

Girls basketball numbers dwindling; hope for a rebound

Oh, mirror in the sky, what is love?

Can the child within my heart rise above?

Can I sail through the changing ocean tides?

Can I handle the seasons of my life? — Fleetwood Mac

Four decades ago this week, senior Ginger Greger and sophomore Lori Knight each had 17 points as Villa Grove defeated ABL 55-34 in girls' varsity basketball. The Blue Devils moved to 5-0 on the season, per the Villa Grove News article, written by the inimitable "Duze," Derek Duzan.

Now, everything in the paragraph above has changed, which is wild and kind of sad, to my sentimental way of thinking.

To the best of my knowl-

edge, Duze doesn't write anymore. I am sure he doesn't write for the Villa Grove News, because I was there when it printed its last edition before being assimilated into the current model, the Journal.

ABL, too, has faded into the sunset of memory, as they combined with Homer schools a long time ago to form the Heritage school district. There were some great athletes and teams to come through ABL over the years, to be sure.

Finally, there's this sad fact. Neither Villa Grove nor Heritage are fielding a girls' varsity basketball team this season due to low numbers. These two once-proud programs, home to regional and sectional winners in past glory years, now can't find enough players to field a team.

This phenomenon isn't only a local one. According to a November article on the "League of Fans" website, the number of girls playing high school basketball nationwide has dipped by almost 20% in the last 20 years. Basketball has dipped from the number one sport by participation among high school girls to number 4, behind Track and field, volleyball and soccer. A woeful trend for hoops fans, to be sure, and one that isn't predicted to go away in the near future.

If the numbers are to be reversed, a look at why it's happened over the past two decades needs to be explored. Per a League of Fans survey of coaches and administrators, some of the reasons included:

- More girls are specializing

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



in one sport year-round and many of them are not choosing basketball.

- Schools have added other sports for girls during the last 20 years, and those sports have pulled some girls from basketball.

- Some girls see basketball as too physically demanding.

- Club teams are a bigger phenomenon in sports like volleyball and soccer than

they are in basketball and club teams have a lot of power over athletes and their parents.

- And then there's this theory: Some girls believe basketball isn't "girly" enough and the uniforms aren't cute enough.

My hunch is that it's all of these things and many more. More girls have part-time jobs than 20 years ago. There are so many non-school relat-

ed distractions and activities these days.

Ironically, this precipitous drop in numbers comes just as the WNBA and women's college basketball tournament have gained viewers and popularity, so perhaps the gain in popularity might once again spur interest in the sport by the young folks.

Here locally, the resurgence of the University of Illinois women's team has shown a steady increase in the number of fans attending home games. At any rate, one of my fondest high school memories was watching the girls' basketball team advance to the super sectional my junior year, and it would be a shame if an entire generation of players and classmates weren't given that opportunity.

Is your current diet good for you?

Over the last few weeks, I've talked about the importance of diet on your future health potential. But, if you're like me, you have been confused about which diet to follow and generally what you should be eating. The one thing I'm certain of is everyone's diet is different and one diet doesn't fit all.

This week, I want to provide you with a simple way to know if a food you're currently eating is agreeing with you or not. Most of you won't need to buy anything or go anywhere to learn these simple tricks. All you must do is pay attention to your body during and after you eat.

We've all known people

who ate a certain food for years and years with no problem, then suddenly, when they eat the same food now, it makes them feel yucky. What's up with that? The easy answer is their digestive system lining has been destroyed enough to allow them to become allergic or at least, intolerant of that food.

One of the most important barriers in your body is the lining of your digestive tract. This lining consists of specialized skin cells. Some of these cells secrete mucous that act as part of a separating wall between your food and your blood stream. This barrier is necessary, so your digestive

Real Life Wellness

By Dr. Bill Hemmer



enzymes don't breakdown and digest your stomach cells. If these cells or the mucous layer becomes damaged or is missing, enzymes can damage or destroy your digestive lining cells which leads to something called Leaky Gut Syndrome.

Leaky Gut Syndrome is just that. The content of your intes-

tines leaks undigested content into your blood stream and abdomen without being properly digested. This leads to large particles of food, bacteria, viruses, and parasites being able to invade your bloodstream before they are fully digested. This leads to an immune reaction within your blood.

