

# TEXAS

## Athletic Administrator Spring 2024 Newsletter



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**RECLASSIFICATION  
& REALIGNMENT**

2024-2025 & 2025-2026

**OFFICIAL RELEASE**



# Executive Director's Report — Rusty Dowling

Welcome to the 4th annual Spring Sponsor Showcase. We appreciate all our members and THSADA sponsors who have made the effort to support this event and all athletic administrators throughout the State of Texas. As we enter the Spring semester we are about halfway through the 2nd semester and as we all know the spring sport calendar has events and activities pretty much six days a week until mid-May. The challenges that await athletic administrators during the 2nd semester are always significant and seem to be never-ending. Personnel, Budget, Re-scheduling events, end of year Banquets and Award Ceremonies, Summer Planning and beginning of the school-year staff developments. We hope this mid-semester Showcase event will afford you the opportunity to re-charge, engage with your colleagues and provide that push going into the last part of the school year.

One of the main initiatives that THSADA has taken up is in conjunction with both the THSCA and the UIL regarding Sportsmanship and what we can do to be pro-active in implementing good sportsmanship behaviors from all stakeholders. The Athletic Committee has taken the lead in representing THSADA and we look forward to working with all our partners on this extremely important topic.

THSADA membership continues to rise as we currently sit at 1,400 members and we increase every day as we move towards our State Conference. You must be a member to attend any THSADA event and the benefits you receive are significant whether it's through our TAAC program, Region



meetings or any of our three THSADA-sponsored event throughout the calendar year.

This past December 6th and 7th the THSADA Board of Directors and Committee Chairs met in Houston at Challenger-Columbia Stadium in Clear Creek ISD to conduct the business of the THSADA. As it always does, the Board meeting provided an opportunity for Officers, Region Directors, and Committee Chairs to not only conduct the affairs of the THSADA but also provided Board members the opportunity to discuss issues specific to athletic administrators during several social gatherings held in conjunction with the Board meeting. PBK Sports acted as a host for the annual Board/Committee Chairs dinner held Wednesday, December 6th.

Several significant items and actions came out of the Board meeting. The Board approved the following proposals:

1. Retired THSADA members may serve on a Standing Committee with approval of the President.
2. Region Directors can serve 2-two-year terms consecutively
3. Approved a fee increase for the State Conference from \$100.00-\$125.00
4. Approved a fee increase for Fall Forum from \$60.00 to \$70.00
5. Adjusted title of Assistant Executive Director to Associate Executive Director.
6. Approved adding the position of Assistant Executive Director to be named at the State Conference.
7. Approved addition of a new program-the Texas Cup
8. Approved the THSADA Financial Report
9. Approved formation of a THSADA Sports Medicine Committee

In additional business the Board was presented with a THSADA-THSCA ad hoc committee partnership to address issues and concerns that are aligned to both the interests of Athletic Administrators and Coaches. This Coaches and Athletic Directors Alliance will be on the front end of responding quickly to those issues that affect Texas athletics and guiding both Boards on the respective actions that should be taken.



THSADA Board of Directors meeting December 2024

## 2024 Scholarship Application

THSADA announces that the application for the Whataburger scholarship is now open. Whataburger will award a \$3,000.00 scholarship to one female athlete and one male athlete. [Click here for the application.](#)



THSADA Committee Chairs all gave updated reports on the work of their respective committees. THSADA committees are very important in the overall work of the THSADA as they lean on the experience and knowledge of all committee members to address any and all issues facing athletic administrators. The service each committee member provides is genuinely appreciated and makes a difference in the effectiveness of THSADA.

The 2024 THSADA State Conference and Tradeshow will be held June 2-5, 2024, at the Kalahari Resort in Round Rock, Texas. Pre-registration is currently open at [www.thsada.com](http://www.thsada.com) and we are looking at the largest attendance we've ever had. At the State Conference this year there will be several new features presented. The Tradeshow Hall will now be open on Monday for lunch and again at its regular time on Monday evening. The Tuesday Tradeshow will open first thing Tuesday morning for breakfast then again at its regular time Tuesday evening. There will be up to five sessions each hour with the additions of the JHAMS (Junior High and Middle School) program, special District Executive Committee trainings for those ISD Superintendents that sit on a DEC and special emphasis on athletic de-

partment business best practices. The regular curriculum of TAAC and QUAD A sessions will be held with the QUAD A Cover Letter/Resume review increasing in the number of participants that can enroll in each session. This was very popular last year and so we are expanding the number of participants for each session.

In closing I again want to thank everyone for your continued support of THSADA, have a great last half of the school year and we look forward to seeing everyone at the State Conference, June 2-5, 2024, at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Round Rock.



<b>2022-2023 THSADA Financial Report</b>			
<b>THSADA Revenue</b>	<b>8/2022-7/2023</b>	<b>THSADA Expenses</b>	<b>8/2022-7/2023</b>
Sponsorships	\$ 573,261.83	State Conference Exp.	\$ 265,967.98
Conference Registration	58,800.00	Fall Forum	15,988.04
Exhibitor Fees	98,800.00	Spring Sponsor Showcase	28,350.55
Additional Badges	800.00	Scholarships	9,000.00
Golf Tourn.	9,260.00	Hall of Honor Banquet	
Raffle Tickets	2,975.00	NIAAA	2,033.45
Hall of Honor Banquet	(40.00)	Contracted Services	471,282.67
Fall Forum	10,170.00	Operations	82,517.57
Spring Sponsor Showcase	12,945.00	Meals-Entertainment	5,706.34
Memberships	84,445.00	Advertising	4,005.00
Sale of Merchandise		Board Mtg. Exp.	2,929.16
Sponsor Playbook	1,400.00	Travel	24,494.25
NIAAA Webinar	3,450.00	Dues	
Other/Red'd Petty Cash/Misc.	6,475.00	Misc.,	
Interest-Savings	6.67	Staff Registrations	2,160.62
Misc.*			
<b>Total Net Income</b>	<b>\$ 862,748.50</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$914,435.63</b>



