

# Reliving the dream: Retelling Gibsonburg's 2005 title run

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From left to right, actors Nick Schneider, Jonnie Wagner, and Dustin Shidaker discuss their roles with Gibsonburg coach Kyle Rase. *THE BLADE/JEREMY WADSWORTH* [Enlarge](#) | [Photo Reprints](#)

GIBSONBURG, Ohio — A gray, overcast sky covered the quiet, small town of Gibsonburg on Friday afternoon.

Other than a few semi-trucks making their way through the area and an occasional automobile

passing through the intersection of West Madison and

North Main streets in Gibsonburg, few local residents moved about the sidewalks in front of the one block of buildings that basically makes up Gibsonburg's one stoplight downtown.

Yet, the area wasn't completely without activity.

Across the street from Ideal Bakery, which is a favorite meeting place for locals that sits on the southwest corner of the West Madison and North Main intersection, a film and sound crew were setting up to shoot a scene for *Gibsonburg*.

The crew's presence on the sidewalk elicited curious stares from the occupants of passing vehicles.

The scene being set up was one of the closing shots for the full-length feature film about the 2005 Gibsonburg baseball team that surprisingly won the Division IV state championship, becoming the first high school baseball team with a losing regular season record to win a state title in Ohio.

Gibsonburg, which finished the 2005 regular season with a 6-17 record, won eight straight playoff games, including a 6-5 triumph over Fisher Catholic in the state championship.

“It’s surreal to see what’s happening about the team you’ve coached,” said Gibsonburg coach Kyle Rase, who is serving as a baseball consultant and historian for the project.

“There are not too many days that go by when I don’t think about how we pulled that off.

“We got every break, and it’s something people will never forget.”

Bob Mahaffey hopes to ensure Gibsonburg’s story will long be remembered.



Bob Mahaffey believed Gibsonburg’s unlikely run to the 2005 title should be made into a movie, so he dedicated himself to writing the script. He is also the producer and director. *THE BLADE*/JEREMY WADSWORTH [Enlarge](#) | [Photo Reprints](#)

Mahaffey is the president of Xcelerate Media, which is a Dublin, Ohio-based media company that produces online training materials for Fortune 500 corporations like Sony and Pepsi.

Mahaffey, a 1980 Elmwood graduate, thought the story about the Bears baseball team was compelling enough to deserve feature film status. As a result, he decided late last year to develop a movie about the miracle run put together by the Golden Bears.

Mahaffey wrote the script and is also the director and producer behind the independent film project being made on a \$200,000 budget.

Recreating on film the events that made the likes of Alex Black, Andy Gruner, Wes Milleson, Thom Brinker, Derek Hetrick, and Wyatt Kiser household names in the Gibsonburg community has been a labor of love for Mahaffey.

He developed the storyline and gathered history about the actual events over three months before spending three days writing the script for the movie.

During the past two months, he has consistently worked daily from 4:30 a.m. to midnight.

Yet, it’s been well worth it, according to Mahaffey, who is already planning to do two more feature films in

the same “defying-the-odds” genre over the next four years.

“I’ve never had more fun on anything that I’ve done in my entire life than what I’m doing right now,” he said. “I started a company with two people out of the garage of my house that’s now doing really well. That was a lot of fun, but this is more enjoyable than that. It’s just exciting.”

Rase said he initially sat down with Mahaffey in November and talked in detail about the 2005 season. The Bears coach said notes he kept as a journal about his first season as the Bears coach helped with reflecting back on the season.

Forty percent of the movie scenes takes place on the baseball diamond and depict the Bears’ playoff run, while the rest of the movie consists of a Hollywood plot line, according to Rase.

“It’s been a very detailed process,” Rase said. “We went over the playoff games, batter-by-batter over the eight games.”

The project began earlier this year, and filming is scheduled to wrap up by the end of the summer. The goal is to enter the film into the Sundance Film Festival.

The project has used 50 area college students interested in movie making. None of the students are being paid, but they have an agreement to receive payment for their work if the movie turns a profit.



Casey Smith, films actor Louis Bonfante and Gibsonburg resident Kenny Fork, far left, during the making of ‘Gibsonburg.’ Portions of the \$200,000 project were filmed in Gibsonburg last week.

[Enlarge](#)

However, actress/comedian Judy Tenuta and Lili Reinhart, a Cleveland-based teen actress, have leading roles and are being paid for their work, along with some consultants who have previous work experience in movies and TV.

They recently shot graduation scenes at Gibsonburg High, only hours before the 2011 commencement ceremonies took place a few weeks ago.

However, most school scenes have taken place at North Union High in Richmond, primarily because it’s in the Columbus area and the school colors are orange and black like Gibsonburg’s.

They have filmed game scenes at Columbus' Huntington Park, which is the home for the Columbus Clippers minor league baseball team. Gibsonburg actually won the state championship at Cooper Stadium, which no longer exists as a baseball field.

Re-creating those memorable moments of the championship season for a movie has been special, according to Rase.

"All the same feelings and excitement are coming back like the way they did back then," Rase said.

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