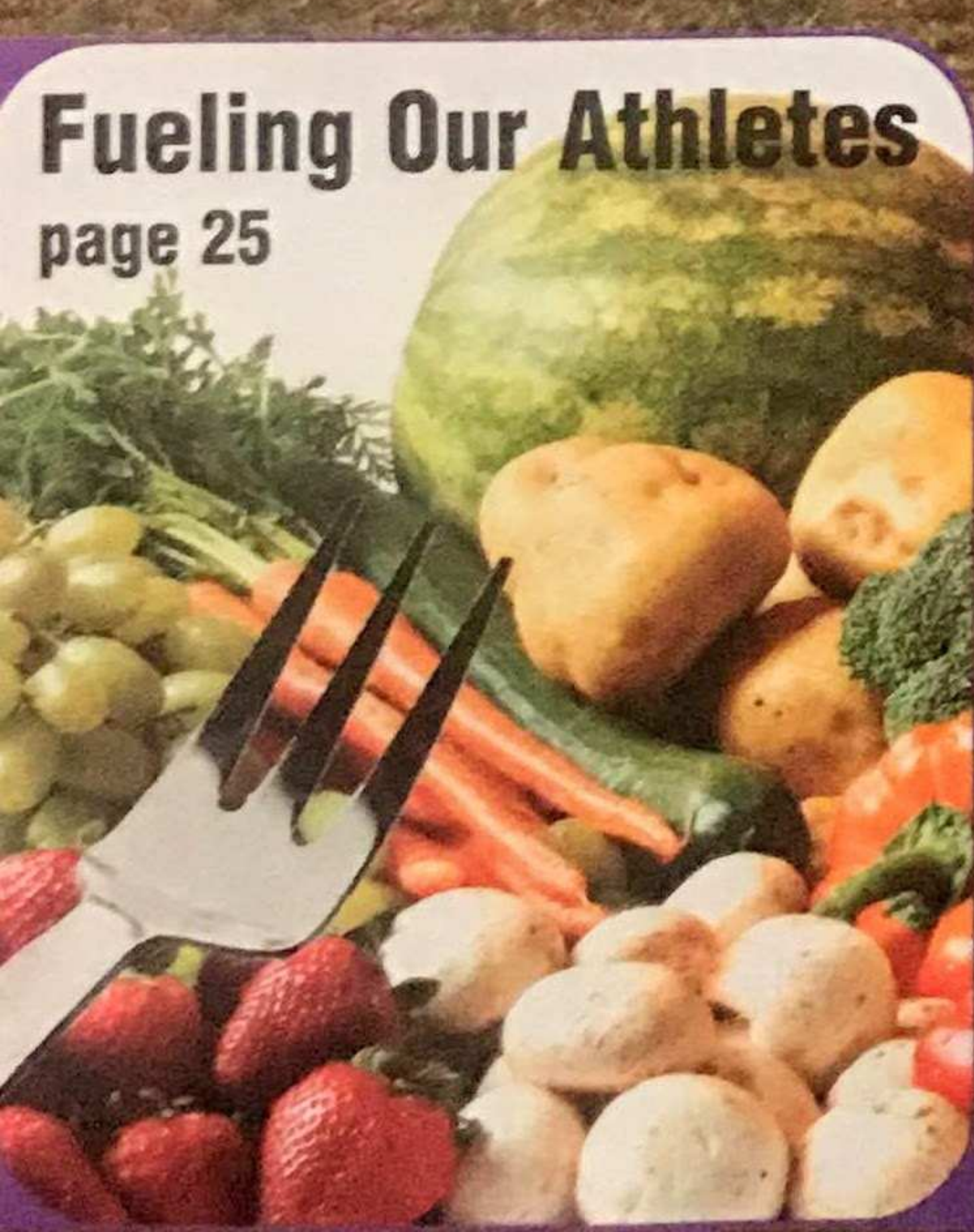


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Fueling Our Athletes
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Training Tomorrow's Leaders

TRAINING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Pop Warner Coach Alan Wilson Leads his Team to Success in Life

