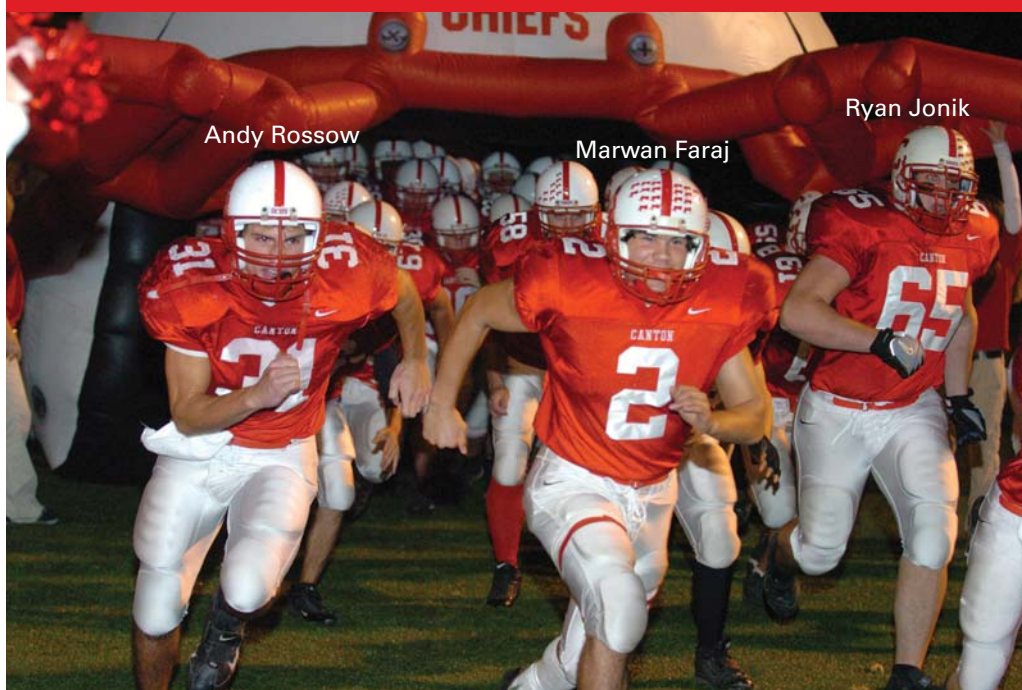




The *Patience* to Win

Canton High School's winning football tradition didn't come overnight

Photos by Andrew Rubenstein



Andy Rossow

Marwan Faraj

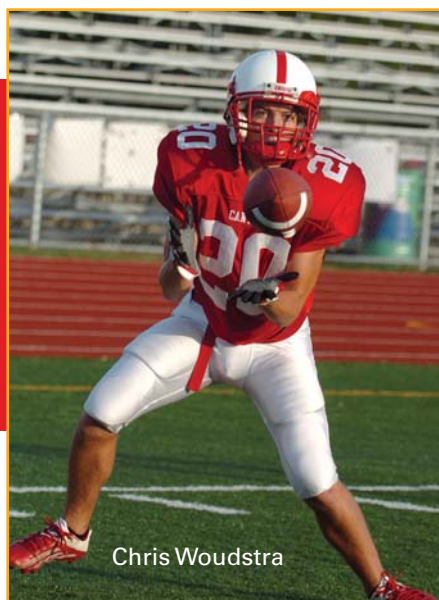
Ryan Jonik

When Tim Baechler became the head football coach of Canton High School, he inherited a team that had won only two games in its previous two seasons. The positive aspect of this situation was that the program could only get better. The negative side was that athletes who are accustomed to losing tend to stop believing they can win. Coach Baechler thought that the Chiefs from Canton, Michigan, could not only win but win big. He just didn't know how long it would take.

Canton High School is part of a 305-acre campus site called the Plymouth-Canton Educational Park that

combines three high schools: Canton, Plymouth and Salem. The proximity of the schools is such that in the interest of fulfilling their educational potential, some students take classes at multiple schools. In fact, you'll often find athletes from opposing schools attending classes together. But while this unique educational environment has its advantages, it certainly hadn't done much for Canton's football program.

Just how bad was football at Canton? Well, consider that the team started in 1973, and for the first six seasons it averaged only two wins a year. There was a spark of hope in 1978 with a 4-5 record, but the following year they lost every game. It wasn't until 1989 that



Chris Woudstra

the team finally had a winning season, a feat they managed to accomplish only three more times in the next eight years. Then Coach Baechler took over.

In Baechler's first season, the team won three games and the new program showed signs of a turnaround from the team's one-win season the previous year. The second year they won four games, just one shy of a .500 season. It was progress, but Coach Baechler knew he could get more out of his team if they worked harder, and smarter, in the

weightroom. That's when Baechler implemented the BFS program at Canton, and the following year he led his team to an eight-win season – the team's best record in a decade – and a district championship. Success continued the next year with a 9-2 season, which tied the school record for most consecutive winning seasons. At last Canton High School was building a tradition of winning. But Baechler wanted more, and so he came up with an idea that would help take his program to the next level.

"I felt we needed a little inspira-



Brandon Fender

tional boost to get our off-season training going, so in the winter of 2002 we hosted a BFS Clinic presented by Doug Ekmark," says Baechler. "It was just what we needed. We were getting the program turned around, but I just felt our players needed to be sold on the BFS program by a difference voice."

