

TAKEO SPIKES



One of the NFL's best got his start the BFS way

There are approximately 15,000 high schools supporting football programs in the US but only 32 teams in the NFL, so you've got to figure the odds of an athlete making it to game-day Sunday are mighty slim. Only the best of the best are drafted, and only a few of those actually make the final cut. So it's no wonder that BFS Clinician Rick Tomberlin is especially proud to have coached Takeo Spikes, a 242-pound linebacker for the Buffalo Bills.

"Takeo played for me his sophomore, junior and senior seasons. During that time we were 41-3," says Tomberlin, currently the head coach at Washington County High School in Sandersville, Georgia. "In his senior year we were 15-0 and state champions—we were never challenged, and Takeo was our ace that year," says Tomberlin. "Takeo is the most driven athlete and the best leader I have ever coached. He simply would not allow the team to ever have a bad practice. He always came up with a devastating hit or a big offensive play when we needed one."

As a tight end, Spikes caught 17 touchdowns in his senior year; and he also excelled in track. That year Spikes was selected as Georgia's Mr. Football by the state's coaches and Georgia Player of the Year by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and he earned All-America honors from *USA Today* and *Parade*.

Tomberlin attributes much of Spikes' success to his efforts in the weightroom. "Takeo believes in being prepared and continues to train diligently, breaking personal records and always staying in top shape."

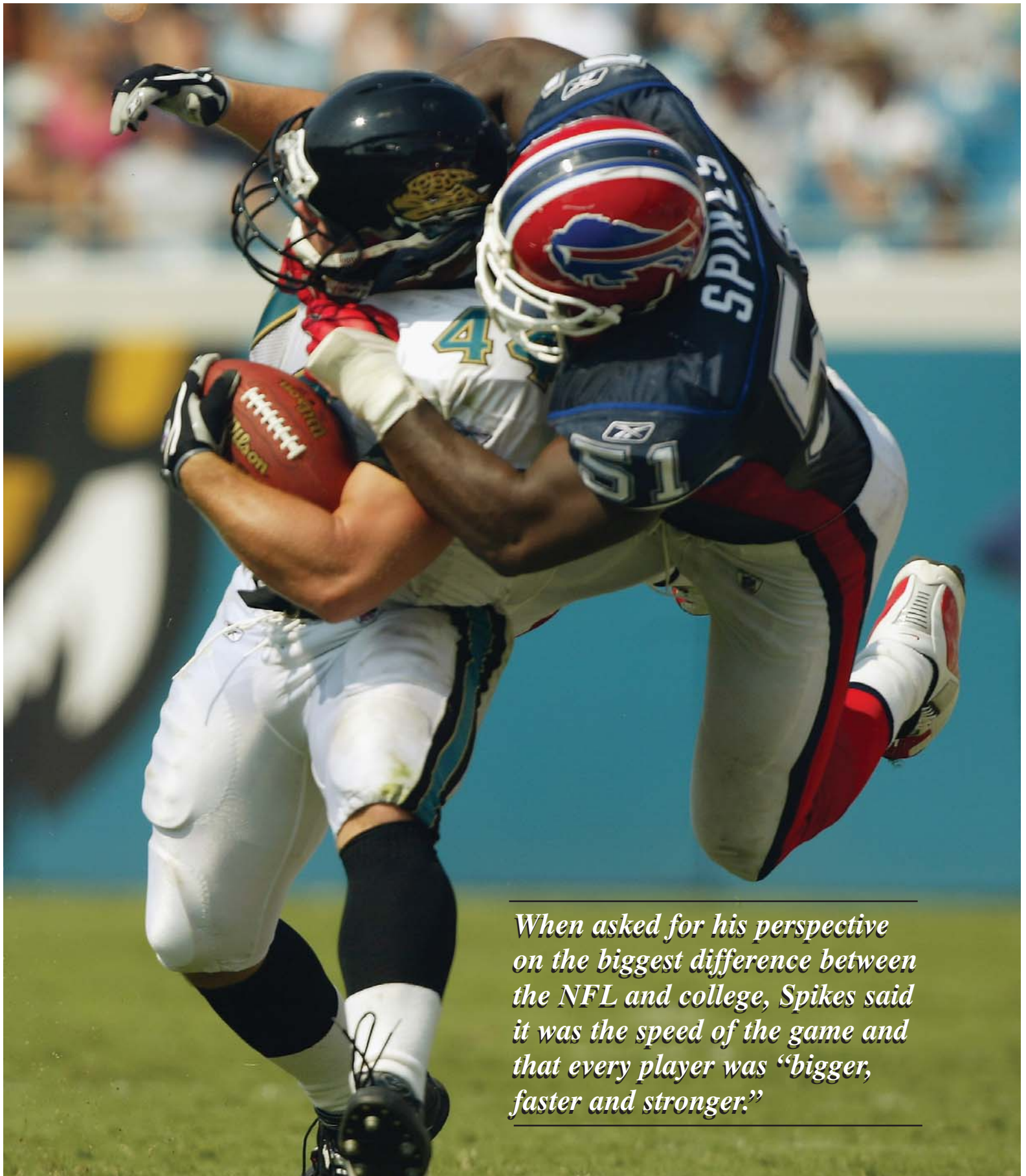
Spikes agrees. "When Coach T and his staff came to Washington County during my freshman year in high school, they taught me the value of hard work and the importance of getting in and staying in great physical condition. We always took the field knowing we were the stronger, better-conditioned team. I have always been a goal-oriented person and Coach T showed me how to make my athletic goals a reality. In training for the NFL I still use the BFS program and training philosophy I learned in high school."

