



2005 BFS High School of the Year

BY KIM GOSS

Whitmore Lake

Coach Brian Lemons' commitment to "classic" BFS has produced great improvements for football players and cheer athletes alike

A few years ago I was having dinner with Dr. Greg Shepard and we found ourselves discussing the way some coaches have modified the BFS program to fit their athletic programs. Coach Shepard's response to my comments was to the effect that after teaching the BFS program to as many coaches as he has for as long as he has, he's found that the only coaches who are not getting the results they want from the program are those who try to change it!

Coach Shepard, whose official title now is BFS CEO/Founder, went on to explain how those coaches who are having problems with team speed are not doing the plyometric workout, and those who are not getting the strength gains they expected are modifying the set-rep system. Hopefully, those sorts of coaches are in the minority. One coach who is using the BFS program exactly as it was written and is getting incredible results is Brian Lemons.

Coach Lemons coaches at Whitmore Lake High School in Whitmore Lake, Michigan. Lemons started using the program five years ago, and the program has grown to the extent that almost 50 percent of the student body is using it. In fact, the BFS Readiness program is a mandatory course for all freshmen.

Coach Lemons' enthusiasm and sound teaching methods have inspired the board of directors at BFS to name Whitmore Lake High School as the first-ever BFS High School of the Year.

"I started coaching ten years ago in a large Class A school district. The kids there never bought into the weightlifting program – it was 'too long' and it was hard to convince them to do it," says Lemons. "Their apathy discouraged me to such a point that after my third year there I honestly began to think that weight training had little to do with athletics – you either have the talent or you don't." After Lemons' third year he left for another school district, and his attitude changed completely.

"I had a friend at my new school who was into the BFS program and I

thought, 'This workout is nice – it's very well organized, and I can get it done in a 45-minute class period.'" So Lemons gave it a try. The kids bought into it, and his team made the playoffs. Lemons was hooked. "I decided to get on board with BFS and find out as much as I could about it." That's when Lemons accepted a job as a PE instructor and assistant football coach for the Trojans, which needed a fresh approach to its conditioning program.

A Fresh Start

The weight training program for the Trojans was pretty much non-existent when Lemons arrived at Whitmore Lake High School – in fact, he recalls that there were only about eight kids using the weightroom on a consistent basis. Not wanting to endure the disappointment he'd had at his first school, Lemons laid down the law. "I said, 'This is how it's going to be!'" So I got out the log books and went 100 percent BFS, with no added influence from outside.

"That first year I had about 14 football players working out in the off-season; this past year there were about 65. Along with the football team was the boys' basketball team, cheerleading, baseball, vol-



Proper spotting for ultimate safety is emphasized at Whitmore Lake High School, as evidenced by these two photos.



Plyometrics is a must for the Trojans. In fact, every freshman at Whitmore Lake goes through a 9-week BFS Readiness program that includes box jumping.

leyball and cross country.” The results? From 1959 to 2000, the football team had only seven winning seasons. Since then they’ve made the playoffs every year; and from 2001 to the present their offense averages 30 points a game, while their defense allows an average of only 12. There’s more – just ask the other coaches.

“Before the commitment to BFS, we hadn’t had a winning season in 20 years,” says Rick Ziem, boys’ basketball coach. In the three years prior to starting BFS their record was 20-62, and since then their record has been 50-17.

“BFS has impacted the strength and vertical jump of our cheer athletes, which has led to better jumping, stunting and gymnastic skills,” says Wendy Lemons, a former cheerleading coach who has led the team to five state finals since 2000. “In a six-year span our average score has increased 151 points, from 457 before BFS to 608 since the implementation of the training program.” It gets even better.

Coach Lemons says that during the

school year, more than 150 of the 380 students at the school use the BFS program. Such participation has led to major improvements in the weightroom. “When I first came here, it was two squat

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racks, two benches and some selector plates. Now, thanks to fundraising efforts and the support of our principal, Tom Dekeyser, we have made major improvements.” And why has Principal Dekeyser been so supportive? He says it goes beyond athletics.

“Michigan, as well as other states, has reported problems with obesity in adolescents,” says Dekeyser. “Our approach to combating problems such as this is to teach our kids the importance

of lifelong fitness. Our weight program ties directly into lifelong fitness. Additionally, there is no question that our weight program has impacted our athletic program. We suffer very few season-ending injuries and have begun to compile winning records in areas in which previously we were losing.”

The Next Level

Besides equipment, a major improvement to Coach Lemons’ program has been the purchase of the BFS Beat the Computer software. “The kids like the computer program even more than the

log books because it tells them exactly what to do – there’s no guesswork. If the computer tells them they need to squat 325 five times, they put 325 on the rack and they go after it. Before, they might

not have tried it because they were the ones choosing the weights. And the program is a great tool for me because it gives me physical evidence that I can show to the coaches, the principal and even the parents about how much the kids are lifting and how fast they are improving.”

Another aspect of the BFS program that Coach Lemons appreciates throughout the year is the concept of unification. “In a school of 380 students most of



At Whitmore Lake the cheerleaders perform the same lifts as the football players. Says Strength Coach Brian Lemons, "With the BFS program, I'm trying to make each athlete, no matter what their sport, the best athlete possible."

your athletes are playing several sports, so you're sharing your athletes. In a school the size of Whitmore Lake, it really hurts the overall athletic program if one player decides to specialize in just one sport. The same goes for the workout program; because if an athlete changes workouts after every season, they won't get the long-term effects they would have had they used the same program."

If you visit Whitmore Lake High School, you'll see that the football team

and the cheerleading squad do the exact same core lifts, and that's just fine with Lemons. "The only things we alter are the auxiliary lifts, which we make specific to each sport. Whereas the football players might be doing the incline bench press as an auxiliary, the cheerleaders would do the military press instead, because that's closer to the actions they do during cheerleading on a consistent basis."

Lemons has had great feedback

about his program, but he occasionally encounters athletes or parents who assume he designs the workouts around the needs of the football players. "But that's not the case at all! With the BFS program, I'm trying to make each athlete, no matter what their sport, the best athlete possible. I tell my students, 'I don't care what sports you play – you just need to play sports and be as strong as you can.' That's what important to me." **BFS**

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