The following year, the team won nine games again and its first league championship, but the Chiefs had an early exit from the playoffs. "Our kids were still hungry and excited about the off-season training program, but more importantly, they believed in it. They saw

the success of the graduating seniors and how their lifts and times were improving, and they saw it in themselves in the success of our team. The BFS program gave our kids tremendous confidence."

The year 2004 marked another milestone for Coach Baechler's coaching team and the Canton High School football team. Not only did they win league and district championships, they finished with an 11-win season, the most ever in the 23-year history of the program. The next year was a 10-win season and a third league championship; but despite averaging 44 points a game, they found themselves shut out in the district championships, 20-0 against Novi. It was the Chiefs' first shutout in five years. The



Blaine Paden

Konrad Konsitzke

following season started off rather grim, as their starting quarterback, Shawn Little, became ill and had to miss the first three games of the season.

2005: A Season to Remember

Despite the initial absence of their offensive leader, the Chiefs defeated their first two challengers in 2005. The next game was a heartbreaking overtime loss to Walled Lake Western High School, a team they had beaten four years in a row.

BFS SUCCESS STORY



Tim Baechler, head football and strength coach

Casey Randolph, head wrestling coach and assistant strength coach



Ryan Jonik power cleans 315 pounds, a school record



Quarterback Shawn Little runs the 40 in 4.5



2005 CANTON CHIEFS FOOTBALL

WEEKEND	OPPONENT	RESULT	SCORE	CONFERENCE
Aug. 26	Pioneer	W	42-12	
Sep. 01	Walled Lake Central	W	24-20	Western-Lakes
Sep. 09	Walled Lake Western	L	14-21 (OT)	Western-Lakes
Sep. 16	Livonia Franklin	L	7-13	Western-Lakes
Sep. 23	Wayne Memorial	W	55-6	Western-Lakes
Sep. 30	Northville	W	35-0	Western-Lakes
Oct. 07	Plymouth	W	42-7	Western-Lakes
Oct. 14	Walled Lake Central	W	41-33	Western-Lakes
Oct. 21	Salem	W	33-12	Western-Lakes
Oct. 28	Monroe	W	42-34	Pre-District
Nov. 4	Detroit Cody	W	63-34	District Final
Nov. 11	Detroit King	W	48-21	Regional Final
Nov. 19	Macomb Dakota	W	35-21	State Semi
Nov. 26	Rockford	L	21-31	State Final
2005 TOTALS		11-3-0	502-265	

This was followed by another conference loss, this time to Livonia Franklin, 7-13. The rest of the regular season was a different story: They won their next five games, outscoring their opponents 206 to 58, including a 35-0 shutout of Northville High School. The Chiefs finished the season with a respectable 7-2 mark and great confidence going into the playoffs.

The first playoff game was on October 28 against Monroe. It was a struggle, but one that ended with the Chiefs' victory 42-34. The district final against Detroit's Cody High School was next, and Canton put on an offensive show that resulted in a 63-34 victory and a shot at Detroit King in the regional finals. That resulted in a 48-21 victory. In

DT Donnie Laramie qualified for state in wrestling and has power cleaned 285 pounds.



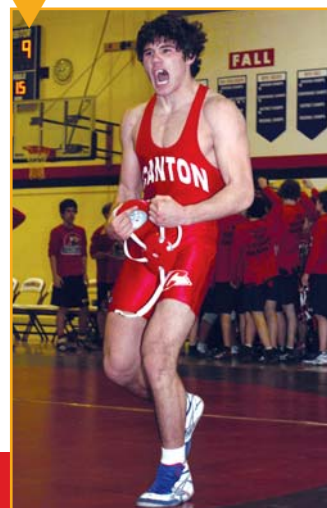
LB Colin O'Shaughney weighs 210 pounds and power cleans 250.



CB Chris Woudstra weighs only 165 pounds but can Hex bar deadlift 350 pounds.



Marwan Faraj is the starting outside line-backer and the league champion in wrestling.



Corner Jeff Phillips weighs 215 pounds and benches 365.

Deshon McClendon plays running back and free safety and can parallel squat 500 pounds.



the state semifinals against Macomb Dakota on November 19, Canton fell behind 14-0 in the first quarter but came back to win 35-21 and a berth in their first-ever state championship game.

The state championships were held at Ford Field, where Canton faced off against Rockford High School. Here the Chiefs were finally stopped, 21-31, but they walked off the field with a sense of pride knowing they had accomplished what no other Canton High School team had ever done.

Coach Baechler reflects on his team's amazing run: "There are a lot of reasons for our success, starting with a dedicated coaching staff and talented athletes who totally believe in our program. But BFS was a definite difference maker for us – in fact, since our

BFS clinic in 2002 our program has gone 41-7! It's true that there are many different programs to choose, but we chose BFS and believed in it 100 percent and ran with it without looking back. We are not the strongest team or the fastest

team, but our kids got stronger and faster every year, and they feel good about what they are doing. BFS has given our kids tremendous confidence." **BFS**

Canton Football Strength Report, 1998 vs. 2006

1998

of Players Benching 300> – 1
of Players Benching 250> – 1
of Players Squatting 365> – 0
of Players Power Clean 225> – 1

VS.

2006

of Players Benching 300> – 6
of Players Benching 250> – 15
of Players Squatting 365> – 14
of Players Power Clean 225> – 14

"We play a very competitive schedule. Every school we play has a strong weightlifting program, so we are just trying to keep pace with them. What I like about BFS is that it is organized, we can be done in 45 minutes, it's a total body workout, and our kids get stronger and faster. There are other excellent training programs we could follow, but BFS just fits us the best," Coach Baechler stated.

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