The Role Model Linebacker

Born in Sandersville, Georgia, Spikes explains his full name is Takeo Gerard Spikes. Takeo is pronounced "tuh-KEE-oh" and translates as "great warrior" in Japanese. He has definitely lived up to his name.

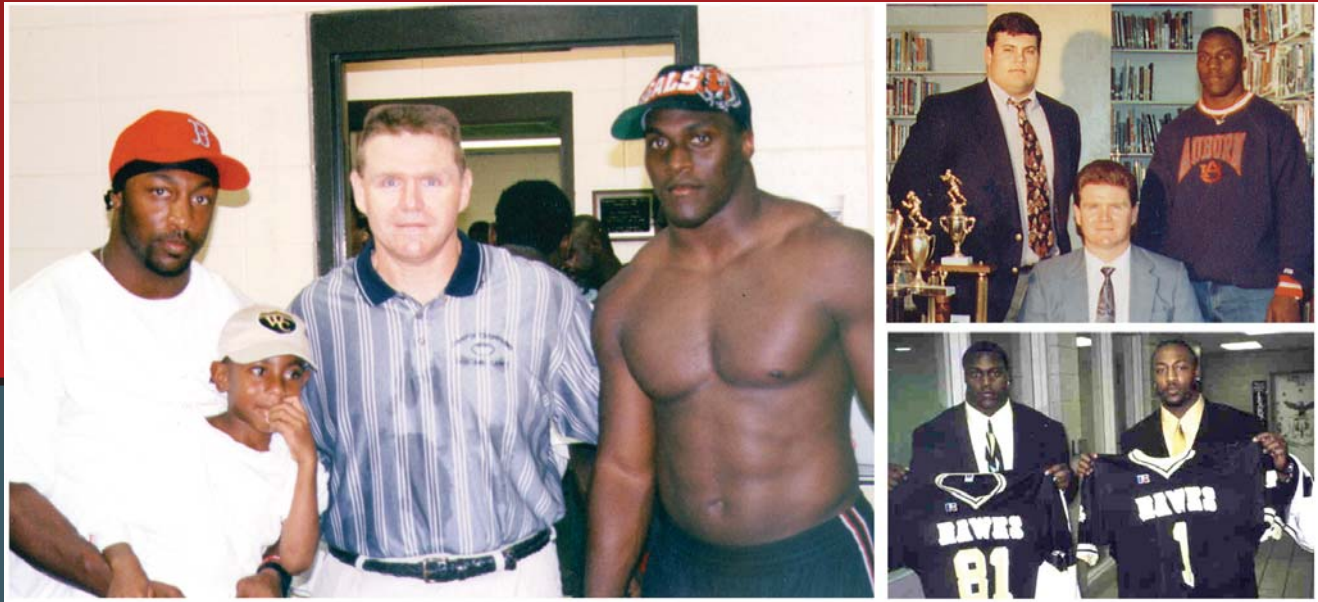
After high school Spikes attended Auburn University, majoring in liberal arts. As a linebacker, by his sophomore year he was a semifinalist for the Dick Butkus award. In his junior year he was named

Takeo Spikes, #51 of the Buffalo Bills, wrestles down Tony Stewart of the Cincinnati Bengals during a game on October 5, 2003. Spikes played five seasons with the Bengals. (Photo by Rick Stewart/Getty Images)



When asked for his perspective on the biggest difference between the NFL and college, Spikes said it was the speed of the game and that every player was “bigger, faster and stronger.”

Spikes does a high-flying tackle on Marc Edwards of the Jacksonville Jaguars during a game on September 14, 2002. Despite his intensity on the field, in his entire NFL career Spikes has never missed a game due to injury.



Above, BFS Clinician Rick Tomberlin poses with Miami Dolphins running back Robert Edwards, and Takeo Spikes. The top right photo was taken on signing day in 1995 when Jeremy Brett and Spikes signed with Auburn, and the bottom right photo is Edwards and Spikes displaying their Washington County Hawks football jerseys.