Your Immune system thinks these substances are invaders (which they are!) even though your body could tolerate digested parts of the same things in the past with no problem. Then, your Immune system creates antibodies for those new invaders.

This is the first way you will know if a specific food is good for you right now or not. If you eat something and you immediately or within a few minutes start to become stuffy, your nose starts to run or you begin to sneeze, then chances are you are dealing with a Leaky gut issue, and you have created an Immune response to that food.

A second way to know if you are intolerant or have become allergic to a specific food is if your pulse raises after you eat it. This isn't easy to figure out unless you have some sort of a fitness tracking device like a Fitbit or an Apple Watch. If you have a device like this, check your pulse rate before you begin to eat and then check it again when you are done. If your pulse rises by more than 2 or 3 beats per minute, then something you just ate is given your body a reason to react negatively to it.

The best way to get rid of these foods is to use an elimination style diet. More on that next week.

Real men do eat quiche; here's a good one

The other day I had quite a bit of chopped ham to use up, so I found this recipe online for Ham and Hash Brown Quiche. It was quite good; we both liked it a lot.

Now, before you turn away thinking "I don't like quiche" or "my husband won't eat quiche," check out this recipe! Instead of the traditional pie crust, the crust is made with the hash browns. That's different!

I made this for supper, and then in the morning we finished it up for breakfast. It reheats quite well in the microwave. If serving it for breakfast, add some fresh fruit and you have a nice meal. Or serve it for supper along with a tossed salad.

Ham and Hash Brown Quiche

3 cups frozen hash browns, thawed
3 Tbsp butter, melted
1 cup cooked chopped ham
1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
1/4 cup chopped onion
1/4 cup chopped green pepper
4 eggs
1/2 cup plus 2 Tbsp milk
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp pepper

Press the thawed potatoes between layers of paper towels to remove excess moisture. Place in a pie pan, press onto the bottom and up the sides of the pan. Drizzle with butter. Bake at 425 degrees 25 minutes until golden brown. Remove from the oven and reduce the temperature to 350 degrees.

Combine the ham, cheese, onion and green pepper. Spread evenly over the crust. In a small bowl, combine eggs, milk, salt and pepper. Pour over the ham mixture. Bake at 350 degrees 25 to 30 minutes or until set.

think the next time I make this, I may use red pepper to add a touch of color, and I think a bit of jalapeño will spice it up a bit. This is a recipe you can easily play around with. Add what your family likes. It would probably be great with cooked sausage instead of ham.

The above recipe was really easy to make because I already had chopped ham, and I always keep some chopped onion and chopped green pepper in the freezer.

If you do make this recipe, be sure to press the ham mixture down evenly. I didn't realize when I made mine, the mixture was higher on one side, and then I poured the egg on, all the egg ran to the other side. I was able to flatten it a bit and spread the egg around more evenly. I used a regular pie pan; did not need a deep dish pan for this recipe.

Quiche is a French tart consisting of a pastry crust filled with eggs, cheese and meat. The most well-known form of quiche is quiche Lorraine, which has bacon. It can be served hot or cold.

Although Quiche is considered to be a French dish, it has been found in English cuisine as far back as the 14th century and in Italian cuisine in the 13th century. Quiche took quite a hit back in 1982 when Bruce Feirstein published the book "Real Men Don't Eat Quiche." Just so you know, that book was on the New York Times Best Sell-

er list for 55 weeks and sold over 1.6 million copies. Even though the book was written to be funny, many men took it to heart and refused to eat quiche. After the book was published, quiche was long considered to be an entrée for a women's luncheon.

I would like to hear from you your special recipe for Valentine's Day. Do you have a special dinner you make or perhaps a delicious dessert? If you have such a recipe, please send it as early as possible so I can get it printed well ahead of Valentine's Day. Please send it to letscook!@heraldpubs.

Let's Cook

By Linda Hoskins



com or mail to Mascoutah Herald, PO Box C, Mascoutah IL 62258.

Please tell us where you got your recipe; did you find it in a church cookbook or perhaps create it yourself? Also, in-

clude your hometown as this column is printed in a number of newspapers in Illinois and Missouri. If you wish, I will leave your name and town out of the paper. Thanks, and Happy Cooking!

