

# Hook, Line and Sinker

## With Tony Hooker

What if you built it and they didn't come?

That has to be the question that drives many in the sports world today, at all levels.

At Friday's VGH game, fewer than 100 fans made the trek south to see the team put together a solid come from behind effort to keep their playoff hopes alive.

Of course, the 87 mile trek through the hills and hollers was one that dissuaded all but the most ardent of fans, but the issue lies much deeper than that.

For proof, one must only look at other levels of competition.

Take Nebraska football, for example. No less an authority than Tom Osborne indicated this summer that had the Huskers not hired Scott Frost as head coach, "the streak" might very well have ended. What's the streak, you ask? Coming into the 2018 season, Nebraska had sold out every home game since 1962. 361 games, 361 sellouts. Amazing. And this was in danger? Truth be told, if the product on the field doesn't improve, it might still be.

NASCAR is probably the prime example of fans staying home in droves, these days. This summer, Michigan International Speedway removed thousands of seats before the series came their way. According to reports, they went from selling out 137,000 seats during the halcyon days last decade, to struggling to fill 50,000 this year. An amazing decline to be sure.

There are many other examples of folks staying home in droves rather than attending live sporting events. A

recent Illinois football game in Chicago had an announced attendance of 25,000, when in reality, it looked like maybe half that number were in the house. This in a town with over 350,000 living alumni.

Even the St. Louis Cardinals fell victim to this phenomena, in a way. St. Louis pundits were lamenting a lack of fans at the last home series of the season, one which was pivotal to their post-season chances. There were many open seats in the higher sections, and this for a team that was third in the majors in attendance, drawing over 3 million fans for the 21st year in a row.

In reality, for the big boys of the pro sports, attendance is no longer the main revenue driver. TV is, and this is also true to an extent for the college sports. The optics of having a stadium that is three quarters empty aren't pleasant, but the greenbacks keep flowing in and bigger buildings keep growing up.

This obviously isn't the case at the high school level, where revenue production isn't really a thing, but where it can hurt is with the peripheral organizations whose sole means of income is from concessions sales and the like. Classes and groups take turns staffing the concession stand, and fewer fans means fewer pork chop sandwiches and bags of popcorn are being sold, which means the groups have to turn to other fund raising opportunities. I love cookie dough as much as the next guy, but there's only so much I can afford.

There is really no clear cut reason for the erosion of attendance over the years. High

school football, once the 'only game in town' on a Friday night, now has competition. There are volleyball tournaments and cross country meets that draw folks away, on occasion. The cost of attending a UI football game has skyrocketed. A family of 4 can expect to shell out \$20 to park, \$200 for sideline tickets, and another \$100 bucks on concessions. Or, I could pocket the \$300 make my own chili dog and enjoy the game from the comfort of my own living room without waiting in line for the rest room. (Truthfully, I've got a teenaged daughter, so I'll probably be waiting in line for the rest room, and the \$300 will probably be spent on clothes, but still)

Truth be told, there are myriad other things that kids can be doing on a Friday night, these days. Technology has given today's youth instant access to an entire world of entertainment that isn't crowded or cold or rainy or hot and humid. I'm sure success or lack thereof on the field of battle has a lot to do with the attendance numbers, as well. There aren't any easy answers for this. It could be the nature of the beast as we move toward the future. As a kid, I wouldn't have dreamed of not being at a home football game. It was the social event of the weekend, where we would kick the crap out of each other in the football games behind the bleachers before deciding whose house we were going to crash at. That's not the case anymore, and to my mind, change, though inevitable, isn't always for the better.

# Devils use strong run game to defeat OPH

The Blue Devils' 2018 trek to Palestine for an LOVC SE conflict had a different feel than most years, as the new look Oblong Palestine Hutsonville co-op came into the game riding a two game winning streak and carrying playoff hopes, and for the first three quarters of the game, the two sides appeared evenly matched.

Luckily for Villa Grove Heritage, the game lasts 4 quarters, as VGH used two fourth quarter Zach Champagne (14 carries for 73 yards, two TD's) scoring runs to secure the 24-14 win and keep their playoff hopes alive.

The game started ominously for the visitors, as OPH recovered a fumble near mid field on the game's second play.

The threat was negated when VGH's Ierik Sorensen alertly pounced on a loose ball just three plays later giving the Blue Devils possession at the OPH 40.

VGH, using some gashing runs from sophomore sensation Robbie Wicklander (9 carries for 42 yards) were able to move to the OPH 21, but turned it over on downs at that point.

It took just one play for the hosts to dent the score board, as a fine pass, just over the outstretched hands of a VGH

defender, found its way to a receiver for the 79 yard td. The extra point try was true, and with 7:06 in the first, the score stood at 7-0.

The two teams then exchanged possessions for most of the second quarter, as the VGH defense, led by Champagne, (11 tackles) Sorensen (six tackles, 1 Pass Break Up) and Zayzen Price (8 stops) began to establish control of the line of scrimmage.

