

TEXAS

Athletic Administrator

Summer 2024 Newsletter



**GAINING
THE EDGE**

Executive Director's Report — Rusty Dowling

Welcome to the 53rd annual Texas High School Athletic Directors Association State Conference. This will be a very rewarding State Conference and your attendance and participation will continue to make our annual Conference successful. The State Conference allows all athletic administrators the opportunity to network with other state athletic administrators, visit and continue to do business with our Exhibitors and THSADA sponsors as well as listen to our line-up of excellent speakers, participate in our professional development sessions, and take advantage of all resources provided to continue to effectively do the work of an athletic administrator. CPE hours are again available for all the Professional Development activities. The theme for this year's State Conference is, "Gaining the Edge." This theme adequately reflects the conference agenda that will be predominant at this year's State Conference. Professional Development will again be the focal point of the State Conference as we will have wide selection of professional development sessions along with our QUAD A program in addition to a new program that we are rolling out at this Conference called JHAMS – Junior High and Middle School program for athletic administrators.

The 2024 State Conference will kick off with our annual THSADA-PBK Sports Hall of Honor Celebration followed at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 2nd with several professional development lectures featuring Mr. Jim Walsh of the firm: Walsh, Gallegos, P.C., followed by our annual Sunday Night Kickoff Reception hosted by paragon Sports Constructors.

Monday will be a full day of professional development featuring UIL presentations, a panel featuring University Athletic Directors, a coaching leadership panel moderated by THSCA, QUAD A sessions and a wide variety of sessions offered throughout the day. This conference will be the largest attended event we've hosted and there will be numerous times where we will offer up to five concurrent sessions. A change for this year is we will host an afternoon Tradeshow for lunch then break into our professional development sessions followed by our Daktronics Tradeshow that will be open from 4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. with our Exhibitors, food, and beverage along with the camaraderie that is always present at these functions.

Tuesday morning the annual Hellas Construction-Benny Carter Memorial Golf Tournament will be held at the Golf Club at Star Ranch as well as another new addition to the schedule that will be a morning Tradeshow featuring a breakfast menu. Our JHAMS program will kick off the



day along with our continuing QUAD A program that will feature a resume review for QUAD A candidates that will be conducted by Athletic Directors and ISD Superintendents. We will end the business day with our Tuesday PBK Sports Tradeshow Festival.

Wednesday is the last day of the State Conference and will feature THSADA Committee reports, introduction of the new THSADA Board of Directors and a Legislative Council preview by UIL staff. The last session of the day we will speak to a new

Sportsmanship initiative that both THSCA and THSADA are sponsoring call – "The Texas Way" Rounding out the morning and the State Conference is our very popular Mega Drawings event.

The new THSADA Board of Director/Chairs/Ex-Officio members will officially be installed at the Wednesday morning session. Taking over as President of the THSADA is Leslie Slovak-Director of Athletics-Richardson ISD. Leslie has served the THSADA as a Committee member, Region Director, President-elect and now as the President. Serving as the new President-elect will be Andre Walker-Director of Athletics-Houston ISD. There will be several new Region Directors as well. Region 2 Director will be Jim Garfield-Abilene ISD, Region 5 Director is Mike Bass-Alvin ISD and Region 8 Director is Jay Govan-Northside ISD. We thank the previous Board for their services and look forward to working with the new members. The Committee Chairs and Ex-Officio members will remain the same.

Take advantage of everything the State Conference has to offer. Again welcome to the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center and enjoy the Conference.



Associate Executive Director's Update – Bob DeJonge

Membership

THSADA Membership continues to increase across the state! Each Region has experienced substantial growth over the last 12 month. When we convene in Round Rock for the State Conference we will have over 1650 members. There are some key factors that are responsible for our rapid growth. The work of the THSADA Membership committee throughout the year as well as the social media updates that occur weekly. Additionally, the quality programming that our TAAC, Quad A and JHAMS committees offer at our three events plays a key role in membership growth. The third factor contributing to our growth is the benefits of attending our Region meetings. Our Region Directors and Committee members do an outstanding job preparing an agenda that provides relevant and timely information to its members.



table discussions, updates from the UIL, THSCA and TGCA, as well of opportunities for State and Regional Sponsors to interact with our membership. Attendance at these meetings totals over 2500 per year!

Fall forum and Spring Sponsor Showcase –

These two THSADA events are placed strategically during the year to aid athletic administrators in preparing for the challenges that confront Athletic departments each year. Fall Forum is designed to give athletic administrators an opportunity to discuss strategies that will lead their departments to a successful year. The timing of this event also coincides with a soon to follow UIL Legislative Council which also includes realignment discussions every other year. Attendance at this event is over two hundred each year!

Spring Sponsor Showcase occurs in early spring just as the busiest and most challenging time of the year begins. This includes that overlap of winter and spring seasons, playoff planning, dealing with weather challenges, budget planning for the upcoming year, and possible legislative initiatives that may affect public education and our extra-curricular programs. Spring Sponsor Showcase also provides an exclusive opportunity for THSADA's key sponsors to interact with our membership. Spring Sponsor Showcase attendance numbers are over 250 attendees and 120 sponsors!

