

Hook, Line and Sinker

With Tony Hooker

Despite a long tradition of good softball being played in Villa Grove, regional titles have been hard to come by for the Blue Devils. That's what makes the 2019 Blue Devil run to a sectional title so special.

I recently sat down with Coach Jeana Block to talk about her team's post season run, and a great many other things.

Why is it so difficult to win a regional in softball?

We have a lot of tough competition in the area. Last year, three teams in our conference won a regional. This year, there are two regional winners in our conference, and Cumberland was in a regional championship, losing 3-0 to Casey. I think this area is really saturated with good softball, and it's just tough to get out of a regional with a title. I thought that last year, we were the better team, but just didn't show up to play. We "laid an egg", but I think that experience has paid off

this year. They learned a lot from it, and it made them hungry this year. I think they realized that they can't take anyone lightly.

Your schedule this year was brutal. On you're Tennessee trip, you were playing schools with a thousand kids. Was that intentional?

Evansville (Bosse) had 2400 kids! Our record is 21-12, but when I wrote our synopsis of why we should be seeded number one, all our losses are to top teams in the area. We did lose four in Tennessee, but they were to really good teams, like the number one 4A school in Alabama. We gained so much from going down there and playing in decent weather in March. We came back, and after the first two weeks, we'd played 15 games, while around the area, there were a lot of people who had played five or six.

A trip like that forces your team to get tight, right?

It's more about team building than anything. The girls

had a lot of fun. It's not fun to lose, to get kicked really hard, but it allowed the girls to see that we might be good in a 1A conference, but that there's better out there. It let them realize what we've got to do.

What's the strength of your team?

I would say experience. We have thirteen on our roster, and ten of those thirteen have played numerous travel ball games with the Elite. We started when these sophomores and juniors were seven and eight years old, and up until this past summer, they've played every year. They have so much experience at making the little plays. I think that was the difference in the Casey game, for example. They laid down a bunt, and we made the play at third, and Jordyn Ray, playing center field, comes in and covers second, Kyleigh (Block) has the ball and throws to her and we turn a double play. They weren't expecting that,

and they were stunned. We then scored a couple of runs the next inning and win 2-0. Their coach said they hadn't seen a team make that play. That's not something I can teach them. It's something they've seen other teams do, and these girls know each other so well. There's no hesitation. They trust each other. I really think that experience and the trust they have for one another is our team's strength.

As far as pitching, you've got three solid starters, which is a luxury, right?

That's a luxury. We've got three solid starters and then Vanessa, who's a freshman, is coming along, and she'll be right there with them next year.

Up and down the lineup, you've got sticks. You've got four or five kids who've hit home runs?

Right. At batting practice, we've had eleven of the thirteen kids hit one out. They all can do it. They're all big enough and strong enough to do it.

How has your team improved the most over the course of the season, from game one to now?

I'd say confidence. We talked about how strong our schedule is, and we played all of our really tough games early. A big game for us was against Argenta, who took third in the state last year and had quite a bit returning. We knew they were going to be good. We ended up at the wrong school and we only had 15 minutes to warm up. We were scrambling, putting our shoes on, and I'm thinking "This is going to be a mess," and instead they focused like lasers and we ended up winning 11-1. That was a huge game for us, kind of a turning point. We gained that confidence back. We had lost the first game to Mahomet, and then we played Tuscola and lost in extra innings. We played Unity and lost by a run. We kept falling short, so Argenta was kind of our defining win, along with Casey. Since we beat Casey, we've played with a lot more confidence. We've changed our mentality in the batter's box from "I hope I don't strike out" to "I want a pitch to hit. I'm going to hit the ball, so bring it to me!" They've finally realized that they're a good ball

team, but they have to bring it every time.

You played at Casey, correct? Were you guys good?

Yes, I played there. We were good, we went to state all four years, winning state my sophomore year and finishing third when I was a senior.

Which is better? Winning as a player or as a parent and coach?

As a parent, definitely. To see my kid get to do it when she was in junior high was amazing. I think, when we were playing, we didn't recognize the magnitude of it, especially coming from Casey. It was like "we go to state every year." Now as an adult and as a coach, it's a lot more fun watching the kids do it, even though they don't appreciate it yet. Now, as an adult, it's fun to say "Wow, I was a part of something pretty cool."

Villa Grove went on to defeat Fisher 3-2 and Salt Fork 15-5 to capture the first sectional title in school history, before falling to Peru St. Bede 5-0 in the super sectional matchup.

Villa Grove High School: Honor Roll 3rd, 4th Quarters and Semester

VILLA GROVE HIGH SCHOOL HONOR ROLL

Third Quarter, 2018-2019

A student must have at least a 4.50 grade point average for High Honors. A student will be eligible for Honors having at least a 4.00 average with no grade lower than "C", nor more than one "C". Two grades of "C" are permitted if both occur in weighted courses. Only courses offering one-half unit of credit per semester are considered. Names marked * denotes no grade lower than "A".

