



Catalina Foothills finished the 2012 season with a 0-10 record, but in 2013 they won eight games and made the playoffs.

The Turnaround *Artist*

Jeff Scurran leads the Catalina Foothills Falcons to greatness

Jeff Scurran has coached football for over 40 years and has yet to accept a job with a team that had a winning record. Two of the teams he took over were winless, another had only one win, and Pima College had never even played football. So, over the years Scurran became a specialist in turning around programs that have lost their way.

But none of these teams had hit the bottom as hard as the Catalina Foothills Falcons. Scurran's third 0-10 team would be the biggest challenge – so far – of his coaching career.

Scurran believes that teaching success through sport is an educational absolute, and he's dismayed by schools that offer sports program but do not encourage or support the efforts of coaches and students to succeed.

As a longtime BFS clinician who has spoken at nearly a thousand clinics throughout the US, plus several in Japan and Europe, Scurran developed a curriculum for teaching the basics of movement and body position that increase both the athletic ability and strength of his athletes, framed around the total BFS system.

Scurran has a knack for creative strategies that match the abilities of his athletes and their improvements in explosive movement. In his first year of coaching at each school Scurran took his two winless programs into the state semifinals. Also, he coached Tucson's Sabino High School from a meager 30 percent winning average since its inception (1-9 the year before his arrival) to 118 wins in the 1990s with three state titles, five title games and nine state semifinals.

If that weren't enough, Scurran then started the Pima College football

program from scratch; the team defeated the defending national champion in Pima's inaugural game. Three years later Pima finished number five in the nation, winning as a huge underdog in a bowl game on national TV.

In 2013 the turnaround would be even more challenging for Coach Scurran. Catalina Foothills had finished its 2012 season 0-10. These were familiar grounds for Scurran, whose wife had taught in the district for 20-plus years. But even though he knew a lot about the school and had met many of the families in the program, he had no idea of the depth of the problem.

Foothills had been outscored 423 to 73 in 2012, gaining a meager 128 yards each game while allowing their opponents nearly 400-plus yards. Players were leaving the program in droves, and many potential athletes were opting for other schools with greener athletic pastures. Making matters even worse, the high academic success of the school and its athletic prowess in other sports made the football players the brunt of cruel jokes. Morale was bad and the future looked bleak.

Flash ahead one year later: Catalina Foothills makes the playoffs (for only the second time in its history), averaging over 34 points per game and gaining almost 400 yards each time out – all with a freshman quarterback.

How did the “Turnaround Artist” do it...again?

Simple Steps to Greatness

Scurran will be the first guy to say there is no secret. To him, it's all a matter of hard work, done with focus and to a point.

“I was fortunate enough to come across BFS early in my career and learn that it's not just working out with weights and training for speed,” Scurran

explains. “We train the whole athlete – their mind, body and spirit. This was the very first lesson that BFS founder Dr. Greg Shepard taught me, and it still applies today.

“What I've done that's a bit unique is develop our system into a curriculum, a definite plan, in the same way good teachers plan to teach their students to be successful in a classroom setting. After all, it really is no different. Instead of a test, we have our games.

“Much of this is done in small steps. Too often, coaches move forward



Coach Jeff Scurran is a specialist in turning around football programs at both the high school and college level.

before their athletes have mastered a seemingly small, but necessary, step. This is poor teaching, just like it would be with a classroom teacher who moves ahead before the students understand the lessons of step one. In a school where most athletes play other sports, this year-round curriculum is essential for us to defeat teams that have better athletes.”

But Scurran has always believed that athleticism is only one factor in the success of an athlete, particularly in a team sport such as football.

“Every athlete who steps on the

field must feel confident in their ability to compete. Without this, there's doubt, and doubt is a direct path to defeat. But looking in the mirror and seeing a good body is only one element in creating an athlete who's ready to succeed. Strength is great too, but again it's only one element. Quickness, explosive movement, agility, staying on balance, knowledge of position, knowledge of the game, eye contact, and the ability to maintain the correct body position to produce proper fundamentals are all just as important. Any athlete who doubts their training regimen simply can't do their best.”

