

# *Hooping with the Elks*

## *A Victory Story*



LEADERBOARD		
GIRLS: 12-13 YEARS OLD		
	SCORE	PLACE
1 MORGAN MIEHLE	25	1 <sup>ST</sup>
2 BREE BESONEN	23	3 <sup>RD</sup>
3 AMANDA CISER	19	
4 MACEY NEUMILLER	20	
5 MAZIE BUFFETTA	19	
6 MAGGIE BROGDON	24	2 <sup>ND</sup>
7 LEXI MCGUIRE	17	
8 KRISTEN HOLT	20	
9 BRIELYNN JONES	19	
10 ANNALEE LIVNGOOD	19	
11 BRANTLEY MCBRAYER	18	
12 AUBREY PAK	20	



*Written and Illustrated By: Morgan Miehle*

Hooping with the Elks: A Victory Story

Written by Morgan Miehle

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Illustrated by Morgan Miehle

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This book is dedicated to Mom, Dad, and my sister,  
Maddie. Thank you for introducing and supporting my  
journey in The Elks Hoop Shoot, an experience I will  
cherish for life.



The Elks Hoop Shoot has been an unforgettable part of my life since the third grade. Each year brought its own story and challenges, making it a thrilling adventure I will never forget. Starting in the third grade, the Hoop Shoot seemed simple - a chance to shoot some foul shots. I didn't expect a lot. Yet, there I was, competing at the local level, moving on and winning the county, district, state, and regional



competitions for the 2019-2020 Hoop Shoot Season. I fell short of making it to the National Hoop Shoot by two shots. I remembered those first shots and felt a sense of happiness, win or lose. The third-grade regional competition was my first big step. I made it but ended up in third place. Knowing I had the skill to reach regionals and was one step away from nationals was bittersweet.

Fourth grade rolled around. I won the local, county, district, and state competitions, making it to the regional competition - the gateway to nationals.

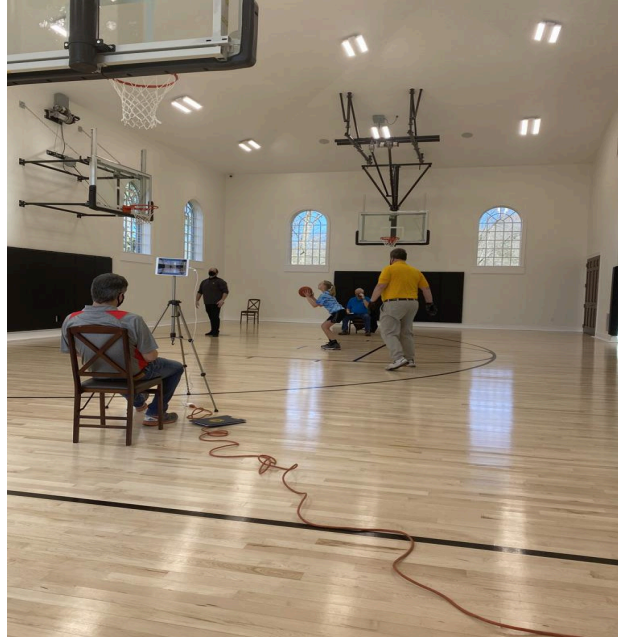
The regional competition took place in March. On March 13, 2020, my parents picked me up from school before lunch. We were Maryland-bound,



heading to the regional competition, when the news hit - COVID-19 had taken its toll. On that fateful March day in 2020, everything changed. The nation seemed to freeze, and the regional competition was called off. It was disappointing; a dream of making it to the National Hoop Shoot was put on hold.

The following year, the Hoop Shoot couldn't go on as usual.

Instead, the Elks Hoop Shoot team arranged an at-home virtual competition to complete the 2020-2021 hoop shoot season, which was put on hold



because of COVID-19. The location of this competition was my cousin's gym. Shooting in a gym surrounded by my family, I proudly aimed for the basket. I got second place this time, one step closer, but fell short of making it to the National Competition once again.

