

RULE

FROM 0-10 to

OHIO STATE CHAMPS

HILLTOPPERS

C H A R D O N H I G H S C H O O L

"Dear BFS,

Well, we did it! After enduring an 0-10 season in 1992, we ended up state champs in 1994. As you know Ohio, (known for the Massillon-Mckinleys, Moellers and now St. Ignatious) plays the best football in the USA!

"last year we were the first team to go from 0-10 to the playoffs, missing the finals by one game. This year we were on a mission. To finish 10-0, we had to drive 79 yards in the last 26 seconds to finish perfect. Our kids never give up! Our defense gave up only 3 rushing touchdowns in 14 games and clinched the state finals with a goalline stand stopping our 13-0 opponent on 4th and 1 from the one yard line!

Our defense was led by two All-Ohio players and a BFS made front four. Our 5-7 159 pound Middle Linebacker Andy Hoenigman was fabulous. (Dead Lift 500, Parallel Squat 435 and Power Clean 235 pounds) He was our leading tackler and took on a 210 pound Tailback repeatedly in the semifinal game! (Two big sacks in the finals)

Rick Warner, (Dead Lift 500, Parallel Squat 500 and Bench Press 345 pounds) a 6-2 260 pound Offensive Guard and Defensive Tackle was All Ohio! He built himself from a 180 pound 8th grade. Christian Walsh, 6-0 205 pounds, couldn't be moved by a 275 pound Offensive Tackle in the Semis. His 235 pound Clean, 500 pound Dead Lift and 500 pound Parallel Squat had a lot to do with that. All three are nominations for BFS All-American Status. Andy Hoenigman should be a candidate for Player-of-the-Year! Thanks!

Yours in Sports,
Bob Doyle

Editor's Note: BFS did a Total Program Clinic after Coach Bob Doyle's Hilltoppers went 0-10 two years ago. Last season Chardon High School won the Ohio Division II State Football Championship (Next to the biggest classification). The above is a letter from Coach Doyle.

Coach Bob Doyle is an Upper Limit coach. He is driven and loves what he does and the kids that he coaches. Coach Doyle is no stranger to the Ohio Playoffs. He has a sparkling 9-3 playoff record and this last season was the topper, the Hilltopper. It was especially sat-

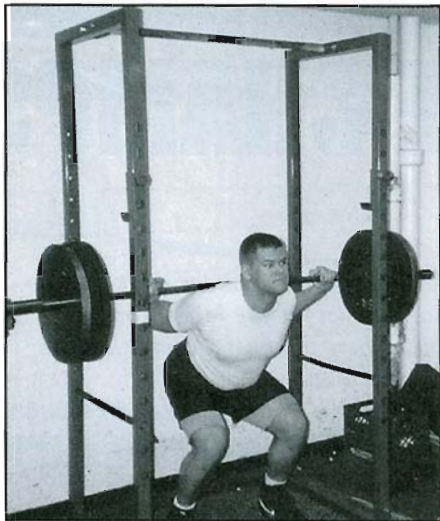
isfying because Chardon is a public high school. The Catholic schools usually dominate, in fact, Coach Doyle can only remember two state football championships ever being won by public schools in the upper two divisions.

The Chardon Hilltoppers drive to the state title had seven distinct elements which propelled them to their chosen destiny. It is my hope that these Upper Limit elements of success will rub off on everyone who reads this article.

I. THE OFFENSE

Chardon High School won the state title with a 17-6 decision over Rayland Buckeye Local before 10,000 plus fans at Paul Brown





Starting Jr. Tackle Rob Conroy

Tiger Stadium. The Hilltoppers rushed for 307 yards on 54 carries - a record in a Division II championship game. This smashed the previous record of 268 yards by Akron Buchtel in 1987. "Our goal was to get that 268 yards," said Coach Doyle. "I thought if we could get that rushing record, we would win the game. Our offensive line is big and physical. It's only a matter of time before we wear people down."

Chardon senior running back, Eric Ash, took over in the second half. In the third quarter alone, Ash rushed for 87 yards. The 6-1, 170-pounder finished with a game-high 138 yards on 28 carries (4.9 yard average) and two touchdowns.

