

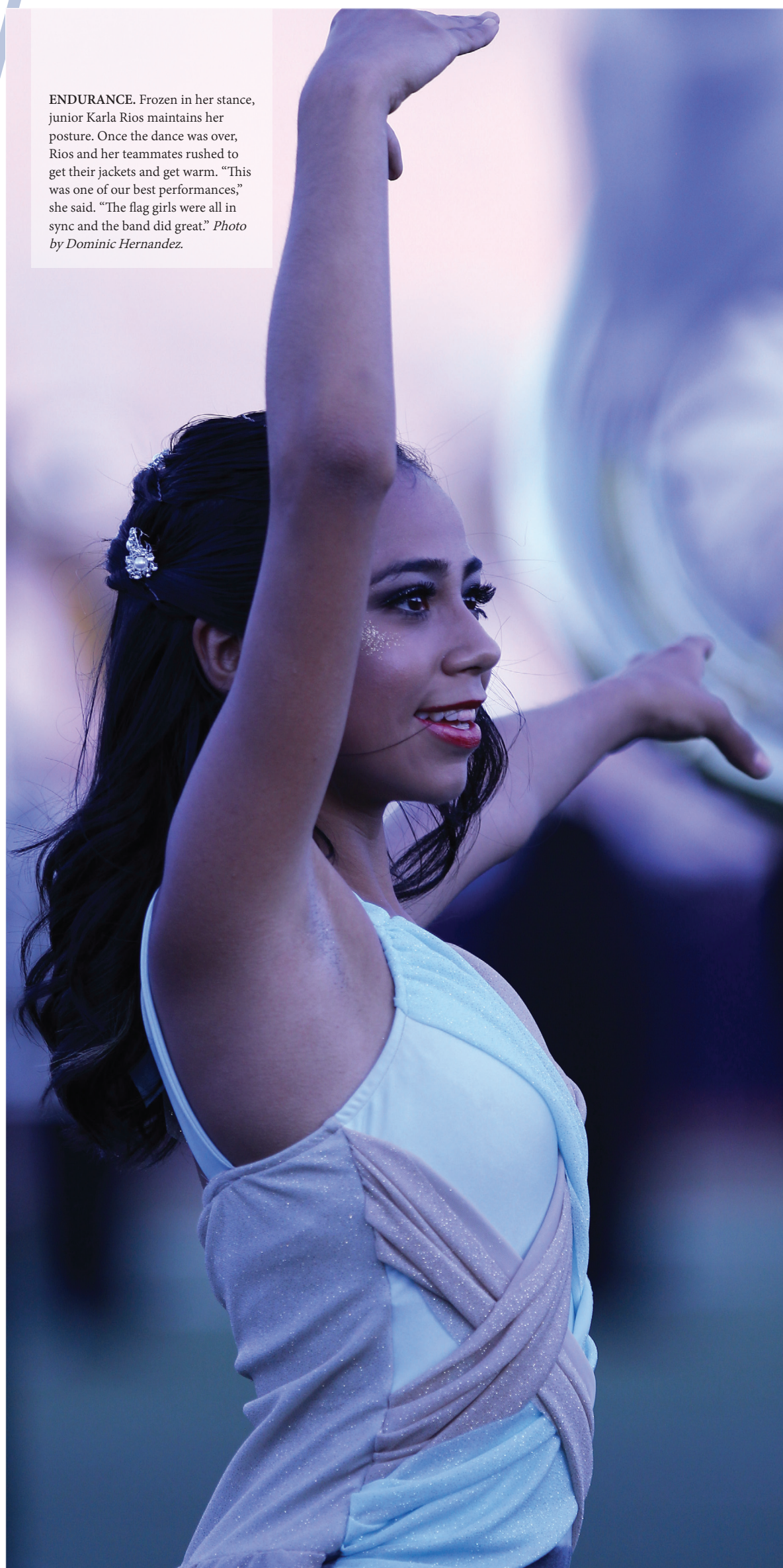
**UPGRADE.** As the light illuminates junior Sarah Ortiz while she performs her routine, the feeling of joy set in. Ortiz enjoyed this pep rally especially since it was different from the previous ones. "Being captain is a different experience. It's a lot of work, but I still enjoy it," she said. "Next year, I have a chance at being leader, so I'll be in charge of a large group of girls. That will be a big improvement for me." *Photo by Jose Chavez.*



**ONE TO REMEMBER.** At the biggest game of the season, sophomore Jasmine Bradley cheers on the Aztec football team as they take on the Rams. Bradley and the flag team celebrated with the fans as they finally gained victory over Montwood High. "I love marching season," she said. "Even though waking up early can be a drag, I've made a lot of memories from practices to games." *Photo by Jose Chavez.*