The Blue Devils were finally able together a drive on their final possession of the half, as Evan Wilson (5-10 57 yards passing, 6 carries for 20 yards) found Austin Grimm (3 carries for 44 yards, one reception for 9 yards) on a big third down conversion before taking it in for the score from 3 yards out. Wilson's 2 point conversion pass found Cole Thomas to set the score at 8-7 with 3:01 left in the half. OPH could mount no coherent threat for the remainder of the half and the two sides went to the half time locker room.

With it being Palestine's homecoming, halftime festivities took a little longer than usual, but it the two teams continued to play an even contest until Oblong again went to the aerial attack for a 36 yard td, giving the hosts a 14-8 lead with 1:21 left in the third period, setting off

pandemonium in the packed bleachers.

Unfortunately for the hosts, that would be their last gasp, as from that point forward Villa Grove Heritage began to dominate on both sides of the ball.

Two quick screens from Wilson to Blake Smith picked up 25 and 16 yards, Wicklander carried it for 15 to the three, and Champagne took it over from there, leaving dazed and confused defenders in his wake. Champagne's 2 point conversion attempt was also good, and with 10:28 left in the final stanza, VGH had a 16-14 lead that they wouldn't relinquish.

After the defense, led by Clayton Knierim (4 tackles, one TFL) held once again, the Blue Devils made short work of a clinching td drive, going 55 yards in five plays, with Austin Grimm's 38 yard scamper to the opposing 19 being the key play. Champagne would once again find pay dirt, trucking his way in from the 6. The two point conversion again was good, setting the final margin at 24-14.

The Blue Devils return to action on October 12 at 7:00 pm versus Tri-County. The game is Villa Grove's homecoming contest.

# Unity High Soccer Updates

Unity 1, Monticello 0  
2nd half Stahl (PK)  
Unity 9, ALAH 0  
1st half

Manrique (Bachert), Bachert (Stahl), Stahl (Bachert), Bachert (Stahl), Bachert (Freeman), Stahl(UA),

Newsome (Freeman), Manrique(Stahl), Manrique (Stahl)

# Senior Spotlight

Gracyn Allen

1. Who is your dream date? What are the two of you doing?

My dream date would be with Kris Bryant. We would go on a sailboat all day, stop at different beaches and go surfing, eat a bunch of food, and then watch the sunset.

2. What is your favorite food?

My favorite meal is what I have at my family Thanksgiving. My favorite things are the chicken & noodles, mashed potatoes, and the pumpkin pie.

3. Who do you HAVE to have tickets for?

The singer that I HAVE to have tickets to see is Thomas Rhett.

4. What is your dream career?

My dream career is an orthopedic doctor because with the different sports injuries I have had in the past, it has always been a field that I have been interested in. I think that it would be great to be able to help people overcome their injuries just like my doctor did when I had them.

5. Where do you see yourself in ten years?

In ten years, I see myself having a career that I love and a family that loves and supports me just like mine does now.

Fiona Ely

1. What is your dream career?



My dream career would be to be a traveling physician. I want to work for an organization that is centered on providing healthcare and support for less fortunate communities, specifically in developing nations. I feel that this career would combine my love for travel and desire to work in the medical field. After that, I want to work in a hospital setting.

2. What is your favorite restaurants?

One of my favorite restaurants is Olive Garden. Whenever I go there, I usually order the Chicken Alfredo or

Shrimp Scampi and the vegetable minestrone soup.

3. Who is your favorite teacher? Why?

I have been blessed to have so many great teachers at Heritage that it's hard to choose! But Mr. White, one of our math teachers, has been a great support this year. Although I am not taking one of his classes, I know that I can rely on him to help me out. I can go and talk to him about school, college preparations and more and he always gives good advice.

4. Who do you HAVE to have tickets to see in concert?

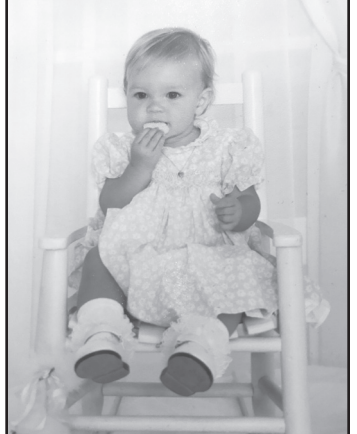
I love Taylor Swift!

5. Where do you see yourself in ten years?

In 10 years, I hope to have finished medical school and beginning my career as a doctor. I also hope to be engaged and ready to start the next chapter of my life.



The 2018 Homecoming King Evan Wilson and Queen Fiona Ely.



Gracyn Allen




Fiona Ely

**BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY** | Snyder Real Estate  
HomeServices


# OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, October 13 | 10am - 12pm  
1602C County Rd 200N | Villa Grove, IL 61956



This property is a rare find! 4BR, 3.5 BA with 2.36 acres, 30 x 40 pole building, above ground pool and multiple decks for entertaining.

PRESENTED BY:



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