Sixth Grade brought another hoop shoot season. The journey began at the local level, where I joined many local



basketball shooters.

With determination and countless practice sessions, I claimed the local championship.

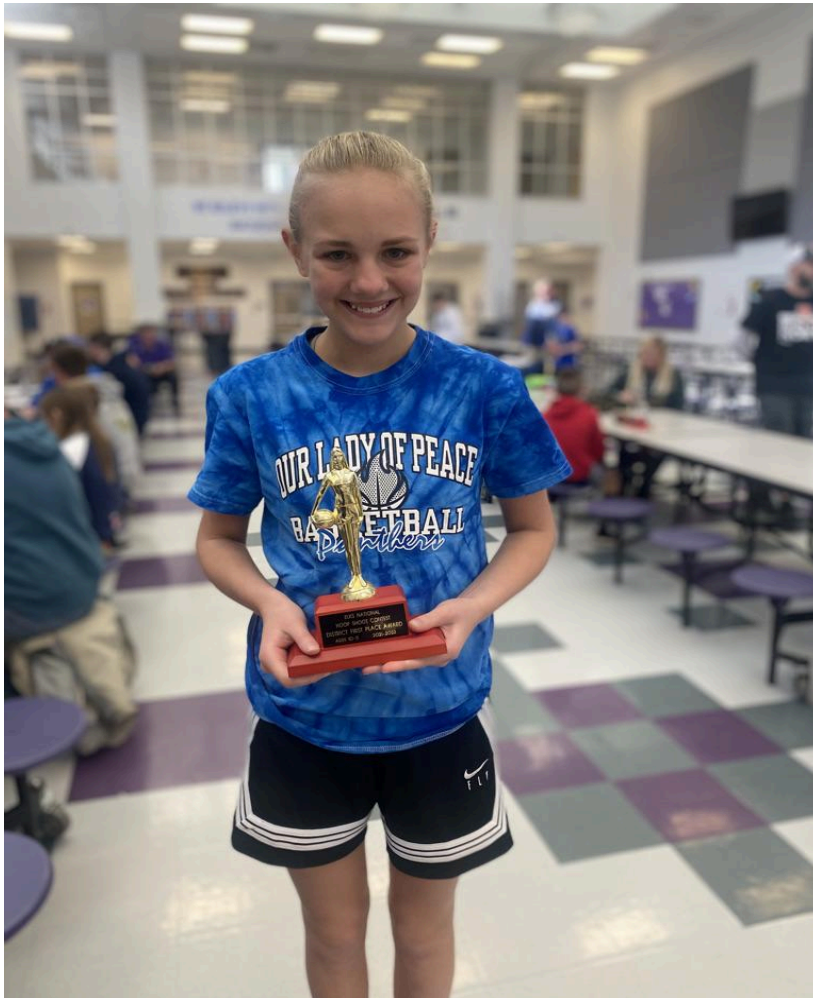


The county competition was a step forward into a larger arena. I secured another win and advanced to the district level.





At the district competition this season, I faced one of the best young shooters from the area. I felt pressure with every shot, but my practice paid off once more. I earned my ticket to the state championships. Statebound for the third year in a row.



The state-level competition was the pinnacle of my journey before regionals. Competing against the top shooters in West Virginia was both nerve-wracking and exciting. Every shot counted, and the competition was fierce, but I was determined. When the final shot went through the net, I was victorious again, clinching the state championship and earning my regional spot in Maryland.



WV State Hoop Shoot 2021-22

The 2021-2022 Hoop Shoot season brought me another shot at regionals, where something memorable happened. Snow



was falling as we arrived; it was a winter wonderland outside.

The school where the hoop shoot was to take place had to cancel due to closure the day prior. The ELKS

solution? A Walmart hoop set up at the Elks Lodge, shooting

through ceiling tiles. It was unconventional,

but that didn't stop me from landing in second place again.