Eric has a twin brother, Kevin, who also plays at cornerback. Kevin remembers what it was like two years ago. "That was the worst possible season. All along, though, the goal for our senior class was to come back and win state. We got a taste of it last year by going to the semifinals. We wanted to go all the way as seniors. Les Ash, their father, stated, "After their 0-10 sophomore season, they came up to me and said, 'We don't like this, Dad.' All the kids on the team and the coaches have a great work ethic."

The moral of this element is: If you don't like where you are, pull yourself up, out and forward.

II. THE DEFENSE

During the playoffs, Chardon was superlative on defense. Game One: The opponents TB had 1,301 yards for the season only got 42 yards against the "Hill-Stoppers" defense. Game II: The opponents TB was their all-time leading rusher with over 1,300 yards had only 42 yards. Game III: A TB with 1,100 yards got only 92 yards. Game IV: In the Finals, the Chardon Defense held the TB who had rushed for 1,500 yards to only 27 yards.

The moral: Defense wins championships!

III. COACHING

The Chardon Hilltoppers finished their regular season with a perfect 10-0 record by driving 74 yards in the last 28 seconds beating West Geauga 28-21. "This game is the reason we run up that hill at Alpine Valley," said Coach Doyle. "It's one of our humongous workouts. It teaches the guys how important it is to never quit." (Alpine Valley is a ski resort in Chardon)

After defeating favored Walsh Jesuit in the state semi-final game 17-14 in front of 8,500 at Byers Field Coach Doyle stated, "The whole world knows you are a great team because you have come from the valley to the mountaintop."

Coach Doyle added an interesting twist to practice when perfecting his goal-line defense. It was simple: stop the offense from the five yard line or run sprints or gassers. The players learned well. The threat of sprints paid huge dividends. In the state championship game with Chardon leading 14-6 was when the goal-line defense was to be tested. It was the first time in the playoffs it was used. Rayland Buckeye Local took over on the eight yard line after a fumble. Three plays later the ball was on the one. Then left tackle Rick Warner and left end Christian Walsh snuffed out the fourth-and-

goal try.

Before the Walsh game, Coach Doyle gave each lineman a red, six-inch ruler to remind them how important it is to have a quick first step after the snap. "We've been preaching that all year," said Coach Doyle. "That first six-inch step wins championships."

Coach Doyle further stated, "I really believe I have great assistant coaches and that's why we're so successful." Dudley Lytle calls most of the defenses from the press box. Bill Overton has been with Coach Doyle all 16 years coaching the offensive line. Emerson Beery is the defensive ends coach, Mark Percassi-QB's, Jim DiPofi-defensive line and offensive backs, and special teams coach-Dan Dinko.

IV. LEADERSHIP

Chardon junior QB, Scott Neill, stated, "It's execution by every single player, all 11 players doing the job on every single play." This was after their semi-final victory. "I've said it a million times. Again tonight, our offensive line took over."

Neill emerged after the last game of the season two years ago as a 9th grader. Chardon was getting beat badly when Coach Doyle decided to insert a fuzzy-faced freshman at quarterback. Scott gained 65 yards



#22 Joe Krebs Explodes in State Semi-Finals

on two carries against the conference championship team. "Right then and there we knew next year was going to be fine. We would be able to run the option," said Coach Doyle.

Now, as a junior, Neill gets even higher praises from coach Doyle, "I think his speed is deceiving. For a kid 6-2 200, he runs away from people. He's not only powerful, he's got good foot speed. Scott runs the option so effectively."

Scott analyzed, "I think we have so many different weapons. You can't bring everybody up to stop the run. You can't blitz because that will leave somebody else open. If our defense comes to play, we're going to be hard to beat. Those guys hit and fly to the ball. The coaches come up with great schemes every week. I'm amazed at what they do. Our guys take it as a challenge. It's a personal thing."

After losing in the semi-final game last year, Scott was quoted just before their quarterfinal game as saying, "We just decided we didn't want to feel that way again. We wanted to win it all. We had 21 returning letterman. We have the talent."