# Assistant Executive Director's Update – Bob DeJonge

## THSADA Spring Sponsor Showcase 2024

Our 4th Annual Spring Sponsor Showcase is only days away! This year's event is being held at one of our favorite event sites – Embassy Suites in San Marcos. This state-of-the-art hotel and convention center offers outstanding amenities for our attendees and sponsors. In addition to free parking, the hotel offers an outstanding made to order complimentary breakfast, the venue also offers free wi-fi in all guest rooms and meeting space. This year's event begins Tuesday afternoon with an AAAA Orientation and an opening Keynote address from Dr. Christopher Moran, Superintendent of Schools San Angelo ISD. At 6 PM we will offer our annual sponsor/attendee welcome reception. Wednesday begins with an 8:30 welcome followed by a day full of sessions highlighting:

- UIL Orientation Training
- Assistant Athletic Administrator Duties and Responsibilities
- 3 QUAD A Sessions (Aspiring Athletic Administrator Academy)
- Social Media Guidelines
- Addressing Student Athletes with Special Needs
- UIL Staff Presentation

At 11:40 am Wednesday we will offer our **Mid-Day Sponsor Tradeshow and Luncheon**. This is a gives attendees and sponsors a unique opportunity to share some quality time together. Lunch will be provided for all attendees and sponsors.

This year's event promises to be one of the most meaningful and entertaining conferences we have offered our membership. We hope to see you soon in San Marcos!

**June 2, 2024, Kalahari Resort and Convention Center Round Rock, Tx.  
Kalahari Ballroom 1:30 – 3:15**

This Year's Hall of Honor Celebration will be the Kickoff event at this year's THSADA State Conference. Tickets are



available for \$20 - please go to the THSADA website for single or multiple seat purchases.

This year's award winners are nothing short of a Who's Who list of All Star Athletic Administrators and Supporters. We hope to see a record crowd at the Kalahari this summer to

honor these deserving recipients!

### Hall of Honor Inductees

- Maria Kennedy – Retired El Paso ISD
- Philip O'Neal - Retired Mansfield ISD
- Debbie Fuchs – Retired Clear Creek ISD

**Joe Bill Fox Award** – Pat Kohan – *Kohan Content*

**PBK Sports Athletic Director of the Year** – Philip O'Neal – Retired Mansfield ISD

**New This Year-** (TBD after Spring Elections)

- THSADA Citation
  - THSADA Superintendent of the Year
- NFHS Citation** – André Walker – Houston ISD

**NIAAA Bruce Whitehead DSA** – Dena Scott – Fort Bend ISD

**Kelly Reeves State Award of Merit** – Paige Hershey – Spring Branch ISD

**Frank Kovaleski Professional Development Award** – Sheri Stice, retired Cy Fair ISD

**NIAAA Hall of Fame (Texas Nominee)** – James Hyden, retired Arlington ISD

**Regional Athletic Administrators of the Year** – TBD by election later this spring

Outgoing Region Directors – These Athletic Administrators have completed their term as Region Director. They are the conduit that links our association together and their contributions are invaluable! Their terms end at this year's State Conference

- Region 2 – Jerod Womack – Mansfield ISD
- Region 4 – David Cervantes (serving

for JJ Calderon) – El Paso ISD

- Region 5 – Andre Walker – Houston ISD
- Region 8 – Melanie Hinson – Southwest ISD

## 2024 THSADA Election Center

Spring is the season for THSADA Elections. We just finished our election process for THSADA President Elect. After a very close election and run-off we want to congratulate all seven candidates for their outstanding leadership and service to their regions and around the state.

It is with great pleasure that we announce that the winner of the President-elect Election is André Walker of Houston ISD. André will take office at this summer's

State Conference in Round Rock. Below is his biography.

**André Walker, CMAA, TAAC, M.Ed.**

Executive Director of Athletics & UIL Activities, Houston

Independent School District-Region 5

André currently serves as the Executive Director of Athletics and UIL Activities for Houston ISD and has worked in Athletic Administration for 20 years. HISD is the district he graduated from and the only district he has worked in. He is an active member of the Texas High School Athletic Director's Association (THSADA), Texas High School Coaches Association (THSCA), Texas Girls Coaches Association (TGCA), Houston Coaches Association (HCA), the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA), National Federation of State High School Association (NFHS), and the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4).

He has earned:

- THSADA Regional Athletic Director of the Year
- NCS4 Professional of the Year



- NFHS Citation Award
- NIAAA Frank Kovaleski Professional Development Award
- NIAAA Distinguished Service Award

He serves the THSADA association as the Region 5 THSADA Regional Director, as a mentor, chaired the Athletic Committee, and is a member of the officials committee. His vision for this association is to continue providing high-level professional development to prepare the next generation of Athletic Directors to lead their districts to greatness for all students and communities in

Texas.

### THSADA President Elect Candidates

Region 1 – Toby Tucker – Canyon ISD

Region 2 – Jim Garfield – Abilene ISD

Region 3 – (Not participating, won last year's election)

Region 4 – David Cervantes – El Paso ISD

Region 5 – André Walker-Houston ISD

Region 6 – Jason Dean – Georgetown ISD

Region 7 – Rob Davies – Harlingen CISD

Region 8 – Melanie Hinson – Southwest ISD

**Regional Athletic Administrator of the Year** - in all 8 Regions Feb 29-Mar. 7

**Region Director Elections** - Regions 2, 4, 5, 8 Mar 18-28,

Things to remember – you must be an active member of THSADA in order to participate in an election or attend a THSADA event.

