

Everette Enjoying Latest Reclamation Project, Working to Get PU Sprint Football Up to Speed

For Steve Everette, the Christmas of 2010 is one that he will never forget.

It wasn't that Everette received some fancy gift or went on a big trip. Instead, Everette was given a challenge as he learned over the holidays that he had been promoted to head coach of the Princeton University sprint football team.

The Tigers play in the Collegiate Sprint Football League (CSFL) which includes seven teams and is limited to players who weigh 172 pounds or less.

While some people wouldn't view getting the chance to take over a program that hasn't won a league game in 13 years and was outscored 316-48 in going 0-7 last fall as any kind of a present, the energetic Everette was thrilled to take the helm of the football backwater.

"Tom [Cocuzza] stepped down after the Penn loss and I applied for the job," said Everette, the head coach of the Princeton High football team from 2002-2009 who had become an assistant coach for the Tiger sprint program last fall.

"I was busy with the offseason and I got an e-mail saying that I had an interview with the selection committee. I didn't have time to prepare much. I got the job and it was nice. It was a good Christmas present."

For Everette, who took a hapless PHS program which had gone 6-52 overall in the six years before he arrived and guided it to two state tournament appearances in his last three seasons culminating with a 7-3 record in 2009, isn't daunted by the sprint team's losing streak.

"I can use my energy, I love a reclamation project," asserted the animated Everette, 41. "Every time you struggle, you look for opportunities when they come about."

For Everette, getting the opportunity to coach the student athletes on the Princeton squad is one he can't pass up.

"All the kids I have met at Princeton have

been great but we have a special group of guys," said Everette.

"We have 24 who are engineering majors so they are ridiculously good students. They are hard workers and dedicated football players. Everyone is a walk-on. They choose to be on the team. They have a love for the game and a love for each other."

In order to help the players exercise their passion for the game, Everette has shown flexibility.

"I have to be more creative with the sprint guys because there are more restrictions on their time," explained Everette, who developed a formal offseason weightlifting program for his players with the assistance of a Princeton strength coach.

"With all those engineering guys, I can't waste a minute of their time. We were doing offseason workouts at 9 in the evening so they could do their classes, labs, and problem sets. They looked at it as a study break. We have an on-line film editing program so if a kid misses film or has to leave early, he can look at film on his own time."

Since Everette is still teaching at PHS, he has become a presence on the Princeton campus as he builds his program.

"I am able to spend time in the building," said Everette. "Coaches in the past have had jobs in the real world and couldn't be here as much. I am working right up the street and I can be here a lot and bring a face to the program."

The ambitious Everette has been using that time wisely, soaking up lessons from other Tiger coaches.

"One of the greatest things for me is access to the great group of coaches at Princeton," said Everette.

"When I coached in high school, I would travel around the country and talk to coaches. Here I can watch Courtney Banghart's team and see how she runs a practice. I was able to watch Sydney Johnson and bounce

things off of him. The football guys have been helpful; I can go upstairs when I have questions. Steve Verbit, Jim Salgado, and Jared Backus have been great."

The Princeton administration has also been helpful to Everette. "I have been able to sit down with them and say this is what I want to do," said Everette.

"There was some hesitation because I was asking for things that the sprint program has never done before. They have been saying there is no reason not to do it, so let's do it. They have been very supportive."

The sprint program is dependent on the support of its famously loyal alums which include such luminaries as former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, a captain of the team in his Princeton days.

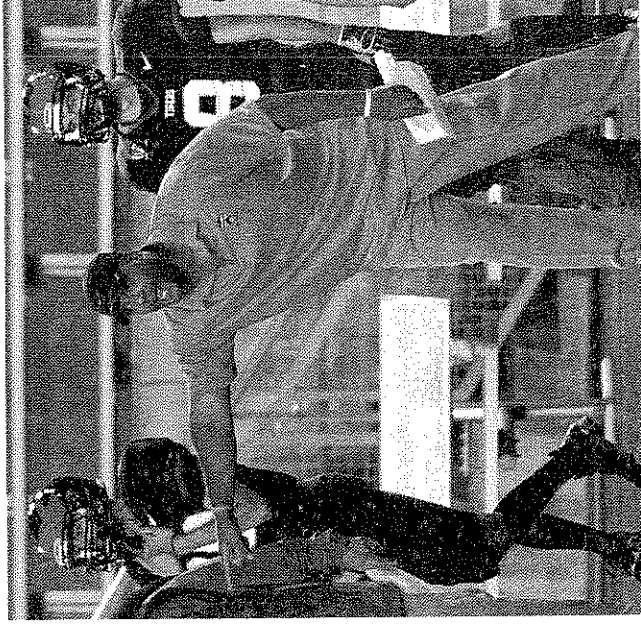
"The program is basically funded by alums," said Everette. "I am in constant contact with them, updating them. When we need something, they say go out and get it. We didn't have video equipment, we were using a Play Station 2. Now we have a DVD projector and 16-inch flat screen."

Now, Everette is focused on getting his squad ready for its season opener at Penn on September 16.

"We started practices on August 31," said Everette, noting that Princeton came close to victory last fall in tough losses to Mansfield, Post, and Cornell.

"The spring practices went well. The numbers are up, we started last season with 31 kids and we have 38 kids committed this year."

Everette is committed to providing the



SPRINT TECHNIQUE: Steve Everette makes a point in a tion last season while serving as the assistant coach of Princeton University sprint football team. Everette, the form head coach of the Princeton High football program, has been promoted to the helm of the Tiger sprint squad. Everette, who took PHS from mediocrity to the state playoffs, faces another rebuilding project with Princeton, which has been lodged the cellar of the Collegiate Sprint Football League (CSFL) more than a decade. Everette and the Tigers will look to get on the right track when Princeton opens its season by playi at Penn on September 16.

(Photo by Stephen Goldberg)

strategic framework to help his kids play their best.

"The defense is staying pretty much the same with a few wrinkles; we are putting basically a new offense," said Everette.

"The kids are extremely excited; they are ready to get things up and running. They have a lot of work into the offseason and I hope it will pay off. It is an uphill battle. It takes a lot of determination with good blocking tackling, and not turning the ball over."

And by turning the sprint football program over to Everette, Princeton has given its players an edge in that battle.

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