V. RIDING THE HIGH PLACES

Tim Warsinsky, Cleveland Plain Dealer Reporter wrote: There is an unwritten rule on the Chardon football team that only players enforce. Whenever someone swears around Andy Hoenigman, the offending player must drop and do 20 pushups. Hoenigman, who stands a mere 5-8 and weighs 159 pounds, isn't being protected by his larger friends. "It's Andy's rule and we all enforce it," said Warner, Chardon's 260-pound tackle and one of Hoenigman's closest friends on the team. "We do it out of respect. Everyone has a lot of respect for him."

Hoenigman is a devout Mormon, getting up before sunrise every day to attend a 6 a.m. church study



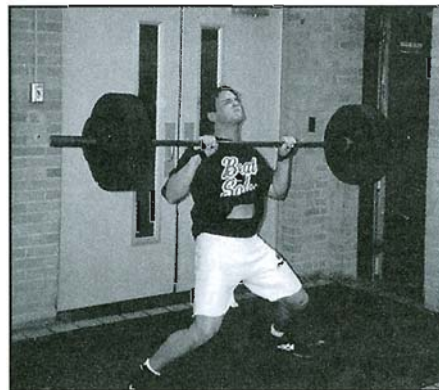
Rick Warner Doing The BFS Dot Drill

group at school, and he does not use foul language. He is modest, soft-spoken and friendly. Liked by everyone on the team. He was even elected Homecoming King.

But he's no wimp. "I like hitting people, really hitting people," said Hoenigman, "and I really like playing middle linebacker."

Pound for pound, Hoenigman is one of the strongest football players around. It's incredible," said Coach Doyle, "Some of our biggest kids can't dead lift 500 pounds like Andy. But to see him get 500 pounds off the ground, every vein popping out of his body, is just amazing."

Though Hoenigman is the first football player to arrive at school every day, he's among the last to leave, often having to be booted out of the weight room as Coach Doyle



Senior 2-Way Starter, Christian Walsh with the Clean

locks up at 7:30 PM.

"Coming here early makes me feel good during the day. I don't go through the day with a bad attitude," said Hoenigman. He also said the time spent in the weight room not only makes him physically stronger, it also builds stronger bonds among teammates.

"In Chardon, you'll find it doesn't matter how much a person weighs. A person can always do more than someone twice their size because he has a lot of heart," calculated Hoenigman. "Our team is like a family and we help each other up when people are down. There's a camaraderie in the weight room."

Hoenigman has 120 tackles, 40 more than the next-highest total on the team and almost twice as much as everyone else. "He leads the defense. Andy has done a great job," Warner said. We're keeping the offensive lineman off him and he takes care of the rest."

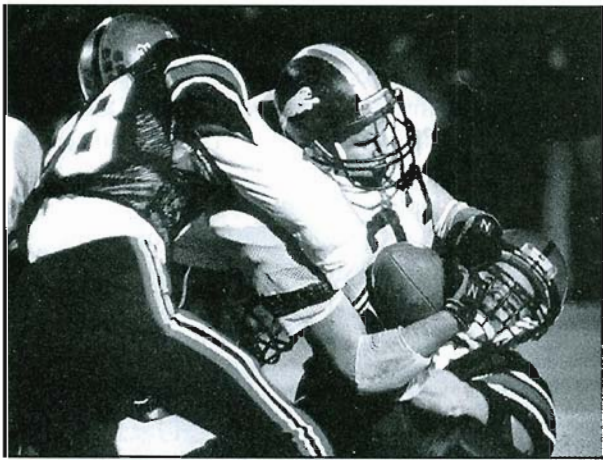
Marty Gitlin, a writer for the News-Herald, quoted Hoenigman, "I've learned that when I go out and play football, I'm not out there to hate people. It's a fun sport and it's a contact sport, but you can't lose control and you always have to show sportsmanship. Some kids have a tendency to run their mouths on the field and swear, but in my book that's considered a penalty. Foul language is never needed and it brings down the game and lowers everything around you. When I hear it, I just try to block it out.

"One thing Mr. Doyle taught us is controlled intensity. You can be intense and hit hard but you don't have to run around screaming"

Chardon defensive coach Bill Overton heaps praise on Hoenigman, "He's such a sincere kid and I believe his faith plays a key role in what kind of a person he is. That gives him such a good work ethic, which transfers to what he does on the field.

