

# THE INDEX-JOURNAL

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## **Emerald Fans Can Prove Me Wrong**

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Dear Emerald supporters, students, faculty and alumni,

Frank Hill Stadium is located at Emerald High School. If you're coming from 72 Bypass, you'll pass the school on your right. After passing the school, you'll see a practice field and a softball field. Behind those two fields is the stadium where the Vikings play all their home football games.

I offer directions, because based on the Emerald games I've covered, only a handful of you have been able to find this facility. In the past few weeks, I've mentioned this lack of fan support in my widely popular and often hilarious Pigskin Picks column, and the outcry from the fans has been incredible. But after I answered that ONE e-mail, I had plenty of free time on my hands. So I came up with an idea.

Many, many schools have used colors to help show team support. Last weekend, Clemson interim coach Dabo Swinney became the latest in a long line of coaches to suggest a "Color Out."

Clemson supporters came out in droves for "Orange Out." It's in that spirit I suggest Emerald's first "Purple Out."

Here's how it works: Everybody supporting the Vikings should come to Friday's game against Abbeville, which I have affectionately dubbed the Best Team in America, wearing purple. If you don't own a purple shirt, you can buy one and help stimulate the economy, since our government really hasn't the foggiest idea how to make that happen.

Emerald athletic director football coach Mike Clowney, who noted that support improved last Friday during homecoming festivities, thinks this is a fantastic idea. "I think that will be something that will be very supportive of our kids, going into our last home game of the regular season," Clowney said. "It's Senior Night. I think it's something we could do to show support for those guys."

Abbeville, of course, is unbeaten and one of the best teams in Class AA. What strikes me most about this game is that I covered a matchup between the two teams a year ago. You know what I noticed? Abbeville had more fans than Emerald.

The game, by the way, was at Frank Hill Stadium.

Now, there are a handful of you who attend every Emerald game, and that's commendable. But for those who haven't noticed, Emerald, which has failed to make postseason play the last two seasons, is essentially a lock for the playoffs this year.

So with the Vikings headed to postseason play for the first time in the Clowney era, I think it's time for the football team to have support befitting its playoff stature.

If you don't believe me, ask Zane Newton, one of the classiest kids you'll ever meet.

Newton, a senior who started at quarterback before an injury, wouldn't mind seeing a few more fannies in the seats behind him. "If we could get that unity and have the whole stands wearing purple, that would be so cool," said Newton who, by the way, ventured to Columbia last fall to cheer

on the Emerald girls tennis team in the state finals against Bishop England.

Now, here's some advice on decorum should you happen to journey the three miles from your house to Frank Hill Stadium.

This is not a Sunday service. This is a football game. It is completely appropriate to cheer, scream, holler and vocally support the Vikings. There is no reason to sit silently during the game (I hope Greenwood fans are reading this, too).

In fact, I strongly suggest when the officials make a questionable call against your beloved Vikings you be sure to loudly offer your opinion. However, I strongly advise you against verbally suggesting voluntary manslaughter during your screaming fit (yes, Ware Shoals fans, I'm talking to you).

Speaking of Ware Shoals, the Hornets, Ninety Six and Saluda all have crowd support that is greater than Emerald's despite being smaller schools. Believe it or not, I've been to Dixie and McCormick football games that would shame Viking supporters.

Need more incentive? If you want, you can even yell at Clowney. Most of the time he's wearing a headset, either communicating with his coaching staff or listening to jazz music. I've yet to figure it out.

So there it is, Emerald fans. Along with finally showing support for a group of young men who have worked tirelessly since last spring to prepare for this football season, you'll prove me wrong, because I don't think you can do it.

There isn't a chance you pack Emerald's home stands, and there's no way you guys are organized enough to ALL wear purple. But if you do, here's a little caveat: I promise not to make fun of Emerald for the rest of the season in my Pigskin Picks column if Emerald has more fans than Abbeville at Friday's game.

I might pick at Clowney, because bald people make me laugh (as you can tell my headshot, my receding hairline is hilarious).

Emerald's football team will be clad in an all-purple ensemble. Let's see if you can do the same. Hope to see you there Friday.

Sincerely,

Scott J. Bryan

P.S. You might want to get there early. I'd hate for all the Abbeville fans to get the good parking spots.

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