Regional Hoop Shoot, Hagerstown, MD 2021-2022 Season

Another year has passed. I am in the 7th grade, and now it is time for the 2022-2023 Hoop Shoot Season. I found myself on familiar ground. I was successful in the local, county, district, and State competitions for the 4th year, claiming the first-place trophy and moving on to regionals in Charlottesville, VA, for this season.



Seventh Grade became the turning point. Finally, on March 11, 2023, I broke the regional barrier that had held me back.

I was so excited about breaking the barrier I was trying to get past for three years.

Making it to the National Finals was a dream come true and a



goal I had worked hard for. It was not about winning; it was about conquering a milestone I had chased for years.

Looking ahead to the Nationals, I knew the competition and pressure would be greater. Twelve regions across the United States were coming together to shoot free throws for a National title. I had to prepare to be my BEST! So, I dedicated time whenever I could, before and after basketball practice. I squeezed in between Club Volleyball practice, and even on the weekends, you would find me at the free-throw line.

My parents told me I had to be mentally tough, too. They encouraged me to stay strong mentally. Missing a shot was not the end of the world. Their advice? If you miss a shot, move on to the next one without getting frustrated or upset with yourself or blaming it on the gym, rim, or basketball. It was about keeping my head up and moving on, no matter what.

The nationals were not about winning; it was that years of practice paid off. It was about the experience and knowing how far hard work could take me.

After a month of getting ready, it was time for the ELKS NATIONAL free-throw championship in Chicago. The ELKS were very helpful and made the whole experience unforgettable. They covered all the expenses for my parents and me, which was awesome.

When we arrived at the Hilton, Chicago, on Thursday, April



21st, 2023, they had a hospitality room for all the shooters, with many activities planned. We got trading cards and this “Best Swishes” book.

It was filled with good luck messages from supporters, fans, and family, sending best wishes for Saturday's competition.





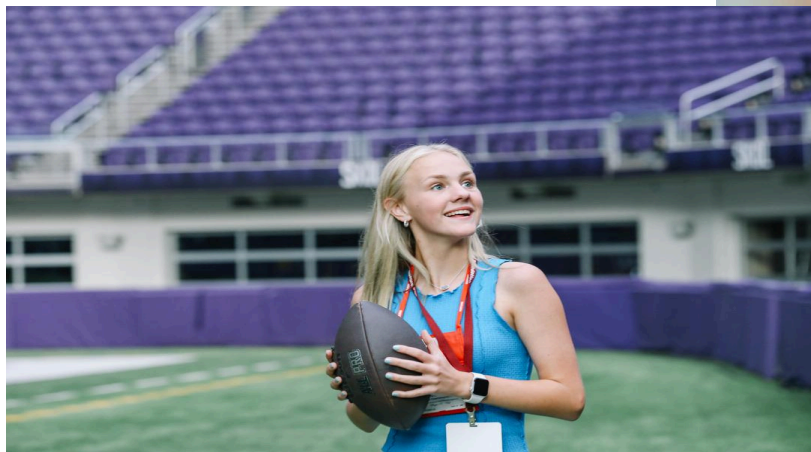
Friday, April 22nd, was all about practice. Each region was



assigned a time to practice for the competitions coming up on Saturday. It was time to prepare and get ready before the big day.



Friday evening was exciting! The Elks provided dinner and a tour of Soldier Field, the home of the Chicago Bears. It was a fun way to wrap up the day!



Saturday, April 23rd, the ELKS Hoop Shoot National Finals finally arrived, the day I have been working hard for. After a little extra sleep, I got up and had breakfast. I had to wait because my age group wasn't scheduled for the morning session.

When the time finally came, we headed to Wintrust Arena,

where the 2022-2023 hoop shoot took place. A big tour bus picked up the 12

competitors and their families, taking us all to the competition location. I was excited to step into the arena finally.



Surprisingly, I felt calm after warmups and under the pressure. Being one among twelve contenders helped my nerves.



