

All in good time

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Friday, 28 September 2012 13:22 -



Ostergard continues long tenure keeping watch over football scoreboard

When Gothenburg High School activities director Doug Martin asked GHS graduate Larry Ostergard if he would be interested in running the clock at varsity football games, Ostergard figured he could do the job until his kids entered high school.

That was the fall of 1971.

“I thought I’d do it for maybe a handful of years,” said the retired heating and air conditioning specialist.

Ostergard’s children came and went through GHS. Many of his grandchildren did too.

Now, 42 football seasons later, Ostergard still occupies the west stool in the south press box, comfortably perched behind the electronic control panel for the third scoreboard he has operated.

“It takes concentration,” he said. “You have to watch the officials all the time.”

When he first started, Ostergard controlled the clock and the score while Wayne Epke kept track of the downs and yards to go.

When the scoreboard was updated, one keypad ran all aspects and Ostergard did it all.

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Now, with the new scoreboard installed before last season, Ostergard has taken a team approach.

He said Doug Larson starts and stops the time with a finger switch while he uses Ed Fruit as a sidekick to input the possession, yard line, direction of play, etc.

In his second year with the new system, Ostergard said it's getting a little easier.

"I think one person could probably do it all," he said, "but about the time you look down to punch in one thing, the referee is signalling to start the clock. Having another set of eyes really helps."

Ostergard admits he's caught himself watching the play a time or two but that wasn't the case when he had his only run-in with the officials.

"We were playing Lexington and there were only a few seconds left in the first half. Lex was driving on the north side headed east. Gothenburg made a tackle but it was a first down so they moved the chains.

"The play went out of bounds so the clock shouldn't have started but the head referee signaled to start the clock, so I did.

"The officials sent word up to the press box that if we couldn't keep the clock running correctly up there, they'd keep the time on the field."

Ostergard said he and Epke met the officials coming off the field at halftime to express their opinions.

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That was the only time Ostergard can recall having issues. The rest of the years, he has appreciated his warm, dry seat with a bird's-eye view of the game.

Over the past 42 seasons, Ostergard has missed only two games. The first was when he and wife Joan were traveling to Texas to watch the Huskers play. The second was for another NU football game at Notre Dame.

In addition to the football scoreboard, Ostergard also volunteered to keep the basketball scorebook while Robin Stevens was the coach as well as serving as a timer/picker at track meets.

"I still help out with track when I can," he said, "but my job has pretty much become obsolete with the electronic timing."

Ostergard said he enjoys volunteering his time in the press box, especially since sports have always been a big part of his life.

Hopefully, he said, he's got plenty of time left.