

Summer's athletes are Planted in Euclid

It's a hot summer afternoon and Nate Clements, Tony Fisher, Maurice Clarett and Romeo Augustine are on the beach. There's no lotion, no lake to jump in, no way to cool off. There's merely sand, 22½ yards of it, that runs along the back of the Euclid SportsPlant.

The four work on footwork, running on tethered straps through ropes that double as tires. Shuffle drills (four times) and power jumps (series of threes and twos) follow. And then the killer. Eight to 10 sprints of 45 yards in the sand. Clarett opts to do 15.

Doesn't sound like much for young athletes in shape, right? Well, try doing this after you've lifted weights for 1½ hours and then run the dreaded hill behind McDonald's on East 222nd Street for an hour. That's a series of up to 50 yards of uphill sprint work.

For the record, that's two NFL players, two former Ohio Mr. Footballs, a running back on a national championship team and a Canadian Olympic basketball player paying for the privilege of pushing their bodies under extreme conditions.

But it's also the allure of Speed Strength Systems Inc. that operates out of the SportsPlant. In just 2½ years of business, trainers Tim Robertson Jr. and Eric Lichter have gained a national reputation that has drawn star athletes in several sports and age levels to their Euclid facility.

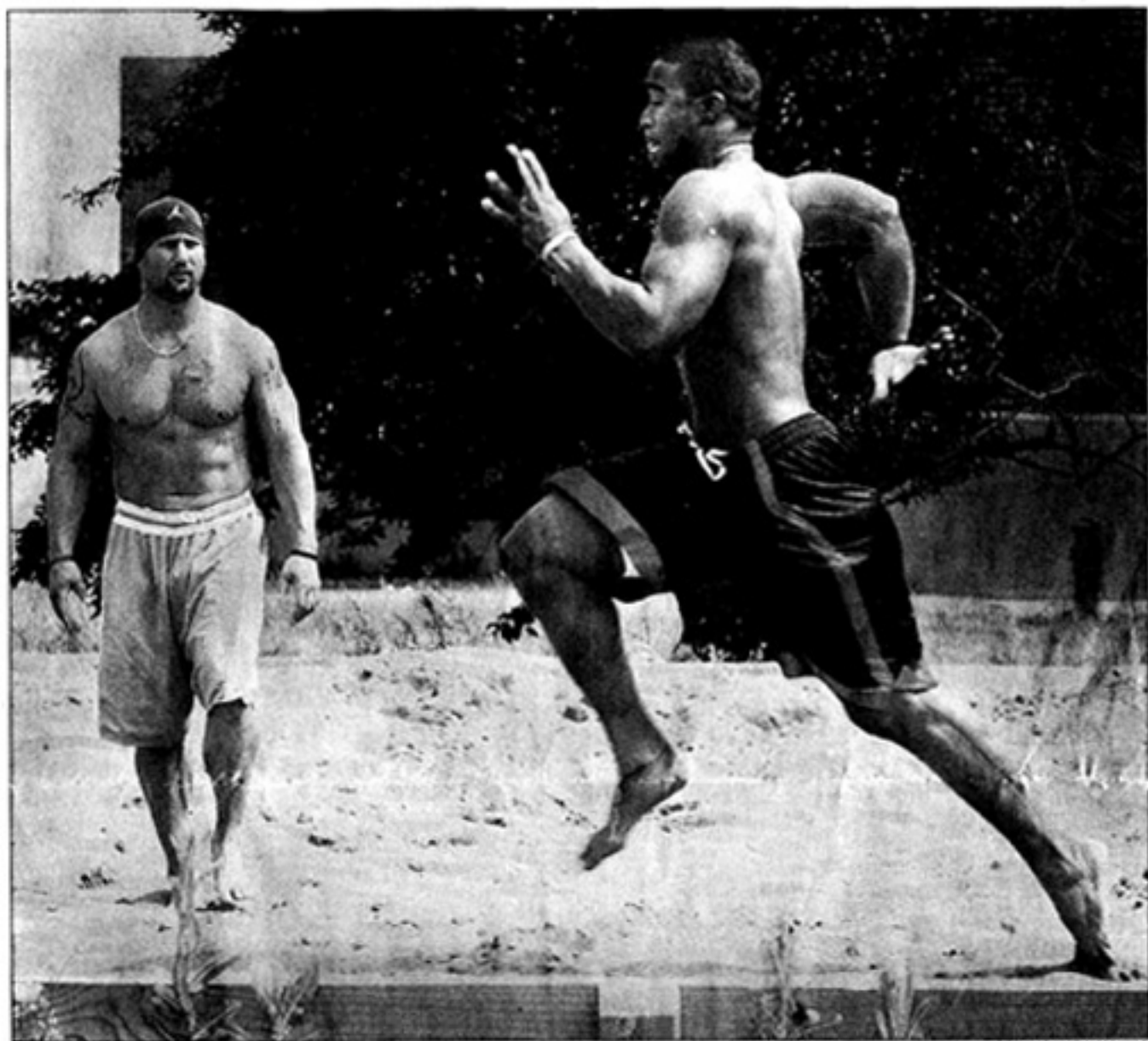
"Right now I'm on summer break before training camp and they're leaving it up to us to be in shape," said former Sun defensive MVP Clements, a Shaker Heights, Ohio State and three-year Buffalo Bills veteran. "I come here to work out and stay in shape."

