



RECORD BOOK BRILLIANCE

// Basketball girls win program's first district title, earn spot in school history by making it to 'Elite 8' round

FRESH MEAT. Off the dribble, freshman Rebecca Davila rushes to the paint passing the Bulldog defender. After Davila passed the defense, she was looking for an open teammate. "I get a lot mixed feelings about being on varsity," she said. "It's a lot of responsibility since I'm so young." *Photo by Bryan Chavez.*

It's 3:20 p.m. and practice is about to start. The team is either tying loose laces or putting unruly hair in a ponytail. Senior captain Stephanie Cordova yells, 'Lets warm up!' It's time for another long, body-tesing practice. Assistant Coach Richard Molina has the team run suicides for missed layups and the girls scrimmage against each other. As head coach of one of the top teams in the city, Ty Burns knows what his team is capable of doing. Making improvements every year from better records to seeding in the playoffs, he knew how to get the first-ever basketball district title for the Aztec temple and make a run in the playoffs. The girls finished the season ranked 70th in the state. "Last year we were short of our goal, and we knew what had to be done this season," Burns said. "A dream became a reality for our program and for our school. This is what happens when everyone believes in each other and has the same vision."

Being one of the leaders of the team, senior Stephanie Cordova knew that if she gave her all and helped push her teammates on and off the court, if they worked hard and realized their mistakes, they would experience glory. "It's an amazing feeling. Being on varsity since freshman year, we all had dreams about being district champs," she said. "Nothing feels better than knowing every year we've made improvements and finally all of our hard work is paying off. Sophomore year was when we first made playoffs, junior year (we) tied for second and now, it's a breathtaking feeling holding the gold ball." For others, it's their first time to be on this journey. One of three freshmen, Thalia Watters, experienced something not all get to in their first year of high school. "I feel like I accomplished a lifelong dream that most freshmen don't accomplish," Watters said. "It feels good to be a part of the first district title for the school and for the basketball program since the school has been open." In their third straight year of playoffs, the girls wanted nothing less than going home with their first bi-district title against Lubbock Monterey. Celebrating like no tomorrow, they got prepared for the next game, meeting up with Arlington Bowie

for the second time this season. "I couldn't believe we were able to come back from a huge deficit," junior Latrice Washington said. "Throughout that whole game, I tried my best to get everyone involved and to always get to the open person. It was a great feeling because I never experienced such a thing." In a rematch from last year's bi-district game, the Aztecs had a chance to make history by winning the school's first regional quarterfinal. Making it to the "Elite 8," the team spent four days in Fort Worth with all of El Paso rooting for them because they were the only girls team to represent the Sun City in Fort Worth. The Aztecs played in their first ever regional semifinal game against Flower Mound. Though the Aztec's didn't come out on top, they will never forget the incredible journey that led to them making school history. "It was a great experience seeing different talent from all over the state," junior Erika Santiago said. "The city supported us even though some schools are our rivals. They still wanted us to win. Hopefully next year, we will also have a great season, (so) that we can show everyone that we will be okay without our seniors."

// Melyssa Caro

PICK POCKET. Catching her opponent off guard, senior Ciara Fields steals the ball. Despite her effort, this was their first loss of the Colleyville tournament. "They were the toughest team we faced in the tournament," she said. "It all worked out in our favor since we ended up playing them a second time and beating them in the second round of playoffs." *Photo by Princesleah Aguilera.*

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. After the last regular season game, seniors Melyssa Caro, Dezerae Johnson, and juniors Erika Santiago and Latrice Washington hold up the district championship trophy. The Aztecs kept moving forward, looking to win their first bi-district title. "It was just unbelievable," Caro said. "No words could describe that moment. Hard work is finally paid off." *Photo by Bryan Chavez.*



DADDY'S GIRL. Celebrating an incredible comeback, senior Stephanie Cordova leaps into her father's arms with utter happiness. The girls went on to make a history-making run by winning the next game and reaching the "Elite 8." "We never gave up even though we were down by a lot," she said. "It was a great moment to share with my team, raising up the gold ball and being able to with the person who believed in all of us from the beginning — my father." *Photo by Bryan Chavez.*

CAREER MILESTONES

During the bi-district game against Lubbock Monterey, senior Adeola Akomolafe got her 2,000th career rebound. The Texas Christian University signee averaged 15.1 rebounds per game, made two-time defensive district MVP and 1-6A district MVP her senior season.

"With the help of my teammates and my coaches, I was able to reach my goals," she said. "All I was doing was going out there and getting it."

Photo by Princesleah Aguilera.

