

# Special Ops. Begins

---

Special Ops. Was created on a warm September day in 2006 during the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the 2006 season. The idea was to find an effective way to create enthusiasm and to get the players more involved in Special Teams. I wanted to bring fun back to specials while incorporating unity, dedication, honor, and discipline. I wanted to transform the ok "let's go kick the ball now mentality into passion for what I knew it could be. I wanted to give the players a sense of belonging to something special, something that would set them apart from other teams, and to teach them about something greater than themselves... The team.

At a Monday practice my Head Coach Ken Schmidt and Offensive Coordinator Ed Couturier, knowing I wanted and was looking to change the name of the unit, suggested calling the special teams, Special Forces. At their visit with Indiana, they noticed that their Special Teams were called Special Forces, but at the time I thought it was a little corny. I wanted something more powerful. I asked friends, family, coaches, and players for ideas on what the name could be. Then it hit me Special Operations or Special Ops. as we now call it. At first I juggled it around and did some research on what Special Operations was. Once I had a clear understanding of it, I knew that this was it. Our new name Special Ops. When all else fails WE DON'T! When no one else can, WE WILL!

The new name was just the beginning of the revamping of Special Teams. The next day at practice, I talked to my players about what I wanted to do, and that they were going to SET THE TONE for the next varsity units for years to come. They liked the idea, but there was still more to change. I asked the players to come up with new names for the units. Each week we changed the name of a unit until they were all done. The names went as followed. What was once the Kickoff team was now the Kamikaze Unit. This unit is the craziest of them all, it takes a lot of guts and heart to be on this unit. You must be really fearless to be a member of this unit. The punt team was transformed into the Bomb Squad, due to the fact that our punters were bombing the ball away. Our punt return team was give the name the TNT unit because they were blocking a lot of punts and cause the other teams to get nervous about who was coming for the ball. The kick return team took us some time. We could not come up with a name that fit the unit just right. Then one night, a friend of mine came up with the name Recon unit, we recover our ball and return it home. The last of the five unit we just left alone FG/P.A.T units no reason why we just could not come up with a fitting name for them.

As the week went on I started to think of new ideas to make the transformation even better, more exciting, and with more of a military theme to it for the men. I thought, we are going to need a logo and a symbol of who we are. I saw a gentlemen and on his jacket he had a hockey puck inside of a rifle scope or I thought. I asked him why was it inside of a scope and he told me it wasn't, then it hit me. A football inside of a rifle scope. It was perfect we always have the ball in our sights. So that week I started to create the logo. I started thinking about what would get the men really hyped up. We have our new unit names, and logo, but the pride and hype was not there. So I asked my Head Coach if I could take over a wall in the locker room for Special Ops. A place for the men to see and be proud of the wall of HONOR. On this wall we post depth charts, stats, Special Ops. player of the week awards, unit goals, posters and news articles. A place they can go and call their own. The next week the ideas came to me to create Special Ops posters of our own. I used the old Uncle Sam army poster and remade it to fit us. They read "Special ops. Do you have what it takes"? I created a couple of different ones for the wall.

I felt all this was great, but are we really Special Ops.? What makes them Special Ops.? What puts them on a level that no one else can touch or compare to? Who would know better than the men and women of the United States Army. A friend of mine threw an idea out that I should get the Army to sponsor the unit. On a Tuesday afternoon the call was made, and within a half hour I received a call back from Sergeant Aaron Stuckey. I proceeded to explain why I was calling them. I wanted to know if they would be willing to help support the Special Ops unit at Waterford Mott High School. I explained about our military theme, and how we are pushing honor, respect, discipline. The sergeant had to make some calls first, but he said they would love to help in any way they can. Half way through practice that day an army hummer pulled up to the practice field and out stepped three soldiers. That day a great relationship with The United States Army started that stands strong to this day.

Now this type of idea has been done before. This is nothing new, but we needed to be different and better than anyone else. We need to take it to the next level, where no one else has taken it. With the Army's help and support we were able to implement new ideas like holding an annual Boot camp or Hell week which some players have called it. The week before 2-A-Days the Army takes over our program for 5 days for 2 hours a night. They run the show pulling, pushing, and dragging the men through different assault drills each day. The main focus is to break them down mentally and physically till they can no longer take it, then we build them back up. We have to see what our men are made of, and who we can count on, on Special Ops.

Each day at Boot camp has a different theme to teach the men. Day-1 is Loyalty, Day-2 is Duty & Respect, Day-3 is Selfless Service, Day-4 is Honor & Integrity, and Day-5 is Personal courage. Every day the Army goes through and reinforces these areas. LDRSSHIP take the first letter of every theme. Besides holding the boot camps, the Army also provides the men with water bottles, bags, lanyards, key chains, and if you make it through boot camp on the last day you get your dog tags. On the last day of the camp the Army gives out 4 awards to the men that they feel went above and beyond the call of duty. Not only does the Army help us get mentally and physically ready for the season, they are at all our home games to show support and escort us on to the field and present the game ball.

With the support of the Army everything was looking good, but I wanted to really be different than any other program. I want the men to really take pride in this. So we came up with weekly Operations. Every week we have an Operation or Mission we must complete. If we are away for a game we say we are going to set up our base on their land and take over. Every week the men want to know what the operation is. See scouting report. To make it more intense we have a Corsairs flag that we plant into the ground home or away to show we are taking over, Just another way to get the men hyped. Along with weekly operations we do a yearly operation also. We let the seniors come up with their yearly operation. See Special Ops. Operation.

Each year I added new things like, Special Ops. Player of the Week award. They receive a certificate, pin, shirt and their picture taken and hung on the Ops. Wall in the lockers room. 2007 we added Special Ops. Tee shirts for the player that went above and beyond the game. To really make thing fun I renamed every play in our play book and used military code names. We started hand signaling every play into the game. We started training like we were in college. We hold punting, kicking, and long snapping off season work outs to keep the men learning new drills and techniques about their positions. Also, in 2007, we started the Airborne Unit for our Wide receivers. In the air or on the ground one way or another they will get it done.

Special Ops. Is still going as strong today as the first day we started it. The unit names are still the same. The locker room is still the same, but what is great every year I get a new unit of men that want to be there, battling for a spot, they can call there own. We do not strive to be the good, we strive to be GREAT

SPECIAL OPS. 2006