

Gaffney Football: 100 years of pride and tradition

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Gaffney. A small town that gathers underneath Friday night lights to watch the scene unfold as the team takes the field, the cheerleaders raise the spirit of the crowd, the Band of Gold marches and plays their hearts out. It's the moment everyone has been waiting for all week... Indian Football.

Gaffney High School Football was established in 1920, and the coach of the very first team was C. C. Hubbard, who coached from 1920-1921. Opponents included teams from Laurens, Shelby, York, Greenville, Spartanburg, Laurens, Carolina Military and Navy, and Union. The Indians had 5 wins, 3 losses, and 1 tied game for their first year as a team.

In 1927, Gaffney had an undefeated season with the total of 9 wins. The state championship was located in Columbia, where the Indians beat Columbia to win the State Title.

In 1928, the Indians had another undefeated season with eleven total wins that year. Again, the Indians won against Columbia for the State

Title, with the game located in Gaffney. The Indians had ten wins and one loss against Richmond Academy in 1929. During the Blacksburg game, Gaffney's second string of players played the entire game, winning 45 to 7.

After a successful first decade of Gaffney Indian football, the 1930s brought four coaching changes. L. F. Carson returned and brought the Indians back to State in 1931 and 1934 with records of 10-0-1 and 9-0-1, respectively.

In 1937, Gaffney had a season with 9 wins, 1 loss, and 1 tied game. During this season, on October 15, 1937, Gaffney had their first game at WK Brumbach Stadium, now known as the old Reservation.

The 1940s and 1950s were a quiet time for Indian football, with no state championships during either of these decades, but a legendary coach's arrival in the 1960s would change all of that.

Bob Prevette's 13-year stint as head coach of the Indians saw four state championships (1960, 1963, 1964, and 1965).

In 1969, the Indians beat Brookland Cayce, 24-6, winning Upper State, and advancing to State. The Indians lost to Edmunds (Sumter), 15-22.

In 1972, Gaffney won 8 games and lost 3. At 56 seconds remaining in the Gaffney vs. Dorman game, the score was Gaffney, 14, and Dorman, 13. Dorman decided to go with a two-point conversion and missed, leaving the score 14 to 13, Gaffney. Gaffney also played Union and became Region Champions with the win.

A.L. Curtis took over as the head coach from 1980-1990. In 1980, the Indians had a total of 10 wins and 2 losses. In the game against Rock Hill, #12



Ardell Fuller tied a South Carolina state record with a 52-yard field goal at Rock Hill. Gaffney made it to the play-offs, beating Orangeburg-Wilkinson in the first round with the score 16 to 7. The Indians advanced to round two, where they lost to Irmo.

During the remainder of the 1980s, the Indians reached the state championship game in 1981, 1983, 1985, and 1986, winning in 1985.

Joe Montgomery was named head coach in 1991, and continued through 2002. During Montgomery's tenure, the Indians played in three championship games, and won two more state championships in 1992 and 1997.

In 2002, Gaffney hired coach Phil Strickland, who lead the Indians to three additional state championships in 2003, 2005, and 2006. The Indians 15th state championship came in a thrilling win when Gaffney scored with twenty-one seconds left to win the game 33-32 against Summerville.

In 2006, Gaffney had a completely undefeated season, with a total of 15

games won. When Gaffney played Byrnes, the game was nationally televised by Fox Sportsnet. Byrnes was ranked 2nd in the Nation on game day. Gaffney ended up beating Byrnes with the score of 28 to 15. Gaffney beat Colleton County, Byrnes, and Stratford in the playoffs to continue to the championship game, where they beat Irmo 45-0 for the school's 16th state title. At the end of the season, Gaffney was ranked #11 in the Nation, and Malcom Long was named South Carolina's Mr. Football.

In 2010, the Gaffney Indians gained Dan Jones as a coach. Jones lead Gaffney to back-to-back state championship game appearances in 2011 and 2012, with the Indians winning the title in 2012.

