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Arlington High football players show their strength

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The Arlington High School football team likes winning at the state level, no matter what the competition might be.

The school has dominated the Big Man Challenge, a multi-event strength competition, for the last four years, earning three state titles and a berth in this year's event in Duncanville.

Going into the June 18 event at Bowie High School, the Colts were undefeated. They have won four meets, including Arlington, two at DeSoto and the Michael Johnson event.

"I just love the competition," said senior lineman Ignacio Nolasco. "It's just fun competing and trying to be the best at anything."

The challenge was created for the big guys in football -- the linemen who assemble on opposite sides of the football and try to outmuscle one another.

It's something for them to do while the quarterbacks, running backs and receivers spend the summer competing in the popular 7-on-7 leagues and qualifiers.

"It's something that got started a few years ago but has really grown," said assistant coach Jeff Waldrop. "It's a lot of fun." The challenge has eight events, ranging from bench press to pushing pickup trucks. The fun for players is getting to show off their brute strength against other top teams.

"We go up against some really tough teams, the DeSotos, the Cedar Hills," offensive coordinator and line coach Philip Nelson said. "They really enjoy it."

Arlington will send eight to 10 guys to state. Most of the tournaments have five-man teams. The Colts pick from a group led by seniors Troy Tickle, Jeremiah Robbins and Nolasco and junior Daireck Hicks.

Three of those four will be starters on the offensive line when the Colts enter next season as one of the top contenders in District 4-5A. Tickle is one of the starting defensive ends.

Other players in the mix are Daniil Lysenko, Daniel Montel, Chris Burnett, Merveil Lufuluabo, Caleb Amukua, Kenya Thomas and Wade Carroll.

Eight is enough

The athletes prove their might in eight contests of strength:

Bench press (most repetitions with 205 pounds). "The bench is one we take a lot of pride in; we never get beat in it. We've gone 115 before," Nelson said.

Medicine ball toss. The players get on their knees and throw the 12-pound ball as far as they can.

Hand-over-hand sled. Athletes use a rope to pull a 225-pound sled 20 yards. Sled run. They sprint 20 yards pulling the sled. Truck push. The five members push a truck or minivan 40 yards. Tire flip. They flip big tractor tires in a relay format. Farmer walk. The competitors carry weights for a distance, round a trash can and return to the start.

The final event varies but is usually either an obstacle course or a tug-of-war with a rope. "I love the tire flip," Nolasco said. "I'm just pretty good at it." The Big Man Challenge is also a good way for high school athletes to break up the routine of lifting weights and running. Nolasco said the Colts use the challenge to bring the players together.

"You are competing individually to get yourself better, but it's a team" event, Nolasco said. "We're always there for each other. Everybody has each other's back. It helps our teamwork."