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**Pigskin preview:**  
Top eight performances in photos



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**Parade run-down:**  
Star-studded homecoming floats throughout Baylor's history



**SPORTS | C1**

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Football versus Iowa State

HOMECOMING

2023



**PAWS AND SMELL THE ROSES** First pup BU dresses up for homecoming 2022. Roundup file photo.

# Indy, Belle prep for first Baylor Homecoming



Kenneth Prabhakar | Photo Editor

**HOME SWEET HABITAT** Indy climbs a log in the Bill and Eva Williams Bear Habitat.

**ASHLYN BECK**  
Staff Writer

After two months of Judge Indy and Judge Belle officially being home at Baylor, the new cubs will debut at their first homecoming this year.

Keller graduate student Griffin Hunt, who serves as the support coordinator for the Bill and Eva Williams Bear Habitat, said Indy and Belle are undergoing special training in preparation.

“It’s a very new path that none of us have been on,” Hunt said. “We’re all just kind of figuring it out as we go along because they’re so very popular already. Homecoming brings thousands and thousands of people, and we know everybody is going to want to see the bears.”

Hunt said the trainers are utilizing the on-campus habitat and off-campus facilities in preparation, which includes cleaning the habitat, allowing the cubs to build up energy by playing and getting the cubs used to more human interaction.

“We just want to get them used to being around humans as much as possible, and we want to get them used to ... a lot of foot traffic,” Hunt said.

Dakota Farquhar-Caddell, associate director of student activities and director of the Baylor Chamber of Commerce, said homecoming brings people of all ages from all over the country together to celebrate the university, and this year will be no exception.

“We always have bustling crowds — lots of [people] of all ages, from 2 months old to 90 years old,” Farquhar-Caddell said. “We have people come in and want to see the bears.”

Farquhar-Caddell said the cubs have already driven

**RORY DULOCK**  
Staff Writer

Despite the popularity of beloved homecoming traditions like the bonfire and the parade, such events may also raise questions about environmental concerns.

Alan Northcutt, director of Waco Friends of the Climate, said his organization aims to help and educate the Waco area about addressing climate issues and environmental concerns. Northcutt said the bonfire in particular could have negative environmental effects.

“Certainly, a bonfire releases greenhouse gases,” Northcutt said. “There are emissions from that. Wood is probably the least toxic, but if people are throwing things like plastic in, that is more toxic.”

According to Baylor’s guidelines for the bonfire, only approved materials are used in its construction and preparation on Fountain Mall. The guidelines are based on recommendations from the Waco Fire Marshal, the National Institute for Standards and Technology, the Baylor Department of Public Safety and the Baylor Department of

Environmental Health.

Besides greenhouse gas emissions and health risks, Northcutt said he is concerned about the bonfire because Waco has been in a drought. McLennan County was recently under a burn ban, but it was lifted on Sept. 15.

“The other thing is we’re still in a drought,” Northcutt said. “We had some rain, so I don’t know what level we’re at. But before the rain, we were at the highest level of drought. ... I just have to wonder if it would be a little bit risky at that. It’s still pretty dry in Waco, I think.”

According to Baylor’s guidelines, at least six fire extinguishers are required at the bonfire, and the Waco Fire Department extinguishes the flames at the end of the event.

Ladera Ranch, Calif., freshman Cami Adams said she believes the bonfire is worth doing.

“I want to do the bonfire tradition because I think it’s a very important tradition and because of how iconic it is,” Adams said. “I’m excited to see what it’s all about. It’s a rite of passage, I guess, as a Baylor student. I heard that in the past, the grass has caught on fire

around the fire. But I think it’ll be fun. It’ll be fine.”

Northcutt said there could be alternatives to the bonfire in order to eliminate the risks while maintaining the tradition.

“I don’t know if I have an alternative to the bonfire, unless you did something with maybe LED lights and created some kind of cool light sculpture or something like that,” Northcutt said. “I’m sure there’s a lot of students who know a lot about electronics, and maybe some artists could be involved. If you made something with lights, it could even simulate a fire. That’s just a thought. It would have less environmental impact, and LED lights don’t use much power at all.”

In addition to the bonfire, Adams said she is excited to participate in the other Baylor Homecoming traditions.

“I know it’s Halloween, so that will be fun too,” Adams said. “And then the football game will be exciting. Hopefully, we win. And then my friends are going [to] be on the country line dance float, so it will be fun seeing them go by.”

In order for an organization to have its float

included, it must abide by the Baylor Homecoming Parade Handbook.

“Any decorations or debris falling off the floats should be picked up by the organization and not left to litter campus, city or county roads,” the handbook reads.

As for the parade floats, Northcutt said they could have harmful environmental impacts if not disposed of properly.

“You should definitely recycle what you have left over,” Northcutt said. “I would really recommend that. I don’t know if y’all have taken time doing this in the past. I think recommending that they carefully try to recycle the components that they can — you know, obviously paper, cardboard, metal. If there’s any metal involved, there’s the City of Waco, the Cobbs Recycling Center, and there’s also a place called Lipsitz [where you can take metal to be disposed of properly].”

Northcutt said he hopes there will be greater awareness of the environmental concerns related to Baylor Homecoming traditions in order to “address the really big issues on campus.”



Photo courtesy of Josh McSwain

**UP IN FLAMES** The bonfire has been a tradition since Baylor’s first homecoming in 1909. It is built by freshmen and lit by four torchbearers representing each undergraduate class.



GOT SOMETHING TO SAY? We want to hear it. Send us your thoughts: Lariat-Letters@baylor.edu

# Out-of-state students should make most of homecoming happenings

KASSIDY TSIKITAS  
Photographer

Baylor Homecoming traditions help bridge the gap for out-of-state students by hosting unique community experiences. Many states don't indulge in the spirited football games or the big homecoming traditions that Texas has. Take my home state of New Jersey, for example. At Rutgers University, homecoming is often combined with Parents Weekend. Although its football game can get as rowdy as Baylor's, its traditions are a lot more lax. Students in Greek Life gather for mixers the day of the football game, while the university itself

hosts various dinners in the dining halls and a small celebration on the Rutgers Boardwalk. I not only applied myself to the Texas homecoming culture but also enhanced my school spirit. The meaning of "homecoming" is finally appreciating where you are and who you will become. Baylor Homecoming dates back to 1909, when the university hosted the nation's first collegiate homecoming. The traditions of the week create a feeling of finding your place on campus — and they're not only for current students but also for returning alumni. The traditions give us stories to tell and experiences to share with our future families. It might seem like

just a one-week event, but it builds the preceding days, such as Pigskin Revue and the bonfire. Baylor Homecoming may test your stamina, but it's worth it. Completing a week full of time-honored traditions helps you fit into your new environment. After my first homecoming, I saw that this annual event plays a pivotal role for students in determining whether they have found their place



on campus. Engaging in community-oriented events such as the parade, the bonfire and the football game gives them special experiences to bond over for the rest of their lives. Baylor Homecoming serves as a rite of passage for students. It's about not only the traditions but also the journey you take within these four years. Freshmen, enjoy your first Baylor Homecoming. Whether you are from Texas, out-of-state or are an international student, it is worth the experience, and you'll form lifelong bonds with fellow Baylor students. Some may say it's an overhyped event, but I think it is one for the ages.

# Flaming its rivals: Bonfire is superior hoco celebration

ASSOAH NDOMO  
Photographer

Homecoming is a special tradition for Baylor, and it involves many traditions: the bonfire, the football game, the parade, Pigskin Revue and more. Now, why is the bonfire the best one of the weekend? Let me explain why the other ones are not the move. First, the football game is not that special. The game can single-handedly determine if you're going to have a good homecoming weekend or a bad homecoming weekend. It's high risk, high reward, but there's no need to bet on that with the other options on the list. The parade is not a bad tradition. It includes not only Baylor students but also the Waco community. Everybody is all smiles while watching organizations display floats that they have been working on for weeks and months. Imagine being on a float for two hours, and it's just people cheering you on. That's amazing, isn't it? You would think. Here's the problem with the parade: It's early in the morning. Most people are probably still recovering from the night before. Besides, while watching the parade, most of the time you're just admiring the show, and you don't really get to interact much with others because they're admiring the show as well.



Now, my knowledge of Pigskin is fairly limited, but I know it's a performance consisting of the top All-University Sing performances from the year before. The organizations practice their performances for about two months before they finally perform during homecoming weekend in Waco Hall. The thing about Pigskin is that it primarily includes sororities and fraternities. If you don't know someone who is part of Greek Life, you rarely hear of it. Point being, it's not exactly inclusive of all Baylor students, so I don't think it can be considered the best homecoming event. Finally, the bonfire. The bonfire is literally a social gathering. I'm not saying the other events are not social gatherings, but the whole point of the bonfire is for everybody to eat some food and watch the bonfire. Imagine: It's a chilly night. You go outside, and you see everybody gathered on Fountain Mall. You find one person you know, and next thing you know, you have a whole friend group together in a matter of 30 minutes. There's no extra noise — just you and the Baylor community. Watching the bonfire with friends is truly a surreal experience. It's almost as if you're in a movie, which is what makes the bonfire the best tradition of Baylor Homecoming.

# Sing, Pigskin should count for CAE credit

DANI BIGHAM  
Reporter

If you're a part of the 45% of students in the College of Arts and Sciences, you're all too familiar with credits for CAEs — Creative Arts Experiences. They're intended to help students become engaged in art, music, theater, film and literature on campus. For some reason, All-University Sing and Pigskin Revue don't fall under this category, even though there are hundreds of participants every year — from Sing chairs and stagehands to sororities and fraternities. It's not like these are new events either. They've been a part of Baylor's history for over 60 years. Sing was started in 1953, and Pigskin followed shortly after in 1958.