HIGH HONORS:

Senior Class: Ashley Fulk, Austin Grimm, Chelsea Harrison*, Tristan Harrison*, Tommie Hooker*, Kaylee Knell*, Christopher Levine*, Kaitlyn Morse*, Taylor Risken*, Jared Stevens*, Alexis Vandeventer*, Jackson Vandeventer*, Sophia Wegeng*

Junior Class:

Beau Beesley, Chase Burwell, Reagan Cheely, Kelsey Drew*, Sydney Eisenmenger*, Maris Eversole*, Liberty Floyd, Grace Hutchison*, Jamie Kern*, Austin Langellier*, Molly Mixell*, Samuel Reno*, Savannah Shanks, Ierik Sorenson*, Samantha Stevens, Liberty Watson*, Jackson Wiessing*, Amber Williams*

Sophomore Class:

Kale Barrett*, Kyleigh Block*, Sarah Brown, Irene Bruschi*, Madison Burwell*, Isabella Caceres*, Holley Cowman*, Paige Dahl*, Kathryn Eisenmenger*, Kaitlynn Gray, Mat-

thew Gulick*, Caleb Hardyman, Meike Herbrandt*, Alexa Howard*, Carson Howard, Lydia Howard*, Thanthai Krutthong*, Logan Nohren*, Daniel Olson, Manuela Pedersoli*, Erin Shunk, Sara Stutz

Freshmen Class: Liam Barr, Regan Blanton, Hayden Carter, Jobeth Crafton*, Isidora Davis*, Ashton Harrison, Mark Henry, Molly Little*, Taylur Orwick, Ashlynn Smith*, Morgan Smith*, Hailey Stutz, Ava Vollmer, Caleb Wiessing*

HONORS:

Senior Class: Chloe Colblentz, Payton Floyd, Austin Grimm, Dinah Henry, Mokaylee Knell, Portia McCollom, Liam Richey

Junior Class:

Ragin Baker, Connor Block, Kamy Burton, Kale Cline, Camilla Cooke, Lily Cooke, Carson Ewing, Kimberly Faith, Juliana Jobe, Justice McCollom, Austin Piercy, Zayzen Price, Heather Rentfro, Mackenzie Romack, Kehm Shirley, Taylor Wilson

Sophomore Class: Samantha Campbell, Keagan Champagne, James Eversole, Addison Fisher, Ricki Hire, Jairus Kiser, Lily Lawrence, Michael McGarigle, Kayley Richardson, Blake Smith, Jalen Southard, Logan Wehrheim, Robert Wicklander

Freshmen Class: Chris Farris, Kirsten Foreman, Andrea Hall, Andrew McQueen, Karleb Miller, Amelia Williams, Tyler Wilson, Kylee Witte

HONOR ROLL

Fourth Quarter, 2018-2019

A student must have at least

a 4.50 grade point average for High Honors. A student will be eligible for Honors having at least a 4.00 average with no grade lower than "C", nor more than one "C". Two grades of "C" are permitted if both occur in weighted courses. Only courses offering one-half unit of credit per semester are considered. Names marked * denotes no grade lower than "A".

HIGH HONORS:

Senior Class: Brianna Dale*, Payton Floyd, Ashley Fulk*, Austin Grimm, Chelsea Harrison*, Tristan Harrison*, Tommie Hooker*, Mokaylee Knell*, Christopher Levine*, Kaitlyn Morse*, Taylor Risken, Jared Stevens*, Alexis Vandeventer*, Jackson Vandeventer*, Sophia Wegeng*

Junior Class:

Beau Beesley, Payton Campbell, Reagan Cheely, Kelsey Drew*, Sydney Eisenmenger*, Maris Eversole*, Liberty Floyd, Grace Hutchison*, Jamie Kern*, Austin Langellier, Molly Mixell*, Samuel Reno*, Ierik Sorenson*, Liberty Watson*, Jackson Wiessing*, Amber Williams*, Taylor Wilson*

Sophomore Class: Kale Barrett*, Kyleigh Block*, Sara Brown, Irene Bruschi*, Madison Burwell*, Isabella Caceres*, Holley Cowman*, Paige Dahl*, Kaleb Drew, Kathryn Eisenmenger*, Ginger Erl Soper, Kaitlynn Gray, Matthew Gulick*, Caleb Hardyman, Meike Herbrandt*, Alexa Howard*, Carson Howard, Lydia Howard*, Thanthai

Krutthong*, Logan Nohren*, Daniel Olson*, Manuela Pedersoli*, Erin Shunk, Sara Stutz