It's my great pleasure to serve the best Athletic Administrator organization in the Country!

## From the President— Philip O'Neal

Dear THSADA Member,  
I hope the fall semester has transitioned into the spring semester, following the new year, as smooth as possible. We all know how busy the spring gets with so many of the sports we offer, taking place at the same time. While it can be exhausting at times, I encourage each of you to focus on what an incredible experience you are creating for so many student athletes.

As the spring semester begins, the THSADA staff diligently begins to make final preparations for this year's summer state conference, titled "Gaining the Edge." We are all looking for the opportunity to gain an edge in our daily



work and as we look to better serve coaches and student athletes. No matter your capacity, as a Director or Assistant Director, there is no better conference

in the country, to assist those you serve in gaining the edge, than this June's THSADA State Conference. In order to reap the rewards of this amazing conference, you must be a member. I want to encourage each of you as leaders, to enroll those under your supervision, as members. Enrolling them as members, allows them to take advantage of all THSADA has to offer. It also allows you to send them to the state conference, a critical component of your growing and serving others.

Good luck to each of you as you navigate the spring semester and all the amazing experiences you are creating.

## From the President-Elect — Leslie Slovak

Joining THSADA will have an immediate impact on your growth as a leader. Members can take advantage of the many professional development options we offer. Our TAAC program is a certification program with classes offered at THSADA events as well as online. QUAD A is our aspiring administrators academy. This program provides a curriculum addressing the duties and responsibilities specific to becoming a Texas Athletic Administrator at any classification level. We



are excited to offer a new program called JHAMS. This program is structured specifically for Junior High and Middle School Coordinators. Please check out our website for events such as the Spring Sponsor Showcase, State Conference and Fall Forum. These events are full of professional development and networking opportunities. I hope you take advantage of all THSADA has to offer. You will not be disappointed!



# Regional News Updates

## Region 1

Region 1 celebrates the addition of assistants to the athletic administrative teams:

- Canyon ISD - John Peterson
- Lubbock ISD - Jolee Luce

The Region 1 THSADA meeting was hosted by Lubbock ISD in January. We invited and honored our administrative assistants. The athletic administrative assistants began collaborative conversations for support and networking.

Coaches and Athletic Directors in Region 1 stand alongside Randall High School in support of Leslie Broadhurst, boys' basketball coach. Coach Broadhurst is battling medical issues. Coach Broadhurst has been a coach for Randall High School since its opening in 1988.

## Region 2

Stephenville ISD breaks ground on new football stadium. Partnering with Hellas Construction to complete the new facility by May of 2025 and begin play in the 2025 Season. The stadium will seat 7,500 and play host to football and soccer.

Clyde CISD begins play on new turf baseball and softball fields this Spring. Hellas Construction partnered with City of Clyde and Clyde ISD to build this multi-purpose facility that can also host youth tournaments

## Region 3

Region 3 has had a couple new hires in the past few weeks. Jared Womack is moving from the AD position in Waxahachie and is replacing outgoing THSADA President Philip O'Neal as the Mansfield ISD Executive Director of Athletics. Jeff Smith is moving from the AD position in Plano to the AD position in Prosper. He is

replacing Valerie Little who is being promoted to a new role within Prosper ISD. Congrats to these two Region 3 AD's.

In addition, many school districts in this region are working on projects associated with their bonds. Mesquite ISD recently completed the building of their new Natatorium which in January. Their swimmers have consistently qualified several kids each year to regionals and state but have always had to practice in outdoor pools in all sorts of weather conditions. Congrats to all those districts that are doing all they can to provide the very best for their student athletes.

## Region 4

Socorro ISD is nearing completion of their Student Activities Complex II (SAC 2). It is projected to be completed in time for the 2024 football season. It will seat 7500 people and be adjacent to the current Student Activities Complex (SAC) which seats 10,815. The SAC 2 includes multi-use space in the design to host other activities.

Ysleta ISD has completed renovations of all of their baseball and softball fields with artificial turf.

## Region 5

Region 5 is working through the reclassification with several pending appeals. We hosted athletic administrators from area colleges and universities to discuss topics such as the transfer portal and NIL.

## Region 6

Region 6 welcomes Justin Carrigan as the new athletic director for Liberty Hill ISD. After spending 19 years coaching at the collegiate level, Coach Carrigan and his family are thrilled to join the Liberty Hill community as

they prepare to open their second-high school, Legacy Ranch High School.

## Region 7

Harlingen CISD is Focusing on Emotional Intelligence

According to psychologist Daniel Goleman's research, personal and organizational success is 80% emotional intelligence, or EQ, and only 20% IQ. Emotional intelligence is the capacity that allows us to become aware of our emotions and understand the feelings of others. To raise the emotional intelligence of every student and staff member HCISD is teaching the five domains of emotional intelligence across the district. The five domains are Self-Regulation, Self-Awareness, Motivation, Empathy, and Social skills. By raising the emotional intelligence of our coaches and athletes we are equipping them to better respond to the challenges and stresses of competitive athletics and life in general.

## Region 8

Barbara Wise and Brian Clancey retired from SAISD in San Antonio. Both retire from the profession with over 33 years of experience.

**New Athletic Directors to Region 8:**

- Tiffany Lopez - Judson ISD
- Sandra Hernandez - Southwest ISD
- Marissa Muniz - San Antonio ISD
- Albert Torres - San Antonio ISD
- Michael Mendoza - New Braunfels ISD

Congratulations to Comal Day-enport for their 4A State Volleyball Championship!