So much time, effort and love are poured into each seven-minute miniature musical. The acts combine choreography, costuming, props, lighting, set design and music. The categories in which the acts are judged further prove that they fall within the CAE realm, as judging is split into theater, dance, music and campus life. I understand that Sing or Pigskin performances shouldn't be able to count for multiple CAEs at once, but they should be able to fill the theater requirements or the additional two CAEs that can fall under any category. I work as a stagehand at Waco Hall, so I see everything firsthand. The work doesn't just



begin with the performance. There is planning that starts literally months in advance, dozens of rehearsals and far too many meetings. It isn't just those competing who put in long hours; it's people behind the scenes as well. Prep for Pigskin starts over a month in advance within Waco Hall, and Sing chairs have already begun working on next year's acts. Sing and Pigskin are popular events, with tickets selling out very quickly despite being rather expensive and existing for multiple performances. A large majority of CAE events are at no cost to students, so why is one of the biggest paid events of the year simply glossed over? And it's not just Sing and Pigskin that lose out on CAE credits. It's the overwhelming majority of events hosted at Waco Hall that get passed up. For example, other events that don't qualify for CAE credits are The Nutcracker, which features music by the Waco Symphony Orchestra and dancers from Ballet Frontier; After Dark, which is a massive talent show; and Orchestral Magic, which is also presented by the Waco Symphony Orchestra. I've worked these events, and they feel as enriching as attending a Baylor concert or watching a film. Since these events are performed in Waco Hall and since they are accessible to students, they should count for CAE credits. I just want everyone to get credit where credit is due and to be able to benefit from Baylor's beloved traditions.

“ So much time, effort and love are poured into each seven-minute miniature musical. ... I want everyone to get credit where credit is due and to be able to benefit from Baylor's beloved traditions. ”

Looking for something new to do this homecoming? We've got some fresh ideas for your weekend right here:

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<b>ARTS &amp; LIFE EDITOR</b> Emma Weidmann*		<b>SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETER</b> Kate Miller		<b>Arts:</b> LariatArts@baylor.edu	
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# PIGSKIN IN PHO



**AWARDS** Alpha Tau Chi Omega presents its first place act, "A Day at the Derby." This act was first place from All-University Sing 2023, Pi Beta Phi was second and Zeta Tau Alpha was third.



**TOP PIGSKIN PERFORMANCES** Sigma Chi's act is "The Good, The Bad and The Funky."



**TAKING THE STAGE** Zeta Tau Alpha's third place act is "Experiment"



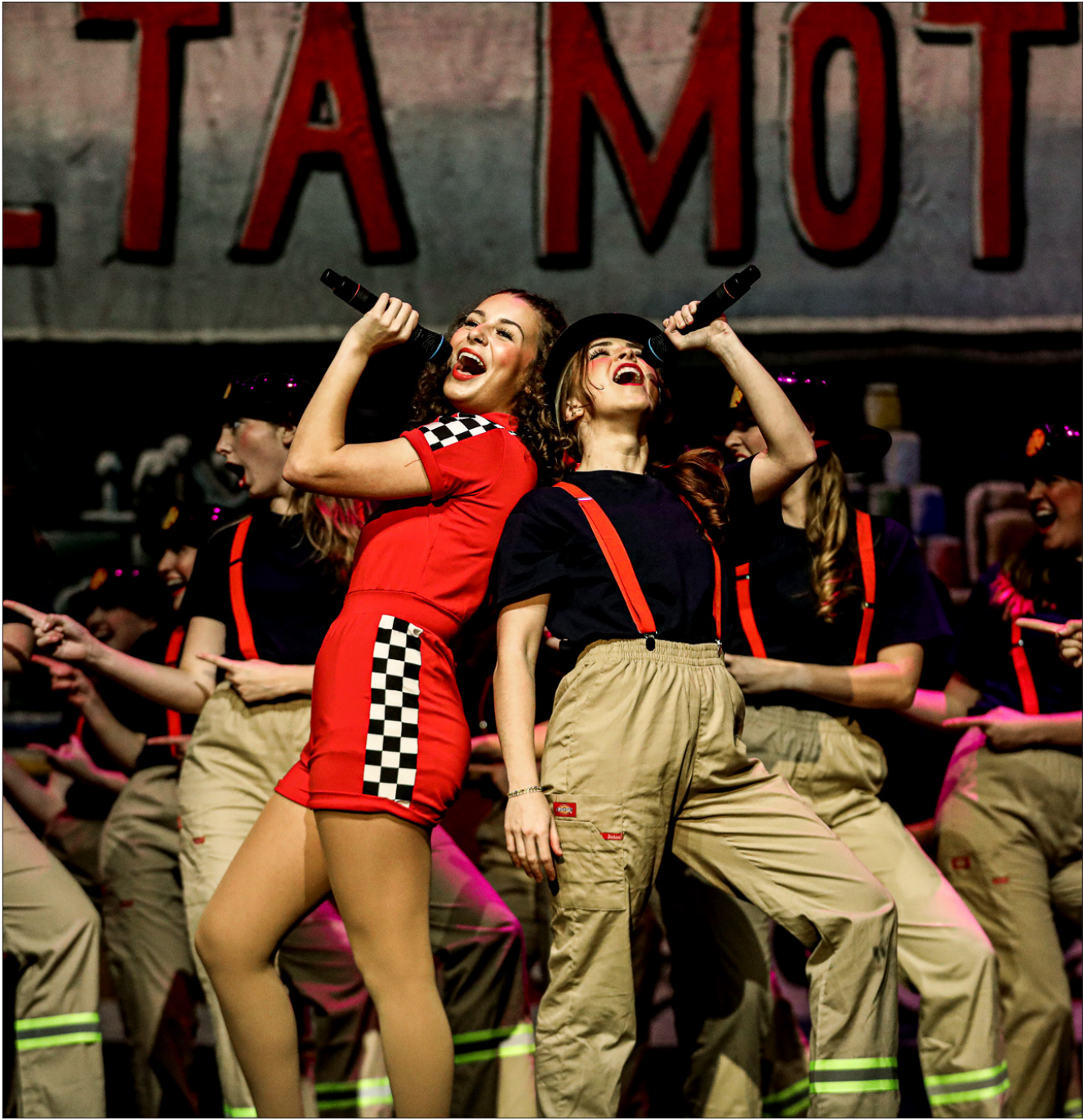
# OTOS



**OPPORTUNITIES** Sing Alliance's act is "Some Bunny's in Trouble." The group is for non-Greek Life students who are interested in participating in All-University Sing and Pigskin Revue.



**MAKING MAGIC** Kappa Omega Tau's show is "Against All Oz." .



**MEET ME AT THE SPEEDWAY** Delta Delta Delta puts on a show entitled "Delta Motor Speedway."



**SOLD OUT SHOW** Pi Phi's second place act is "Be My Girl."



**BROADWAY** Kappa Kappa Gamma performs "Kappa HQ."



# From trumpets to the Virgin Mary: Parade features organizations old and new

**CALEB WHEELER**  
Staff Writer

In Baylor Homecoming history, groups like the Golden Wave Band have had a long-established presence, but this year's parade will also include new organizations like the Catholic Student Association.

The parade has brought together the spirit of Baylor and the surrounding community from the start, according to the Baylor website.

"Throughout the years, the Parade has featured horse-drawn carriages and wagons, bands, student and civic organizations, dignitaries and more."

The Golden Wave Band is one of the groups in front of the parade.

"[The band is] one of the first groups in the parade, so it's really

cool to be the front of the university," Tomball senior Blaise Alfredson said. "As one of the drum majors, we march in the front of the band, so being able to be a part of that is really cool."

Alfredson has been a drum major for two years. He said he enjoys being able to march in the parade and see families coming from all over to watch. Although the pressure of playing for crowds seems like it would be stressful, Alfredson said the band handles it with grace.

"We're fairly comfortable with it, because at least for the three drum majors, we do a parade every week sort of for the [football] games," Alfredson said. "We're pretty comfortable because we've been doing it throughout the season."

Alfredson said the distance of the parade does not bother the band,

which actually marches straight from the parade to rehearsal to prepare for the football game.

The parade route spans from Austin Avenue and S. Twelfth Street to campus.

He said the experience is also fun because of the size of the band.

"We're kind of a float in and of ourselves because we're just so big," Alfredson said. "We've got like 290 [students] in the band, and so because we're so big, we don't need a float. We have our uniforms. We have our big instruments. And so we're extremely recognizable as we are."

The Golden Wave Band has become a staple of the Baylor Homecoming Parade, but new organizations can join as well.

This year, the Catholic Student Association is participating for the

first time in seven years.

"[Our hope is] definitely to get more members, spread the Catholic presence on campus and even offer a visual evangelical tool to show a bit of Catholic belief about Mary fondly," Waco junior and Catholic Student Association outreach officer James Foley said.

Foley said members hope this will help bring attention to the Catholic view of Mary's importance in a fun and engaging way.

"So far, even just the building has been really fun, coming together to work on a lot of fun activities," Foley said. "We'll also be coming directly from [the parade] back [to St. Peter's Catholic Church], where St. Peter's is hosting their own sort of tailgate."

Foley said he is happy with what the float has become throughout the

building process.

"I've organized most of it, ... but then we've had a lot of community members and non-officer members helping out and taking a big load," Foley said. "I started a float-building committee that was me and three other officer members, so it's been nice, giving us an opportunity to sort of step up as a leadership role in our community."

The organization's float expects to have between six and eight people during the parade.

Despite some last-minute issues, Foley said he is hoping their presence will establish the organization and its beliefs in the community.

"We're very grateful to Baylor for letting us host a visually Catholic float," Foley said.



**LEADING THE PACK** The Golden Wave Band is one of the oldest groups in the homecoming parade, and it's always one of the groups to lead the procession of floats, student organizations and more.



Scan here for more information on the parade, including its route and how to watch.

## CUBS from Page A1

more crowds to the habitat, and he expects homecoming to draw even more.

