good team," says Frank. "When developing young kids, it's important to give them a basic lifting program with cleans, squats and bench pressing. That's what Bigger Faster Stronger is about, giving kids a basic structure of physical training underneath them that they can build on and refine as they develop." As for Brett, Frank says that if his son was going to be successful in athletics, "we needed to get him hooked up in the weightroom."

This is Frank's first year coaching at Locust Grove High School in Oklahoma, taking over a football program that had endured a streak of 13 straight losing seasons. His previous school was Metro Christian Academy, where he took his team to the playoffs every year and in 2004 went 10-3 and made it to the quarterfinals. Frank says Brett, having been in the program for so long, helped implement the BFS program at Locust Grove. In fact, when Metro Christian Academy had a BFS clinic in 2004, BFS Clinician Dennis Dunn used Brett to demonstrate perfect lifting technique.

Besides a sound lifting program,



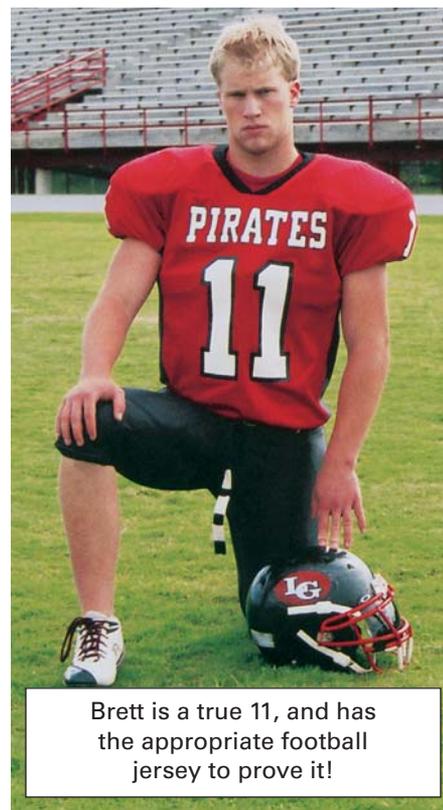
Plyometric box jumping has been a key to Brett's improvements in speed. In the seventh grade, Brett's vertical jump was only six inches!

another aspect of Frank's philosophy for developing young athletes is motivation. Kelly says that when Brett first displayed an interest in playing football, Frank started a notebook for his son filled with inspirational quotes and magazine articles. "When I looked at that book, I was surprised to see that every article came from *Bigger Faster Stronger* magazine," says Kelly.

As a junior, last year Brett helped Locust Grove High School open the season with a 61-0 victory over a perennial rival Salina High School and end its streak of losing records. Brett was a juggernaut on defense with 101 tackles as middle linebacker. "Brett's persona is that the tougher the game is, that's when he plays his best – he's a winner!" says Frank, who saw his new team start the season with a 61-0 victory and end its losing streak.

Brett's brother, Beau, will be a freshman at Locust Grove next year. Frank says, unlike Brett, Beau didn't have the medical challenges that Brett faced and has a bright future in athletics – in fact, Frank says Beau will challenge for the job as starting quarterback. With sound coaching and two Marsalns on the team, the future looks bright for Locust Grove football next season.