"But he's also a tremendously fierce competitor. He loves to play the game right and to play it right





Kevin Ash & Pat Turner making a Stop in The State Championship Game

you have to play hard. I'd have to say he's one of my favorite people. I have so much respect for him."

VI. REST WHEN YOUR DEAD ATTITUDE

Tim Warsinsky writes again: Don Vaughn, the hilltoppers 180-pound nose tackle, dragged his limp body off the field after the semi-final victory. He stopped to shake a reporter's hand and his arm had all the resilience of a wet noodle.

As the celebration moved to the locker room, Vaughn quietly maneuvered himself like an old man around a throng of jumping, screaming teenagers. He gently sat on a chair, leaned his sweaty head against a brick wall, and touched his cheek, which was going numb.

A team trainer, accustomed to treating Vaughn for hyperventilation after games, set up an oxygen tank, which had been purchased for Vaughn. The trainer placed a clear plastic mask over Vaughn's nose and mouth. Vaughn closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Breathing was all he could do because he left everything else on the field. "I just gave all I had," Vaughn said.

Chardon's opponents are averaging 64 yards per game rushing and have only scored three rushing touchdowns. In the three playoff games, opposing quarterbacks have been sacked nine times and thrown

nine interceptions in 37 attempts. Much of the reason must go to pressure from the front four. It's called the Great Wall of Chardon: Korey Rice, Christian Walsh, Rick Warner and Don Vaughn.

The Great Wall combined for 73 tackles behind the line of scrimmage, including 39 by Vaughn. "Don just goes crazy. He gives up his body and thinks of himself last," teammate

Warner said. "I'm amazed at some of the things he does. Last year against Madison, he pancaked a 327-pound center. Against Walsh Jesuit, his technique was perfect."

Coach Doyle said, "Don Vaughn is one of the most amazing football players I have ever seen. When you watch the kid, and you realize how big he is and who he plays against, the things he does are incredible. He's one of the reasons high school football is so enjoyable."

Korey Rice is a 6-5 245-pound defensive end and is the most physically imposing Hilltopper. He grew five inches and added 65 pounds of muscle in the last two years. Rice had two sacks in the semi-final game. "He's like a blocking a tree," surmised Coach Doyle seriously.

"Christian Walsh unquestionably has been the biggest surprise and the biggest factor in our defensive success," Coach Doyle said. "We already knew about Vaughn and Warner but we were totally unsure about Walsh's position, and he's played that position better than anyone we've ever had."

Rice, Vaughn, Walsh and Warner have talent, power and aggressiveness but Warner said "those are not their main assets, trust is." We trust each other. We're not worried that someone will miss the tackle if the play is run to the other side. We don't try to play each other's game."

VII. SPIRITUAL-EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

Chardon senior safety John Toaddy played like a man possessed in the state semi-final game. He had two interceptions. The second one occurred on the game's final play on Walsh quarterback Rick Arnold's last-gasp desperation pass which set off a wild celebration by the Chardon fans. "Those were for my dad," said John, whose father died of brain cancer one week after last year's state semi-final loss. John also said he thought his father, Mike, was "watching us." Mike Toaddy was only 45 years old.

John's father was an assistant freshman football coach and assistant varsity baseball coach. When he died, it affected the entire Chardon team.

"Those guys have been close since elementary school," Coach Doyle said. "They were close on and off the field. John's dad was an ex-coach and teacher. All the kids knew him and loved him."

John said his father is always with him in spirit. "I always wear something he gave me. I wear a wristband on my arm that says 'Dad' on it. He always watched me play and gave me tips. He wanted to be involved."

Before Mike died, the Chardon players gave John's mother two autographed footballs. This last season they presented her with a homecoming jersey with "M. Toaddy" on the back.

"They all went to the funeral," Coach Doyle said. "They all tried to keep John's spirit up. The Chardon players have always been a very close knit group."

We thank Coach Bob Doyle, his staff and the Chardon players who have shown us a true Upper Limit Quest-For-Greatness story that gives hope and courage to others that follow.....□