# Athletic Director Spotlight:

## Q&A with Your THSADA President – Philip O’Neal

### ***Who were some of your mentors who helped shape you along the way as an administrator?***

I learned early that being an administrator is no different than being a coach. All those things we do as coaches, completely apply to being an administrator. I’ve had so many mentors, but there are a few that stick out. I played college basketball for a guy named Mark Adams. He was most recently the head coach at Texas Tech. I learned a lot about leadership from him. He had amazing people skills and is one of the most competitive people I know. Holly Teague was my boss for many years in Weatherford. She taught me so much about being yourself and not always solving a problem in the conventional way. She taught me the importance of politics as you navigate situations. She was always out ahead of potential political situations and was proactive in preventing them from escalating. She taught me that standing your ground for those things that matter most doesn’t have to be done in a combative way. She opened my eyes to any strengths or weaknesses I had and helped me grow through both. Jim Vaszauskas was a coaching friend who ultimately became the Superintendent in Mansfield and my boss. I learned from him the importance of not making things too complicated. He also taught me the importance of strategizing through problems. All three of these amazing leaders were big picture thinkers. I believe that is an important characteristic of being a successful administrator. You have to know the big picture consequences of any decision you make. All three of these people were brilliant at seeing things through that lens.

### ***As a leader for such a large district how did you instill your vision***

### ***on a district that is so widespread?***

In a large district you rely on so many others to carry out your vision. For me it always starts with the athletic staff, to include the campus coordinators. I have always focused on culture more than vision. I believe that culture is more important today than ever before. You are only as successful as the people you are working with. If you create a culture in which people want to be associated with, then you will attract good people. If you attract quality people, then your programs are successful in building character in the athletes you serve. Success is a bi-product of the culture you build.

### ***What were the best parts of being able to serve as the THSADA President?***

Any position I have ever held, developing new relationships, or expanding on current relationships has always been the best part. It has been amazing to see behind the scenes all of the work that Rusty Dowling and his team perform on a daily basis to provide THSADA members with the tools they need to grow in their profession, whether they are an aspiring, new or long time Athletic Director.

### ***What advice would you give to young aspiring administrators or young athletic directors?***

I believe this can best be communicated through bullet points. Here are a few things that come to mind.

- Be your authentic you. You can’t be successful trying to be someone you are not
- Build relationships. It is the single most important component of success
- Think big picture. There are implications to every decision you make

- It’s your job to make your boss look good. If you make your boss look good and they get to keep their job, guess what? You get to keep your job too!
- It’s not the job of those you supervise to serve you, it’s your job to serve them and work to put them in a position to be successful
- Learn to deal with ridicule. There will always be detractors to every decision you make. It’s important to know, if you choose to be a leader, ridicule will come with the position.
- Make decisions that are in the best interest of those you serve, not you or your friends

### ***What is your favorite memory from your coaching career?***

I was fortunate to experience some level of success as a coach, in comparison to expectations at the district I coached. I had a team picked seventh in the pre season that ultimately was the district runner up and beat the number two team in the state. No on court success compares to the relationships I continue to have with some of my former players.

### ***Favorite memory:***

I left an assistant basketball coaching position at Temple High School to become a head coach at Copperas Cove, a district rival school. When they announce the starting line up for Temple, the first time we played, every player on the team lined up and hugged me instead of shaking my hand. That was an incredible moment for me and solidified my idea of the importance of building relationships.

**Spotlight** Continued on next page



### ***What do you plan on doing with your time now that you have retired?***

Following my tenure as President of the Association in June, I will announce that I am going to work for one of the vendors of the associ-

ation. I am very excited about that opportunity. I am currently working with several private equity groups utilizing current relationships to assist them in making connections. Most importantly, I am excited to not have the after hours commitment that

goes with being an Athletic Director so that I can spend more time with family. My grandson's participate in sports and I am excited to get to more of their events.

## **Using Principles and Standards Over Goals**

By Carl "Hank" Semler, Associate Head Football Coach, Lubbock High School

One of the first questions coaches are inevitably asked is "What are your goals for our program?" To me, this question should be rephrased to "Do you know all the clichés that come with interviewing for this position?" The correct answer to this question is a test to see how much homework you've done over the school you're interviewing with. For example, if your response is "I want to take this program to the next level," and they just won the state championship. You could have a hard time convincing those interviewing you that you can get the NCAA to admit a high school into its ranks. If you're completing your end-of-year evaluation after a bad season, it's normally not enough to tell the powers that be "My goal is to win more games next year." Yeah, no kidding! This article is an attempt at flipping the script on goals, and relegating them to 3rd place on the "Here's why I'm the best person for this job" or "This is why I should get another year" meters. I will speak bluntly (30 years of great experiences, with about 15 more to go), so if you would like to cuss or discuss this, my phone number is 682-557-6114 and my email address is [carl.semeler@lubbockisd.org](mailto:carl.semeler@lubbockisd.org).



Ok, so, here's my argument for ranking goals behind principle and standards...

1. Goals are temporary, no matter

- how extensive they may seem.
- Goals are thought of as a destination, not a process.
- Goals are sometimes created as a "chase perfection and catch excellence along the way" situation.
- Goals can be hard to get people to buy into.
- Once you meet or achieve a goal, then what?
- Goals can be an excuse for questionable behavior and compromising ethics and morals.
- Goals are black and white in an increasingly gray world.
- Goals do not allow for "small victories" or growth. You either met the goal or fell short.
- Goals can be a trap if set too low. This can lead to a sense of being better than you really are.
- Goals can be superficial. Set an easy goal – meet the easy goal – have a cheesy celebration.

