

Teen athletes find competitive edge at training center

By DOUG DODSON

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Sports icons like Kobe Bryant and Kevin Garnett used to be the rare exception, but times are changing.

Bryant and Garnett both made the leap to the professional ranks straight out of high school.

More teen athletes are looking for a competitive edge.

And that search has fueled the opening of the Centers for Athletic Performance, 14647 Walters Road.

The center is the brainchild of former Rice and Klein High School football player Eddie Enriquez, who said there is a severe shortage of training facilities geared toward teen athletes in the Houston area.

"My partner Scott Moody, who started with a center in Kansas City, and I decided we would start a center here in Houston since I was familiar with the area," he said. "There just isn't any other place like this in the area."

The center, which held its grand opening last month, has seen its enrollment numbers get off to a flying start.

"We had 50 kids signed up in the first two weeks," Enriquez said. "Obviously I was happy about that, but I was also a little surprised.

"I think that word of mouth is what brought them in here more than anything. "And, Enriquez said, each of his students has come to the center with one primary goal, gaining the competitive edge.

"The kids we get are the ones who either want to start on their high school varsity team or who want to get an athletic scholarship to college," he said. "That's their primary goal."

And that is the nice thing about this program.

"These kids go on to college and play and they find it easier because they have been through it all before," Enriquez said.

When they get there, they already know proper technique and positioning, so the strength coach doesn't have to worry about spending time educating them.

A large part of the center's focus is on teaching proper technique as students go through four core modules designed to improve stability, flexibility, balance, strength, power, explosiveness and speed.

The center uses training techniques based on scientific research and technology to combine traditional strength training philosophies with functional performance techniques.

Each student works through the progressive stages of each module at his own speed and ability.

"There are a lot of places that concentrate on the professional or college athlete, but I felt we needed to focus on the high school and junior high athlete, because they don't get this kind of training anywhere else," Enriquez said.

And while high school athletes do have access to programs through their school, Enriquez said those programs often fall short of meeting the needs of the serious athlete.

"There is a big difference," he said. "Guys go into their high school programs where they get weight training and work on their agility. But the problem with that is many times the proper technique is not emphasized. Without that technique, two things happen. One is kids can wear down their joints, such as the knee or ankle and second, they are not maximizing their workout. "They are not getting the full benefit of their effort, but they don't know any better so they are satisfied."

Klein High School lineman Matt Sobotik, who will vie for a starting position this fall, said he came to the center with the hope of gaining an edge once workouts resume in August.

"I read up on the program and it seemed like a good thing," Sobotik said. "It will help me with my strength, conditioning and agility."

At 6-foot and 220 pounds, Sobotik is specifically hoping to improve his quickness.

"I am a bigger guy," said the Klein High junior. "So the running aspect is what I am focused on, and they work on your form to help you gain that explosiveness.

"This program analyzes every part of your athletic performance, so I thought this would be a better way to go and it would benefit me more than anything else out there."

Going through the program is hard work, but Enriquez points out that those who come to the center already are focused and serious about taking their ability to a higher level.

"The professional and college athletes are now training year round," he said, "And that is becoming the mentality of the high school and junior high athletes.

"It is very competitive at that level and the kids in this type of program are excelling because they are doing this every day."

Sobotik said he will be anxious to see how well he performs once the Klein football team hits the field this fall.

"I will be interested to see when we start up football again, how I will do compared to everybody else," he said.

The program is not limited to just athletes. Enriquez said the curriculum at the center would benefit anyone.

"This works for great for everyone, even if you are not an athlete," he said. "A lot of the movements that we do are very functional in terms of everyday activities. The things we do mimic things you do each day, such as climbing, lifting, and carrying things.

"The key is that you have to be serious about wanting to better yourself."

For more information about the Centers for Athletic Performance or its programs, call 281-444-0300 or visit the centers Web site at www.CAPelite.com.