THSADA State Conference - This is the cornerstone event of the year for our association. This year we expect a record number of 650 attendees and over four hundred exhibitors. As attendance continues to increase THSADA leadership has also expanded course offerings. This year we will offer Thirty-nine professional development opportunities! Highlights include Legal updates regarding Title IX, UIL Updates, "The Texas Way" initiative, NIL

discussions, Quad A programming and our newest programs JHAMS for our Junior High and Middle School Coordinators. Additionally, do not miss opportunities include our Sunday afternoon Hall of Honor Celebration, The Benny Carter/ Hellas Construction Golf Tournament, and four tradeshow opportunities scattered throughout the conference. (food and Beverage served at each Tradeshow)

THSADA 2024 Awards – Presented at the THSADA / PBK Hall of Honor Celebration

This year's Award recipients are truly a reflection of the quality of our organization, THSADA is proud to recognize these outstanding individuals for their outstanding leadership and contributions to the profession of Athletic Administration

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

Region 1 – Brad Thiessen, Amarillo ISD

Region 2 – Jim Garfield, Abilene ISD

Region 3 – Leslie Slovak, Richardson ISD

Region 4 – David Cervantes, El Paso ISD

Region 5 – Andre Walker, Houston ISD

Region 6 – Janice Williamson, Bryan ISD

Region 7 – Ron Adame, Sharyland CISD

Region 8 – Melanie Hinson, Southwest ISD

DeJonge Continued on next page



Outgoing Region Directors

Region 2 – Jerod Womack, Mansfield ISD
Region 5 – André Walker, Houston ISD
Region 8 – Melanie Hinson, Southwest ISD

THSADA Citation

Melanie Hinson, Southwest ISD
Suzette Arriola, East Central ISD

THSADA Superintendent of the Year

Dr. Roland Hernandez, Corpus Christi ISD
Dr. Joe Young, Brownwood ISD

Joe Bill Fox Award

Pat Kohan, Kohan Content

PBK Sports Athletic Director of the Year

Philip O’Neal, Retired Mansfield ISD

Hall of Honor Inductees

Maria Kennedy, Retired El Paso ISD
Philip O’Neal, Retired Mansfield ISD
Debbie Fuchs, Retired Clear Creek ISD

Please make a point to congratulate these deserving award recipients when you see them at the conference!

From The President — Leslie Slovak

It is an incredible honor to serve as the next President of the THSADA. This is an amazing organization filled with leaders who are all in for kids and coaches. I am looking forward to serving in this role as we continue to grow our profession and provide valuable resources for our members. Please do not hesitate to reach out, if I can do anything to help you. We are better together!



2024-25 Board of Directors

Officers

President – Leslie Slovak, Richardson ISD
President-elect – André Walker, Houston ISD

(Board Committee)

(Finance)
(Finance)

Region Directors

Region 1 – Toby Tucker, New Home ISD (Strategic Planning)
Region 2 – Jim Garfield, Abilene ISD (Strategic Planning)
Region 3 – Jennifer Frazier, McKinney ISD (Strategic Planning)
Region 4 – David Cervantes, El Paso ISD (Strategic Planning)
Region 5 – Mike Bass, Alvin ISD (Strategic Planning)
Region 6 – Jason Dean, Georgetown ISD (Strategic Planning)
Region 7 – Rob Davies, Harlingen CISD (Strategic Planning)
Region 8 – Jay Govan, Northside ISD (Strategic Planning)

THSADA Staff

Director of Administrative Services – Ellissa Unger (Resolutions)
Director of Finance – Diane McKay (Finance Committee)
Director of JHAMS – Bill Daws
Director QUAD A – David Kuykendall/Debbie Fuchs
Director of Exhibits/Sponsorships – Dave Stephenson
Director of Convention Services – Lisa Stephenson
Director of Professional Development – Johanna Denson
Director of IT and Operations – Jeff Lillibridge
Director of Membership – Mary Cooksley
Event Technology Coordinator – Keith Kilgore
State Conference Golf Coordinator – Joe Barnett

Ex-Officio

Superintendent – Dr. Roland Hernandez, Corpus Christi ISD (Resolutions)
Superintendent – Dr. Joe Young, Brownwood ISD (Strategic Planning)

THSADA Committee Chairs

Membership – Tom Lee, Sharyland ISD (Resolutions)
Awards – Russ Reeves, Rockwall ISD (Resolutions)
Policy – Silvia Salinas, Del Valle ISD (Resolutions)
Publications – Andrea Fluhman, Amarillo ISD (Resolutions)
Athletic – Stan Leech, Boerne ISD (Resolutions)-Chair
Officials – Mike Bass, Alvin ISD
TAAC – Johanna Denson, THSADA (Strategic Planning)
NIAAA – Brenda Marshall, Corpus Christi ISD (Resolutions)

Executive Staff

Executive Director – Rusty Dowling (Finance Committee)
Associate Executive Director – Bob DeJonge (Strategic Planning)
Assistant Executive Director – Jody Hormann

“The Texas Way” is a cooperative venture between THSADA and THSCA to address the problems and concerns regarding sportsmanship and what proactive measures can be taken to minimize these concerns. Look for further information regarding this initiative to be released at the THSCA Coaching School in San Antonio.



Regional News Updates

Region 1

Region 1 welcomes new athletic administrators:

Claudia Garcia - Girls Athletic Director and Softball Coach, Hereford

Floyd White - Pampa, Athletic Director

Joshua Johnson - Tulia ISD, Athletic Director

Michael Lozano - Spearman ISD, Athletic Director

DJ Howell - Sterling City, Athletic Director/Head football coach

John Peterson - Canyon ISD, Athletic Director

Joshua Hernandez - Perryton ISD, Athletic Director/Head Football Coach

Region 2

Region 2 welcomes new athletic administrators:

Abilene Wylie - Mike Fecci comes to Abilene Wylie ISD after a long career in McKinney ISD and previously served as Associate Athletic Director for McKinney. Fecci brings experience in a multi-school district and is a Hardin Simmons alum.