"Having cubs on campus has reinvigorated a lot of the habitat's traffic and has certainly drawn huge crowds, mainly because they're so active and little and cute and fun to watch," Farquhar-Caddell said. "And so people love to come see them and watch them grow."

Farquhar-Caddell said Indy and Belle are predisposed to human interaction, so events like Meet the Cubs and homecoming only energize and excite them.

"They love it," he said. "They love that kind of energy. They love the attention, and they love the interaction — even through a fence."

Farquhar-Caddell said the excitement of Indy and Belle's first experience reflects the culture and joy already surrounding homecoming.

"I love Friday evening, when Baylor families from all across the country roll into town," Farquhar-Caddell said. "The air is just a buzz of excitement. There's kids up on parents' shoulders and music and people eating good food, just celebrating company and what it means to be a part of the Baylor family."

Hunt said the tradition of the bears plays a big role in bringing the Baylor family together.

"It's just really cool, especially [during] homecoming when we see multi-generations of the Baylor family come and still engage with the bears," Hunt said. "It's still something that they think is really cool and [they] hold near and dear to their heart."

However, Hunt said this year's homecoming is particularly special because it is the inaugural homecoming for Indy and Belle, who are the first cubs in two decades to call Baylor home.

"I think it's so very cool to have this opportunity," Hunt said. "We haven't had cubs in 20 years. We've had bears on campus for over 100 years. It's one of the coolest traditions across the country."



Scan here for the Lariat's exclusive inside look at the bear habitat.

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# Walking down memory lane: Baylor’s 114-year old tradition

**KALENA REYNOLDS**  
Reporter

Baylor Homecoming originated almost 114 years ago on Nov. 24, 1909. According to Elizabeth Rivera, university archivist of The Texas Collection, the tradition exists thanks to then-President Samuel Palmer Brooks, who created the nation’s oldest homecoming as a way to inspire the community and reunite alumni.

Rivera said the first homecoming was expected to have thousands of alumni in attendance. The Baylor Lariat helped advertise the event by sending out postcard invitations, which included the date, the faces of Rufus C. Burleson and William Carey Crane, former Baylor presidents, and the statement that “faculty and students desire your presence.”

“I think that’s a really powerful word choice — ‘desire your presence’ — because when you show up, you make a place better,” Rivera said. “You bring your story, and that’s what they’re requesting in 1909.”

According to Jeff Pirtle, director of The Texas Collection, the first homecoming featured concerts, a speech from the president, a soiree in Burleson Hall and more. The football game was hosted by Carroll Library on Carroll Field and had over

5,000 attendees.

“If you’ve ever seen early photographs of Baylor when they first moved to Waco in 1887, we’ve got photographs of the entire student body, and it looks like it’s maybe about 100 students on the high end,” Pirtle said.

The next Baylor Homecoming took place in 1915, and it officially became an annual event in 1934. At that point, its name was changed from “Good Will Week” to “Homecoming.”

The traditions that have withstood the test of time for every homecoming are the football game, the parade and alumni reunion parties. Rivera said Baylor utilized these traditions to help reconnect alumni while raising money for the school.

“At that time, Baylor did not have the same endowment and the same financial support that it has today,” Rivera said. “So one way to increase support is bringing back those people who have graduated — bringing home your alumni and welcoming them and getting them reinvested.”

In 1927, tragedy struck when 10 Baylor basketball players died on their way to compete against the Texas Longhorns after a train collided with their bus. Now known as the Immortal Ten, their loss inspired a homecoming tradition that is still recognized today. Since 1947,

their story has been retold during the Freshman Mass Meeting, when the Eternal Flame is handed down to the incoming class to continue their legacy.

“They were the best of the best, you know — bright young prime of their youth,” Pirtle said. “It really became a calling cry to Baylor students to live the legacies of those lives as they continued to learn and take on new careers and start families and be part of their own communities and churches ... having that spirit live on with them.”

Although Baylor is now known for its Greek Life, it originally had Latin Literary Societies on campus. The men’s societies included the Erisophian Literary Society and the Philomathesian Literary Society, while the women’s societies were the Calliopean Literary Society and the Rufus C. Burleson Society. Similar to modern sororities and fraternities, these societies held service, social and academic events, and they were celebrated during homecoming, where they created floats for the parade.

Over a century later, Baylor Homecoming holds the same values as it did in years past, serving as a way to bring together the Baylor community, alumni and current students alike.

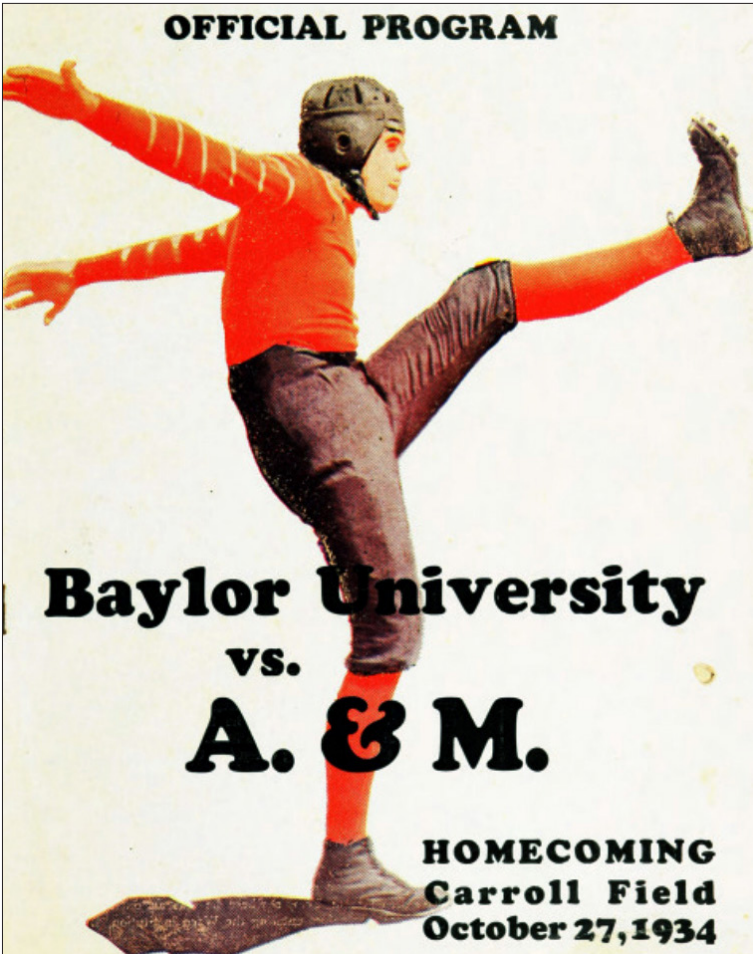


Photo courtesy of Baylor University

**HOMECOMING HISTORY** Baylor football played Texas A&M in a homecoming game on Oct. 27, 1934. The Aggies won 10-7.



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ROYAL LEGACIES

Baylor Homecoming queens pass down decades of tradition  
pg. B2



SING SWEETHEART

Meredith Henry juggles Sing chair duties with KOT Sweetheart status.  
pg. B5



“It is such a perfect picture of unity and Christ’s desire for the church – that we would all join together as one and glorify Him.

75th annual Singspiration concert is embodiment of homecoming spirit  
pg. B6

BaylorLariat.com

The best floats in Baylor Homecoming’s history

KALENA REYNOLDS  
Reporter

In 1915, the first floats appeared in the Baylor Homecoming parade and have been an iconic part of the Baylor tradition throughout the years. Baylor is known for having the oldest and largest homecoming parade, and these floats are a representation of the effort and intentionality participating organizations put into their creation.

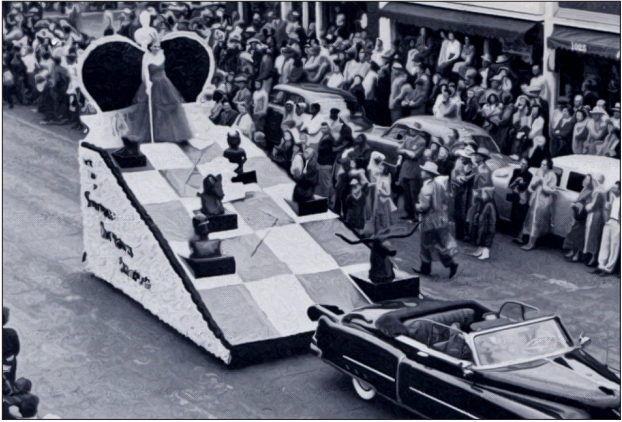
For an organization to enter a float in the homecoming parade, it must be approved in two categories: theme and initial risk management. Once approved, all organizations are given specifications they must meet when building their float.

Organizations spend months creating floats to enter in the parade and often go to great lengths to ensure their float idea is original by keeping their ideas a secret. The floats are then judged based on a number of categories, including title and theme, proportions, animation and special effects, craftsmanship, public appeal and ingenuity.

Throughout the years, the parade has featured horse-drawn carriages, bands, student and civic organizations, dignitaries and more. During the parade, shops and restaurants located on the route of the parade will decorate their storefronts to join the celebration.

Each float featured on this list has unique elements that have been remembered throughout history and encapsulate the warm memory of the Baylor Homecoming parade. Counting down, here are some picks for the best floats to ever follow the route across Waco in the homecoming parade.

1. DELTA ALPHA PI, 1954



Roundup file photo

**CHECKMATE** Delta Alpha Pi made moves with their chess-inspired float in 1954.

This queen of hearts’ float takes the crowning glory on this list. The year was 1954, and the chess pieces featured on the float were shaped as opposing conference mascots. This photo was taken a few blocks from where a disastrous F5 tornado hit on May 11 of the previous year. Baylor played TCU at that year’s homecoming and won 25-7. The design of this float, combined with the concept, makes it stand out. The unique idea of incorporating opposing teams as chess pieces creates a symbolic meaning behind the float and a beautiful design.

