



The downside of taking over a championship program is that the only place to go is down. This was the problem facing head football coach Joe Parrish of Cambridge High School in Cambridge, Wisconsin. The previous coach, Bob Noldof, was the seventh winningest coach in Wisconsin and had been at the school for 32 years. A hard act to follow.

“When you take over from a coach who has had that level of success, there are certain expectations placed upon you,” says Parrish, “but I looked at it as a challenge to continue that winning tradition.” And a challenge it was, as Parrish’s teams struggled with

losing seasons his first three years. This year, however, Cambridge High School returned to its former glory.

Despite being the second-smallest school in its 5A conference, the Cambridge High Blue Jays went undefeated in the regular season, averaging over 30 points a game and allowing fewer than 9. In the playoffs, the Blue Jays won the first game, bringing their record to 10-0. The following game they lost 20-7, defeated by the team that went on to win the state championships. “The school that knocked us off were the defending state champions, and they came in with a swagger that we are trying to get,” says Parrish.

Parrish says there are three things that made the difference for the Blue Jays this year. “First, we had a great senior class with leadership. Second, we had the Bigger Faster Stronger program along with the Be an

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Trevor Staubli #32



11! program. We challenged our kids not only to be good athletes but also to be good citizens in the community. Third, we played with a lot of passion because we had dedicated our season to one of our senior captains who was killed on July 27 in a motorcycle accident two weeks prior to the opening of the season.”

Do It for Dozer

That athlete’s name was Dustin Zuelsdorf. At 5-foot-10 and 225 pounds, the 17-year-old Dustin started at offensive guard and last year was a second-team All-Capitol Conference selection. Dustin had earned the nickname “Dozer” from his knack for bulldozing his way through opposing players on the gridiron.

What makes Dustin’s accomplishments as a player even more memorable is that he was born with a severely clubbed left foot. He was advised by doctors to take up swimming because his handicap would affect his ability to run. His mother, Kim, said her son lived the phrase “playing through pain.” Parrish agrees, and says that during practice there were times when Dustin was in extreme pain but would not stop.

When Parrish talks about this young man, you can see why his team was so inspired to do well. “Dustin was an outstanding young man, with a dedication and work ethic that you just don’t see every day.” Parrish says that one thing Dustin did that impressed him was convincing the coaching staff to let them work out earlier in the morning. “They called it the A.M. Shift, and the kids really bit into it – to me that spoke highly of Dustin’s leadership qualities.”

After the accident the coaches and players at Cambridge High made certain Dustin would be remembered. On a wall inside the Blue Jays’ locker room there is a large photo of Dustin walking off the field after a practice; his jersey and shoulder pads sit over a locker; and a flag with his jersey number, 52, hangs by the doorway of the locker room.

The student body, the school administration and the community also paid tribute. During the season



In memory of Dustin Zuelsdorf, a football player who was killed in a motorcycle accident, the student body and school administration placed a boulder with Dustin’s jersey number on it along the path to the football field.

posters that read “Do it for Dozer” were everywhere. In his memory a boulder was placed on the path to the football field, and benches were painted with “Dozer 52.” His number is retired, and only his younger brother, Kiefer, an eighth grader, will be allowed to wear it.



Despite being from the second-smallest school in their conference, the Cambridge High Blue Jays went undefeated in the regular season, averaging over 30 points a game and allowing fewer than 9. Running tough is #8 Jace Rindahl.

A Perfect Season

In 2003 the Blue Jays had finished 2-7, but these results didn't create a feeling of despair among the 2004 team and their fans. Says Coach Parrish, “I told my players that if you keep working hard and believe in yourselves, good things are going to happen. The kids were dedicated, worked hard, focused and played with passion.” As for the fans, Parrish says the student body, the administration and the entire community “rallied in support.”

Last March BFS clinician John Rowbotham did a clinic for Cambridge High School. Says Parrish, “BFS is a very structured program that enables our kids to get in and out of the weightroom in an hour – and that includes stretching and the Dot Drill. Our kids also really get into the running program. The BFS program keeps our kids focused; you can just see the improvement coming!”

Although Parrish's efforts using BFS first focused on football, the program is expanding, especially among female athletes. “We are really starting to see some turnover into other sports, and also among female athletes. We had a cross-country runner win a conference championship,

“We challenge our kids to not only be good athletes but to also be good citizens,” says coach Parrish.



and there are kids who are not even in athletics who are using the program. And that's mainly what we want – to get as many kids involved as we can and use it as an overall tool for our athletic program, not just focused on our football players. At a school our size, we share so many athletes among our programs that we really want everybody to benefit.”

Parrish believes that in addition to high school athletes, even younger athletes can benefit from the BFS program and also the Be an 11! program. “I teach middle school, and I've introduced the Be an 11! program and some components of the BFS program to our sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. The two programs complement each other, as improving behavior off the field helps these young athletes accomplish their goals on the field.”

Now after a few years of struggling, Cambridge High School is back to its winning ways. And the person who best summed up the 2004 season is a player who was present only in spirit, Dustin Zuelsdorf. In a paper he did for his creative writing class last spring entitled “A Perfect Season,” Dustin wrote, “I got the same gear as I had the last two

years and my trademark number 52. . . . We kept on winning. Our last home game was homecoming, and we were also playing for the conference championship. . . . The [last] kick was pushed wide right and the kick was no good. . . . We had won.”

A perfect season for the Blue Jays, the perfect tribute to Dustin. 