Abilene ISD - Athletic Director Jim Garfield announced the hiring of longtime friend and colleague Lou Mora as the Assistant Athletic Director for Abilene ISD. He will fill the role left vacant by the retirement of Coach Del Van Cox who served athletes for over 30 years.

Region 3

We are working to confirm a Region 3 Entry Fee Agreement. This agreement allows any school district to participate in an agreed entry fee. Schools cannot charge participating schools more than the agreed fee. If schools choose not to participate, then they can be charged any entry fee. The agreement covers all individual and team sports.

Retiring Athletic Directors:

Becky Spurlock – Azle ISD

Russ Reeves – Rockwall ISD

Steve Koch – Jesuit HS

Region 4

Region 4 is experimenting with using a shared Google Drive Folder to develop schedules for the 11 school districts, 4 private schools, and 3 charter schools that total 42 high schools in the region (not including the high schools with Las Cruces, NM). There are 4 editors representing the multi-school districts who meet to set up the draft schedules by dragging the schools from column one to either the home or visitor columns to create a matchup. Teams are ranked by competitiveness and size to create the best possible non-district matchups. Each assistant athletic director and athletic director are commentators and able to go into the spreadsheet and leave notes requesting matchups or changes. The same process is used for tournaments. Once this process is completed, all of the ADs meet to make final changes and finalize the schedules and tournaments to share with coaches, admin, and publish. The El Paso region has never had the coaches create schedules. The ADs have historically met weekly or bi-weekly to work on schedules. Getting 20+ people to match on 20 different paper schedules wasn't always accurate. Now, we are all using the same master schedule for each sport.

Region 5

Retiring ADs

Scott Moehlig – Alief ISD

Kirk Eaton – Cy Fair ISD

Pat Dowling – Katy ISD

Tony Willis – Texas City ISD

Jim Holley – New Caney ISD

We have also updated our entry fee agreement to cover the increasing cost of tournaments.

Region 6

Congratulations to Janice Williamson on her retirement with Bryan ISD. She served in roles from coach to executive athletic director over the span of 46 years. Thank you for your service!

Congratulations to Dereck Rush on his promotion to Athletic Director of Bryan ISD.

Region 7

After a successful tenure in the education field, a special congratulations to Edinburg CISD Athletic Director Roy Garza and Mission CISD Athletic Director Leticia Ibarra on their retirements. Coach Roy Garza was an educator, coach, and administrator for the past 39.5 years. During his tenure, he coached golf, basketball, and football and led ECISD as their AD for the past 10 years.

Coach Letty Ibarra has dedicated 39 years during her journey as an educator, coach, and administrator. She coached track, basketball, softball, soccer, volleyball and has led MISD for the past 8 1/2 years.

Region 7 wishes the best of luck to Coach Garza and Coach Ibarra in their future endeavors.

Region 8

Congratulations to Rodney Wilson from Northside ISD and Sylvia L. Barrera from Laredo ISD who will be retiring at the end of the school year.

New Athletic Directors in Region 8. Charles Bruce, Northside ISD and Russell Doege, New Braunfels ISD.

New Region 8 Director Jay Govan III, Northside ISD

Northeast ISD and Northside ISD in San Antonio will host the 2024 UIL State Tennis May 16-17.



Athletic Director Spotlight: Maria Kennedy – A Game Changer for El Paso Athletics

By Michael Mackeben, Clint ISD

During the 2024 Track & Field Regionals in Lubbock Brad Thiessen, Amarillo ISD Athletic Director shared one of his battles with Maria Kennedy over playoff locations. Brad thought Maria said Lovington, NM only to find out Maria had Loving, NM reserved - a 125 miles closer drive for El Paso and a town of 1300 vs 11,000 – needless to say, his coach was not impressed with the agreement. Brad said the ironic thing about his battles with Maria, is they have now become close friends who visit each other often after his wife and Maria developed a friendship from their interest in beauty products outside of athletics.

In the August 2020 THSADA Spotlight on Maria, she shared that she grew up with six brothers and one sister and to survive in a house full of men, she excelled in sports while growing up in Van Horn, Texas - all five feet and one hundred pounds of her! She used athletics and education to help shape who she is today. She played basketball at Sul Ross State University in the early 1980s and began a 20-year coaching career in Victoria ISD, Andrews ISD, and El Paso ISD. During her career, she was honored for her accomplishments, which included:

- 1997 El Paso Times Coach of the Year for the Franklin HS Girls Basketball Team
- 1998 El Paso Times Coach of the Year for the Franklin HS Girls Basketball Team
- 2018 THSADA Region 4 Athletic Director of the Year
- 2019 Margaret McKown Distinguished Service Award from the Texas Girls Coaches Association
- 2020 University of Texas El Paso Women in Sports Award
- 2021 induction into the El Paso

Athletic Hall of Fame

During the 11 years as an assistant athletic director and 5 years as the athletic director for El Paso ISD, she served on association committees and held positions in state and national athletic organizations:

- THSADA Membership Committee Chair
- Region 4 Director
- THSADA and NIAAA Panels
- THSCA Urban ISD Committee
- NIAAA Region 4 Rep

In 2021, Maria decided to retire from El Paso ISD, but it was short lived. She continued to collaborate with different companies that work with Texas athletic programs and in 2023, she took over as the interim athletic director at Loretto Academy in El Paso. In March, Maria became the athletic coordinator for Gadsden ISD in New Mexico where she continues to work with New Mexico and Texas athletic directors and coaches.

