

Military Madness

Regiment of Roughnecks compete in fourth UIL State Marching Competition

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Staff Writer

The breath catches in the throats of band members as the Regiment of Roughnecks approaches the end of the tunnel entering the Alamodome for preliminary competition. Littlefield's band was wrapping up their performance and White Oak was up next. For some, this was the beginning of the end. For most, this was only the beginning of a tradition so many before them had worked tirelessly to establish.

The Regiment of Roughnecks marched at the UIL state marching competition in San Antonio at the Alamodome on November 2, 2015. This year was the band's fourth consecutive trip to San Antonio for state marching competition.

"The coolest thing about that is, that doesn't show that you've had a good group of kids come through," band director Jason Steele said. "That shows that you've got a great program. We've had two generations of high schoolers that have been making this thing great for a long time."

For the juniors and seniors of the band, this was their second and last year to be able to

march in the Alamodome.

"It honestly feels so exciting," senior Paige Bagley said. "Just to know that marching in the Alamodome will be the last marching contest I'll participate in blows my mind."

Over half of the band's members this year are made

up of underclassmen. For the freshman and sophomores, this would be their first year to compete in high-level competition.

"Being a freshman, I felt like there was added pressure to be good," freshman Olivia Sipes said. "I felt like if I messed up it

would cost the band, but I just had to be confident and do my best."

The band was the only military-style marching band competing at this year's 3A competition and competed against only corps style bands.

"I felt very honored and very blessed to be able to do that," Steele said. "It was not the only time we've been the only military band there, but it's always a big honor."

During their journey to state,

the band experienced last-minute obstacles. On the Thursday before their Saturday performance, two auxiliary line members were used as substitutes and given 2 days to learn the entire drill. Neither girl had ever marched with a horn and had to learn all new fundamentals as well as the drill before area contest.

"It felt like the fate of the band was on our shoulders," sophomore auxiliary line member Makenna Gibbs said. "I kept thinking, 'if we don't advance, it's our fault.'"

Along with substitutions, the band dealt with the area marching contest being moved from the outdoor field at Stephen F. Austin University to the indoor practice facility at Carthage High School due to inclement weather.

"I think part of it was a hindrance, just the actual loading and unloading and getting to places," Steele said. "Of course, it started pouring when we were having to unload. But when we are as prepared as we are it takes an awful lot more to mess us up."

The band received fifth place at competition and will continue to hold the title as best-ranked AAA military band in the state of Texas.

"It was a really big honor to get fifth," Bagley said. "I felt like we worked our hardest and I'm proud to be leaving with such big shoes for the students to come to fill."



Standing tall, the band performs at the Alamodome for the UIL State Marching competition. White Oak was the only military band to compete at the state level this season. "This year was fun, stressful, and exciting," sophomore Austin Henry said. "I can't wait for the same feeling my senior year when we compete for state again."

DIVING INTO A DREAM

Make-A-Wish Foundation sends second-grader to Florida to swim with dolphins

Mackenzie Brown
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As soon as she steps into the small room, her nerves take over. The room is full of cameras pointing her direction, but it is also full of familiar faces. Someone tells her that this is not a birthday party. No, this is a gathering to thank her for being an inspiration.

Her nervousness shifts to shock, and then to pure joy. She races around the room, hugging her friends, her relatives, and everyone else who is there to support her.

On November 10, Jaidan Johnson was taken to Air U and told that the Make-A-Wish Foundation would be sending her to Florida's SeaWorld and Dolphin Cove, where she would swim with dolphins.

"It was cool, cause I was the only one who trick-rod and I was the youngest one there," Jaidan said. "I was supposed to hold the fins. Both of them. But I slipped off, and then I was trick-riding!"

Jaidan was diagnosed with Alpha 1 Antitrypsin, a condition related to the liver, at only 7 weeks old. She was added to the transplant list at nine months old.

"Before her transplant, she couldn't walk because her belly



Holding onto her new marine friend, second-grader Jaidan Johnson smiles for the camera. Jaidan traveled to Florida to swim with dolphins thanks to the help of the Make-A-Wish Foundation. "We [pretended to] pull the fishing pole and then the dolphin made a sound like a reel," Jaidan said. "Usually in the wild, dolphins only live to be about fifteen years, but some of these were fifty!"

was the size of a basketball due to ascites, which is fluid buildup," Jaidan's mother Jaime Steele said. "To everyone's amazement, she walked for the

first time one day after her life-saving liver transplant."

After Jaidan was told about her upcoming trip at Air U, she got to sign the Pink Heals pink

fire truck outside of the building.

"The moment she realized that the whole group was there for her was wonderful. She just stood there and looked around

in shock," event coordinator for Pink Heals Tammy Denfeld said. "She was very moved by signing the truck. She is a survivor."