**SPOTLIGHT.** All eyes are on freshman Andrea Gonzalez as she is lifted by teammates at the homecoming pep rally. Gonzalez had a little bit of stage fright since this was her first performance at a pep rally. "Pep rallies are different experiences than football games," she said. "All eyes are on you, so you can't mess up" *Photo by Jose Chavez.*

**ENDURANCE.** Frozen in her stance, junior Karla Rios maintains her posture. Once the dance was over, Rios and her teammates rushed to get their jackets and get warm. "This was one of our best performances," she said. "The flag girls were all in sync and the band did great." *Photo by Dominic Hernandez.*



# GRACEFUL AND GORGEOUS

// Young team, with few seniors, soars through the season to regional competition

Alarms go off at 5 a.m. every school day until November. Morning practices wake up the surrounding neighborhood. The first drive going South on Loop 375 to the football game is the most anxious bus ride — and not just for the running backs and tight end players. Eventually arriving at the Students Activity Complex (SAC), the Mahuiztli flag team prepares mentally and physically for a confident and extraordinary marching season.

Dance teacher and flags director Jennifer Romero finds inspiration for her Winter Guard show in the music she hears and films she watches with fundamental and emotional soundtracks.

"For Winter Guard, I like to find my music first and then use it as inspiration for the theme and movement. This year I selected music composed by John Powell from the movie soundtrack 'How To Train Your Dragon 2.' The music is very airy and light, yet powerful," Romero said. "I do my best to create a show that pushes the team members to the next level, while still within their reach."

Excited for her final year, senior leader Jazmine Castro was prepared for what this season had in store. She had to help a new team gain confidence, fight stage fright, teach them new moves and throwing techniques.

"I was afraid because it's a brand new team and I didn't know how they would react to the football games or during pep rallies," Castro said. "I had to be strong not just for myself but toward them. Leading 17 girls and there was only me was extremely hard, I had to put my foot down. I

gained their respect a lot easier that way."

From having a large group of experienced seniors to a new team, Romero also had to make a transition to get everyone to understand the purpose of their team. She had to slow down the choreography of the routine and teach the team to perform with emotion and experience.

"This year I only had three girls with experience. Everyone else is new or had little experience," Romero said. "Each competition I have seen them grow in their skill and performing level. With the bulk of a new team it takes a while for them to learn how to perform and perfect their skills."

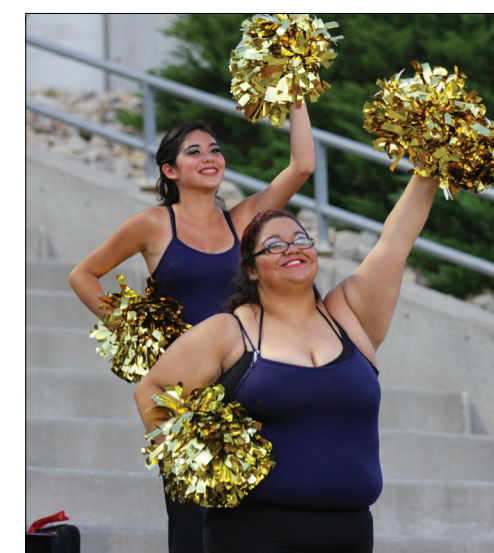
Despite having so many new faces on the team, the flag members took a new step by attending their first regional winter guard competition in Denton, Texas. The team also placed third in the local circuit.

"It was a great inspiration to the team and has taken the team to a higher level of performance and commitment," Romero said.

For one of the newbies, being in flags wasn't a hard transition. Junior Kelsie Marquez joined flags after gaining experience from the dance team. Even though dancing with a flag and throwing up a rifle is a huge difference from only dancing, she managed to make a smooth transition.

"I was in dance before I joined flags," Marquez said. "Mrs. Romero made me fall in love with dancing. Transitioning wasn't hard for me. The way she choreographs is so precise and it's just a lot of fun."

// Melyssa Caro



**LIFT OFF.** On the tips of her toes, junior Kelsie Marquez gracefully carries junior Karla Rios to the other side of the mat to kick off the performance. Once the show was over, the Aztecs waited excitedly for their results. "I just love performing with my team," Marquez said. "We may have our bad performances, but we never give up. We always push to get a good score." *Photo by Melyssa Caro.*

**THE FINALE.** At the first football game of the season, junior Sarah Ortiz and senior Jazmine Castro cheer on their peers against the Eastlake Falcons. Ortiz and Castro kept their composure all season, keeping in mind that they had a new team. "Since it was my last year, I was scared and really excited for this season," Castro said. "I knew it was going to be a great year." *Photo by Bryan Chavez.*

WORD  
PLAY



Marching season  
**WAS MY**

favorite part of  
**BEING IN FLAGS.**  
It was  
**A GREAT**  
experience.

—AUDREY GONZALES, FRESHMAN