

**ATHLETES
ASSERT**

**Lady 'Dawgs
dominate district led
by senior guard**



Micah Walton
Point Guard

Questions? Concerns? Email
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To say that we've come along way throughout the course of the season would be a major understatement. From fall ball in September to February playoffs, we've excelled beyond what was expected of us.

At the beginning of our season in November, head coaches in our district ranked all nine teams and their expected outcomes, sort of like an NCAA AP poll. We were projected to finish in fourth, just barely making a playoff spot.

Now, we ended up finishing second in district, while contending for first place with Westlake, one of the most competitive teams in the state. We even managed to split the season series, as we beat Westlake at home after losing to them earlier in the year.

After a successful 2022-23 season, we graduated 13 seniors. Nyla Anderson and I were the only returning Varsity players this year. The majority of our district thought that our team would fall off due to the fact that we would have to rebuild our program from the ground up, but that only made us better.

To become a winning team, we knew that we had to lock into the talent that we knew we had and pair it with unmatched effort. At the very start of the season, we established that with these two traits are paired, we could become unbeatable.

We also established that to be great on the court, you have to be great off of it. Encouragement and effort is a must for us.

I've never been on a team that has loved each other this much, we're all genuinely best friends, and this team means everything to me. We set aside time to hang out with each other at our own free will, and I feel like a lot of teams lack that bond, or there's cliques within a team that make it divided.

Another thing that we've emphasized throughout our winning season is confidence. We don't allow arrogance on our team, but we do instill confidence in ourselves and others because we all believe in each other.

We trust each others capabilities, which only strengthens us. When someone makes a mistake, we all do. When someone does something great, we're the first to celebrate it.

We've definitely had our rough patches during the season, but what we've always done is learned from our mistakes. Mistakes aren't excusable or dismissed when made, but they are made up for with effort.

Mistakes and lessons led us to where we are now, contending for first place in district and our first playoff win in years. Playoffs start soon, and we're scheduled to play Vandergrift, the third seed in our bi-district in the first round. I have no doubt that we have the talent and the character to not only beat Vandergrift, but also to make a deep run this year.

**Have a sports opinion or story you want to share? Contact bowie.journalism@gmail.com to be the next feature columnist.*

**SCAN TO
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VIDEO BY Austin Ikard

Para-athlete swims for 'Dawgs

Freshman Kate Alexander is aiming to compete in the 2032 Paralympics

Ben Tillisch
Executive Editor: Sports

As the starting pistol sounds, ringing across the water and echoing throughout the arena, freshman Kate Alexander explodes through the air, cutting the surface tension of the water like a knife. Swimming hard, Alexander carves through the pool.

25 yards later, Alexander gracefully pushes off the opposite wall and makes the turn. Hearing the shouts of encouragement from her teammates and coaches, Alexander wills herself to swim faster as she closes in on the finish line.

Reaching forward, Alexander touches the wall of the pool, emerging to find that in her first Bob Stallings Aggieldand Invitational she managed to record a personal best of 35.73 seconds in the 50 yard freestyle competition.

"I always set a goal for myself," Alexander said. "It's always an exciting thing to improve, whether it be beating someone else or recording a new personal best time. It gives me motivation to keep going. At the same time though, I try to relax and remind myself that it's not the end of the world if I don't swim my best race."

Alexander first began swimming when she was eight years old. Since then, the freshman swimmer has competed in a number of races, including freestyle, fly, backstroke, and breaststroke in various competitions.

"It really helps me with my confidence, and it brings me joy like every time I do it," Alexander said. "For me, swimming is like an escape from reality, especially if I'm having a rough day. It makes me stronger and makes me happy."

Unlike many of her competitors though, in 2021, Alexander was diagnosed with a form of peripheral neuropathy known as Charcot-Marie-Tooth (CMT), a hereditary nerve disease that impacts muscle control.

"It's been hard to swim because I'm swimming against



KICKING HARD: Freshman Kate Alexander swims the backstroke race. Alexander holds a personal best time of one minute and 46 seconds in the 100 meter backstroke. **PHOTO COURTESY OF** Kate Alexander

able bodied people, when I'm the only disabled swimmer in most competitions," Alexander said. "So, it's been hard, but I've accepted who I am, and I've learned to set my own goals, while also competing with other swimmers."

Despite CMT, Alexander continues to swim competitively. In December 2023, Alexander had the privilege of competing against the fastest para-swimmers in the country at the U.S. Paralympics Swimming National Championships in Orlando, Florida.

"Swimming has definitely made me feel more confident throughout my entire life," Alexander said. "It shows that I'm capable of doing things and it gives me a lot of motivation. Overall, it improves my self-esteem, partly because of having such supportive teammates and coaches."

At the Paralympics National Championships, Alexander raced formidable competition,

including collegiate para-swimmers, in six different categories

of various lengths and strokes. Freshman Logan Jones details Alexander's mentality that propelled her to the pinnacle of para-swimming in America.

"Kate doesn't let her disability hold her back and she never stops working hard," Jones said. "Seeing the effort and positivity she puts into every swim makes you want to try harder. It's tough after a hard race to keep the positive energy and not pass negative energy to your peers, but Kate is always in a good mood and is always ready for what comes next, it's

inspiring."

