

# **The Anatomy of a High School Football Game**

## **- Ginny Naughton**

Until a few days ago, I was a rookie to high school football. In the movies, High School Football Games (HSFG) are glorious, glittering events, complete with bright lights, big signs, and the thrill of teenage initiation. Before Friday, what countless teen flicks had shown me was all that I knew of these strange, adolescent rituals. Given the relative inaccuracy of movies, my first encounter with this sporty unknown on Friday was akin to that of a fish meeting a bicycle; in other words, I was entirely clueless.

There seem to be four main components to a true HSFG: The Team, The Other Team, The Environment, and The Viewers. These ingredients are mostly equal in importance, and each provide a huge contribution to what defines a HSFG.

The Team is the most obvious part to our whole. They are the reported main attraction, the back bone to the experience. Are they really? Well, we all will always say they are. The Team, unfortunately, is where it seems the movies most lead us astray. Everyone always knows what position everyone plays and who the quarterback is, and the popularity of the players often varies directly with their skills and abilities. In reality, until the day of when they all wore their jerseys, it was indiscernible who was or wasn't on the team. On the sidelines together during the game, they all resembled identical little carrots anyways, so the identity of the players was lost, even if you did know who was in the row of red popsicles. Honestly, I still don't know who the quarterback is. Despite the lacking communication about them, there would have been no game without this clan of nameless individuals, so thank you Team (whoever you guys are). Without you, we'd have to find another excuse to stay out Friday night and celebrate.

As for the Other Team, do not fraternize with them. Do not admire their plays. Whatever you do, do not compliment their school colors. The Other Team is now your sworn enemy. As unorthodox as it is to say this, the Other Team is the unsung hero of the HSFG. Now, this is due to nothing other than the fact that The Team and the viewers (which I shall address soon) seem to need a common antagonist in order for everything to function properly. Without this, the Team obviously would have no one to play and the viewers no one to boo, but it goes deeper. Viewers thrive on the animosity, the anger, and the competitive energy directed right at The Other Team, so the more fans they bring and the tighter they make the game, the better. Upon investigation, their stands all seemed quite relaxed and didn't mind a few Marblehead girls sitting with them, but that doesn't matter. For the confines of the game, we hate them. And seriously, don't compliment their colors. Environment plays a small but not insubstantial part. Would it really be a HSFG without gangs of small children running around in football and soccer jerseys, without teams of middle schoolers running around and trying out being in high school? Obviously yes, but this provides a necessary sense of superiority for the actual high schoolers there, and is at least one of the seeming perks. The air was brisk and naturally fall-like, so it was no wonder that hot chocolate, popcorn, and blankets were flying off shelves. Coats and mittens suggested but not required. Unlike in the movies, the lights really only lit the fields, the metal stands froze your petunias off, and the delightfully muddled commentary was only broadcasted through a few

speakers. Still, the frigidity of it all was simply part of the experience; no pain, no gain. We can discuss the game and the atmosphere as much as we'd like, but the one thing we truly do come for is who else will be there. Is your squad all coming? Which squad will yours sit (or really stand, I should say) with? Is that person going? Is that one? Will you be near the person who's getting their ear pierced, or will you just hear about it from a squad member who was? Will someone get arrested? Who will get hit with a can? Who will do the throwing? These questions can only be answered by going. We teenagers appear to be social, herd animals. We want to talk. We want to be talked about. We want to know what's happening, where it's happening, and get firsthand information. We don't know who's on the team but we want to. We don't know the other team, but we want to know how much we beat them by. We don't know what'll happen at these strange events, but we're going to.

Are HSFGs glorious or glittering and thriving with teenagedom? Maybe. It just depends where you look.

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