Maria is a fierce competitor and willing to stand toe to toe with anyone. She may be small, but the Energizer Bunny would need more than a few energy drinks to keep up with Maria.

She never lost her love for fitness and to this day, is grinding it out every morning with her cross-fit group. Retirement offers time to travel for Maria and Aubrey, her husband who is also a retired teacher and coach (and still coaching high school golf). They now spend their time traveling around the country visiting their children and watching their grandchildren compete with their clubs, school teams, and universities.

I asked Mike Williams, former Ysleta ISD AD and current Garland ISD Assistant AD and Rusty Dowling, THSADA Executive Director what they thought Maria's greatest contribution was. They both said the same thing. Maria was one of a small group of strong women who led the way for women to lead large urban athletic programs in Texas. Prior to Maria, El Paso felt isolated from the rest of the state. Her persistence, personality and her hard work brought the region into the mainstream of Texas athletics and opened doors for the current area athletic directors to have relationships with the rest of the state that did not really exist years ago.

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE-Rusty Dowling

	Members	School District
Region 1	Andrea Fluhman-Chair	Amarillo ISD
Region 2	Scott Campbell	Stephenville ISD
Region 3	Kody Groves	Mesquite ISD
Region 4	Michael Mackeben	Clint ISD
Region 5	Dena Scott	Fort Bend ISD
Region 7	Henry Cantu	Rio Grande City ISD
Region 6	Megan Symank	College Station ISD
Region 8	Sonia Almanza	Northside ISD



Standardization of Middle School Athletic Facilities

By Megan Symank, Assistant AD, College Station ISD

For growing school districts, building schools sparks enthusiasm in the community. There are increased opportunities for kids to learn in new buildings and excel in extracurricular activities. However, one critical component to the design phase of new construction is the standardization of facilities when considering equity in a multi-middle school district.

Athletic Director at Hutto ISD, Brad LaPlante, shares Hutto's vision as they prepare to open their third middle school. Hutto ISD's process for the standardization of middle school athletic facilities includes a plan for the outdoor facilities and for the indoor facilities. These plans are detailed here.

Outdoor Standards

The standards set in Hutto ISD for athletic facilities at middle schools are intended to provide functional space for event hosting and daily school practice. Hosting events may include school athletic events like middle school football and soccer games or any outside rentals. Schools will also conduct daily practices for football, soccer, and track, as well as daily use for off-season.

Each of the 3 middle schools in Hutto ISD are aimed to include the following after construction or upgrades:

- Artificial Turfed Field (comparable to high school)
- Water access at the 50 yd line
- Appropriate Electricity Access
- 500 Seat Capacity Spectator Bleachers
- LED Lighting
- 4 Lane Track and 4 Jump Lanes (long/triple jump)
- Concessions/Restroom/Storage Building
- Flagpole
- Outdoor Speaker System



Single gym format with bleachers for 2 separate courts photo provided by Hutto ISD.

- Wireless Scoreboard
- Close Proximity to Parking
- 8 Ft Chain Link Fence
- Shot Put and Discus Ring
- High Jump area and Pole Vault Area
- Wireless Internet Accessibility
- Golf Cart/Gator Access

Indoor Standards

In addition to the standards set for outdoor athletic facilities, Hutto ISD also aims to standardize the gym areas of middle schools. These standards are to include:

- 1-Gymnasium with Wood Flooring: 2 Courts with Seating
- Separation of PE & Athletics Locker Rooms
- Wireless Scoreboard
- 65" Smartboard on Wheels
- Weightroom

While every school district may have unique circumstances, understanding the needs of the community is imperative to the success of schools. Hutto ISD's standards for building new facilities is only one approach to how



Turf photo provided by Hutto ISD.

they provide their students with vast opportunities while ensuring equity for all students. As Texas school districts consider renovating and building new middle school facilities there are foundational components that can be considered with the help of neighboring ADs who have walked this path first.



Female Athlete Symposiums

By: Sonia Almanza, Northside ISD

To help educate younger generations on leadership roles, female symposiums are becoming more popular in middle school and high school. Symposiums are used to inform younger female generations of the opportunities they have in leadership roles, whether in sports or not, and the characteristics they learn in athletics to help them achieve their goals. It also gives the female athletes a safe environment to ask questions to the speakers on any subject.