2. KAPPA OMEGA TAU, 1968



Roundup file photo

**BARGING IN** Kappa Omega Tau created a steamboat float for the 1968 homecoming parade.

This steamboat-inspired float inspires elements of music, arts and culture. The iconic early 1900s boater hats the band is wearing showcase the nostalgia behind the float, and the woman traveler on top makes for a float of innovation and historical inspiration. The unique architecture and detail put into this float make it second on the list, though it won first in the float competition that year. While it’s clear the float was well thought out, it’s also enjoyable to look at and encapsulates the Baylor Homecoming parade float style. The gorgeous imagery and colors used in the float bring it together to land a spot as second on the list.

3. ALPHA OMEGA, 1948



Roundup file photo

**OUT OF THE BOX** Alpha Omega’s float in 1948 mimicked a familiar fashion.

In 1948, Baylor played Texas A&M for the homecoming football game in the municipal stadium — Baylor football was part of the Southwest Conference at the time. W.R. White was the first Baylor president to start the long-standing tradition of presidents leading the parade, and every president since has led the parade at least once. This hatbox-inspired float is not only ginormous but also has hidden wheels, making it look like an art piece and a float at the same time.

4. PI KAPPA ALPHA, 1980



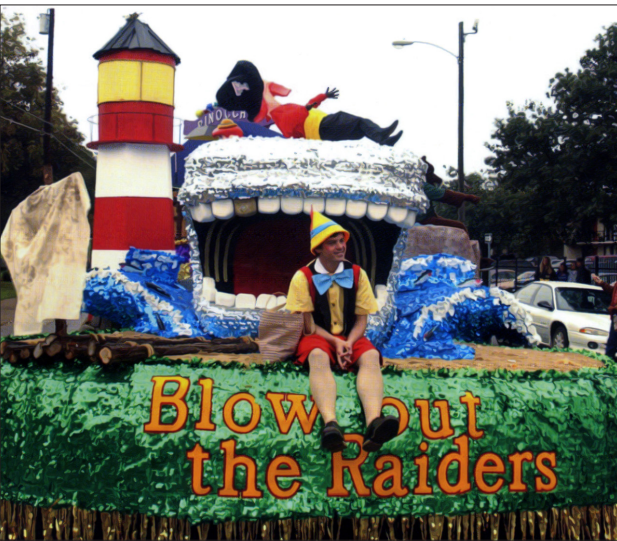
Roundup file photo

**A SUPER FLOAT** Pi Kappa Alpha saved the day in 1980 with this Superman-inspired float.

In 1980, Pi Kappa Alpha put a Waco spin on the iconic superhero. The shape of this float is what makes it stand out, as you can tell the effort and planning that inevitably went into fashioning a heroic bear from wire and tissue paper.

This float must have had the judges “pumped up,” because it won an honorable mention in the float competition that year. Not to be confused with Pi Kappa Phi, Pi Kappa Alpha is no longer active at Baylor, but it definitely left its mark on the parade with this super display.

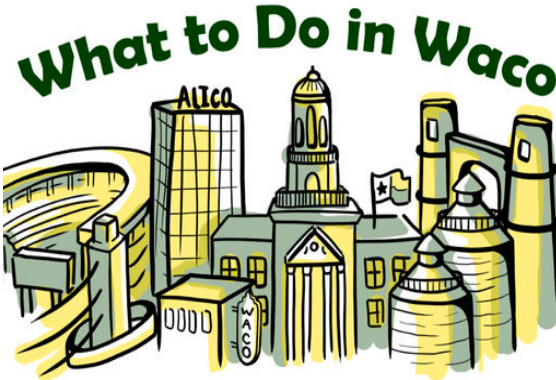
5. KAPPA OMEGA TAU, 2004



Roundup file photo

**WHALE YES** Kappa Omega Tau’s Walt Disney “Pinocchio” themed float in 2004 won the the Judge’s Award.

This Pinocchio-inspired float takes fifth place for its unique take on the classic Disney movie to create an opposing image for Texas Tech. This float has all the necessary little things, such as the subtle wood logs and the bronze whale tooth. Kappa Omega Tau did not short on the details or innovation for this float. While the float is a recreation, it’s good enough to be identified from miles away. The unique take on football opposition makes the float special, the colors are infinite and the life-size Pinocchio puts the float over the top.



What to Do in Waco: HOCO edition

PIGSKIN REVUE

Oct. 26 - 28 | Times vary by date | Waco Hall | The top eight acts from All-University Sing 2023 advanced to Pigskin Revue, where they will showcase their talent for a second time across three nights. Tickets are available to stream the Saturday show.

ROYAL & PURE HOMECOMING STROLL-OFF

Oct. 27 | 7 - 9 p.m. | Bill Daniel Student Center | The National Pan-Hellenic Council competes in a tournament of step dancing, complete with costumes, props and no shortage of creativity and talent.

EXTRAVAGANZA, PEP RALLY AND BONFIRE

Oct. 27 | 6 - 10 p.m. | Fountain Mall | Gather for food trucks and fun before the homecoming pep rally gets started. Performances by the Golden Wave Band, spirit squads and more gear up for the lighting of the bonfire.

75TH ANNIVERSARY SINGSPIRATION

Oct. 27 | 7 - 8:15 p.m. | Seventh & James Baptist Church, 602 James Ave. | A congregation of Baylor students, alumni, family and friends gather to worship with a variety of musical styles.

WACO DOWNTOWN FARMERS MARKET

Oct. 28 | 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. | 500 Washington Ave. | This weekly event hosts local vendors, artisans and craftsmen in the heart of downtown Waco, accompanied by live music.

HOMECOMING PARADE

Oct. 28 | See a parade of extravagant floats, balloons and more go by as Baylor ramps up for the homecoming football game. The Golden Wave Band leads the line as students, local businesses and more march in tow. Find a QR code to the route on page A6.

FOOTBALL VS IOWA STATE

Oct. 28 | 2:30 p.m. | Baylor football takes on the Iowa State Cyclones in a homecoming showdown.

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS PARADE AND FESTIVAL

Oct. 28 | 4 - 10 p.m. | The annual Dia de los Muertos Parade returns to downtown Waco with live music, folklórico dancers and art to celebrate Waco’s culture and diversity.

DR PEPPER PARANORMAL EXPERIENCE

Oct. 28 | 7 p.m. | Dr Pepper Museum, 300 S Fifth St. | \$35 tickets | Experience a guided tour of the Dr Pepper Museum. Some have seen glowing orbs and mysterious figures haunt this Waco landmark.

WESTERN BELLE PUMPKIN FESTIVAL

Sept. 23 - Nov. 5 | 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. | Western Belle Farm | \$16 admission; free admission on Farm Fridays | Welcome spooky season with pumpkin carving, apple cannons, cattle drive train rides and more.



# Being homecoming queen takes royal effort

**KALENA REYNOLDS**  
Reporter

Crowning a homecoming queen has been a tradition at Baylor since 1934, and it continues to be a prestigious position passed down from student to student. The title was created to designate one student to represent the university and its beliefs, and the role involves a variety of responsibilities.

“The homecoming queen is the person that they feel will best represent the university as far as academics and service and involvement,” Waco senior Abby Geisler, who serves as the Baylor Chamber of Commerce homecoming court coordinator, said.

This year, there is a mix of judges, ranging from Baylor representatives to Waco residents who are unaffiliated with the university.

Requirements for homecoming queen have shifted throughout the years to uphold tradition while adapting to modern standards. The women have gone from being judged on the quality of their float and their beauty to being judged on contribution and representation.

“Originally it was, I would say, more or less a beauty pageant. Typically, the winner was the most beautiful woman who appeared on stage,” Geisler said. “And recently, it has morphed into something much different.”

To become nominated for the court, a person must be a part of a student organization. Some organizations vote on who they should select, while others choose their president.

After a person has been nominated, they apply and begin preparing for the homecoming court process with information sessions, headshot sessions and group photos.



**IN THE SPOTLIGHT** The 2022 homecoming king and queen, Daniel Atkins and Amanda Werner, are crowned.

Most of the obligations for the court happen during homecoming week.

“All of the nominees are presented at the first Pigskin [performance] on Thursday night, and their interviews are during homecoming week,” Geisler said. “And then on Thursday, they’ll crown the queen and the rest of the court.”

During homecoming week, the judges begin the process of choosing

the homecoming queen through interviews and assessments.

“The judges receive a questionnaire from all of the nominees that they get to read and look over, and then they get to interview all the nominees,” Geisler said. “What they’re really looking for is just someone who can represent the university well, so they look at things like academic involvement, like academic success.

They also look at just general Baylor involvement.”

Geneva, Ill., graduate student Amanda Werner was the 2022 homecoming queen and said the judges asked about how she believed she contributed to the Baylor culture.

“They asked just about the Baylor mission statement and how we’ve seen that apply to our lives and our time at Baylor,” Werner said. “So I think they

were just really looking for someone who has the desire to see that mission carried out not only on campus, but in their daily lives.”

During homecoming week, the court rehearses dances and routines for different events in preparation for possible crowning. Once the homecoming queen is announced at the first Pigskin show, she is expected to be involved at various events.

“We try out for our halftime routine. We try out for our sidelines during practice. We prepare all of that stuff in advance,” Werner said. “And then, we also just spent a lot of time talking about the logistics of everything, and we have our bonfire routine.”

Several sacred traditions are passed down from one homecoming queen to the next. While most people solely know about the crown, there are many other traditions that embody the title of homecoming queen.

“We have the necklace that gets passed down year after year, and then there’s a deck of cards with a golden queen card in them,” Werner said. “There are photo albums that get passed down in journals where the queens will write in them.”

Such traditions have contributed to the prestigious essence of the position while helping connect Baylor students to history and community.

“We have a robe — really beautiful, the velvet green robe that every queen gets,” Geisler said. “Then, they traditionally ride in the parade in a horse-drawn carriage, which is really, really cool.”