Scurran further insists that without the help of three other factors, no one can sustain success or create a major change of attitude.

“So much of our success can be credited to my coaching staff, the school's administration and winning over the parents. Without support in these areas, it's difficult to get the kids to buy in long term,” he admits.

The principal of Catalina Foothills, Dr. Angela Chomokos, had built a championship-level program at another school. Athletic Director Jody Brase, who is the daughter of national championship basketball coach Lute Olsen, has winning genes in her family DNA.

As everyone knows, the parents at a higher-end school like Foothills can be as problematic as they are supportive.

“They are used to business and academic success in their lives,” Scurran points out. “Their personal success is often the result of a well-made plan. They want a system where their kids can work hard to achieve success as well. They want a plan that will work well with the academic commitments required by this school. Our system is built on sound fundamentals of preparation and safety that are readily apparent to everyone.

“For me, however,” Scurran continues, “having a hard-working staff who know football, are personally committed to our students’ academics and support our system on and off the field – that’s where the rubber meets the road.

“Everything starts in the weight-room using the tried and proven BFS Set-Rep System. I’ve never found anything that’s more workable for every type of school and the different athletes that we all have to coach,” he states.

“Our seniors accepted the whole concept: the movement drills, the plyometrics, the weights and my style of coaching. These guys had gone through some tough years, but throwing a lot of new things at such smart kids wasn’t

going to work by itself. Having them understand the big picture was huge.

“Our greatest asset is our athlete’s brains, work ethic and championship decision-making skills. Those are the building blocks, for sure. I had to show them what was possible, get the rest of the community to give us a chance, and lead my athletes to work the dream. Remember, most of these guys knock it out of the park in the classroom. It always helps to have smart people around you.

“Too often, people want instant gratification but don’t understand the hard work it takes to reach the top – and it takes a lot more than natural athletic ability, especially at the high school level,” says Scurran, who doubles as a motivational speaker.

“Before I came to Catalina Foothills, many people told me that these kids weren’t tough enough to win against great competition or resilient enough to adjust to my coaching style, which challenges everyone to work outside of their personal comfort zone. They called us names and said some pretty silly things, too.

“These athletes have earned the respect they now receive, and they’re feeling pretty good about what they’ve accomplished. The life lessons they’ve learned through the process will be with them forever.”

Scurran concludes, “I can honestly say there is nothing like a great turnaround to make you believe that everything in life is possible. And it’s a ton of fun, too.” **BFS**



#7 Tommy Ciaccio
#25 Gabe Gerhauser
#32 Austin Baldwin



#15 Jeremy Tedards



#5 Ian Turner



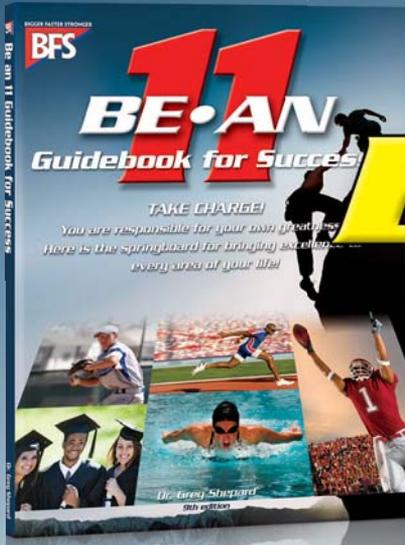
#4 Rhett Rodriguez
#21 Tyraun Cruz
#58 Luis Escarcega

#63 Bryan Ellwood
#77 Kash McDonald



#18 Elliott Buchanan
#32 Austin Baldwin

Among the highlights of the 2012 season for the Falcons was winning their last regular season game in overtime to get into the playoffs.



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