

1. WITH FLAGS RAISED in the air, super fans lead the football team out onto the field after halftime. "We were excited to step up and be the flag runners this year since we didn't have any last year," Landon Russo said. [LBlair]



HERE COME THE HAWKS

Friday came and the polls were set: the experts predicted the Hawks to finish last in district. The *Texarkana Gazette* picked Pittsburg over Pleasant Grove in the first game of the season, continuing their slide over the past few years.

But no one told the Hawks.

When the team scored in the fourth quarter giving them a one-point lead, Hawk fans roared with excitement. The air was thick and beads of sweat dotted the faces of fans, due more to their nerves than the heat. As the clock ticked down to zero and it was obvious the Hawks were going to win, students pressed hard into the metal fence, ignoring warnings from principal Darren Williams that they could not rush the field.

While everyone was anticipating the typical "welcome to school and here is the team" speech, coach Smith instead strode from one end of the gym to the other, urging the Watermelon Supper crowd to stand and cheer. "I wasn't expecting it," sophomore Blaise Olsen said. "He started talking and had everyone's attention." It was the first spirited moment of the year, but it definitely wasn't the last.

SENDING A MESSAGE

Standing shoulder to shoulder, parents, students, and faculty lined the sidewalk behind the 600 hall. Posters were passed out as the spirit tunnel for the volleyball girls began to form. The glass doors swung open as the team walked out to board the bus to playoffs. "Everyone's support really did affect our playing," junior volleyball player Faith Lipham said. "It pumped us up and reminded us who we were playing for."

FRONT AND CENTER

By halftime, the varsity football team was down 14-35 to Center at home. "In the locker room, Coach told us we weren't playing like ourselves," senior Tarique Bolding

"The first game was a dream," senior football player Tarique Bolding said. "For the first time, the stands were still filled to the brim with fans during the fourth quarter."

With the Hawks ahead by one point, the final buzzer sounded and students poured onto the field.

"I didn't realize we had even won until all my friends and teammates were jumping all over us and yelling," senior football player Tyler Shelton said.

That spirit in the stands started at Watermelon Supper when coach Kendrick Smith took over the microphone and made an impromptu speech to the crowd of students and parents.

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said. But the Hawks returned to the field ready to make a comeback. And with 20 seconds left on the clock, the crowd exploded as senior Jacorey Prim made the final tackle, with the scoreboard reading 45-42 Hawks. "It was indescribable," Tarique said. "It was the most heart wrenching game of my football career. When the buzzer sounded, we were speechless because we knew this year was ours for the taking."

LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE BOYS

As the JV volleyball game against Paris ended, the varsity girls began to warm up, and the gym began to echo with the familiar, booming voices of the football team. "They came in loud and instantly filled the entire team with energy," sophomore Nakina Levingston said. Coach Josh Gibson and the team filled the stands in return for the girls' support during football games, and their cheering carried the girls to a five-set win. "During the game, their support and cheers gave us the momentum we needed to keep fighting," Nakina said.

Page by Meredith Payne and Chelsea Cole

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