A couple of weeks ago, an all-female panel with various administrative positions, were invited to speak to the female athletes at Taft HS in San Antonio. The goal of this event was to speak to female athletes on adversity, teamwork, work/life balance, body image, healthy habits, social media, and females in leadership roles. The different levels of experience and current jobs held by the speakers gave the athletes a different view from each of the speakers. It was also a chance for the athletes to see a panel of current females in leadership roles throughout their community and local school districts. Mrs. Ileana Perez spoke to what she sees in elementary school aged children and how extracurricular activities lays the foundation of skills they will continue to use beyond elementary school, such as a sense of teamwork and problem-solving skills. Coach Maggi Whelm spoke from her perspective as a high school coach and the skills she installs in her athletes such as communication skills and punctuality and how she incorporates them into her practices every day. Most high school athletes have the goal of playing in college. The audience had the pleasure of hearing Coach Valerie



Left to Right: David Hinojosa, Moderator. Speakers: Maggi Welham, Assistant Athletic Coordinator East Central ISD, Suzette Arriola, Athletic Director East Central ISD, Ileana Perez, Principal Fields Elementary, Valerie Huizar, Head Girls Basketball Coach St. Mary's University, Sonia Almanza Assistant Athletic Director NISD at Taft High School

Huizar current head girls' basketball coach at St. Mary's University. She was able to express to the audience that in high school athletics you learn life skills and in college she helps athletes execute these skills on and off the court. She also spoke to the expectations of college athletes and what she looks for when recruiting high school athletes. Suzette Arriola and Sonia Almanza spoke on being a female in an athletic administrative role. Both spoke from a behind the scenes look and even though athletic directors do not work directly with athletes every day, they work directly with the coaches that work with athletes every day. Every speaker also spoke real life struggles to overcome adversity, the skills they learned in athletics, and how athletics attributes to their current leadership role.

Southwest ISD held their first female symposium called "See Her Lead" this past fall. The goal of the symposium was to ensure female athletes are not alone and have people who believe in them to achieve their goals. One of the activities the athletes participated in was a vision board to outline their prospective career and the steps needed to achieve their goal. One of the keynote speakers was Coach Ashley Carter. She spoke to the athletes on team culture and the identity, confidence, and mental skills they need to succeed at anything in life, not just the game or society's perception of success. Coach Carter discussed overcoming barriers in society and teach the athletes "to unlock the tools already within them so that they dominate not just the game, but also the game of life!"



Female athletes from SWISD at the first annual "See Her Lead" symposium.



One Season to the Next: Life of Athletic Trainers

By Scott Campbell - Stephenville ISD

As the school year comes to a close most Athletic Trainers working for a school district in Texas are beginning to put their plans in place for the next year. Experience tells them that the August days of Volleyball, Football and Cross Country will be here before they know it. There is a lot of work to be done between May and August. That to-do list could include some critical components that will go a long way in helping kids be successful. That to do list includes athletic physicals, hiring staff, adding certifications and attending summer conferences.

For many districts the month of May will include a free or reduced fee athletic physical available to student-athletes in the district. This is an important step in the process to identify any medical issues or limitations that would impact a student athlete's performance and overall well-being. Having a completed and clear physical in hand come August puts kids ahead, setting them up for a great start to the year. Licenses Athletic Trainers (LAT's) compile and organize the list of students who still need a physical ensuring no one slips through the cracks and work hand in hand with head coaches and athletic administrators.

Some school districts are in hiring mode as the school calendar counts down. Just as the coaching cycles begin to move in late Spring so often does the search for athletic trainers. In some cases for smaller districts they are transitioning from perhaps an out of district contracted trainer to a full-time on campus LAT. Texas has made some strides in this area as school districts recognize the need and liability to ensure student safety by providing more full time employees. In some larger districts schools might be transitioning from one full time role to adding a second or even a third. As school districts grow, adding additional train-



ers on campus allows for balancing the workload both with practices, games and morning treatment times.

School districts within close proximity to colleges that regularly produce new LAT's have an advantage when it comes to hiring. The pool of applicants is often right there within the near community or driving distance to the district. Most trainers hired at the high school level come with experience at the collegiate level. Their collegiate training programs allow them to work with different intercollegiate sports during their time in college that really benefits them when they find themselves covering sports of all varieties. The athletic training field is in the process of transitioning to a Master's degree for entry level positions. One delay in the hiring process is Spring graduates take their exam in April and they must await their results before being hired. In Texas you must have a license through the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations. (TDLR) to practice as an athletic trainer. In addition a Board of Certification (BOC) allows trainers to practice anywhere in the world that recognizes athletic training.

Continuing education is important for all educators including Athletic

Trainers. Certified Athletic Trainers are required 50 CEU hours every two years. There are several opportunities throughout the summer months including Southwest Athletic Trainers Association, more commonly known as SWATA. Texas shares a district (Southwest Athletic Trainers' Association) with Arkansas so the conference rotates each year. The last two years were in Arlington but this year is in Arkansas at the end of July. Other options include the Davis Mountains Sports Medicine Clinic held in Alpine, Texas as well as the South Padre Athletic Training Seminar (SPATS) held on South Padre Island on the Texas coast. These continuing education opportunities also provide for networking and professional growth.

As one can see the responsibilities both personally and professionally for Athletic Trainers can be endless. It is a vital component to student health and wellness. These roles are essential in all school districts and provide a valuable resource for student athletes. The State of Texas must continue to look for ways to encourage growth and programs that ensure we are training up the next generation of Athletic Trainers.



From Player to Umpire: The Journey of Gustavo Garza

By Carlos Uresti (AC/HC – Brownsville Porter ECHS)

Roots of Resilience

Gustavo Garza's journey to the brink of umpiring in the major leagues began long before his days on the diamond. Raised by his grandparents, Gustavo learned the values of hard work, integrity, and perseverance at an early age. These guiding principles have shaped his character and fueled his passion for excellence in all aspects of life.

The Heartbreak and a New Path Unfolds

As a standout athlete at Brownsville Porter High School, Gustavo dreamed of making a name for himself on the baseball field. Directed by Carlos Uresti and mentored by Oscar Cortez, Gustavo poured his heart and soul into the game. However, fate dealt him a cruel hand his senior year when his final season was cut short due to COVID, leaving him without the chance to wear the Cowboys uniform one last time.