by Kathleen Harte Simone

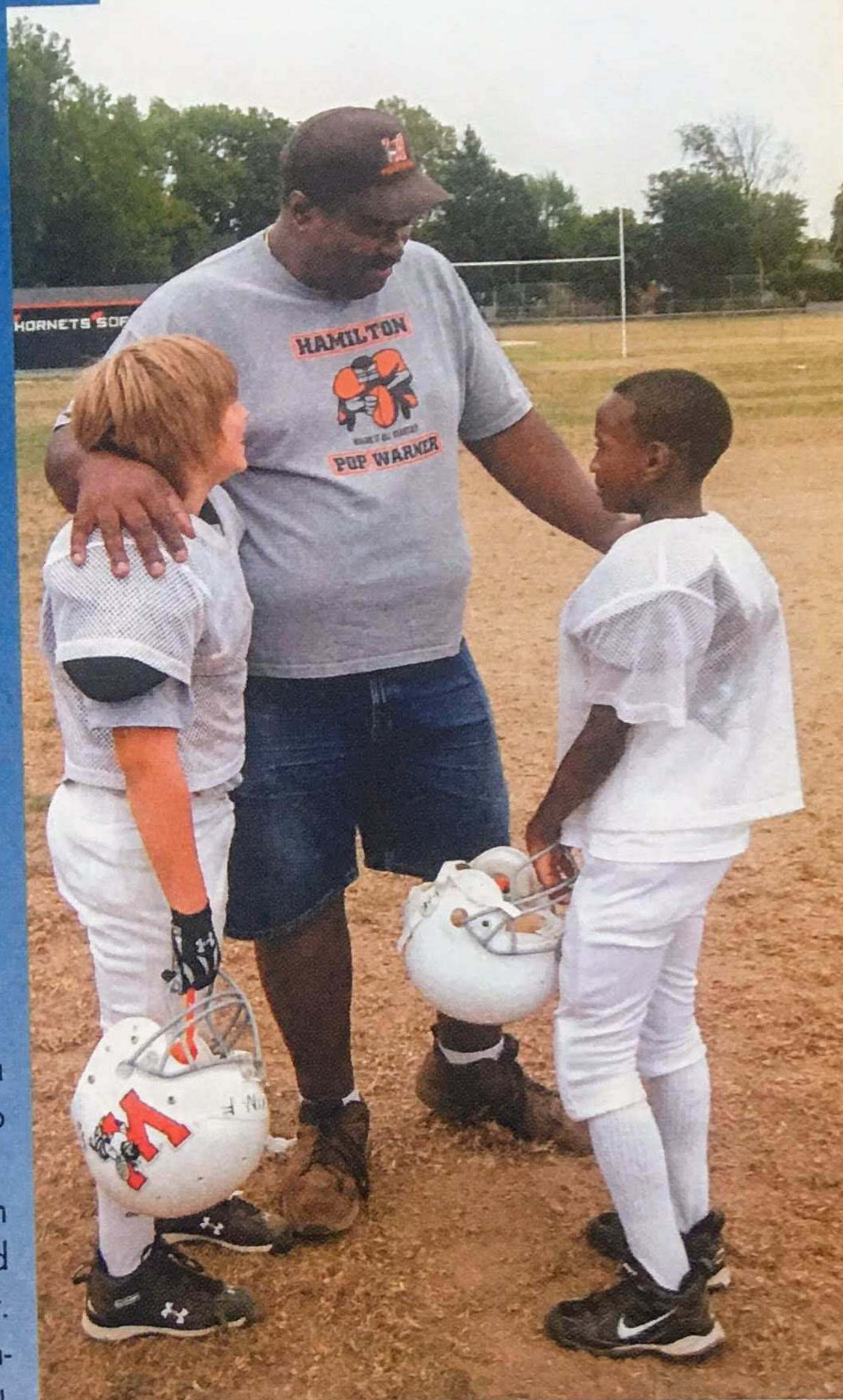
They may only stand about 4½ feet and weigh less than 100 pounds but the young boys that suit up in the Hamilton Hornets Pop Warner football uniforms and pads stand tall and proud. It's not only because of the success they achieved last year, having advanced to the playoffs. But also, these young athletes and their coach take the field three times a week armed with the confidence of giants because they know they are winners, on and off the field. Their success, under the direction of Coach Alan Wilson, expands beyond championship records.

Wilson is a man who demands much of the young athletes he coaches on the local gridiron, but not just winning games. No, Wilson's expectations for the boys, age 8-11, are to "do all the right things," work hard in school, be respectful, demonstrate good sportsmanship, and be good role models for others. The rest, he says, will take care of itself.

"Coaching football has meant a lot to me," Alan shared. "I'm taking part in a sport I love and giving back to the community. It's nice to know that I can help young boys become good men."

Once a shining star on his high school football team in Hamilton, NJ, Wilson has been involved with Pop Warner for six years, first as an assistant coach and two years as a head coach. He also serves as the club's equipment manager. "Being a coach, I have to be a role model. I have to make kids believe in themselves. That's really important. It should be

(continued on page 34)



**COACH
FYI:
GAIN A
QUICK
7
YARDS**



1 I-set formation for the 49 sweep



2 Fake the hand off to the 2 back (lead back).



3 After the fake, tuck the ball as if you handed the ball off.



4 Then, fake hand off to the 3 back (blocking back).



5 Then, hand off the ball to the 4 back, who will have 2 blockers in front of him.



6 Everyone blocks down the field and the quarterback rolls out. You should gain 7-10 yards on this play.

Pop Warner's Alan Wilson (continued from page 13)

important for parents too, more than if their child is the best player out there. I'm lucky to have great support from my kids' parents, but I've also seen cases where parents don't get it – they think that winning is everything. They don't understand how hard their sons are working every day to improve their skills and to learn to work as a part of a team. When you can see this improvement and the kids see it too – that's success. That's what will help the kids in the long run."