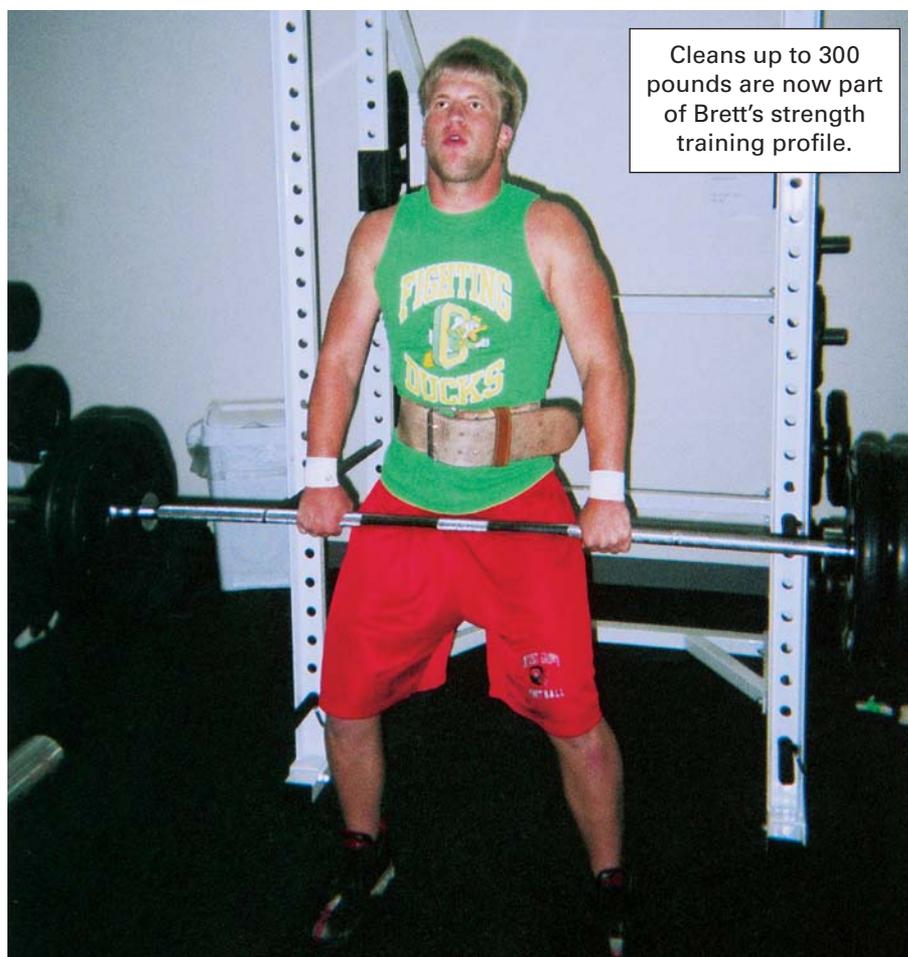
These days Brett stands 6 feet tall and weighs 198 pounds, and it's all muscle. Brett power cleans 285 (300 from the hang), benches 300 and towel benches 315 for three reps, and does a 390 rock-bottom squat and a 515 x 11 box squat. At football camps run by two major universities, Brett ran 4.74 in the 40, did a 4.48 pro agility and vertical jumped 27.5 inches. Says Frank proudly, "I have been around athletes at all talent levels, but I have never been around any-

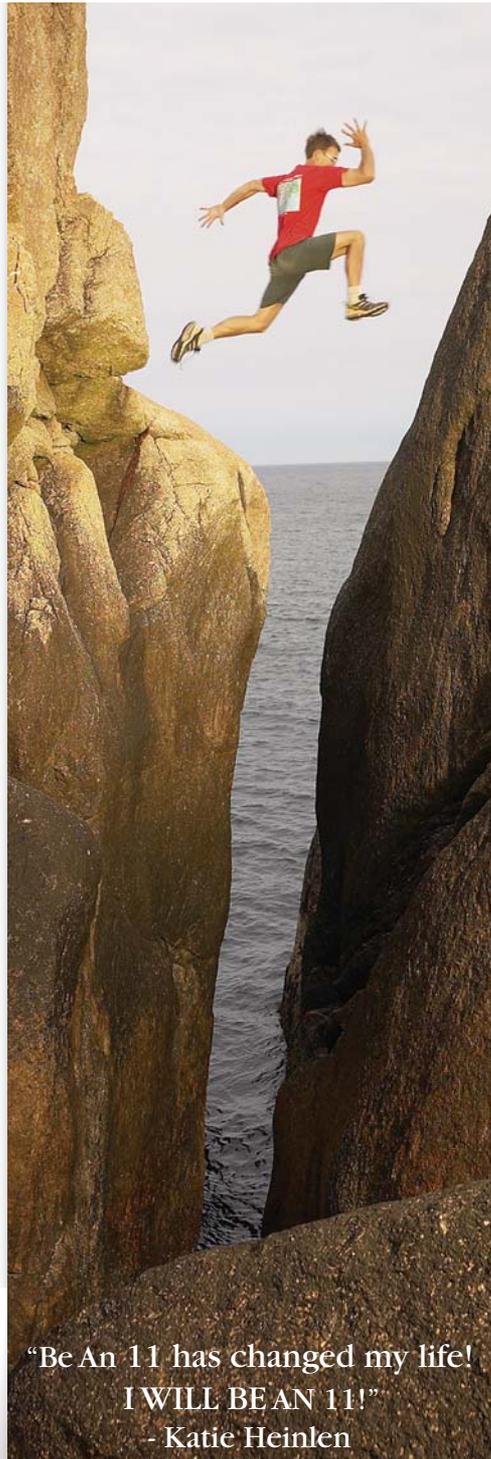


one who has the work ethic Brett has every day, year-round."