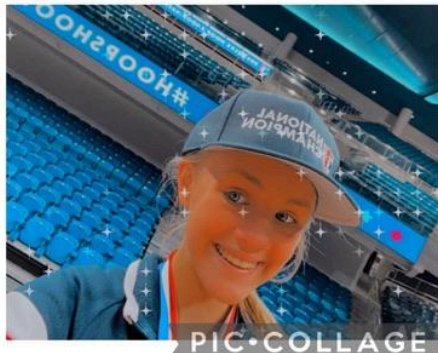
I was the first to shoot out of the 12 competitors. In the first round, I made 10 for 10. Three others matched my score and shot 10 for 10.

I found my rhythm with each shot in round two and made 15 for 15. I hit every single shot. Now, the best the others could do was tie with me. After the last person shot, 1 in 12 odds didn't matter, a milestone I had never managed before. I hit every single shot, 25 out of 25—a perfect score.





2023 ELKS HOOP SHOOT NATIONAL FINALS		
LEADERBOARD		
GIRLS: 12-13 YEARS OLD		
	SCORE	PLA
1 MORGAN MIEHLE	25	1st
2 BREE BESONEN	23	3rd
3 AMANDA CISER	19	
4 MACEY NEUMILLER	20	
5 MAZIE BUFFETTA	19	
6 MAGGIE BROGDON	24	2nd
7 LEXI MCGUIRE	17	
8 KRISTEN HOLT	20	
9 BRIELYNN JONES	19	
10 ANNALEE LIVENGOOD	19	
11 BRANTLEY MCBRAVER	19	



PIC•COLLAGE

My journey through the ELKS HOOP SHOOT has been a rollercoaster of determination, setbacks, and exciting moments. It taught me to aim high and never give up.



According to Makenna Cannon, the youth program manager for the Elks, the ELKS HOOP SHOOT is about “GRIT.” It’s about the ability to keep pushing even when things seem tough. She said, “Grit doesn’t always get you the win, but it pushes Hoop Shooters to set new goals and keep going, and that drive is something they’ll keep with them forever.”

I have gotten to know a lot about GRIT. For three years, I made it to the Regional Finals and faced disappointment each time. Traveling 4 to 5 hours away to shoot 25 foul shots, only to come up short, tempted me to give up. But I didn’t. I kept practicing and kept my goal of making it to the National Finals.

When I finally made it to Nationals, I didn't miss a shot. And being the only one with a perfect score for the girls earned me the National Championship and two special awards. One was the



Director, which goes to the top overall boy and girls scores of the day. The other was the Emile Brady Award,

named after the Hoop Shoot's second National Director, awarded to any Hoop Shoot Finalist who sinks a perfect 25 out of 25 during the National Finals. I am thankful for the



opportunities the ELKS organization has provided me and my family. Here is to more victories, both on the court and in life!

## About the Author

My name is Morgan, and I am an 8th grader. I love shopping, playing softball, basketball, volleyball,



and singing in my free time. I am a Junior Beta member and am excited to be elected the student council president for the 2023-2024 school year. The Elks Hoop shoot has been a big part of my life since I was eight. The Elks organization has given me some unforgettable moments and victories.

My mom, dad, and sister have been with me everywhere, cheering me on. Sharing these moments and achievements with them has created memories I will cherish forever.

## Summary

Since the third grade, the ELKS Hoop Shoot has been a big part of my life. Winning local, county, district, and state competitions was exciting, but missing Nationals by two shots was tough. COVID-19 disrupted the fourth-grade regional competition, leading to an at-home virtual contest in the fifth grade, where I finished second. Sixth grade was an interesting regional competition with a store-bought hoop in the middle of the ceiling tiles in the Elks Lodge. Seventh grade turned the tide; I finally made it to Nationals in Chicago. During the Finals, I felt unexpectedly calm and shot a perfect score of 25 out of 25, a first for me. This journey taught me perseverance and to aim high. Winning was incredible, but the lessons learned were the real reward. Cheers to more victories, both on and off the court!