National Defensive Player of the Year by *Football News* and First-Team All-America by *Sporting News*. At this time Spikes decided to enter the NFL draft and was drafted in the first round (13th overall) by the Bengals.

During his rookie year in the NFL, he made an immediate impact. He started in all 16 regular-season games and led the team in tackles, the first rookie to do so since James Francis in 1990. His first sack was in a game with the Green Bay Packers, where a fourth-down play by Spikes hit quarterback Brett Favre for a 12-yard loss. The following year Spikes became a team captain. When asked for his perspective on the biggest difference between the NFL and college, Spikes said it was the speed of the game and that every player was “bigger, faster and stronger.”


Spikes spent five years with the Bengals, starting every game and never missing a single game due to injury. He earned the team tackling crown for four years, becoming only the third Bengals player to do so. In 2001 he posted his best numbers, with 173 total tackles along with 6 sacks. One of the highlights that year was a 66-yard interception return for a touch-down against Baltimore on September 23, which helped him win the AFC Defensive Player of the

Week and put a halt to a 12-game winning streak by the defending Super Bowl champions.

In addition to making an impact on the field, Spikes has made a good impression off the field with his charity work. He did volunteer work for Children’s Hospital in Cincinnati, serving as a

spokesman for its eye screening program, and represented the Bengals in the NFL’s United Way Program in 1999. He was also an active supporter of Cincinnati’s planned National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, helping raise private donations by performing radio announcements and making personal appearances.

In 2003 Spikes became a free agent and signed with the Bills. That year the team surrendered 145 fewer yards than in 2002, due in large measure to Spikes’ contributions. He accumulated 137 tackles, 2 sacks, 2

interceptions, 1 forced fumble and 1 fumble recovery, thereby earning him a place in a Pro Bowl. Spikes was subsequently interviewed by *Democrat and Chronicle* and was asked for his views on athletes as role models. His reply reflects the perceptive side of this amazing athlete: “It’s not up to an athlete to decide if he wants to be a role model. Like it or not, you *are* one.” 

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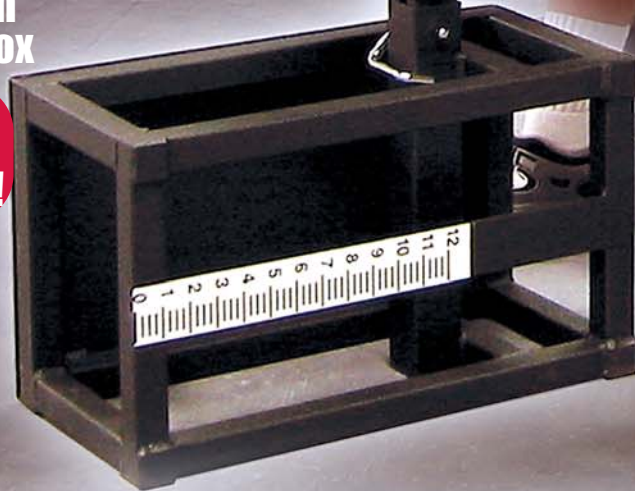
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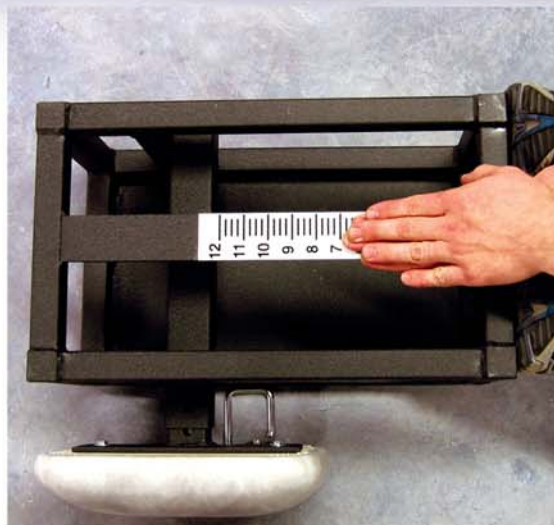
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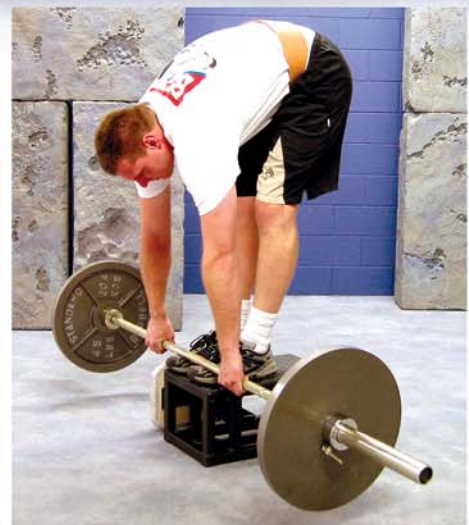
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