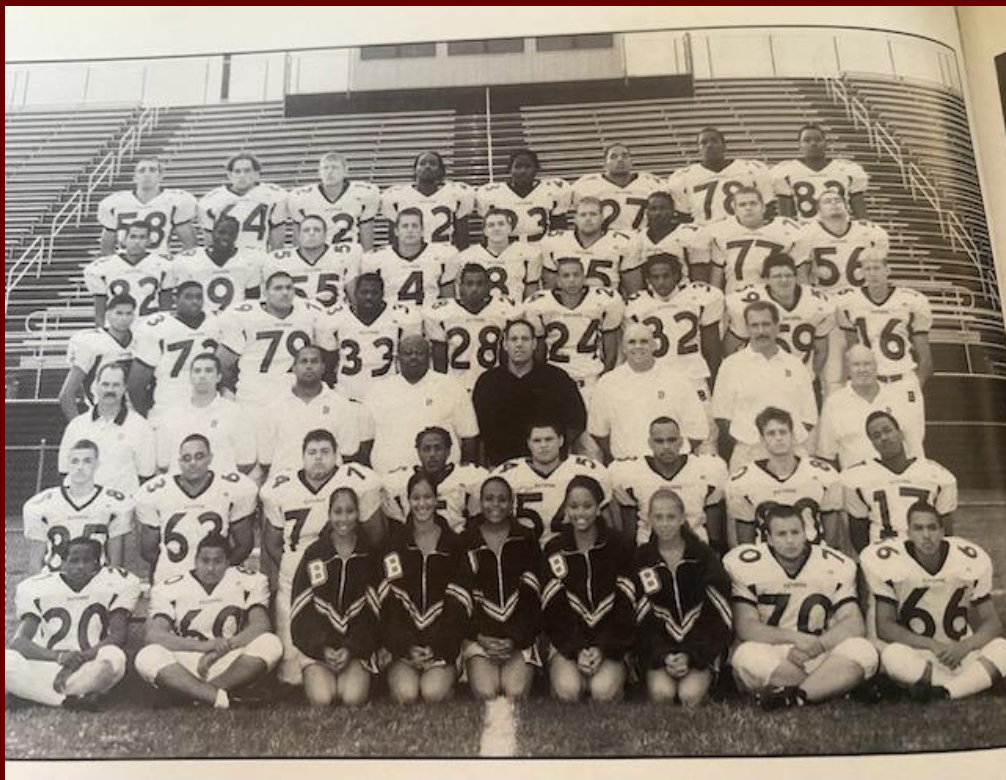


2002-03 Football Team



Bayonne High School etched its name into state history with a thrilling 25–23 victory over perennial powerhouse Hackensack, capturing the school's first-ever North 1 Group 4 state championship. Under the steady leadership of Head Coach Rick Rodriguez, the Bees showcased grit, discipline, and belief on the game's biggest stage. The offense was fueled by All-State running back Bryan Smith, who delivered a championship performance by rushing for 150 yards and scoring three touchdowns, repeatedly breaking through Hackensack's defense when it mattered most. His efforts set the tone for a team that refused to be denied its moment. Defensively, the Bees were anchored by All-State defensive back and team captain Brandon Smith, whose leadership and composure guided a relentless unit throughout the contest. Seniors Rico Rivera, Vin Fonti, Dennis Halsey, Quincy Smith, Chris Manna, Elvis Morel, Dwight Hazlewood and Shawn Ellerson all played pivotal roles, providing the experience and toughness that helped seal the historic win. Sophomore linebacker Jerome Hayes earned Player of the Game honors alongside Bryan Smith, leading the team with an incredible 22 tackles and making his presence felt on every series. Together, this group delivered a championship performance that will be remembered as a defining moment in Bayonne High School football history.