

Team ready for challenges

As the end of the season draws near, the atmosphere at practice increasingly electrifies.

At this point, physically exhausted bodies feed off of raw emotion and the pure desire to continue playing. If there is one message that is blatantly obvious in our gym, it is this: We are ready.

We were ready for Brown County. Well, it seemed like we were. On Thursday we faced the Eagles on their court.

It is very easy to put into words how we feel about this team. They are our archrivals, and with every archrival comes an intense, emotion-filled game.

Our goal was to shut down Brown County's post game, which is known to be very good. Unfortunately, we were not effective and played with little intensity for the first half. The hole that we dug ourselves proved to be too deep, and we lost by 11 points.



Courtney Von Stein
WINTER SPORTS DIARY

Though our regular season did not end the way that I had hoped, I can say that we improved every aspect of our game from the beginning of the season.

We are ready for Park Tudor in Tuesday's opening round of the sectional. The draw dealt us a royal flush, and we are excited.

If there is one piece of advice that I could give to others, it would be this: Do not underestimate us. Few teams have seen our true potential this year. Kelsey Harvey will return from an ankle injury soon, and she is our final card. When our hand is full, and we play

it to win, we are underrated.

We are ready for whatever the future, post-sectional, may bring for us. Win or lose next week, we are excited about what lies ahead for the Indian Creek girls basketball program.

This year has been very much a year of growth. Though they will not reap the benefits of our hard work and learning experiences, those who may not be here next year will sorely be missed.

Much lies ahead for our program, including a talented group of incoming freshmen and prospective growth in numbers.

Along with these good things come challenges, however, and I feel that we are fully equipped to address them.

Quite simply, we are ready.

Courtney Von Stein is a junior on the Indian Creek girls basketball team. Her Winter Sports Diary entries appear each week in the Daily Journal.

Time with owls can be a hoot

"Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy will be full." — John 16:24.

Obviously concerned, White River neighbor Ann Gohman, at a neighborhood gathering Saturday evening, asked if I had been seeing great horned owls along the river.

"Not like we used to see them when they nested in the old, storm-damaged maple tree in the wooded area of the river's far bank, but I still see them now and then," I told her.

And what to my wondering eyes should appear on Sunday morning, 50 or 60 feet from our living room double glass doors that look out over the river?

You guessed it, a huge (almost 2 feet tall), wet and ruffled great horned, sitting in a hackberry tree covered with a green vine.

He soaked up the bright sunshine for half an hour or so before leaving for wherever great horned owls go on January mornings.

A quick call before he departed brought Ann and her birding binoculars.

Therein lies the foundation for another great horned owl story, perhaps two, if I don't wax too wordy.

You see, my life has been intertwined with owls and hawks of several species, foxes, and other predatory critters since I was a boy learning to be an outdoors enthusiast in southern Indiana.

In those days, the 1930s, all predators were thought to be such a menace to wildlife that we not only killed them on sight, we even collected bounties for the slaughter.

I don't think anyone could ever heap enough shame on the heads of predator killers of that era (including this gray head), but it was a part of my outdoor indoctrination that is difficult to put in the past.

This unsavory activity did have a plus, in that it taught me to talk to owls. This, eventually, would lead not only to a communications system for me and my older squirrel-hunting mentor, the late William Branard "Jack" Cain, but to a way of enjoying these magnificent birds throughout my life.

Squirrel hunters are a devious lot when it comes to allowing other hunters know where/when they hunt. Hunting on Sundays was taboo (worse yet, it was unlawful) in those days, and some of our favorite squirrel woods were posted "no-nos."

So we talked in hoots, and pre-arranged hoots spoke volumes. We might be several hundred yards apart, but by speaking our owl lingo we knew what the other hunter was doing.

Eventually, though, our communication system would put me



'Bayou' Bill Scifres
OUTDOORS

deep in a woodland that stretched for miles with the sun sinking fast on an early fall day.

Jack and I had caught a ride to the edge of Boo's Thicket, a huge woodland that bordered the Muscatatuck River south of Crothersville, our hometown.

Late in the afternoon Jack hooted, and I translated the message as a request for me to come to him. I answered and headed in that direction as fast as I could without creating disturbance in the dense brushy understorey.

But every time I hooted to ask him to let me know where he was, his position would change as he went deeper into the woods. The light of day was failing with each hoot, and I went deeper and deeper into the woods.

Finally, I slowed my pace, became more stealthy and eventually put a large barred owl to flight just as I thought I was about to find Jack. As darkness closed in, I realized that I had been duped by this impostor. I had been communicating with a real owl that would fly deeper into the woods before I could see it.

It was well after dark when I stumbled back to the road. Back in town, I found Jack with a group of other townsmen on one

of the downtown liars' benches.

Tired and hungry, I recounted my story, and Jack, laughing heartily, said he had gotten hot and thirsty at mid-afternoon and had left after hooting to let me know what he was doing. I guess I didn't hear or "give a hoot."

Still another interesting owl-hooting interlude occurred on a still, cold winter night many years later. My wife and I lived on the east bank of White River, Trail's End, west of Fishers.

Being a night worker in the sports department of an Indianapolis newspaper, I would arrive home in the wee hours of the morning. Much to the consternation of my wife, who viewed my owl talking through jaundiced eyes, occasionally I would sit on the front porch to unwind from eight hours at the "funny farm" and call in an owl.

On the night in question, I must have been too tired for conversation with anyone, not even an owl. So I had slipped quietly into my pajamas and was about to drift off into never-neverland when the resonant hoot of a great horned owl shattered the quiet, startled night, reverberating off the bedroom walls like the smashing break of the balls on a pool table.

"Beautiful," I smiled. "What a way to end a day."

"Crazy Bill," my wife said, sitting up in bed. "The neighbors are gonna think we're nuts."

'Bayou' Bill Scifres' outdoors column appears Saturdays in the Daily Journal. Comments can be sent to P.O. Box 699, Franklin, IN 46131.

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