Goals are the "why" in culture and strategy. I am not against the "why," I just believe in order to have meaningful "whys" you first have to have clear, powerful, and outstanding "what" and "how's," and sometimes we confuse our journey with our destination. When this happens, goals do not get met, things look a whole lot worse than they really are, perceptions become reality, and real estate signs start showing up in yards! So, if you are still reading, let's look at the "what" called principles.

Principles are what I talk about first when discussing topics like culture

change, improvement, or sustainability of success. Principles are the belief system that provides the foundation for all work coming up. While our goals change according to each new situation, our principles remain the same. Our principles are our reason for taking action, like hollering at the kids trotting around the practice field, instead of sprinting to their next phase. Our principles are permanent, and remain after we are gone. When my dad died, I didn't read much from his former players and assistants about why he coached the way he did. Instead, the overwhelming memories from those who played for him or coached with him were about the life lessons he taught them through small conversations at water beaks, before or after practice, in the weight room, at the store, and everywhere else. Dad's principles of how to live the right way influenced far more people than his coaching record and achievements, and are his true legacy. Our principles are easy for others to buy in to if they share the same vision, like Juan Rodriguez (Head Football Coach of Lubbock High) and me. Coach Rod came to LHS with a set of principles about how to turn around Lubbock High, and our visions just clicked. There were other coaches who did not share Coach Rod's vision and principles, so they moved on. Our principles are never met like goals, but are instead lived out for all to see on a daily basis. Our principles

*Principles Continued on next page*





help us navigate the gray areas of life that seem to grow exponentially. Our principles provide more than enough room for achievements of all kinds, since they provide the foundation for our procession through life. Finally, our principles can never be too low or too high. They are our way of life, and tell everyone else more about who we are as coaches than any of our records or achievements. If you're still interested, let's talk about standards, or the "how" next.

Our standards are our recipes for success. They are our action steps that embody our principles. In other words, they are the house that is built upon the foundation of our principles. Here in Lubbock, we have tons of empty lots where houses once stood. I can usually tell how good of a house it was by looking for the foundation. If I can't find anything, it was probably an old pier and beam foundation that went to crud and caused the house to fall apart. If I find a slab, I know the house that sat on it was probably petty sturdy, and it took one heck of a beating to wreck it. So it is with our standards. Our standards are the tools we use to lead others through the gray areas of life. Our standards are also permanent, like our principles, and in coaching make up our mission statements, like "We will be more prepared than our opponent." Our standards are set according to our principle, so they are always high. Finally, our standards are never superficial. They are deep and meaningful, and tell everyone how we live our life.

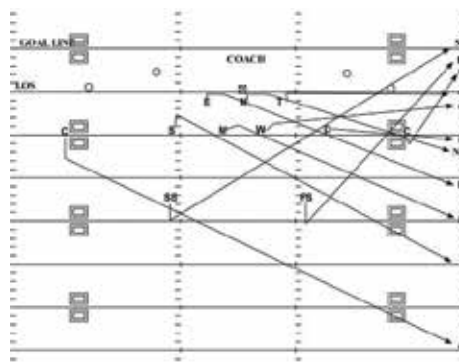
Sometimes, it can be difficult to tell the difference between a goal, principle, and standard. The easiest way to tell the difference is to watch and listen when a compromising situation occurs. If a goal is not met, we get angry or depressed, and when we achieve a goal, we are generally happy. In other words, success or failure to meet a goal results in a surface level response. If one of our principles is compromised, we tend to get quiet and talk about how we need to change the way we think about or look at something. When we maintain

our principles, we tend to talk about what drives us. In other words, principles require an intimate level response. Lastly, when one of our standards is not met, we tend to question what went wrong. When a standard is not met, we tend to examine what went wrong. When one of our standards is met, we tend to talk about what went right. In other words, our standards require us to take an introspective approach.

Goals, are a great jumping off point when thinking about our future, especially in coaching, and in "hopeless" situations, where it feels like everything and everyone is against us. However, at some point, our goals will not be enough, and that is when our principles and standards must take over. For example, if your goal is to make the playoffs, what happens after you make the playoffs? I suggest that instead of having to add additional goals that make everyone feel like you're demanding more, start off with the principle of preparing for and playing each game as though it is a playoff game and you'll never have to address that aspect of your team's play. Practice plans built around principles and standards usually result in workouts with tons of effort, energy, enthusiasm, and FUN. Practice plans built around goals tend to have a "check the box" attitude ("we did pursuit drill, we did 7 on 7, etc...") and lack the fire of principle-driven practices ("fly to the ball," "no fly zone," etc...).

Here are some examples of goal vs. principle drills in football:

**Goal-driven pursuit drill:**

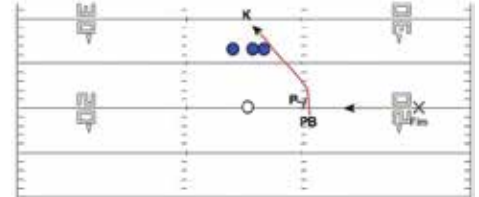


A very good drill if you want to

make sure everyone is doing their job

If your principle on defense is "FANATICAL PURSUIT TO THE BALL," get rid of the cones! Instead, put a popup dummy, tackle ring, standup pad, or something for each defender to violently throw their body at, wrap up, and pile drive into the sideline. THEN, you will know who your fanatics are!

**Goal-driven punt block drill:**



Again, a very good drill to make sure the blocker does not run into the punter, but...