Undeterred by adversity, Gustavo discovered a new way to stay connected to the sport he loved. Enrolling in the newly adopted sports officiating class in Porter HS, he found himself drawn to the art of umpiring. Joining the local RGV chapter of umpires, Gustavo honed his skills under the watchful eye of TASO, laying the foundation for his future success.

Seizing Opportunities

A turning point came when Gustavo attended a free MLB Camp aimed at developing umpiring talent. Despite initial doubts, he caught the eye of MLB supervisors and earned an invitation to the Umpire Prospect



Carlos Uresti

Development Camp in Vero Beach, Florida. Determined to seize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, Gustavo dedicated himself to rigorous training and preparation.

In January of the following year, Gustavo journeyed to Vero Beach to showcase his talents in front of MLB supervisors. Facing physical challenges and mental exhaustion, he pushed himself to the limit, fueled by a burning desire to succeed. When the moment of truth arrived, Gustavo's perseverance paid off as he was offered a MiLB contract, fulfilling a lifelong dream.

As Gustavo embarked on his professional umpiring career, he faced new challenges and obstacles with unwavering determination. From the rookie complex league to Low A baseball, he continued to impress supervisors and climb the ranks, earning promotions and accolades along the way.

Gratitude and Growth

It is safe to say that not only did the sports officiating class open up an avenue for Gustavo to look at baseball in a different light but also equipped him with in depth knowledge to excel in the officiating world. The course also served as a pioneering initiative in the Rio Grande Valley, being its first of its kind in the region.

Throughout his journey, Gustavo never forgot the support and encouragement of

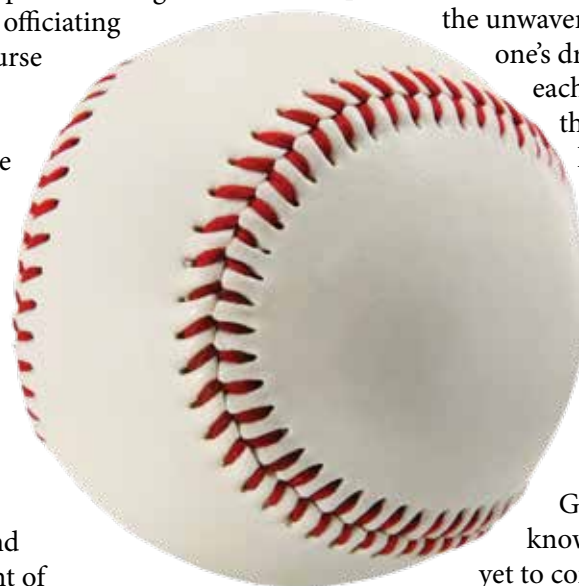


Gustavo Garza

his family and loved ones. From his grandparents, who instilled in him the values that guided his path, to his fiancée, who stood by his side through triumphs and tribulations, Gustavo remained grateful for their unwavering belief in him.

As Gustavo stands on the brink of umpiring in the major leagues, his story serves as a testament to the power of resilience, hard work, and the unwavering pursuit of

one's dreams. With each call made on the diamond, he honors the legacy of those who helped shape him into the person and professional he has become. And as he looks towards the future, Gustavo Garza knows that the best is yet to come.



Q&A Session with Up and Coming District Athletic Directors

Whitney Long – Assistant Athletic Director – Mesquite ISD

After spending 4 years in the corporate world before getting into education, Coach Long started her career in education at Forney High School, teaching history and coaching basketball and volleyball. She then moved to Horn High School in Mesquite where she coached volleyball, basketball, and softball for 3 years. She left Mesquite to go to Southlake to coach with her high school coach, Teri Morrison, to better prepare for a head basketball coaching position. After two years in Southlake, she returned to Mesquite for her first Head Coaching position at Horn High School. She served in that role as the Head Girls Basketball Coach and Assistant Campus Athletic Coordinator for 5 years before moving into the district athletic office this year. Coach Long has served as an Assistant AD for Mesquite ISD for the past 9 months.

Derick Roberson – Director of Athletics – Duncanville ISD

Coach Roberson is a graduate of Texas Tech University. He moved to Dallas in 1994 and began his coaching career in 1995. He has been in the coaching profession for 29 years now, serving as an assistant coach for 13 years and an athletic administrator and/or head coach for the last 16 years. He got his first head football coaching job at Bryan Adams in 2008 and stayed there for 5 years before becoming an Assistant Athletic Director for Dallas ISD. He served in that role for 2 years before returning to Skyline HS as the HFC/CAC where he stayed for 3 years (2015-2018). He then moved to Frisco, to Memorial HS, in the same capacity and remained there for 5 years (2018-2023). Then, just last year he got the opportunity to become the Director of Athletics for Duncanville ISD.

Mike Fecci – Director of Athletics – Abilene Wylie ISD

Coach Fecci has been coaching for 26 years. He started at Irving MacArthur High School under David Visentine where he was the Offensive Coordinator. He then moved to Rowlett High School where he was the Linebackers Coach and Special Teams Coordinator under Kiff Hardin. In 2006 he went to McKinney North where he served as the Offensive Coordinator under Shawn Pratt and in 2009 was promoted to Head Football Coach and Campus Athletic Coordinator. In July of 2022 Coach Fecci was then promoted to Associate Athletic Director for McKinney ISD. He is now serving in his recently approved position as the Director of Athletics for Abilene Wylie ISD in Abilene, Tx.

