

On their mark . . . get set . . . GO

New track coach takes over program after 40 years of service from former coach

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Astin Greer

BY ANNA LEE
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The whistle blows. The kids take off around the track, panting and tired, just trying to get through their run. They're on their fourth 400 meter rep of the day, but the voice yelling at them to "finish out" sounds a little different than past years.

Texas High's former Head Girls Track coach, Pat Daniels, retired after 40 years, opening up a position in the Athletics Program. With such a long reign, Daniels left a mark on the program no student will forget. She built the program into what it is today throughout several generations of students.

The loss of Daniels is pretty significant, bringing a lot of responsibility onto the person who stepped up for the program, new Head Track Coach, Astin Greer.

"I'm gonna have to come in and I've got to evaluate, you know, the needs of the program and just assess what we need in order to continue to grow,"

Greer said. "So basically just trying to put your own imprint on the program is what I'm going to have to focus on right now.

With the shift to the program now being under Greer's hands, a transition year is to be expected. However, Greer did not change his expectations of his team for them to be able to perform and improve from last year.

"You know, the way you coach kids doesn't change," Greer said. "If you want to be successful, you have to coach them hard and have high expectations." Daniels held

a lot of responsibilities in the track program, accumulating these over the four decades she worked here. Obviously when she left, these tasks spread out throughout the program.

"I think Coach Stanford kind of wants to isolate our separate spectrums this year."

Assistant coach Danielle Aubrey said. "I am excited to be able to focus on the distance kids year round and build a different kind of running crew for TISD this year."

There are nine assistant coaches in track, all of them being able to give one on one time with the athletes in their events, helping Greer run his program efficiently. Five of the nine assistant coaches are new, even one of them being Daniels' daughter, Coach Danielle Aubrey.

"You can't do this all by yourself. There is no way someone can coach a whole track program by themselves," Greer said. "I'm fortunate to say that we have so many assistant coaches here and that we can say everybody coaches something."

Greer plans to improve tremendously from last season. The boys had a very unsuccessful season coming in last place in their district only scoring 26 points. The girls came in fourth place scoring 100 points with multiple relays advancing to the area meet.

"We didn't have a lot of depth on [the boys] varsity team," Greer said. "We kept the freshman and sophomores together on JV, but overall as a team [varsity] just came in last place."

The work that they are putting in this year is to be one of the more competitive teams in the state, making a difference from last year's overall loss. Greer wants to start growing the program into something bigger with more numbers of people than there have been in the past.

"Once you become successful again, people will start wanting to be part of the program," Greer said. "I've had a large number of kids who didn't run last year express interest in coming to run this year"

With a lack of upperclassmen leadership, many kids end up quitting or not giving effort in the sport, making the team either unsuccessful or limited on resources. To gain in these low numbers, a welcoming and fun environment is required so that kids who are there, stay.

"No average student likes just coming out and running, you have to have a passion for it," Greer said. "You have to create the atmosphere that makes the kids passionate about it, that makes them want to return and be a part of it."

The JV boys track team won the 2022 district championship, bringing motivation for the few older athletes that are returning. With the underclassmen in the majority, Greer expects the former 1600

meter relay to meet high standards this coming season. Sophomores made up the majority of this team, advancing to the area meet.

"We have a lot of building to do with [the program] to get them to where we need them to be for them to be competitive," Greer said. "We don't want to be just competitive in the district and area, but across our region and hopefully across the state soon."

The team is focusing on the most important things this year, setting goals to be better everyday and being one of the most competitive programs in the state. The loss of Daniels handed the program to Greer, and he plans to run with it.

"Success to me doesn't mean winning every meet," Greer said. "Success is showing up to a meet, and the other teams know they have to bring their A-game because Texas High is there."



photos by breylen garrett

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