Once homecoming week is over, the queen’s duties are finished until the following year’s homecoming, when they pass the crown and other memorabilia down to the next winner. They also help mentor the next queen through homecoming week.

## Looking inward: How the court has changed through the years

**TYLER WHITE**  
Staff Writer

Over the years, the homecoming court has seen many changes, from the people included to the qualities judged. From its origins as a beauty pageant to today’s focus on character and values, the court has evolved into something that looks inward more than outward.

When the tradition first began, the homecoming queen was selected based upon the quality and design of the float she was on. Moving into the 1930s and 1940s, the homecoming queen was chosen based on her beauty, poise and grace in conjunction with the quality of the float she was on.

Charleston, Ill., senior Abby Geisler, a member of the homecoming committee, said that over time, the homecoming court began to focus more on students’ involvement at Baylor and how they represent Baylor’s values.

“I think one of the really cool things has been the sort of change away from it being more like a beauty contest. Like the queen was just the most beautiful woman who looked the best in her gown,” Geisler said. “But now it truly is a lot more focused on — actually it’s exclusively focused on — academics, involvement.”

According to the Baylor website, this shift began in 1973, when women were separated from the floats and were judged according to their personality, beauty, poise and involvement. Moving into the 2000s, the women who were nominated by their organizations were then interviewed by a panel that discussed philanthropy, scholarship, spiritual commitment and more.

“They have to submit questionnaires and interesting questions, just basic information about themselves, and then they’ll

interview with the judges,” Geisler said. “And then the judges will just kind of sit together and really decide from the interviews and all that stuff — their interviews, their questionnaires and getting to meet them and speak to them.”

In 2021, the homecoming court expanded to include a homecoming king, which allowed for greater representation of the student body. Geisler said it’s been amazing to see how Baylor has expanded the court to allow more people to represent Baylor.

“I truly feel like Baylor is very much being representative or represented, and now, any organization can nominate anyone for court, which is really cool to see,” Geisler said. “So we have people from just all over campus. ... So it’s just really, really cool to see the way that everyone is being involved.”

In a 2021 Lariat article, Grapevine graduate Abby Tanner, that year’s homecoming court coordinator in, said the court was setting a precedent by expanding to include a king. She said it would allow more students to showcase what they do for the Baylor community.

“We’re super excited for the addition of guys in this tradition,” Tanner said. “King and his court was added because we wanted everybody to be recognized, not just women, because everybody has done great work for Baylor and is involved.”

Geisler said the court continues to expand, bringing in more representation from a variety of student organizations that showcase the different values of Baylor. She said it’s exciting to see how the court has evolved over the years and how it will continue to grow in the future.

“I think it’d be cool to see more organizations getting into it in the future,” Geisler said. “I’m definitely excited to kind of see how it changes in the future.”

“I truly feel like Baylor is very much being representative.”

**ABBY GEISLER |  
HOMECOMING  
COMMITTEE MEMBER**



**UP IN FLAMES** A student holds up a Sic 'em at the annual homecoming bonfire.

## ‘They’ve upped the game’: Alum, legacy student share love for hoco

**MADELINE CONDOR**  
Staff Writer

Baylor Homecoming is the nation’s oldest homecoming, founded in 1909 when the current president and a group of faculty “embarked on a campaign to bring graduates home to renew old friendships and ‘catch the Baylor spirit again,’” according to the Baylor website.

Keeping in line with Baylor’s philosophy of tradition, this year’s homecoming will kick off with the same variety of events that have continued for over 100 years.

Bobby Glass, a 1982 Baylor graduate, said Baylor Homecoming is as special now as it was during his time at the university.

“It was very festive, very iconic, and we had the big bonfire right there by the library, and it was a big deal,” Glass said. “Pigskin and Sing have always been a huge deal. ... And Baylor does a great job of keeping everything kind of old-school, in my opinion. So it seems to me that if anything, they’ve upped the game a little bit now from what it was back then, just because the college is bigger. We’re Big 12 instead of Southwest Conference, so there’s more kids there.”

Glass said his family has many ties to Baylor. Both his



**PAST ROYALTY** Nominees for the 1954 homecoming court pose ahead of crowning.



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# More than just tissue paper: Float creation includes months of planning, construction

SHAE WHITTLE  
Reporter

Although the floats appear to roll down Fifth Street with ease during the homecoming parade, there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes. Over the course of months, many hours of hard work go into the construction of the floats before they are finally presented to the public on the Saturday morning of homecoming weekend.

“They have some really creative people, and they have some really hardworking people. I think they’ve done an amazing job showing up to float-building, participating and just having a good attitude about it.”

JOSEPH PFISTER |  
BETA UPSILON CHI  
FLOAT CHAIR

The Baylor Homecoming parade has a rich history going back to its roots in 1909. Since then, it has been verified by the Smithsonian as the “oldest and largest collegiate homecoming parade in the country,” according to the Baylor website. Following that legacy, student organizations and community groups have been working to create over-the-top floats for their ride down the streets of downtown Waco and the Baylor campus.

Each float construction experience is unique

to its organization, as groups often use different planning styles and work schedules to bring together their finished masterpieces.

“We started with the planning process,” Fort Worth senior and Phi Kappa Chi float chair Luke Porter said. “And so basically, we all sit down and think of ideas, brainstorm what themes we are going to try to go for. Then, once we land on a couple of themes, we think about how to incorporate Baylor culture into that. Once we have gotten one approved and we get back [at] the beginning of the semester, we can officially start building it. And so by that point, we try to have schematics for the most part of what we’re going to build and how we’re going to build it.”

In the process, float chairs lead construction and delegate tasks to the group. While there are numerous struggles that come with the role, there are many benefits to it as well.

“I’d say the biggest struggle is probably trusting other people to do stuff,” Porter said. “You know, it’s hard for me to give up responsibility to others, and so it’s been difficult, but it’s been cool to see guys execute it so well. The biggest blessing would just be the guys that I get to hang out with — the two other head float chairs and the other float chairs that are on our team. I mean, they’re just incredible guys, and getting to know them and spend time with them has definitely been a blessing.”

Although significant responsibility falls on float chairs, all members of the organization can get involved and play a part in the creation of the floats.

“One of my favorite parts of going to float [construction] is just getting to see everyone,” Bentonville, Ark., senior and Delta Delta Delta president Lydia Pehlman said. “It’s always fun, like getting to talk to new people, getting to have those sweet conversations.”

Phi Kappa Chi and Delta Delta Delta were named first-place winners of the 2022 homecoming float competition for their float titled “Night at the Mayborn.” It featured replica paintings of famous works combined with prominent Baylor figures and symbols, such as a large mammoth statue that was in the center.

Pehlman said she felt excited when their float was announced as the first-place winner while she was surrounded by the Baylor family at the traditional Friday night bonfire. She said she was confident in the finished product but was surprised to find out they had actually won the competition.

“It was Phi Chi’s first time to win float, and



Photo courtesy of Wade Wilcox

**MEET ME AT THE SPEEDWAY** Tau Kappa Epsilon members work on their speedway-themed float.

we’ve gotten a lot of second places, but no first-place win, and so that was nice to be able to start off the school year with that,” Pehlman said.

Porter said the pairing of the fraternity and sorority made the float construction process more enjoyable.

“Tri Delta was fantastic, and I loved working with them,” Porter said. “Their float chairs were awesome, and I’m still friends with them. That process was just so much fun — very stressful, but it always is.”

Fraternities and sororities often join together for floats, utilizing the extra pairs of hands. This year, Beta Upsilon Chi is working with Alpha Phi. Celina senior and Beta Upsilon Chi float chair Joseph Pfister said

it has been a good experience working with the sorority.

“They have some really creative people, and they have some really hardworking people,” Pfister said. “I think they’ve done an amazing job showing up to float-building, participating and just having a good attitude about it.”

Despite the ups and downs, the float construction experience is a homecoming tradition that goes beyond the Saturday debut.

“Float’s always such a good time,” Pehlman said. “Going to the float site and getting to spend time with your sisters and just getting to make something out of your own two hands and see that showcased in the parade — it’s always a special time.”



Roundup file photo  
**HANGING ON** The Baylor Chamber of Commerce links arms to hold back the Baylor Line ahead of the Baylor versus Albany football game on Sept. 3, 2022.

## Chamber preps for huge homecoming weekend

ERIKA KUEHL  
Staff Writer

It’s no secret that the Baylor Chamber of Commerce facilitates most of the preparation for homecoming weekend. However, most students don’t see their long days and hard work. Representatives from Chamber shed light on the process.

Katy junior Natalie Lewicki serves as the current homecoming chair and said Chamber has been preparing for the past 10 months.

“Every year, within the Baylor Chamber of Commerce, we appoint someone that is the homecoming chair for that year,” Lewicki said. “I received the position at the end of the year, right before Christmas, and so the planning started right at the beginning of January. It’s a lot of hard work and time and dedication, but it is very worth it.”

After Friday’s bonfire, Lewicki said Chamber won’t get a minute of shut-eye.

“We actually don’t sleep that night,” Lewicki said. “After the bonfire dies around 10:30 or 11 p.m., we start to clear out the area. We stay up all night, switching campus from homecoming to parade.”

Lewicki said Chamber is responsible for taking down the lights, preparing the stage for press and going to downtown Waco to ensure everything is ready for the floats.

China Spring senior Katelyn Wilmoth serves as the current homecoming parade chair and

said her team will be up before the sun rises, at 2 a.m. Check-in for student organizations starts at 4:30 a.m.

“We know people can be grumpy in the mornings, so we’re hoping it goes smoother and almost welcoming in a way,” Wilmoth said. “We will have a little coffee food truck available for our participants so they can get a treat while they are waiting. And once the parade kicks off, we’re hitting the ground running.”

Wilmoth said she has thoroughly enjoyed her experience working with all of the student organizations during this process.