If your standard is to LAY OUT for the block, you might want to use either a crash mat, or one of the small pit mats from pole vault, put it where you want your blocker landing, and have them practice launching to block the punt without hitting the punter or rendering themselves childless from getting either the football or punter's foot blasted into their, uh, manhood. You can do the same thing for PAT/FG block.

Pregame is a great way for everyone to see your principles and standards in action. It's also the most boring part of game night for the crowd. When I was a head football coach, I started out with the usual: individual, team D, team O, kick a couple of PAT/FG's, team break, head in. Very traditional. Very phony, hype-wise. There's only so many times I could hear 2 claps and a Ric Flair after each play on air. Ugh! The next year, I put my principles and standards on display in our first scrimmage pregame. No individual. Instead, we did team dynamic stretch, then we had run hull from the 3-yard line trying to score, and 7 on 7 from the 20-yard line coming out. The crowd freaked, my AD freaked, the opponent

*Principles Continued on next page*



stopped warming up to watch us. The only ones who did not freak were our guys, who were JACKED! After that, I put the ball on the 30, and we had a thud-speed, full team scrimmage. Now the crowd was into it, and everyone was JACKED! Finally, we lined up to kick PAT/FG with full-blown block coming, and it was awesome! We came back for the scrimmage and laid waste to our opponent, who was ready for a scrimmage, while we were ready for a game. That year, we made the playoffs without a senior class, mainly because every player, coach, manager, and parent bought into our principles and standards.

## THE BLUEPRINT

If you are still reading this, kudos to you! It took me three days just to type it up! Anyway, the following are 10 questions to ask yourself about your principles, standards, and goals if you feel like testing the waters of the THS-CA job portal:

1. What is important to you as a coach?
2. What does #1 look like in your words and actions?

3. What does #1 look like in your interactions with players, staff, faculty, admin., parents, and community?
4. How do you lead (are you vocal, or do you rely on your actions to speak for you)?
5. When things go wrong, do you react or respond?
6. When things go right, are you surprised, or do you expect great things to happen?
7. What do you think about when you're alone?
8. How do you look at the "ugly" jobs, like laundry?
9. How do you treat the various levels of staff in your program?
10. What do you dream about?

Once you answer these questions, here are some ABC's of operational principles for you to define (each of us has our own, non-Webster's definition for each):

- Accountability
- Buy-in
- Courage
- Determination
- Empathy
- Family



- Growth
- Happiness
- Intelligence
- Knowledge
- Love
- Maturity
- Norms
- Opportunity
- Performance
- Responsibility
- Service
- Teamwork
- United
- Victory
- Work ethic

If these words are not in your answers to 1-10, you might consider adding them to your daily vocabulary.

At the end of the day, we all should ask ourselves two questions:

1. Did I live out my principles?
2. How did I, or How did I fail to?



**June 2-5, 2024**

**Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Round Rock**



# South Texas High School Wrestling Under the Lights in Weslaco, Texas

by Moises Chavez

Tomas Garces was a Weslaco High School Alumni that graduated in 2003. During his time at Weslaco High School, he participated in the wrestling program where he was a 2X District Champion, 3X Regional Qualifier, and 2X State Qualifier and amassed an overall record of 95 - 17. Upon graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Army to serve his country and help achieve his goal of graduating college and becoming a wrestling coach. Unfortunately, when he was deployed to Iraq, his company was ambushed and Tomas lost his life. Since his death, WISD has held a memorial tournament in his honor to commemorate the ultimate sacrifice he paid for our country.

This year's event marked the 19th Anniversary of the Tomas Garces Invitational held by Weslaco High School. WISD wanted to think outside the box and attempt to do something that had never been done in the Rio Grande Valley; host an outdoor wrestling tournament. When the idea came up, we knew that it would be a daunting task, but we were up for the challenge. We were very ambitious with our vision to make this a once in a lifetime memory for all of our student athletes, community and the Garces Family. After meeting with our Athletic Director and Athletic Coordinator, approval was granted to move forward with the planning process to be able to conduct our outdoor tournament at our beloved Bobby Lackey Stadium under the Friday Night Lights.

In planning for this event, we realized that in order for us to pull this off, we would need to have a complete team effort to execute this vision. With the help of our Athletic Director, Freddy Rodriguez, Athletic Coordinator, Roy Stroman, Principal, Yvett Morales, and Head Wrestling Coach, Moises Chavez,



Tomas Garces Invitational Wrestling Tournament

we were able to develop a plan and carry it out with precision. This year, a total of 24 boys and girls teams from 11 different school districts participated in the Tomas Garces Invitational, equaling roughly about 300 wrestlers that competed in this Team Dual Tournament. There were also about 250 spectators, coaches, referees from all across the Rio Grande Valley in attendance that came out to support and witness this event. A total of 4 wrestling mats were used and extended from the 20 yard line to 20 yardline. High Schools in attendance included Weslaco HS, Weslaco East HS, PSJA HS, PSJA Memorial HS, Edinburg Vela HS, Sharyland HS, Sharyland Pioneer HS, McAllen Memorial HS, San Benito HS, Harlingen HS, and Los Fresnos HS.

When asked about this year's tournament; Rafael Garces, older brother to Tomas Garces, stated "This Wrestling Invitational has truly been an unforgettable tribute to my brother's memory. The overwhelming turnout of teams and the community coming together to honor his legacy through this demanding sport, which meant so much to him, has touched our family deeply". Garces also stated "Having the Invitational held

at the Stadium feels like a fitting tribute, offering Tommy a front-row seat from Heaven to witness the love and respect poured out in his honor".