Despite his obstacles, Brett Marsaln has always had a positive attitude and a sense of humor, says Kelly. "Brett has scars all over his head and his waist from his operations; and whenever he took off his shirt in the locker room, kids would ask him what happened. He would joke and tell them that he was bitten by a shark, or shot! But a negative attitude, never – and since the seventh grade he knew he was going to play football. Brett's positive attitude as well as lots of prayers being answered are the reasons he is where he is today.

Asked how he's doing now, Brett says he feels "just fine," and that it never really crossed his mind to not play sports. His new goal is to become a chiropractor because he likes the application the field has to sports and "because I'm not a real big fan of blood and guts, or, for that matter, hospitals." And yes, his favorite team is still the University of Oregon. **BFS**





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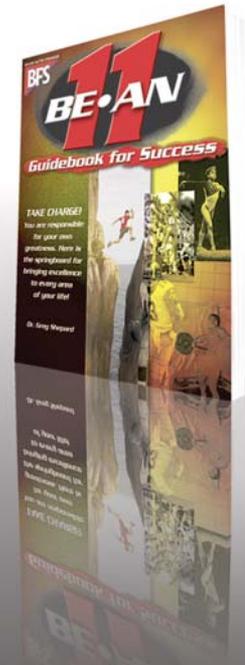
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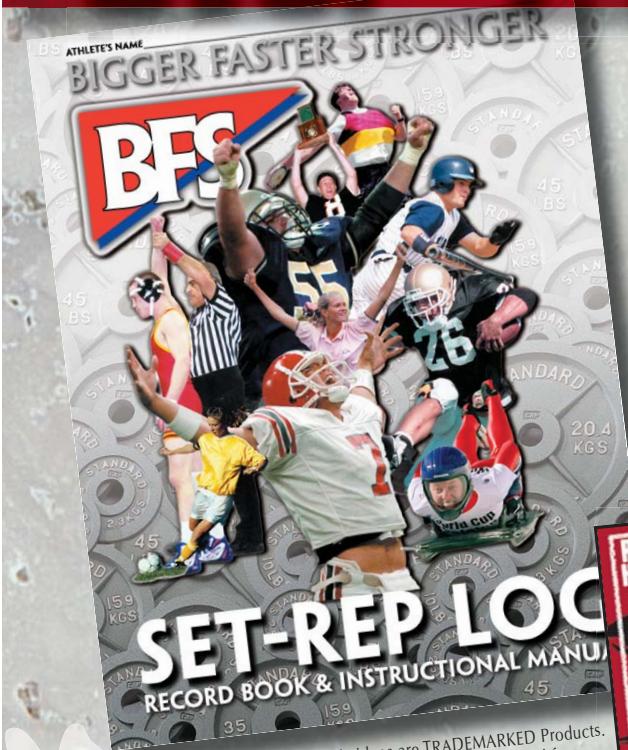
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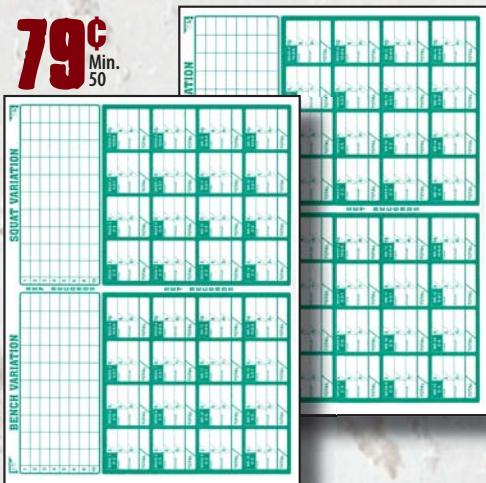
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