What has been your biggest challenge since you have moved from the campus level to Athletic Administration?

WL - I think the hardest thing about leaving the campus is missing out on the opportunity to directly impact kids every single day. I tell everyone that the impact you make on the campus level is tangible, you leave each day with a sense of accomplishment that you were able to make a difference. Even on the hard days when you feel like you failed, you feel like you failed courageously trying to do what is right for your kids. When you leave the campus, you have to know that you will have to serve the coaches and the kids in an entirely different capacity.

DR - My biggest challenge has been getting adjusted to wearing the many different hats at the ISD level. Before, as a campus coordinator, I only had to worry about the things that were happening on my campus. However, as the Director of Athletics, my scope has become much larger. I'm concerned about all district athletic

facilities, making sure our patrons and athletes are performing in a safe environment, serving as a district leader on the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), and attending meetings that I ordinarily wouldn't attend as a head football coach, are all areas that have been challenging in the transition to my new role.

MF - The biggest challenge from moving from the campus level to Athletic Administration is you lose the daily interaction with the coaching staff and the players. You can find ways to find those interactions now and again, but they aren't the same.

What has been the thing that has surprised you the most about moving to the athletic office full time?

WL - The biggest surprise was the spring. Everyone said that the spring would be busy but I really had no idea. Basketball playoffs, wrestling post-season, swimming, girls and boys soccer, softball, baseball, track, tennis, golf, district realignments, phew! It was fast and furious!

DR - I believe the thing that has surprised me the most has been the number of hours I spend supporting the athletic programs here at Duncanville. I thought hanging up my whistle would get me home earlier each day, but that hasn't been the case. Realizing that our coaches need our guidance in many different areas to help foster their growth as professionals has been a surprise as well.

MF - After serving as a Campus Athletic Coordinator for 15 years there is not much that surprised me but if I had to pick something, I would say it is the sheer volume of knowledge that the job requires. You have to understand the "Big Picture" outside of what happens on what particular campus.

Q&A Continued on next page



What do you miss the most since you have left coaching on a campus?

WL -I miss the camaraderie that exists in all the different spaces on the campus. The gym, the coach's office, the field house, my classroom, the front office. In every space you create a family and a team that bonds in such a meaningful way. The relationships and connections are special, nothing like the atmosphere of a high school campus.

DR - Since I've left coaching on campus, I miss the coaching comradery and impacting the kids most. Getting the players prepared to compete on Friday nights, the film study, and the one on ones with my players and coaches have been missed greatly.

MF - I miss the feeling that you have right before Kickoff when you are in the locker room with your team and fellow coaches, and you can hear the crowd. I miss those few moments where all the motions are coming together at once.

What is the thing that you have enjoyed the most about being in Athletic Administration?

WL -I have truly enjoyed getting to work with so many more coaches in different capacities. Getting to be a part of Friday night football games, volleyball tournaments, so many more middle school events, soccer games, the list goes on. There are so many unbelievable coaches in our district! Getting to see them in action, learn from them, and grow as a coach and a leader has been the best part of the new gig!

DR - The thing I have enjoyed most about being in Athletic Administration has been bringing new systems and ideas to the athletic department. Seeing our initiatives come to fruition is very fulfilling as the leader of the organization. Knowing that we have the support to help advance our athletic department has been most refreshing.

MF - I really enjoy solving problems. I love to take a seemingly bad or tough situation and find a positive and productive result to the problem.

Is there any advice that you would give to a young coach or even a veteran coach who is considering making this jump from the campus to the athletic office?

WL - Learn as much as you can in

whatever position you hold. Ask for more responsibilities, leadership roles, observe coaches and administrators and soak it all in. Invest in yourself and your growth. Do the work before you get paid to do it. People will take notice.

DR - The advice that I would give coaches who are aspiring to make the jump to the athletic office are: A) Make yourself available to assist in all areas of athletics. Your work ethic will always speak volumes for who you are as a person. B) Understand that you will have to be "giving of yourself" for the athletic office to flourish, so understand that "It" is not about you! Put the department goals ahead of your own personal goals. C) Lastly, widen your lens. Whatever capacity you are currently serving in, try seeing thing from an overall athletic perspective and how your decisions affect the masses.

MF - If you wait to make the move to athletic administration until you are tired of coaching you will never make it and if you tired of coaching then you will not be an effective athletic administrator because you will not have the drive and passion to serve that you will need.



The District Executive Committee's Roles and Responsibilities

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

As the new alignments were released this past February, UIL Director of Athletics Ray Zepeda shared that the UIL would be reinforcing the requirements and responsibilities for the District Executive Committee (DEC) Chair and Members. Athletic Directors almost always serve in some capacity on the DEC, so it is important to understand these roles and responsibilities.

All DEC Chairs will need to submit the DEC Chair form on the UIL website, along with adding the role of the DEC Chair and setting their DEC Alignments in UIL Portal. DEC Chairs and members can utilize the UIL Portal webpage to access training articles and videos on how to complete these various tasks. <https://www.uiltexas.org/uil-portal>

The responsibilities of the DEC are as follows:

- Enforce all rules in the UIL Constitution & Contest Rules and assess a penalty for every violation.
- Process and approve Previous Athletic Participation Forms (PAPFs)
- Investigate eligibility status of athletes as needed.