"We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every individual who contributed to the success of the Tomas Garces Invitational. Your support and dedication have ensured that his memory will endure, etched into the making of this event for years to come" Garces stated.

This year's Tomas Garces Invitational was a huge success. All of our hard work and dedication paid off and we indeed made history. Weslaco High School and Weslaco ISD will forever be remembered as being the first to host an outdoor wrestling tournament in the Rio Grande Valley. At Weslaco High School, we are very big on tradition and look forward to making this outdoor tournament a new Panther Wrestling Tradition. We look forward to only growing this tournament, and having teams from across the state come down and compete at the Tomas Garces Invitational. We are the standard that most will now try to replicate. "We Are Weslaco and We Are Built To Win!!



# Big Lifts, Big Growth : The Path of Powerlifting in Texas

The fast growing sport of powerlifting is spreading across the State of Texas. Powerlifting competitions have been held in Texas for over 40 years with the first Texas State Meet held in 1982.



The state has seen an increase in the number of participating member schools, athlete participation, qualified judges and competition meets of all sizes. For proof of the powerlifting boom all you have to do is look at the state level competitions held annually in March. The Boys State Competition is held over three days in the massive Taylor County Expo Center in Abilene, Tx. While the Girls State Competition is held over four days in the spacious Comerica Center in Frisco, Tx. With a seating capacity of 6,000 the venue in Frisco has drawn rave reviews for powerlifting spectators, coaches and participants. In 2024 there will be over 1,000 athletes competing at the state level.

Despite not being affiliated with the University Interscholastic League (UIL) most school districts assign two or more coaches to powerlifting and competition season runs from January through March. It's a shorter season allowing athletes to also participate in other Winter/Spring sports such as Soccer, Softball, Baseball and Track & Field. During its early years; powerlifting was a predominantly male sport



and was seen as an extra lift for the football players. Today the sport has more than 1,500 member schools participating state wide. Multiple factors have drawn student athletes to the sport including individual performance over team setting, targeted goals on performance and assigned weight classes that help to level the playing field for participants. Some schools in Texas have added a powerlifting period to the academic day for those participating in the sport. This helps with spacing in weight rooms and ensures safety of athletes as coaches are able to supervise the lifts in a controlled environment.

The sport is governed in the State of Texas by the THSPA (Boys) and THSWPA (Girls). These associations operate independent of each other and establish rules for competition, raise scholarship money, host regional and state level meets and maintain state rankings of participants. Texas has been divided into 8 Regions and 4 Divisions within each Region. Lifters jockey for position in regional rankings to gain one of the coveted spots at the regional meet. In recent years we have seen schools group together by geographical location in an

“unofficial” district to help set up meets and reduce travel. For instance five schools within close proximity will join up for a five meet season in which they all host one meet. Some schools prefer to do this to ensure a qualifying meet each week and reduce travel. The THSPA and THSWPA does not regulate “unofficial” districts but does designate

the requirements for what is considered to be a qualifier meet. For more information you can visit the following websites [www.thspa.us](http://www.thspa.us) for the Boys and [www.thswpa.com](http://www.thswpa.com) for the Girls.

Hosting a meet can involve several days of planning and well over fifty volunteers the day of the meet. Volunteers are needed as table workers, spotters, loaders, expeditors, facility set up and concession

workers. Official judges must pass a test administered by the association. In some regions of the state the judges will come from the Club Sport of Powerlifting at area colleges. Most meets require a space that can accommodate a minimum of three weight racks and up to six weight racks for the various weight classes. For most schools the only suitable space would be in a gym to allow for spectator viewing areas. Some schools are able to utilize multipurpose areas such as a turf room to maximize their space. In the end it's all worth it with an abundance of kids competing and seeing these students accomplishing things never thought possible. As our state continues to grow and add more schools we will continue to see more and more participation in the sport of powerlifting. Everything is bigger in Texas and powerlifting is no exception.



# Empowering Safety: Athletic Directors Connect and Collaborate at the National Interscholastic Athletics and After-School Activities Safety and Security Forum

By Dena Scott, CMAA, Director of Athletics, Fort Bend ISD

Athletic Directors, Superintendents, Principals, medical personnel, police and security officers from all across the country gathered at Legacy Stadium in Katy ISD for the National Interscholastic Athletics and After-School Activities Safety and Security Forum held on January 23rd and 24th. The objective of the forum was to address key safety and security challenges facing interscholastic activities and after-school activities and to share best practices for continuous improvement. Additionally, the forum provided moderated discussions in the following areas: access control and screening, extreme weather planning, emergency medical planning, emergency communications, staff training and development, and recovery planning.

*“These forums are designed for professional development and interactive discussions. The information gathered enhances our best practice guides for the Interscholastic Community responsible for safety and security at athletics and after-school activities. We lean on industry leaders for topics that are presented during our forums so that we are bringing meaningful content to those responsible for keeping our venues, staff, students, and spectators safe. It is important to stay current with trends and challenges facing the industry.”*

– Lauren Cranford, MPH, CHES, Director of Operations, National



Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4)

Attendees were provided opportunities to not only listen to industry leaders on several valuable topics, they were also able to provide feedback in the discussion groups that will be compiled into a best practices document which will be shared at a later date.

*“This great event, provided by the NCS4, allowed the participants the opportunity to collaborate with our colleagues from around the nation on identified best practices that we mutually benefit from. Our industry is committed to keeping our communities, students, and staff safe when attending events and opportunities like this Forum are critical to our planning.”*

– Ben Rolens, General Manager of Facilities, Leonard E. Merrell Center

As Athletic Directors seek further professional development opportunities, forums like the NCS4 serve as

invaluable resources, offering meticulously organized sessions designed to equip participants with the most effective protective measures and mitigating strategies.