"I had met Eric (Lichter) before and he asked me to come out so I did. It's always a thorough workout and when you work with other guys it's competitive and they push you. It's all about how hard you work. Give 110 percent and get the most out of it."

Fisher was the Sun offensive MVP, while winning Mr. Football honors at Euclid. After an injury-plagued career at Notre Dame, he caught on as a free agent with Green Bay last year.

"I just started coming three years ago," Fisher said. "Working with Eric helps me do all the things I need to do. It's convenient living in Euclid and helps me train on the home front."

Fisher, who also plays bas-



Ohio State's Troy Smith sprints in the SportsPlant sand pit under the watchful eye of trainer Eric Lichter.

"I was used to programs at school. This is totally different. You see how it works at every level, high school to pro."

ROMEO AUGUSTINE Canadian Olympic basketball player

ketball in the Euclid winter league, wants to build on his first-year success. "I'm not satisfied yet. Injuries hurt me my senior year and I should have been drafted."

Augustine points out Speed Strength's drawing power. The 6-foot-7 two-guard from Provi-

dence, by way of Montreal, landed a spot on Canada's national team due to his work in Euclid.

"I was introduced to Eric through my AAU coach, Mike Duncan," Augustine said. "I work out here five days a week during the summer. I heard about its reputation and it's surrounded by great people. They put me through great workouts."

"I was used to programs, at school. This is totally different. You see how it works at every level, high school to pro. It enhances your performance. You see little things that help you on the court."

The beauty of Speed Strength Systems Inc. is tailoring workouts for individuals at all skill levels. High school, college and professionals are often in the training room at the same time.

"It's the competition," said

Nordonia running back Dan Mason, a Bowling Green recruit. "I got to work out with Tony Fisher, Maurice Clarett and some of the top running backs in Ohio. There's a lot of players and a lot of competition. They push you."

"I had a chance to work out with Ron Dayne. It's a great place to work out. They had LeBron James here for a while and all kinds of players are here."

People know Ted Ginn as the man who led Glenville to the Division I state title in track in June. Ginn is also listed as Ohio's top football recruit and the top defensive back in the country. The Tarblooder senior knows where his bread is buttered.

"They work on stuff we don't work on at school and that's the reason I came here," Ginn said. "When I was young, I was not

that fast. They showed me how to be fast. I've been coming here for four years."

Ginn wore an Ohio State shirt for his workout and former Glenville and Ohio State players Troy Smith, Donte Whitner and Darius Hiley work out at the facility as well, but he's still undecided about college. "They just told me to go where I was comfortable," he said.

Brandon Flythe was part of the Richmond Heights baseball rebuilding process last year and now will take his talents to Niagara this fall. He's a frequent visitor to Euclid.

"I just want to get better going to college next year and bring out the best in my ability," Flythe said. "It's so close to my home and all the machines are here. We run outside in the sand pit and the hill at

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McDonald's. Everything is close and you're around big time athletes."

Nobody is bigger than Stanley Roberts, a former LSU basketball star trying to make a comeback. A former teammate of Shaq, Roberts went from 370 pounds to 350 at the SportsPlant.

LeBron James added 15 pounds and muscle to his 245-pound frame, while bringing his entire Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary basketball team to the facility.

Then there's the personal attention. Former Euclid girls coach and current assistant principal Pat Vuyancih works with groups of eight or nine players during the summer.

The list of athletes is impressive. Former Villa Angela-St. Joseph basketball players Will Burger, Molly Patterson and Katie Repicky are summer workout performers along with Mentor's Megan Skouby and Euclid multi-sport star Stephanie Svoboda.

Ohio State football recruits Tony Gonzalez (St. Ignatius) and David Patterson (Warrensville), Lake Catholic and East-

ern Kentucky volleyball player Jessica Sabbath and Olmsted Falls and West Virginia basketball player Mike Gansey also come to Euclid during the summer.

Also in tow are the Arizona Diamondbacks' Matt Kata, a St. Ignatius and Vanderbilt standout, and Colleen Royer, a VASJ and Youngstown State volleyball star.

Like the stars have found out, Speed Strength Systems Inc. is no day at the beach, but it's sure to provide the sun for your athletic career.