

Where have all the fans gone? Red Wave slips away



Photo by Joanna Chu



Courtesy of Gann

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What is a "superfan"? Does anyone even know? Lately, when asked that question, it would not be uncommon to receive strange looks and blank stares as if one had never heard of such a thing. But just a short year ago, anyone could say the elements that went into being a "superfan" were easy to distinguish. They were loyal fans that would not miss a local game for anything. Superfans would arrive over an hour before the start of the game, in red and white wear, to ensure their prime front row seats. They used to dominate the Vikings' home bleachers during every Varsity Boys' Basketball game, and eventually, there were so many that the Red Wave was born.

But what about this season? Where have all the fans gone? The stands are half empty and the Red Wave is almost nonexistent. Has all school spirit been lost? Is there no love of the game anymore? Some loyal fans whole-heartedly disagree but are disappointed with the minimal turnout for home games.

"I continue to come to the games because for one thing, I love the sport of basketball,

and I am not good enough to play on the team. I guess the second best thing is to go to all the games and cheer them on," said Senior Matt Wlodarski. Wlodarski is one of the few loyal fans that sits mid-court every home game sporting his Red Wave attire. "I'll always stick with my team no matter what happens, through thick and thin," he said. Although Wlodarski's loyalty is evident, he recognizes that he is on his own. "I feel that the crowd is so small this year, especially the Red Wave, because of the fact that Julian Wright is not here anymore. People think there really isn't anyone else on the team, but obviously there is," said Wlodarski.

The players can always count on Junior Brendan Marshall to be down in the front row to shake their hands as they run onto the floor. "I go to all the games because I love basketball and I know almost everyone on the team," said Marshall. He agrees that the absence of Wright is a major factor to the lack of fans. "I am a little disappointed because there were a lot of people in the Red Wave last year," he said. The two fans have tried their best to cheer on the team, but sometimes it just cannot be done. "Against Joliet, we tried to start chanting, but it did

not really work because there wasn't anyone else there to help," said Wlodarski.

For a team with an overall record of 18-3, they deserve far better recognition than they have received from their fans this season. Yes, most of the key players from the "glory" days are gone, but that does not mean this year's team is any less talented. Some people look at the new Southwest Suburban Conference roster and think it is a joke, then choose not to come because they think it is going to be a blow-out. However, the Vikings have had their fair share of struggles this season and even a few surprising defeats. Even without playing teams like Thornton and Bloom, the Vikings have been ranked among the top ten in state all season and deserve just as much fan support as the last two years.

Just because Wright has moved on to bigger and better things and left his H-F legacy behind, it does not mean that his fans have to move on too. The team now has Senior Andre Walker to admire and rising Sophomores Kevin Dillard and Supo Sanni

to keep an eye on as well as other great players. Everyone who used to go all out and devote their Friday nights to the Varsity Basketball team needs to continue the Wave they started last season and the traditions from many years ago.

There may be a few things that the school can do to promote attending the home games. "They could try offering [free admission] to students who are in the Red Wave. If they pay five or ten dollars in the beginning of the season for a shirt and stuff, then they will not have to pay to get into any of the home games," said Wlodarski.

Now is the time to turn things around. Seniors, make this a season to remember and lead a superfan legacy. Juniors and Sophomores, bring back the way home games used to be. Freshmen, join the Red Wave, learn from the best, and continue the Superfan tradition year after year. Fill the stands again, chant for the Vikings, wear crazy clothes and give the team the recognition they deserve. Come on Vikings; bring back school spirit one game at a time.

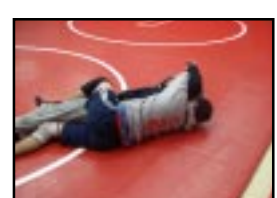
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