Freshmen Class: Liam Barr, Regan Blanton, Hayden Carter, Jobeth Crafton, Isidora Davis*, Ashton Harrison*, Mark Henry, Molly Little, Andrew McQueen, Taylur Orwick, Ashlynn Smith, Morgan Smith*, Hailey Stutz, Ava Vollmer, Caleb Wiessing*, Amelia Williams

HONORS:

Senior Class: Dylan Campbell, Colton Little, Portia McCollom, Liam Richey, Hali Simonton

Junior Class:

Ragin Baker, Connor Block, Chase Burwell, Camilla Cooke, Gage Dann, Carson Ewing, Kimberly Faith, Juliana Jobe, Justice McCollom, Austin Piercy, Heather Rentfro, Mackenzie Romack, Haley Sappenfield, Savannah Shanks, Kehm Shirley

Sophomore Class:

Kale Barrett, Sarah Brown, Samantha Campbell, Keagan Champagne, Holley Cowman, Ginger Erl Soper, James Eversole, Addison Fisher, Ricki Hire, Carson Howard, Jairus Kiser, Kayley Richardson, Blake Smith, Jalen Southard, Robert Wicklander

Freshmen Class:

Chase Dann, Andrea Hall, Issaac Horein, Elijah Kiesel, Lauren Mathews, Trinity Price, Mylee Sprague, Tyler Wilson, Kylee Witte, Vanessa Wright

HONOR ROLL

Semester 2, 2018-2019

A student must have at least

a 4.50 grade point average for High Honors. A student will be eligible for Honors having at least a 4.00 average with no grade lower than "C", nor more than one "C". Two grades of "C" are permitted if both occur in weighted courses. Only courses offering one-half unit of credit per semester are considered. Names marked * denotes no grade lower than "A".

HIGH HONORS:

Senior Class: Brianna Dale*, Ashley Fulk*, Chelsea Harrison*, Tristan Harrison*, Tommie Hooker*, Mokaylee Knell*, Christopher Levine*, Kaitlyn Morse*, Taylor Risken*, Jared Stevens*, Alexis Vandeventer*, Jackson Vandeventer*, Sophia Wegeng*

Junior Class:

Beau Beesley, Reagan Cheely, Kelsey Drew*, Sydney Eisenmenger*, Maris Eversole*, Liberty Floyd, Grace Hutchison*, Jamie Kern*, Austin Langellier, Molly Mixell*, Samuel Reno*, Ierik Sorenson*, Liberty Watson*, Jackson Wiessing*, Amber Williams*, Taylor Wilson*

Sophomore Class:

Kale Barrett, Kyleigh Block*, Sarah Brown, Irene Bruschi*, Madison Burwell*, Isabella Caceres*, Holley Cowman, Paige Dahl*, Kaleb Drew, Kathryn Eisenmenger*, Ginger Erl Soper, Addison Fisher, Kaitlynn Gray, Matthew Gulick*, Caleb Hardyman, Meike Herbrandt*, Alexa Howard*, Carson Howard, Lydia Howard*, Thanthai Krutthong*, Michael McGa-

rigle, Logan Nohren*, Daniel Olson*, Manuela Pedersoli*, Erin Shunk, Sara Stutz, Robert Wicklander

Freshmen Class: Liam Barr, Regan Blanton, Hayden Carter, Jobeth Crafton*, Isidora Davis*, Ashton Harrison*, Mark Henry, Elijah Kiesel, Molly Little, Taylur Orwick, Ashlynn Smith*, Morgan Smith*, Hailey Stutz*, Ava Vollmer*, Caleb Wiessing*, Amelia Williams, Tyler Wilson

HONORS:

Senior Class: Chloe Colblentz, Payton Floyd, Austin Grimm, Liam Richey

Junior Class:

Ragin Baker, Connor Block, Chase Burwell, Payton Campbell, Nathan Chewning, Camilla Cooke, Lily Cooke, Gage Dann, Carson Ewing, Kimberly Faith, Reagan Finke, Juliana Jobe, Mitchell Lighty, Justice McCollom, Austin Piercy, Zayzen Price, Heather Rentfro, Mackenzie Romack, Matthew Rutledge, Savannah Shanks, Kehm Shirley

Sophomore Class:

Samantha Campbell, Keagan Champagne, James Eversole, Ricki Hire, Jairus Kiser, Kayley Richardson, Blake Smith, Jalen Southard

Freshmen Class:

Christopher Farris, Kirsten Foreman, Andrea Hall, Rosa McCollom, Andrew McQueen, Kaleb Miller, Trinity Price, Mylee Sprague, Kylee Witte

