




WINGSPAN

NIXA

WINTER 2022 • NIXA HIGH SCHOOL • NIXA, MISSOURI

HAPPY HOLIDAYS
CULTURAL APPROPRIATION
NIXA WINS BLUE RIBBON
DANGERS OF VAPING

Tabletop Touchdown



Each electric football player takes time and effort to make, and each piece is unique for its position. "I paint all of the players myself and it takes me about twenty hours to get a team done," Paul Bartels said.

PHOTO BY: ELI DEAN

Local dads bring game from childhood to the next generation

STORY BY: Eli Dean
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

At 11 years old, Paul Bartels thought on Christmas Day 1985 that he was getting a train set. Fast forward to Christmas 2022, and Bartels plans to be busy scheming on how to take down his sons at the same game he got nearly 40 years ago.

Before sports, video games like Madden hit the mainstream, electric football captivated children across the country, and for some, the game still is a part of their lives.

"My generation was all about Atari and Nintendo," Bartels said. "But I had five older brothers and since they had all played electric football when they were kids, I ended up being into it as well."

As he got older, electric football went dark for a bit, but towards the end of the 20th century, things got a little more interesting.

"Its popularity dipped down for a bit, but when the internet became a thing, you've got all the guys in their pockets of the country that all loved it, and then we all got to talk to each other," Bartels said. "And then it just exploded."

Those conversations resulted in competitions becoming national and led to the creation of the Southern Missouri Electric Football League.

"From that point, we started setting up leagues and it really started being something people like me got back into," Bartels said. "I've been running

the league since 2000."

The game is unique in that each player flows differently on a metal board that vibrates with motors underneath, which adds to the complexity and strategy the game requires.

"There's so much strategy involved," Bartels said. "Each player has a different job because they have different bases. The bases run on these prongs, and so when the table vibrates those prongs are what makes them move and do whatever you want them to do."

His sons, sophomore Randy and senior Elijah Bartels play in the league, but there are other Nixa students in the league as well, including Senior James Harris, who joined at the beginning of this year. Harris started out knowing very little about electric football but has since become pretty experienced.

"I've definitely gotten better as I've played," Harris said. "I've been able to understand and learn a lot more as time has gone on."

Heavy on strategy and making the opponent overthink, Harris said that he appreciates what goes into each game.

"I appreciate the attention to detail and how much strategy is involved," Harris said. "There's a lot of work that goes into a game and so being able to play and be somewhat good at it makes me feel good."

Harris and Elijah have been friends for a long time, and Harris is glad he was able to be dragged into the game after all of these years.

"I started having interest in electric football since I was in fourth grade when Elijah told me about it, but I never did it because I was a kid and didn't understand but this past winter I decided to do it," Harris said. "I found it pretty fun as a board game where you just play a game of football."

While it might just be a board game, parent-children rivalries are present throughout the league.

"It takes us six months to play our eight to ten game schedule against each other," Paul said. "During our college season we have rivalry week where each of our father-son teams play against each other and it gets pretty crazy."

Elijah said that usually the fathers have the upper hand in the matchups.

"I've been able to beat my dad a few times, but overall most of the time I get absolutely destroyed," Elijah said. "It's almost like if you had someone teach you how to do something and everything they do is how they taught you, which also means they know exactly how to counter you."

Elijah said there is always room for new members, and after the current electric football season ends, a college football season will begin and he hopes that new members join.

"We're always open to new people in the league," Elijah said. "The more people, the more fun it is because we get to play more games, which makes the seasons more fun."