“I have absolutely loved it,” Wilmoth said. “Going out and doing inspections with everyone — it’s really cool. I get to know a few members from each organization and build those relationships with them, which is really sweet. I’ve really enjoyed getting to know all of the float chairs and everyone who’s involved.”

Wilmoth said she’s been attending the homecoming parade since she was little and had no idea it was completely student-run. She said her favorite part of her position has been seeing Baylor in a new light.

“I think for me, it’s just getting to be able to be in a spot where I get to know more of Baylor,” Wilmoth said. “I’ve gotten to contact so many Baylor faculty and staff, and I’ve also gotten to contact people through the City of Waco. I’ve gotten to build relationships with some pretty amazing people, and it’s just really cool seeing everything put together.”

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Arts & Life

# Pigskin sweetheart’s Baylor roots run deep

**BELLA WHITMORE**  
Intern

From Pi Beta Phi Sing chair to Kappa Omega Tau sweetheart, Richland Hills senior Meredith Henry has no doubt left her mark on Sing — not to mention Baylor Greek Life as a whole.

Henry’s ties with Greek life were established before she even decided to attend Baylor, showcasing deep familial roots in Panhellenic organizations.

“My brother was a KOT, and his girlfriend at the time — now wife — was a Pi Phi,” Henry said. “My mom also went to Baylor and was a Tri Delt Sing chair, so the first time she brought me to see Sing, I was absolutely amazed.”

Considering her mother, brother and sister-in-law’s avid participation in Greek life at Baylor, Henry was destined to leave a major impact on sorority culture, especially through her involvement in Sing.

After coming to Baylor, Henry chose to participate in sorority recruitment her freshman year, following in the footsteps of both her mother and sister-in-law. In her sorority,

Pi Beta Phi, Henry found deep community and opportunities to get involved in Sing, a production she was passionate about.

“Ever since I joined Pi Phi, I knew I eventually wanted to be a Sing chair,” Henry said. “I started off as a Sing assistant and just helped out the chairs with really small stuff and got a small glimpse into what they do behind the scenes. I fell in love with the creative process of everything that goes into making an act and hoped that I would get to do that someday.”

Her dream ended up coming true last year as she followed in her mother’s footsteps and became Sing chair for Pi Phi. The role holds vital responsibility for the production, as the chairs create their own act for the sorority to perform.

Pi Phi’s act was “Be My Girl,” and it featured a colorful toy shop set design with innumerable girls decked in doll makeup and pink dresses. “Be My Girl” was adored by audiences and earned second place in the competition, leading the sorority to Pigskin Revue this fall.

McGregor senior and Pi Beta Phi president Julianna Lewis commented on Henry’s commitment to the act.

“Meredith was such an asset to our Sing team,” Lewis said. “She brought an energy to the dynamic and the chapter that made members excited to be a part of something bigger than themselves.”

This year, things have changed for Henry. She is stepping down from her role as a Sing chair and choosing to represent Kappa Omega Tau as their sweetheart instead. Henry anticipated challenges to this drastic change but has enjoyed the friendships and calmer nature of her new position.

“I thought my transition from Pi Phi Sing chair to KOT sweetheart would be hard since I wouldn’t be as involved with the Sing process and wouldn’t get to perform the act I helped create, but it has been so fun and exciting,” Henry said. “I have formed so many friendships with guys that I didn’t know super well and get to enjoy Pigskin without the stress of planning practice and worrying about details.”

“Be My Girl” will always hold a special place in her heart, although during Pigskin Revue Henry will participate in Kappa Omega Tau’s

act, “Against All Oz.”

“It is a little bit of an odd feeling seeing Pi Phi perform their act without me. I put every ounce of creativity and effort into the act ‘Be My Girl,’ so it almost feels right leaving everything I had in the spring,” Henry said.

Henry has made a lasting impression on the girls in her sorority through her hard work, creativity and effort.

“I’m so excited and eager to see how her skills and talents will benefit KOT in both Pigskin and Sing next semester,” Lewis said. “We are so thankful for the way Meredith gives her whole heart in everything she does, and we’re excited to get to share her with the members of KOT.”

Whether she is creating a musical act from scratch or representing a fraternity as their sweetheart, Henry has handled her role with pride and has loved every second of her time participating in Sing.

“I absolutely love Sing, so being able to experience it as a performer, Sing chair and KOT sweetheart has given me so much appreciation for the production,” Henry said.



**FROM SING CHAIR TO SWEETHEART** Richland Hills senior Meredith Henry traded in her role as Pi Beta Phi Sing chair to be Kappa Omega Tau’s sweetheart.



**SWEETHEART HITS THE STAGE** Meredith Henry (middle) takes the stage alongside members of Kappa Omega Tau for their Pigskin-winning performance, “Against All Oz.”

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**IN THE LAB** Zeta Tau Alpha performs their third-place act, "Experiment Z."

Kenneth Prabhakar | Photo Editor

# ‘Be ready’ for performance of a lifetime at Pigskin Revue

**ZACH**

The stage is set, and the top eight performances from All-University Sing 2023 are getting ready for this year's Pigskin Revue.

Frisco junior and student producer Ava Bohling said it's going to be a special performance, and every group is ready to put on a show for the audience.

"I've gotten to watch all the chairs put so much hard work into [their performances]," Bohling said. "I'm super excited for everyone who's watching the show to see all the hard work that everyone put in to make it happen."

Pigskin was established in 1958 by Marie Mathis — the director of the Bill Daniel Student Center and the founder of All-University Sing. She created it as a way to increase the quality of Sing acts and to showcase winners.

The first-place performers from Sing 2023 who are returning to the stage for this year's Pigskin are Alpha Tau Omega and Chi Omega, who joined together to put on "A Day at the Derby." Bentonville, Ark., senior and Alpha Tau Omega Sing chair Will Deal said they implemented tons of fun elements for the audience.

to enjoy.

"We love to try and get the crowd as engaged as possible," Deal said. "We have a whole sequence where we kind of look like we're in the audience watching a horse race, cheering for our jockey. It's fun to have people kind of understand that and see that we're cheering for our jockey."

Deal said Alpha Tau Omega and Chi Omega have been practicing since the second week of school to incorporate new members into the performance. He also said the pairing of the fraternity and sorority has encouraged real bonds to form between the Greek Life organizations.

"It's cool because you get super close to the sorority through it," Deal said. "Beforehand, it was just a bunch of guys and girls that really weren't that close. But then whenever you spend several weeks dancing alongside each other, you get close to those people."

As the years have gone on, Bohling said Pigskin has evolved both in traction and popularity. She also said alumni who performed in Sing often come back to watch their organization perform at Pigskin.

"It's continuing to get more well-known as we go along," Bohling said.

"It's a huge deal for everyone involved in it. People from all around the country come. We stream the Saturday show, and last year when we streamed, we saw that people from all around the world watched it."

"[The audience] just has to be ready," Bohling said. "It's so cool. I think that every act that made it to Pigskin this year was very deserving of it."

## Acts

### Alpha Tau Omega and Chi Omega: *A Day at the Derby*

### Pi Beta Phi: *Be My Girl*

## Zeta Tau Alpha: Experiment Z

**Delta Delta Delta:**  
*Delta Motor Speedway*

**Kappa Kappa Gamma: *Kappa HQ***

## Kappa Omega Tau: *Against All Odds*

**Sigma Chi:**  
*The Good, the Bad and the Funky*

### Sing Alliance: Some-Bunny's in Trouble

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Arts & Life

SINGSPIRATION from Page B6

for people of varying spiritual involvement to strengthen their sense of community.

“I love that Singspiration brings so many people together from the Baylor Family, regardless of what church they attend or where they live,” Oestreich said. “It is such a perfect picture of unity and Christ’s desire for the church — that we would all join together as one and glorify him. This event is unique and special to Baylor. You would be hard-pressed to find another university across the country that puts on such an event during their homecoming week, prioritizing worship and community at the same time.”

Registration is encouraged but not required.



**TIMELESS TRADITION** The Singspiration worship service is a Baylor tradition that has taken place during homecoming week at Seventh and James for 75 years. Photo courtesy of Baylor University

Scan here to register or make a gift for Singspiration, which is from 7 to 8:15 p.m. Friday at Seventh and James Baptist Church.



HOCO LOVE from Page B2

parents went to Baylor, he and his brother roomed together during their time here, his daughter is currently a senior at Baylor and various nieces and nephews have attended or are currently attending the university.

“I have to tell you, [Baylor is] super special,” Glass said. “My mom and dad had their first date right there on the swing behind Collins, and they met at the Student Union Building. I bleed green and gold, and it’s kind of in my DNA because mom and dad met there, so you know, it’s just real special having that. ... It’s really building a family tradition.”

Austin junior Allison Vanderslice said she has been coming to Baylor Homecoming since she was 11 months old. Although Pigskin Revue is her favorite tradition as a student, she said she loved to attend the parade growing up.

“My cousins, my brother and I got to stand out there with the other kids and collect the candy, and I loved looking at the floats,” Vanderslice said. “I thought it was the coolest thing ever that I got to be waved at by college kids. It’s definitely really special because I’ve been seeing it for so long, ... and it’s finally my turn to get to experience it, especially after hearing the stories that my parents and my family had of being at Baylor and the traditions that they got to participate in. ... It’s definitely something that I don’t take for granted, just because I know that when I was younger, I wanted to do it so bad.”

Vanderslice said she would love to continue the family tradition but won’t pressure her future children to attend Baylor.

“[I would] really want them to attend Baylor, but I also would do what my parents did and not pressure anything,” Vanderslice said. “My brother went to Ole Miss, ... but I love Baylor so much, so I came here.”



