



feb.
"I loved the atmosphere of that game," guard sophomore **Eaden Greenhouse** said, "It was a great win with a very large crowd on both sides. We fought hard through adversity, and I'm so proud of my team for coming out with a huge win." Westlake defeated SA Johnson High School 75-66.



march
"The best moment from the Atascocita game was **Blake** getting his first in-game dunk and the team's reaction immediately after," forward senior **Jake Butler** said, Westlake defeated Atascocita High School 57-42.

can't be stopped

the chaps win six straight playoff games



march
"My favorite moment of the Regional Final was the feeling after the game knowing we had done what only one other Westlake team had done and knowing we had a chance to make history for Westlake," guard junior **Conor McManus** said, Westlake defeated SA Clark High School 64-48.



march
"This year's senior class was the most unselfish group of players we have had represent our school," boys basketball head coach **Robert Lucero** said, "We will always be grateful for their contributions." Westlake lost to Duncannville High School 53-66.



take it to the net

1 As forward junior **Preston Clark** fights with a Duncannville High School defender, he tries to secure an offensive rebound during the State Championship game March 13, "My favorite moment of the State game was walking onto the court with my teammates and seeing everything about the court and everyone who showed up to support," Clark said, "It was a surreal feeling. I also liked spending time with the team together for one last time. My teammates have been my best friends and brothers, and they've had a very positive impact on my life." The Chaps lost to Duncannville 53-66.



driven to win

2 Forward junior **Nehikahue Iglehion** protects the ball March 9 during the state semifinals against Atascocita High School. 3 Guard senior **Blake Nielsen** pushes through a Duncannville High School defender to get to the basket, "My favorite moment of the season was in the locker room after our State Semi-Final win just celebrating with the boys after becoming the best team in Westlake history," Nielsen said.



second family

3 Making his way down the court, point guard senior **Eain Mowat** gets past an Atascocita defender, "My favorite memory of the playoffs was in the locker room after Atascocita because we all realized we made history and did what no Westlake team has ever done," Mowat said, Westlake defeated Atascocita 57-42. 4 As guard senior **Cade Manike** keeps his eyes on the hoop to shoot a three, he attempts to score over a Duncannville High School defender March 13. "My teammates and coaches are like my second family," Manike said, "It was ever in need of anything. I could count on any one of them. I've never been so close with a group of guys, and I hope our friendships stay in tact throughout college and beyond."

making history

varsity team faces adversity and leans on each other



Senior **Cade Manike** doubted the Chaps would even get a season. "We didn't know how long we would be playing," Manike said, "We had [positive COVID] cases our first week of practice in August. All of us knew that any day could be our last." Seven months later, the Chaps were officially the first team in Westlake history to go to the State Championships. The team lost a close game to Duncannville high school 53-66.

"We just had to go out there and play our best, but unfortunately we came up short," senior **Eain Mowat** said.

Although the Chaps didn't win State, the accomplishments they achieved together through a difficult year impacted them all. Challenge tested their determination. With season starting off amidst COVID-19 restrictions and continuing with personal hardships and community loss, the Chaps had to persevere.

"With the pandemic, the biggest challenge for us was that a bunch of the guys were virtual, and since we don't have our athletic period, we only saw each other once a day," head basketball coach **Robert Lucero** said, "We had to condense our practice to make sure we covered everything."

The typical season was not a reality for the Chaps. The time they spent as a team was limited, and they were unable to even ride the bus together until the playoffs.

"When we did get together, everyone was just happy to be in the gym and be able to be around each other," Lucero said, "So we had to balance that and make sure we were still getting to work."

Manike saw the unusual circumstances as a way for the team to grow.

"Our strength was our chemistry," Manike said, "There was a time where we had to quarantine for two weeks because of a positive test, and we came together, especially after that. We were willing to hold each other accountable, on and off the court."

The strong bonds within the team were not limited to the players. Manike says his relationship with Lucero has developed since his time at Westlake.

"He became more aware of how much we go through as students," Manike said, "He does 'culture classes,' where he sits us down to talk about social and personal stuff going on. We have to be honest with each other and open up."

Lucero introduced culture classes in 2018, when he felt the team was missing an element.

"I used to think the best way to become a team was just the practice," Lucero said, "You work really hard, you push one another and you compete, and then it brings you closer. That's still the driving force, but there's this other piece that I don't think we were addressing."

The classes were formatted to focus on the core values of the team.

"In culture class, when you talk with each other, you start to understand where people are coming from, through their whole life," Lucero said, "And then you don't judge them as much, or maybe you're more empathetic to what they're going through. And then you start to help them through some of the problems or issues or challenges that they have."

Lucero says the basis of a successful team is the ability to grow beyond the game.

"I know you want to do well in District, go to [the] State Championship, all that, but if you want to get there, then just focus on the people that we're becoming along the way," Lucero said.

Lucero's character-building approach worked. The Chaps won the semi-final against Atascocita 57-42. The next day, the Westlake community was hit with devastating news.

"It was the week Jackson [Coker] had passed away," Lucero said, "We beat Atascocita on Tuesday, and then Wednesday morning, he passed. That day was really tough for a lot of the guys. We hardly had any practice."

The team and the community were affected by the loss of their friend and recent Westlake graduate.

Lucero made it a priority to support his athletes during this time.

"We called a culture class, and we talked about a lot of things," Lucero said, "They went from this emotional high of winning their biggest basketball game they have in high school, and then the lowest of lows the next day."

The support of Lucero and the Westlake community helped the team push through to the end of the season. The Chaps boarded the bus to San Antonio March 12, cheers of support coming from the crowd that had gathered to send them off to the State Championships.

"Most of us have been through Westlake for all of our lives at this point," Manike said, "This was the first year that the support was beyond what I thought we had. Knowing we had the backing of our friends, their parents, our parents, helped us validate our own success and reach our goals knowing win or lose, we have this support."

When the team arrived in San Antonio, they practiced at the Alamodome, where they played their final game March 13.

"That was probably one of our best practices all year," Lucero said, "Their focus and their energy and their effort in practice was just off the charts."

Mowat said the excitement of making it to State was stronger than his nervous.

"Playing in that arena is a very different atmosphere than I was really used to playing in the regular season," Mowat said, "So it's really exciting to get out there."

As the final game approached, Lucero encouraged the players to communicate.

"[Lucero] sat us down the night before, and we're all like, 'Why are we up out of bed at midnight in the lobby?'" Manike said, "We talked for like, half an hour about what we were afraid about tomorrow. I was afraid of failing everybody, KJ [Adams] was the same way, saying he was afraid of making Westlake look bad. All of us just opened up. When we do that, it makes us more trusting of each other."

Manike was proud of how the team's group mentality helped them succeed as players and people.

Lucero said the strengths of the team laid beyond their talent.

"I don't think everybody has the goals that they have—they literally sacrifice personal goals for the team success, and that doesn't always come around like that, you know?" Lucero said, "I will remember them as the most unselfish group that has come through Westlake," story by sophia sutter

locked in

Jumping over an Atascocita High School defender, guard senior **KJ Adams** tries to score a contested shot March 9. The Chaps defeated Atascocita 57-42, which secured Westlake a spot in the 6A State game, photo by aric shah