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2019 VILLA GROVE/HERITAGE HAWKS				
BOYS BASEBALL SCHEDULE				record
Mar 11	SJO	L	0-1	0-1
Mar 12	@ Marshall	ppd		0-1
Mar 13	@ Salt Fork	ppd		0-1
Mar 14	Urbana	ppd		0-1
Mar 16	Paris	W,L	6-5, 8-11	1-2
Mar 18	@ Monticello	L	0-9	1-3
Mar 19	@ Armstrong	W	11-0	2-3
Mar 20	Sullivan	W	5-3	3-3
Mar 22	@ BH	L	8-11	3-4
Mar 26	@ Judah	W	11-3	4-4
Mar 28	Oakwood	L	1-3	4-5
Mar 29	@ Arcola	ppd		
Mar 30	@ Blue Ridge	ppd		
Apr 01	@ Pal-Hut	W	10-0	5-5
Apr 02	LSA	W	17-15	6-5
Apr 04	G-RF	W	7-3	7-5
Apr 05	@ M'ville	W	10-0	8-5
Apr 08	@ C'land	L	3-8	8-6
Apr 10	Oblong	W	12-2	9-6
Apr 11	@ Fisher	W	15-2	10-6
Apr 12	Tri-County	W	18-5	11-6
Apr 16	Schlarman	W	21-0	12-6
Apr 17	@ Hutsonville	W	12-9	13-6
Apr 18	AOC	ppd		
Apr 22	Martinsville	L	15-1	14-6
Apr 23	@ Tuscola	L	2-10	14-7
Apr 29	@ Tri-County	W	11-0	15-7
May 04	Neoga (DH)	ppd		
May 06	@ Oblong	W	9-4	16-7
May 08	Cerro Gordo	W	12-3	17-7
May 09	ALAH	L	5-6	17-8
May 11	@ Unity	L	2-3	17-9
May 15	IHSA vs SJO	L	2-3	17-10

Everyone gets very involved in the little activities our HEAD COACH Jason Conn

2019 VGH Girl's Track & Field Schedule				
Mar 09	@ EIU invite			
Mar 13	@ Uni High (Armory)			
Mar 19	@ Arcola			
Mar 26	@ Arcola			
Mar 28	@ Tuscola			
Apr 05	@ ALAH			
Apr 09	@ Salt Fork Invite			
Apr 12	@ Unity (girls)			
Apr 19	@ Tuscola			
Apr 23	@ ALAH			
Apr 26	@ Monticello			
May 03	@ Arcola (LOVC meet)			

HEAD COACH Heath Wilson

2019 VILLA GROVE Blue Devils				
GIRLS SOFTBALL SCHEDULE				record
Mar 12	@ MS	L	4-7	0-1
Mar 18	Tuscola	L	3-6	0-2
Mar 19	@ Unity	L	9-10	0-3
Mar 20	Urbana	W	11-2	1-3
Mar 21-24	@ TENN	LLLLW		2-7
Mar 26	GRF	W	10-9	3-7
Mar 27	@ AO	W	9-0	4-7
Mar 28	Windsor	L	1-18	4-8
Mar 29	Okaw Valley	ppd		
Mar 30	@ Rantoul	ppd		
Apr 01	@ C'land	W	4-3	5-8
Apr 02	@ SJO	L	2-7	5-9
Apr 03	Tri-County	W	25-0	6-9
Apr 05	@ Oblong	ppd		
Apr 08	Martinsville	W	15-0	7-9
Apr 09	Centennial	W	16-6	8-9
Apr 10	@ Hut-Pal	W,W	16-1, 9-1	10-9
Apr 11	@ Fisher	L	4-6	10-10
Apr 15	vs Heritage	W	10-0	11-10
Apr 16	@ Casey	W	2-0	12-10
Apr 17	Cumberland	W	3-2	13-10
Apr 18	@ Blue Ridge	ppd		
Apr 19	@ Tri-County	W (forfeit)		14-10
Apr 22	Oblong (DH)	L,W	3-10, 9-6	15-11
Apr 23	Salt Fork	W	11-1	16-11
Apr 25	@ Arcola	ppd		
May 01	@ Heritage	W	11-0	17-11
May 02	Armstrong	ppd		
May 03	ALAH	L	2-4	17-12
May 08	Cerro Gordo	W	12-0	18-12
May 09	@ Martinsville	W	12-6	19-12
May 10	@ PBL	W	8-7	20-12
May 14-17	@ IHSA reg W, W	W	14-0, 10-0	22-12
May 22-24	@ IHSA sectional at STM			

HEAD COACH Jeana Block				
2019 VGH Boy's Track & Field Schedule				record
Mar 13	@ Uni High (Armory)			
Mar 16	@ EIU invite			
Mar 19	@ Arcola			
Mar 26	@ Arcola			
Mar 28	@ Tuscola			
Apr 05	@ ALAH			
Apr 09	@ Salt Fork Invite			
Apr 12	@ Monticello	CANCELLED		
Apr 19	@ Tuscola			
Apr 23	@ ALAH			
Apr 26	@ SJO (boys)			
May 03	@ Arcola (LOVC meet)			
May 11	@ Shelbyville			



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