The history of Gaffney football shows us all how important the teams over the years have been to the community, and the impact of this game in the lives of the players, coaches, and students is indescribable. As we celebrate the first 100 years of Gaffney football, we know that the best is yet to come.

Hope Doesn't Sink: The Story of Ryan Hilinski

Joseph Bender
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Sports have the ability to draw out the best and worst in people. Sometimes, when our teams lose or coaches and players make bad decisions, fans and television pundits get so caught up in the negative that it can be easy to forget all of the positive things about sports, most notably their ability to inspire and make us strive to be better.

Here in South Carolina, we do not have to look too far for an inspirational story. Ryan Hilinski, the new starting quarterback for the South Carolina Gamecocks, comes from a football family; however, the tragedy that the family has endured and the inspirational story of how they are trying to use that tragedy to make the world a little bit better is what has captured the attention and awe of so many in the sports world.

The Hilinski family is rooted in football, and always has been since their oldest son began playing the game. Ryan, the youngest of the three Hilinski brothers, played for Orange Lutheran High School in Orange County, California, while his older brothers Kelly and Tyler both played at the college level. Tyler was a quarterback

for Washington State, and Kelly was a quarterback for Weber State.

As the family spread apart, two things stayed with them: family and football. From miles and miles away, the brothers would cheer each other on as they play for their respective schools. The Hilinski brothers' bond was like no other, that is until everything changed.

January 16th, 2018 is a day that Ryan Hilinski and his family will never forget. It started out as a typical day, but that would all change. Their son, brother, and Washington State quarterback Tyler Hilinski died from suicide at his apartment at Washington State University. This forever changed Ryan's and his family's life forever.

It was a shock to the Hilinski family. They never saw any signs of depression, or warning signs from Tyler. Weeks later, that day would still be a blur to

the Hilinski's. Ever since that day, their youngest son, Ryan Hilinski has made his mission to devote his life to the thing's his brother Tyler wasn't able to do, starting with football.

Ryan has made it his personal goal to honor his brother's memory while also helping others going through difficult times, and giving people motivation to ask for help and not be ashamed to talk to people about what your going through. The Hilinski's Hope foundation serves that purpose.

The foundation was formed as the Hilinski's were searching for their "why" and trying to figure out how to move on as a family after such a tragedy. The foundation

helps people struggling with mental illnesses, and the foundation is present in universities across the country. The foundation advocates for adding psychologists to football teams, and also training people how to reach out to someone if you see a person going through mental illness.

"I want him to live on, because his life was so short," Ryan Hilinski told The State newspaper. "We just want him to live on, want him to continue ... through me mostly and through my parents and my brother about what they do, because he was so involved with my recruiting, my college career. He was so involved with Kelly getting into med school, and he was so involved with my parents having a happy marriage. And it's just, a lot of the things, we like to keep him with us because I think he wanted to be with us, but spiritually, he just couldn't."

Tyler was a huge part of Ryan's college deci-

sion, and his future. On an annual family vacation to Hawaii, Ryan got the ok from Tyler to attend South Carolina, where he is currently enrolled. In December of 2018, the Hilinski's made the move from California to Lake Murray, South Carolina, as Ryan began his first semester at South Carolina in January of 2019. He didn't know at the time that he would end up being the starting quarterback for the Gamecocks as a freshman after Jake Bentley's foot injury in the season opener verses North Carolina.

On September 7th, 2019, Ryan Hilinski was the starting quarterback vs the Charleston Southern Buccaneers, and let the Gamecocks to a 72-10 win. Hilinski has already broken numerous records at USC, and is making his brother proud.

"If they're struggling or ever a hint of somebody struggling, or even if they're not struggling, just make sure you tell them you love them," Ryan Hilinski said. "Tell them something you love about them and just make sure they're having the best day they could possibly be having."

More information about the Hilinski's Hope foundation can be found at hilinskishope.org.



Photo by Streeter Lecka/Getty Images

Homecoming 2019: GHS Sports through the Years

1989 Track Team



Above: 1979 Basketball team member, Terri Hollis

1979 Football Team



1959 Football Team



1959 Baseball Team