In her most successful race at the National Championships, Alexander finished 14th overall in the 100 meter butterfly with a time one minute and 45 seconds. Throughout the 2023 fall season, Jones experienced first hand the immense dedication of Alexander that led to her national

success in the 100 meter Fly. "Kate has a great ability to take criticism and focus on it and make it better," Jones said. "She is a very determined person and it's always inspiring to see someone with that quality. Her positive attitude and determination will take her far."

“Kate's positive outlook and attitude influence her life in all areas. The glass is always half full with her, and she can achieve anything.
Chloe Carr
Kate's Swim Coach

Freshman twins making an impact on the court

Caroline Baxter
Sports Writer

Driving the ball down the court, freshman Daniella Williams scans the court, searching for an open teammate. Williams handles the ball confidently, skillfully shielding the ball from her defender.

Finally, Williams fires the ball into freshman Danica Williams, her twin sister, who found space on the wing. In one motion, Danica catches the ball and smoothly rises into her shooting motion. With complete faith in her twin's ability, Daniella begins the jog back to defense before the ball has even hit the bottom of the net. She knows that Danica has drilled the shot.

"What I enjoy most is being able to play with Danica," Daniella said. "It's like a different level of connection between us and it's really easy to play with each other."

Danica and Daniella are one of three underclassmen, and the only two freshmen on varsity. The twins take after their older brother, Darius Williams, a senior point guard, who has been played for the varsity 'Dawgs since his sophomore year.

"Since our older brother played basketball since he was little and we used to always go to his games, I was inspired to be like him," Danica said. "So, I started playing. We started off playing in elementary school and in i9 Sports."

Even though Danica and Daniella are twins, they have opposite strengths and positions on the court. Their bond still always attributes to the benefit of one another.

"I play as a three most of the time," Danica said. "And Daniella usually is the one handling the ball and bringing it up the court on offense. She is very good at driving to the basket with her left hand."

Because of their complimentary talent, the twins have helped the Lady 'Dawgs solidify their spot in the playoffs. Sophomore teammate Grace Guzman points out the immediate impact Daniella and Danica have made.

"They both are always playing at

super high intensity and never seem to get tired," Guzman said. "They keep the team in good spirits even when we aren't winning or in the best of moods."

The Lady 'Dawgs concluded their season in second place in district play with a 14-2 record. This success, according to Danica, stems from the work ethic expected of varsity players.

"It is definitely very hard and tiring," Danica said. "There is a lot of running involved. We have practice every first period and sometimes in the morning and afternoon. It can be a lot to balance outside activities because we seem to always be at basketball."

Along with high school basketball, Danica and Daniella both compete on teams in the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) division outside of school. They also train with private coaches when they can to get better.

"We have AAU, which is extra training, when we don't have high school," Danica said. "It is usually every day, but right now during high school season we only practice during the weekends. We also go to the gym to workout after school."

Even with the strenuous work needed to be a part of the team, Danica and Daniella believe it is beneficial they play together. They believe it helps them understand the runs of play to help them win.

"It is always great to play with each other because we have a relationship no one else has," Daniella said. "I've only ever played two games without Danica, so it will be very weird if we end up going to completely different colleges in a few years."

Playing Division 1 is the pinnacle of collegiate athletics. Danica and Daniella both have aspirations to reach this level.

"I would love to play college basketball just because of how much I love this sport," Danica said. "I don't really mind what division I play in but I would always prefer to play Division 1."

Despite only being a freshman, Danica and Daniella have both gained varsity experience needed to compete at the next level. However, they're only one year removed from middle school



GETTING A STEAL: Freshman Daniella Williams attempts to steal the ball from the opposing guard. Daniella is one of two freshman on varsity. **PHOTO BY** Adriana Chouieiry

and have seen first-hand the difference in levels of play.

"High school basketball is totally different from middle school basketball," Daniella said. "We do a lot of harder things and we pay a lot more attention to actually playing rather than learning the basics."

As a freshman, Daniella believes there is more pressure to perform and meet expectations. This being said, the Lady 'Dawgs house a positive environment needed to effectively integrate underclassmen.

"My teammates cheering me on that calms me down when I get nervous," Daniella said. "They just tell me it's okay if I mess up and that I'll get it next time. This helps me not dwell on it for too long."

Along with stress from being on the court, it can also be very hard to balance being a dedicated athlete and a hard-

working student. Danice and Daniella are both responsible for maintaining passing grades to be eligible to play, which creates a heavy workload for the twins.

"It is hard trying to find time to study because of our basketball schedule," Danica said. "I usually have to do my homework either really late at night or find time during the school day to complete it."

In preparation for their first round playoff game against Vandergrift, the twins attribute the seasonal success of the Lady 'Dawgs to team chemistry.

"It is super fun that we get to play with people we know and that we're close with," Daniella said. "We all get along super well and the team chemistry really helps us win our games. I will miss them when they leave for college before us." ■

**COMING UP IN
SPORTS:**

FEBRUARY 20 Varsity girls soccer vs Austin High @ Burger Stadium

FEBRUARY 26 Varsity boys golf vs. Pflugerville @ ShadowGlen Golf Club

MARCH 5 Varsity boys soccer vs. Westlake @ Westlake High School

APRIL 2 Varsity baseball vs. Johnson @ Johnson High School