Jaidan left for Florida on November 12 with her mother and her grandparents, where she swam with dolphins at Dolphin Cove.

"There was a dolphin that pushed me by the foot. Two couldn't push me cause I was so tiny, and they were too close together," Jaidan said. "Dixie was the one that pushed me. She was so fast. I loved it."

Jaidan's grandparents joined her and her mother for the trip to Florida. They went with Jaidan to Dolphin Cove to share the experience with her.

"As I watched Jaidan all I could think of was in that moment, she was experiencing pure joy," Jaidan's grandmother Sandy Steele said. "It was the happiest I had ever seen her."

While she was in Florida, Jaidan also visited SeaWorld.

"At SeaWorld, we went to the orca show," Jaidan said. "We got so wet my mom had to buy me a new shirt."

Jaidan and her family returned from Florida on November 17, but Jaidan will likely remember this trip with her family for the rest of her life.

"I am very proud of Jaidan, her heart, and her love for others," Jaime Steele said. "Throughout this journey, she has been extremely brave and taught me not to be afraid."

Changing Flags

Angeles Guillen
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Foreign exchange students adjust to American lifestyle

Looking out she felt uneasy, uncomfortable, and a little scared. But excitement also ran deep. She had prepared for this day for a long time. There she was, ready to enter a place where new ideas would arrive and opportunities would arise. Marie was ready for her first day of school in America.

Marie Johannsen and Arthur Nakai are visiting the United States as foreign exchange students. Marie Johannsen came from Aarhus, Denmark, and Arthur came from Campinas, Brazil. Marie arrived from Denmark on August 20, only a week before school started.

"I liked it here pretty quickly,"

Marie said. "I spent a lot of time at home for the most part, but that was okay because I got to know my host family."

Marie's host parent, Ann Beimer, received news of Marie's arrival in May.

"When I received the news that we were going to host Marie I was very excited," Mrs. Biemer said. "I raise other kids in my house, and was thinking that this would be good for them to get other aspects of life and cultures."

Arthur moved from Brazil at the beginning of August. He adjusts to American culture in his new home by spending his free time on hobbies that are notorious for being American.

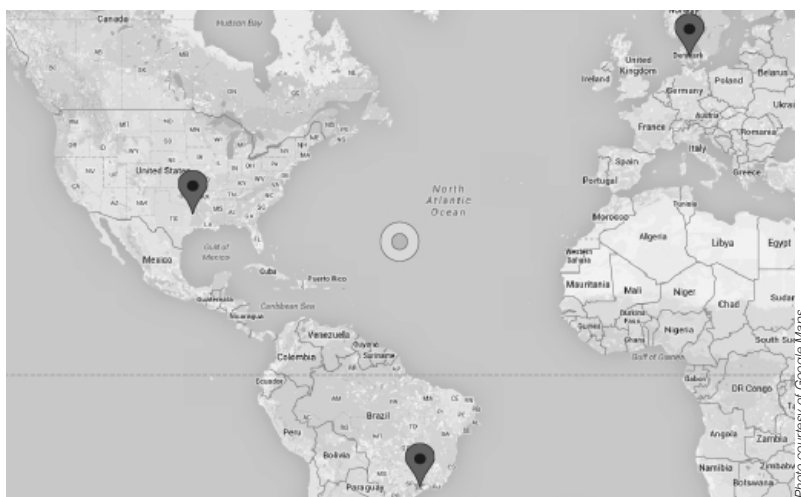
"I eat and watch TV," Arthur

said. "And sometimes I mow the lawn."

Marie's interest in studying in the United States began in the sixth grade. She declined other educational offers made by her parents.

"In Denmark a lot of young people spend a year at an independent boarding school for lower secondary student," Marie's mother Matte Johannsen said. "We talked with Marie, if it was something she would like, but she kept her wish of [studying in] the United States."

Arthur has known for a long time that he wanted to study in America because many of his relatives have been foreign exchange students.



Marie Johannsen moved 4,906 miles away from her home in Aarhus, Denmark, and Arthur Nakai traveled to Texas, 4,958 miles from his home in Campinas, Brazil. "In the beginning it was difficult to understand what the American people were saying but now it's fine," Nakai said. "Also, because of the weird Texan accent."

"I've been preparing myself since I was born. My sister was an exchange student in the same family I am in now," Arthur said. "My friends have been really helpful, like Dawson, Zach, Bevis, Carlos, Marie, and Zander."

Arthur and Marie will be staying a full school year at White Oak and will be leaving around the end of the school year.

"I will always have memories of White Oak," Marie said. "It was always my dream to come study in the United States, and