- Report forfeitures, suspensions, and disqualifications to the UIL.
- Ensure waiver applications have been completed properly and submitted to UIL.
- Submit a financial report each year, as required by each DEC.
- Review Section 1203, which provides additional information concerning the duties of the DEC

Two important documents that explain UIL eligibility rules and policies (no pass/no play, etc.) can be found on the UIL website:

- UIL Constitution & Contest Rules (C&CR) (available as a pdf or as an online manual) <https://www.uiltexas.org/policy/constitution>
- UIL Side by Side Manual (the best reference to access for eligibility questions) <https://www.uiltexas.org/policy/tea-uil-side-by-side>

Also listed on the UIL website under Athletics, there is a section specifically labeled "District Chairs." This is the location for the DEC Handbook and other DEC resources. <https://www.uiltexas.org/athletics/district-chairs>

DEC Chairs can go to the "Organizing DEC Chairs page" and view the checklist provided. It is an extremely helpful guide for organizing meetings following a realignment. <https://www.uiltexas.org/policy/dec/organizing-dec-chairs>

Specific training is required for all DEC Chairs and Members. Section 28(e)(4) of the Constitution and Contest Rules requires all DEC members to complete the UIL online training which consists of:

- DEC CCP
- Attorney General's Open Meetings Act Training
 - 1-hour video training - can be found at the following link: <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/og/oma-training>
 - A certificate can be printed following training completion.

More information will be shared this summer at the THSADA state conference. We look forward to learning more from Ray Zepeda and the UIL staff. It is extremely important to understand the roles and responsibilities of the DEC; Chairs and Members should familiarize themselves so that they are prepared to deal with any issues that may arise.



School Year Coaching Staff Development - State of Texas

By: Andrea Fluhman, M. Ed. -
Amarillo ISD

Coaches orientation for the upcoming school year sports season brings a renewed sense of excitement. Summer time has been spent with skill training, strength training, and conditioning. Coaches orientation is the starting point for putting the pieces together for the competitive sports seasons ahead.

Each year, UIL provides Athletic Directors with a checklist of information and policies to review with school district coaching staff. Districts across the State of Texas host coaching staff development to provide an opportunity for fellowship and training of policies.

The required State training is listed in the Texas Education Code

- **TEC Chapter 33.086 - Certification - CPR and First Aid Training** - Athletic coaches, athletic trainers, cheerleading sponsors and other head directors of UIL extracurricular activities must have a current certification filed with the district.

- **TEC Chapter 22.902 - Certification - AED Training** - Athletic coaches and sponsors, school nurses, PE teachers, marching band directors, and students that serve as an athletic trainer must have a current certification filed with the district.

- **TEC Chapter 33.202 - Annual Requirement – Safety Training** - Training provided by UIL within the Coaches Certification Program (CCP). Athletic coaches must complete prior to contact with students.

- **TEC Chapter 38.158 - Annual Requirement - Concussion Training (2 hours every 2 years)** - Athletic coaches, athletic trainers and potential members of the Concussion Oversight Team must complete the training annually.

In addition to the state requirements, during the staff development,

athletic directors review UIL coaching requirements, district executive committee formalities, and previous participation forms for athletes. UIL has an established portal that provides access to modules and protocols in the Coaches Certification Program (CCP). The CCP consists of both UIL and state law requirements. The CCP requires a coach to complete the prescribed components on a yearly basis, prior to their sport season. Completion of the CCP will recognize coaches as UIL certified coaches.

Required CCP Modules:

- 1) Constitution & Contest Rules
- 2) Ethics
- 3) UIL Steroid Education
- 4) Safety Training (state law)
- 5) Concussion Training (state law)
- 6) Sport Specific Training – each

sport has a sport specific CCP module

- 7) Football coaches only – Best Practices in Tackling certification that will be required for all football coaches once every two years. Training can happen at 2018 (and subsequent years) THSCA coaching school or online beginning April 1, 2019. All football coaches are required to have this certification completed by August of 2019.

- 8) First Year Coaches Only - Fundamentals of Coaching in Texas – required for first year coaches (or JH volunteers) or coaches in their first year to coach in the state of Texas.

- 9) Cheerleading Coach/Sponsor only - Safety/Risk Minimization for Cheerleading Course

Example Of Coaching Staff Development Agenda

9:15 - 9:30 AM	Middle School Coaches Check-In
9:30 - 10:15 AM	Middle School Coaching Staff Meeting (Officials: Volleyball, Football, Basketball)
10:15 - 10:30 AM	High School Coaches Check-In
10:30AM - 11:45 AM	General Meeting in Auditorium (Introduce new coaches to AISD) PAPF, UIL info, Athletic Expectations & previous year celebrations
11:45AM - 12:10PM	District Financial/Purchasing review
12:15 PM	New Coaches Acknowledgement From
12:15 – 12:45 PM	Meeting with all HEAD Coaches – auditorium
12:15 - 12:30PM	Meeting with all NEW AISD Coaches (not Head Coaches)
12:15 – 1:00 PM	LUNCH provided by Athletic Office
1:30 PM	Cluster Meetings – UIL Orientation - on HS campuses High School Trainers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cover UIL Safety Training, UIL Concussions Protocol, Lightning Protocol, all required paperwork for coaches• ALL HS and MS Coaches MUST finish the UIL Rules Compliance Program (CCP) Online before practices begin



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Debbie Fuchs



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