Wilson has been recognized by the Pop Warner organization for his success with the kids. His players' parents, too, hold him in high regard for conveying the life lessons that any athlete can and should take from participation in an organized youth team: that success in the win/loss column is only half of the game.

"I think it's important for parents to talk to their kids and tell them what's really important. Even for the best athletes – for kids that have the potential to be great players– there is so much more to make

them successful," Wilson said. "They need to have a good head on their shoulders and to have good coaches that they listen to. They need to understand that sport is not everything, but it is something that can help lead them down the right path and in some cases, create opportunity."

Although Wilson fully understands the glory that comes with winning, he's equally proud of the strides his players have made in the classroom. "When the kids sign up for Pop Warner Football (or Cheerleading), they have to bring their report cards and show that they can maintain good grades. Most of the players do better in school when they are in season. I tell the kids: your parents will be even happier if you do really well in school."

Wilson's son, a freshman on the Temple football team this fall, is a product of Pop Warner Football, and Dad couldn't be prouder. "He's got great hands and great speed! I can't wait to see him play." His son, Marcus, is the first in the family to attend college.

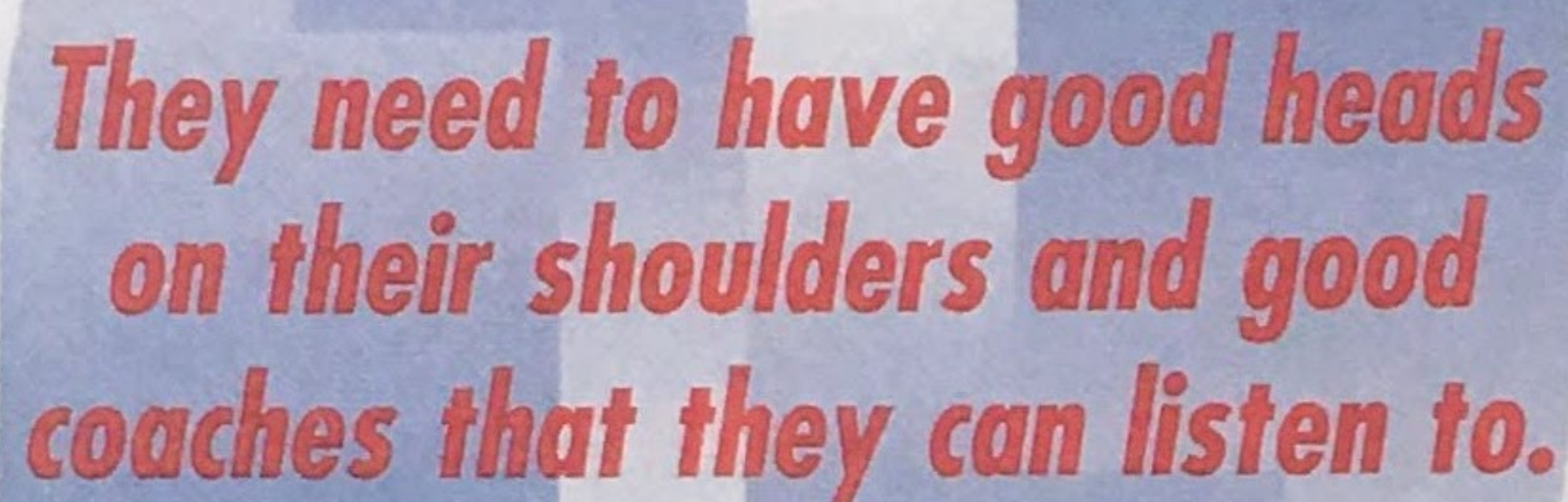
"I never coached my son but I was with him in the car after many games, some-

times when he had a bad game. I call it 'Daddy Talk'. Hey, we all have bad days. I'd let him know what I thought he did well. The coach will tell him the rest. I've found over the years that it's just so important for kids to know that their parents are supportive of them; that they believe in their abilities."

Letting the kids know that he believes in them and keeping them pumped up is a hallmark of Wilson's coaching style. "Sure there are times when I say, 'What did I just tell you?' But mostly, I'm telling them what they do right and keeping them feeling good. That makes them work harder. I've seen it over and over."

Last year's Hornets finished in 3rd place in the league, good enough to put the team into the Pop Warner Garden State Game Playoffs held at Rutgers University. "What an experience for the kids. They'll never forget it!"

Only time will tell how this little team in suburban New Jersey will fare this season. One thing is for sure: even if they lose some games along the way, Coach Wilson will be there leading the boys to success, preparing them to be leaders in their own right. **TC**



***They need to have good heads
on their shoulders and good
coaches that they can listen to.***