*“The National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4) Forum was one of the best I ever attend-*

*ed. The educational leaders from across the country shared invaluable information to help us grow and improve our practices in managing events after the end of the school day. Superintendents, principals, athletic directors, medical personnel and security officers shared best practices they use to assist with running a safe and orderly event before the event starts, during the event, and after the event ends. It takes a special skill set to manage a mixture of students, community members, and fans of the athletic event they love to watch. I got better from attending this forum and look forward to the next one.”*

André Walker, Athletic Director, Houston ISD

In essence, this forum represents a beacon of excellence in promoting safety and security within interscholastic athletics and after-school activities, empowering Athletic Directors to navigate the complexities of event management with confidence and proficiency.



# Celebrating One of Our Own

By Sonia Almanza, Northside ISD

At East Central ISD's annual foundation gala, Suzette Arriola, Athletic Director of East Central ISD in San Antonio, was the recipient of the Margaret Zotz "Spirit of EC" award.

Annually, individuals submit applicants they feel embrace Margaret's spirit, and ensure it lives on in the East Central ISD community.

Margaret Zotz lost her battle with cancer in 2020, and this is only the second year the award has been given out. A former East Central ISD student "Megan" submitted Suzette as an applicant and shared her story so everyone can obtain an understanding of the impact educators, coaches, and/or athletic directors can have a students' lives.

Megan became pregnant at an early age and dropped out of school. She attempted to come back a year later, but dropped out again. She came back for a third time, tried to finish, didn't pass her Math STARR test and decided graduating from high school was not something she would be able to accomplish.

Megan got mixed up with the wrong crowd and started doing things she's not proud of, excepting her life was just going to be what it is. Until one day, living in a house, surrounded by cameras, she noticed a woman with spiky hair, and a man approaching their gate. The woman with spiky hair was Suzette Arriola and she asked if she could talk with her about completing her high school education. Megan said, "no thanks" and "did not want to hear anything she had to say". Suzette replied, «I can wait,» after twenty minutes Megan realized this lady meant it and decided to talk to her.

Suzette had a lot to say, but one thing she asked Megan was, "What kind of mother do you want to be



**Margaret Zotz Family: Left to right, son-in-law, Jonathan Chandler, daughter, Lisa Chandler, Suzette Arriola, and, husband Wesley Zotz.**

for your children?" Suzette then went on to tell Megan, "I believe in you, you've got this!" Megan said she had never had anyone believe in her and "you got this" became her mantra and somethings she tells her self and children all the time.

Needless to say, Megan completed high school knowing she "had it." Megan went on to community college and completed her associate's degree. Next, she got connected with

The University of Incarnate Word and completed her bachelors in accounting. Megan now has a master's degree in accounting from University of Incarnate Word and is a CPA candidate, working as an auditor for a local accounting firm.

Megan concluded by telling a sobbing crowd, her, her husband, and now 4 girls have a wonderful and stable life all because of a spiky haired, determined lady showed up at her house one day, and told her "YOU GOT THIS!"

Megan's story is one of the many stories we as educators, coaches, and athletic directors have on the lives of not only student-athletes, but students overall. The impact Suzette had in Megan's life was life changing. The hard work and dedication Suzette puts in for all students, makes Suzette the perfect recipient of the Margaret Zotz "Spirit of EC" award.



# Athletic Facility Highlight: Huntsville ISD Athletic Complex

By: Megan Symank-Assistant AD College Station ISD

Huntsville ISD is wrapping up a 3-year athletic complex project that addressed all of its athletic needs. The 5A, one high school, school district is located on I-45 about an hour north of Houston with a beautiful piney woods backdrop. Head Football Coach and Athletic Director, Rodney Southern, has been with Huntsville ISD throughout this process and shared with me his experience.

**Q: What is the scope of the entire project?**

A: The entire athletic project consisted of: New 120 yard turf practice field, renovation of six tennis courts and building two new courts, new baseball and softball complex, new track runways and throwing events, new football stadium, new football field house. The entire project was part of a 127 million dollar bond package. The baseball and softball complex was part of prop A and the football stadium, field house, tennis courts and practice field were prop B. The total athletic amount was about 55 million dollars.

**Q: Can you describe the renovation process from identifying needs to construction completion? And, what was the timeline for this project?**

A: The project timeline was adjusted about six months due to pricing after Covid -19. The bond passed in May of 2021. The other issue was our site. The site had many design and build challenges. The football stadium was built on our existing site which had the turf field and track. The baseball and softball complex, new tennis courts and the turf practice field were all cleared areas. There is also a creek that runs through the middle of the job site.

**Q: What were the biggest priorities for this project?**

A: The top priority was getting all of Huntsville Athletics at one location and having a front door for our athletic program. Huntsville ISD did not have a baseball or softball complex. Huntsville ISD did not have a varsity football stadium. The project now has all of our athletic facilities on the high school campus.

**Q: What were some of the biggest challenges you faced?**

A: The biggest challenge was the building site. There were design issues based on the site and the ability to get everything to fit within our limitations.



Week One



Week 22

Huntsville Continued on next page



**Q: What part of this project are you most proud of?**

A: The three things I am most proud of are. The area between the football stadium and the baseball and softball complex. The bridge that connects the two facilities is incredible, especially at night. The other is the overall design and functionality of the football field house. The third is the overall appearance of our athletic facilities.

**Q: Is there anything you would change?**

A: I am not sure there is anything that I would change. We were very involved athletically in both the design and the function needed for our programs. You always see small things you may not like but the overall appearance and functional space is really good.



**Week 36**



**Completed project**







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