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BASEBALL PREVIEW  
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pg. C6

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GLORY TO GOD Senior tight end Drake Dabney scored his third TD of the season against Long Island on Sept. 16 at McLane Stadium. Dabney made his return to the field after breaking his fibula. Lilly Yablon | Photographer

Dabney claws way back to gridiron

MICHAEL HAAG  
Sports Editor

It's nearly been a year since Baylor football senior tight end Drake Dabney had surgery for a broken fibula. Dabney suffered the injury during the Bears' 45-17 win at Texas Tech on Oct. 29, 2022. He wound up having surgery three days later, starting several months of recovery and rehabilitation.

Dabney had had surgery on his foot before, but he said he's never had his world turned upside down quite like that.

"That was the first time I really just went down," Dabney said. "I was like, oh! It was kind of scary. I don't know what it is or what happened. It's not easy but it happened for a reason and I'm grateful for what it taught me."

Dabney saw action in eight games in 2022 before having to sit out the final five. He caught 16 passes for 173 yards, but at that time he was

forced to start an unfamiliar process, something he wasn't sure he was comfortable doing.

"Early on it was hard because I'm a very independent person," Dabney said. "So I don't like to depend on people or need help, but I think the biggest thing for me was just to get out of my own head and just say, 'Hey, there's a great support system through my friends and family and teammates that want to be there for me.'"

The 6-foot-5 tight end said those people around him helped him commit to rehab and spark confidence to get back onto the field. And while Dabney's injury allowed someone like sophomore tight end Kelsey Johnson to get more playing time, it still sent a shockwave through the position room.

"I never want a guy in front of me to go down even though that will make me shine more," Johnson said. "I love him like a brother, so him going down hurt me too."

The Cypress native finished rehab and was back on the field within weeks of the end of the 2022 season. He said the entire process really put the game he loves into perspective moving forward.

"I know sometimes we can often take things for granted," Dabney said. "You do the same thing every day, you can kind of get lost in the sauce. ... You never know when that last snap or last down is. I just thank God for having me here and bringing me through what I've been through."

Dabney made his presence known in his first game back from injury, the 2023 season-opener against Texas State on Sept. 2 at McLane Stadium. The Bears lost that game 42-31, but Dabney notched career highs in basically every pass-catching category.

The senior went for 101 receiving yards on six catches, and he hauled in two TDs. All three of those marked new career highs, and Dabney became

the first tight end in program history to accumulate 100 or more receiving yards since Ken Hodge in 1964.

Head coach Dave Aranda said he tasked Dabney with having an impact like that straight out of the gates.

"The challenge that I've given to him is that he could kind of continue to get these catches and have these runs and do these things," Aranda said. "And I think some of those are strengths of his. And there are always ways we can get better with our strengths, but for him to work on his blocking to continue to be on special teams, I think those are things that can show him the best, not only for our team but also for him at the next level. And I know he's committed to that."

Dabney's early season success hit a little different for the tight ends around him, specifically Johnson whose been there with him during the journey.

"Just seeing him go through

everything with a good attitude, he mentored me on the sideline with a good attitude and not being down," Johnson said. "I had no choice but to be happy for him."

Dabney has 250 receiving yards on 17 catches to go with three TDs. He caught his third TD in the Bears' week three win over Long Island. He's also up to 20 career starts in 35 total games played.

But the current focus lies on Saturday's homecoming contest against Iowa State, which is something Dabney said he's excited about. Being a senior, Dabney said he understands the importance of protecting the home field on homecoming, something Baylor has done in 11 of its last 12 years, including four straight wins.

Dabney said the team takes a lot of pride in protecting Baylor's name.

DABNEY >> Page C3

Football seeks strong start, homecoming success

MICHAEL HAAG  
Sports Editor

Homecoming has rolled around for Baylor football, and the team is looking to bring its road success back to McLane Stadium. Playing in Waco hasn't treated the Bears well, as they're 1-4 in their home venue. This comes during a season in which Baylor leads the nation with eight home games.

In terms of homecoming itself, Baylor is 50-43-4 on the celebration and have won the last four. The program has also won 11 of its last 12 homecoming contests. The Bears and Cyclones have met four times on homecoming, with Baylor going 3-1 in those matchups. Iowa State suffered its worst points margin in the series when the Bears blasted the Cyclones 71-7 in 2013.

Head coach Dave Aranda said it's important to know about the homecoming tradition and that he's going to make sure his athletes are aware. In order to put his team in the best position to succeed, Aranda said it all boils down to how they start the contest.

"I think we have to start faster than what we have," Aranda said. "Whether that is the first drive on offense, having some success and getting points out of it, or at the very least moving the ball and having some positive plays. And then defensively, you know, first two or three drives, you know, illustrating our run fits and our pass rush and our coverage abilities and all that at the get-go."

"I think we have to be able to start fast and I think that would help get the crowd into it that would help get the crowd to go,



Kenneth Prabhakar | Photo Editor

BOUNCE IT OUT WIDE Junior running back Dominic Richardson bursts through the hole during a conference game against Texas Tech on Oct. 7 at McLane Stadium.

"This isn't what it's been. This is different. I have to pay attention to this." And I think we have a big responsibility in that and to get it to where it has been in the past with our home crowd. And all of it is way important. And it's a big factor for this week. And so I'm going to talk about a lot."

Baylor (3-4, 2-2 Big 12) is coming off a win at Cincinnati, as it is now 2-0 away from McLane Stadium. Being road warriors is something redshirt outside linebacker Garmon Randolph said is simply a result of focus and intentionality.

"There isn't that much to talk about except for the people that have to be locked in, they need to be locked in and focus on the task at hand," Randolph said.

Aranda said the team buys into that road mentality and that it needs to shift ahead of this weekend. He said he doesn't like that the crowd plays a factor in how this group comes out of the tunnel.

"When you go on the road, it's very clear that most everyone's against you, and so the lines are kind of clearly drawn," Aranda said. "And so it's us versus everybody. I think when you're at home, those lines are blurred maybe. And I just think we're thinking too much in those frameworks. I don't really like us thinking that way. I'd rather us just focus on the task at hand. Here's what we can do to accomplish this win, here's what we can do to win this play, to win this series, to win this quarter, to win this game. And so a lot of it's going to be refocusing on that."

FOOTBALL >> Page C3



# Baylor golfer Kaur embraces older sister’s historic legacy, paves own path

MICHAEL HAAG  
Sports Editor

Being the younger sister of four-time All-American Gurleen Kaur has never fazed true freshman Ashleen Kaur.

Ashleen said there’s no pressure in enrolling two semesters after Gurleen finished an illustrious career with the Baylor women’s golf program. She’d rather leave her own imprint as a Bear.

“I embrace the fact that my sister was here too, and she played amazing here as well,” Ashleen said. “Just want to make my own name for myself but still be known as her sister.”

Filling Gurleen’s shoes would mean putting oneself on the Mount Rushmore of Baylor women’s golfers. Gurleen is the only Bear to become a four-time All-American, and she has her name splattered all over the program record book. From career rounds (145) and stroke average (72.48) to total individual wins (4), Gurleen either holds Baylor’s record or is near the top of the list.

Ashleen isn’t trying to replicate what Gurleen did from 2017 to 2022 in Waco. Instead, she said she’s using her relationship with her older sister to her advantage.

“She’s literally my best friend, and I talk to her on a daily basis, and she’s helped me so much,” Ashleen said. “I feel like we’ve helped each other, honestly. She has helped my golf game grow tremendously because she understands the most.”

Ashleen committed to Baylor on July 7, 2022, out of Cy-Fair High School in the Houston area. She’s made the Bears’ tournament lineup in all four events this fall.

In her first event, the true freshman shrugged off any jitters, recording a team-best 2-over 218 at the Annika Intercollegiate from Sept. 11-13 at Royal Golf Club in Lake Elmo, Minn. Ashleen became the first freshman to lead the squad in her career-first event since Giovana Maymon in 2014.

The course was familiar to Ashleen, as she opened 2023 with a win at the Annika Invitational in January, besting 71 of the top



Photo Courtesy of Baylor Athletics

**WATCH IT FLY** As of Oct. 22, freshman Ashleen Kaur leads the Bears with 33 birdies through three tournaments going into the teams next event.

female junior golfers in the world.

Ashleen backed that season-opening performance with a 2-under 214 at the Mason Rudolph Championship, which ran from Sept. 22-24 in Franklin, Tenn. Ashleen, a 2023 Houston Chronicle All-Greater Houston Second Team member, led the field in par-5 scoring average (4.17), and the tournament marked her first career top-25 finish on the individual leaderboard.

Ashleen called her second outing at the Annika “surreal,” and head coach Jay Goble

said he was surprised to see her start the year that strong.

“She made it look very easy [in] those first two events,” Goble said. “I think [in] that first event that I walked with her, she shot 68 in the first round. That was about as high of a score as she could have shot that day, which was really impressive.