Forty-year-old photo underscores importance of positivity

I apologize in advance for the egocentric nature of this confabulation. I'm doing it to make a point. I'm not sure what that point is right now but maybe I'll figure it out by the end of the story.

I recently learned that I was a stunningly handsome kid. OK, maybe "stunningly" is a stretch, but I was an alright guy. I didn't know it at the time.

I recently found a handful of photos of myself from my late teens that I had never seen before. I'm like a lot of people, maybe even most people, in that I never like seeing a photo of myself or hearing a recording of my own voice. But when you see a photo of yourself from 40 years ago, you view it with a different perspective. You've changed enough or matured enough that it feels like you're seeing a different person.

Aside from school portraits, there are not a lot of photos of me as a kid. When you're the fifth child in the family, the novelty of taking pictures has perhaps worn off. I'm in a few family group photos, but that's about it.

Lately, I've been going through old photo archives in the newspaper office and digitizing them for posterity. In two envelopes of negatives from 1983 and 1984, I found four

photos of myself. Two of them are of me by myself.

I wrote for the paper in high school and started full time at age 19, so I was in the office a lot. At some point, someone pointed the camera at me. Maybe they were just adjusting the camera settings and snapped a photo of whatever was in front of them.

In both photos where I'm that "whatever," I look fairly annoyed at having my picture taken. But I also look pretty good. I wish I had felt that way at the time.

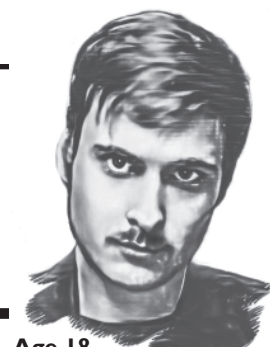
I've always had a high level of confidence in my professional abilities, and that has served me well overall. It may have come across as cockiness at times, but confidence is essential for success. My mother always said, nobody is going to believe in you if you don't believe in yourself.

The same thing applies to your social life. If you don't think you're worthy of other people's attention, you're going to miss the cues they send you.

I totally get how a beautiful teenage girl can look in the mirror and think she's ugly. A lot of young people have low self-esteem. Many of them deal with depression and even suicidal thoughts. And if you have such a person in your life who feels that way, there's a really good chance that you don't even know

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter



Age 18

it. They're really good at hiding how they feel about themselves.

Fortunately, my confidence in other areas was high enough to pull me through those teenage years. While I didn't think I was terribly attractive, I also didn't care. I didn't pay much attention to how I dressed or how I groomed myself. My social self-esteem was low enough that I thought it didn't matter. I didn't think there was anything I could do to make myself attractive, so why bother?

I'm not blaming anyone, especially my own family. The kind of affirmation that young people need can't come entirely from your own family. You expect your family to support you, so you view that as biased and therefore not real. Social self-esteem needs social affirmation (it takes a village...).

I'm not blaming my friends, either. I always felt liked by my friends. That's why they're called friends.

I don't know what it would have taken, when I was 18, 19, 20, to feel better about my appearance and my social value. If anyone has the answer to that, therapists would be out of business.

I would say, in retrospect, don't undervalue the impact that you might have on people you don't know well and even people you don't know at all. A smile, a compliment, a kindness may be just what someone needs to brighten their day and boost their morale.

In today's world, that can be problematic. You don't want to appear creepy or lecherous. You should avoid words like "gorgeous," "sexy," and "hottie." But you know what you can do? Provide acknowledgement.

When you're in an office to see Mr. Bigshot, and an entry-level employee walks in, make eye contact and say hello. I think "you look nice today" is still socially acceptable.

When you're paying for groceries and thanking the cashier, offer a kind word to the kid who's bagging your groceries.

The poet Mary Angelou is credited with saying, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Making someone feel good about themselves is worth an untold fortune. And it costs you nothing.

I proffer that this is especially important for young, fragile egos. When it comes to people around us who we don't know, we never know what kind of burden they're carrying inside. How we interact with them affects that burden. Ignoring them can add bricks to that weight, but kindness never does.

It's too late to change things for that self-loathing young man in the 40-year-old photo, but he survived. He turned out to be a stunningly handsome old man. Well, he's an old man, anyway. Present tense calls for some level of humility.

© Copyright 2023 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblinman.us. It's probably not healthy to think of yourself as stunningly handsome. Fortunately, that's really never been a problem for me.