

## SCHEDULING SUCCES AT LAPEER EAST HIGH



### *Time management is this high school's secret to athletic success*

Lapeer East High School wasn't the worst performer in its football league, but it was far from the best. Head football coach Matt Topie decided it was time to kick it up a notch. The way he figured it, his program didn't need a complete overhaul – just a little creative time management.

Topie's efforts paid off big for this school of 1,250 students in Lapeer, Michigan. This year the Eagles won their first-ever league championship, finishing the regular season at 9-2, their best record since 1976. Included in that record were the Eagle's first 1,000-yard rusher in 15 years and the school record for most total yards in a season: 4,002.

"We were always right there in the middle of the pack in our league, and I think one reason was that there was a little too much emphasis put on the varsity team as opposed to the whole program," says Topie, who took over the program in the spring of 2003. "I tried to establish more consistency throughout the whole program, especially at the lower levels."

One way Topie accomplished this was by adding more structure to the weight training classes held during school hours. "With the help of the school administration, we scheduled five weight training classes during the day, and we changed two of them to advanced classes where the students would need my signature to get into the class."

According to Topie, having weight training classes during the day is important so that athletes can get their workouts done during the day and have time to concentrate on their sport after school. Topie also encourages high school athletes to participate in multiple sports. "Some coaches want athletes to concentrate on just one sport, but I'm looking for players who also go out for wrestling, for baseball and for track." The students are listening, as the number of track athletes increased from 22 in 2003 to 36 last year. "And this year we expect to have over 50!"

An emphasis on promoting multi-sport participation has paid off, and not just in football victories. This year the Eagles won league championships in



men's basketball and women's volleyball; and the school had five state qualifiers in wrestling, the most in their league.

"Lapeer East had been known as a girls' sports school and a basketball school for boys, but I think now we are being

looked at as more of an overall, all-around good sports school."

In addition to scheduling regular school-year weight training classes, Topie made time for a more intense summer program. He made the weightroom available five days a week in the summer and was personally involved in supervising the workouts. "The players wanted the head coach to be there in the summer, and to be a little more hands on," says Topie. "Once they saw me there every day, they knew that they had to be there every day."

## Staying on Track

Fitting in with his organization of weight training program was a commitment to the BFS program. "Our players were very happy to have a structured program like the

**This season the Eagles accumulated 4,002 yards in total offense, a school record.**

BFS program. We used logbooks and put up record boards, and our athletes consistently tried to break personal records. This sort of focus was what we had been looking for.



**This year the Eagles won their first-ever league championship, finishing the regular season at 9-2, their best record since 1976.**

Our teams had always been competitive, but the BFS program


offered the consistency we needed to put us over the edge and into the playoffs."

Topie's emphasis on consistency is reflected in his evenhanded consideration of gender when scheduling classes. Unlike coaches who do not schedule co-ed weight training classes so as to concentrate on the needs of the football team, Topie has a different approach to ensure focus. "We break our classes into groups, and I simply group the girls together – the girls and guys are never at the same station. And because we rotate stations every fifteen minutes, there's no time for anyone to get distracted."

What makes the Lapeer East conditioning program even more impressive is that the weightroom is only about 400 square feet. "It's tiny," says Topie. "When the school was under construction, they built the weightroom with a single universal machine in

mind. Over the course of 30 years we've added more things, and I redid the layout to maximize space." Things are about to change: this year the school will build a 2,400-square-foot weightroom. "It will have a few machines, but it will be mostly free weights, as we plan to continue using the BFS program."

Having accomplished many milestones on the field, Topie says he cannot afford to be complacent. "We're losing 21 seniors on our team, so our younger guys will have a lot to prove. They know they have big shoes to fill, and they're working real hard to

do just that." And with Coach Topie in charge, you can be certain they'll be right on schedule. 

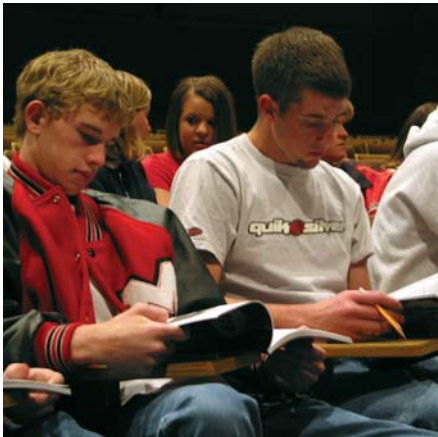


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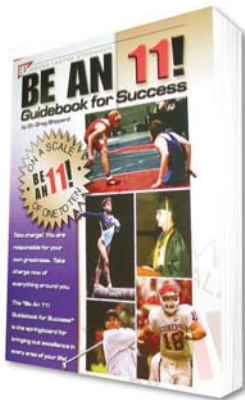
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