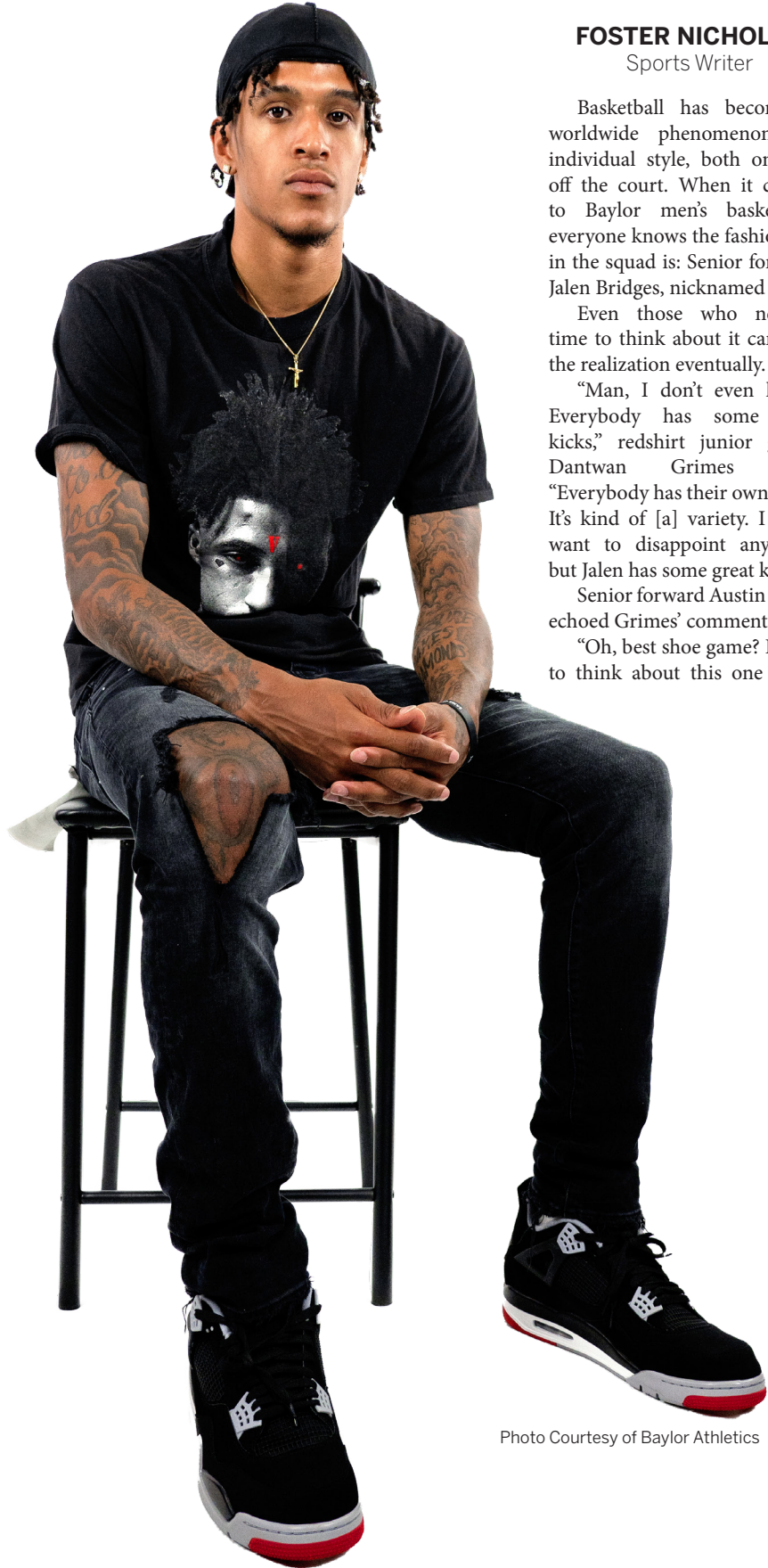
“And then to follow that up at Vanderbilt, which I would say is a much harder golf course, to go out and shoot 67 in her first round at the Mason Rudolph ... wow.”

Despite coaching Gurleen for four-and-a-half years, Goble said it wasn’t as much of a no-brainer to recruit Ashleen as one might think.

Goble said Ashleen didn’t have as prominent of a junior college career, and the ability wasn’t there at first. Seeing Ashleen set the Annika Invitational record with a 15-under 204 back in January as well as her outings the last two months has changed his mind.

KAUR >> Page C4

# Jalen Bridges’ next-level shoe game, style impresses Baylor basketball teammates



FOSTER NICHOLAS  
Sports Writer

Basketball has become a worldwide phenomenon for individual style, both on and off the court. When it comes to Baylor men’s basketball, everyone knows the fashionista in the squad is: Senior forward Jalen Bridges, nicknamed JB.

Even those who needed time to think about it came to the realization eventually.

“Man, I don’t even know. Everybody has some nice kicks,” redshirt junior guard Dantwan Grimes said. “Everybody has their own style. It’s kind of [a] variety. I don’t want to disappoint anybody, but Jalen has some great kicks.”

Senior forward Austin Sacks echoed Grimes’ comments.

“Oh, best shoe game? I have to think about this one for a

second,” Sacks said. “Jalen. Jalen Bridges brings out great shoes.”

Grimes and Sacks’ sentiment were met with the same enthusiasm from everyone on the team, as Bridges was unanimously dubbed as having the best sneaker game on the squad.

“I feel like when you look good, you feel good, and as a result, you play good,” Bridges said. “So I just try to always carry myself in a nice way. I like everything to match. For example, I’ll have a black shirt with a little bit of gray in it, with a tiny, tiny bit of red — like shoes have a tiny bit of red. It’s just little things like that. It’s all the details that make it work.”

Bridges transferred to Baylor from West Virginia prior to the 2022-23 season and started all 34 games for the

Bears. However, Bridges joked that making the move also improved his style.

“I’m very big on color coordination,” Bridges said. “Now I have way more options than I did with navy blue and gold for shoes. I get to throw in the neon green and all those other colors.”

While Bridges agreed that he always brings the “heat,” for the most part, the rest of the team is still in the modern era.

“Don’t get it twisted,” Bridges said. “Jon [Tchamwa Tchatchoua] over there — Jon has some heat in his locker. He just doesn’t bring it out all the time. I don’t think anyone needs my help, but Josh [Ojianwuna’s] selection could be a little bit better.”

Far from “Fugazi,” Bridges said he loves rocking his Kobe 6 sneakers on the floor, matching

his green and gold uniform. The 6-foot-9 forward’s style may be on point off the court, but Bridges said he brings a style and ability that he hopes leads to personal and team success.

“Personally, I just want to be the best version of myself,” Bridges said. “I just want to solidify myself as an NBA player, for real, no matter what that looks like. If that’s defensive player of the year, who knows? Team-wise, I just feel like we need to be the best version of ourselves. I feel like we can’t get caught up in comparing ourselves to past teams or future teams. I feel like we just have to be present. If we do that, we’ll go as far as we want.”

The Bears’ season opener is a neutral-site battle with Auburn at 8 p.m. Nov. 7 in the Sanford Pentagon in Sioux Falls, S.D.



Kenneth Prabhakar | Photo Editor

**KICKIN’ IT** Jalen Bridges attacks the rim during Baylor men’s basketball’s NCAA Tournament Round of 32 game against Creighton on March 19 in the Ball Arena in Denver.



Sports

DABNEY from Page C1

“[We] just want to be able to give the fans a win and just show them that we’re still Baylor,” Dabney said. “We talk about protecting that brand and just going out and really showing what we’re capable of and playing to our full potential [on] Saturday.”

Dabney’s true freshman season (2020) saw the Bears go 2-7 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that the unusual year and the historic 2021 season give him a unique perspective on Baylor football.

The Cypress Ranch High School graduate said he’s truly ridden the roller coaster.

“One thing I’ve learned is that winning is hard in this league and it takes what it takes honestly,” Dabney said. “You have to be willing to sacrifice and just do all the small little details that it takes, but I’m honestly grateful for the ups and the downs and the lessons that I’ve learned. I feel like God has put me here and just the rest of this group I’m around here for a reason. I just think it’s been very special up to this point, and I’m just excited to see how we can finish off the season on a good note.”

With the Bears sitting at 3-4 overall and 2-2 in Big 12 play, Dabney said the team still has a lot to play for. If they win three of their next five, then they’ll be bowl-eligible for the third straight season.

“I think just stacking a win and getting this one this week will

propel us into even more wins,” Dabney said. “Who knows what the possibilities are and how people’s records are going to shake out? So I think we can handle ourselves and focus on ourselves and what we need to do. I think it’ll work out for us.”

And while he doesn’t like to think about it since his focus is on this season, Dabney is still figuring out what his future looks like. He said his goal is to see if there’s a path to the NFL, but he’s already thinking of some backup options if that doesn’t work out.

One in particular that stood out is being on a NASCAR pit crew team. Dabney said he was on vacation and met a nice couple with a son who played Division I football. They told Dabney their son was on a pit team and that he would be a perfect fit for it.

Dabney talked about this potential path in an interview with Baylor+, and he said he’s been getting interest from lots of people.

“I wasn’t really sure what I wanted to do if football didn’t work out, so I was like, this may be something to keep me around that team environment,” Dabney said. “I was actually surprised how many people saw that and reached out and had connections for me.”

But Dabney said his eyes are still fixated on getting back to a bowl game. He said he hopes to build on success he had found halfway through the season and continue to give thanks for coming back from that injury.

“I guess when you look back, the lows weren’t really as low as they seemed in that time,” Dabney said. “But I think it just molded me and shaped me into the man I am today. So I’m grateful for it all.”



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FOOTBALL  
from Page C1

Baylor owns the nation’s No. 28 passing offense and the nation’s No. 3 passing defense. Aranda said the Bears have to do three things against the Cyclones (4-3, 3-1 Big 12) on those lines to win.

“We’re going to have to run the ball,” Aranda said. “To win this game, we’re going to have to stop the run. To win this game, we’re going to have to do grown-up things in a grown-up game. I’m looking forward to that challenge.”

Fifth-year senior Clark Barrington moved to guard for last weekend’s game, and Aranda said he was pleased with the shift. Barrington said there’s a lot of confidence to execute on the ground since the Bears were able to find some running room in the second half last Saturday.

“Going into the last game, we knew that was our struggle,” Barrington said. “So for the first little bit, we kind of stayed away from it, to be honest. But we realized we needed to start running in that second half, and we had a good run efficiency and everything like that coming out of the game. So, I think we realized that these changes were necessary and they’re doing good for us.”

Iowa State looks different to Aranda and Randolph, but only schematically. Former Cyclones and current NFL standouts Brock Purdy and Breece Hall were in Waco when Baylor defeated ISU 31-29, but players like that aren’t featured on that roster in 2023.

Aranda said Iowa State head coach Matt Campbell still runs an impressive ship.

“Their body of work just speaks for itself and they put on the tape and you see it all over again and have a new grouping, new faces, but same results,” Aranda said. “And so, what a challenge ahead of us. But I feel like in a lot of ways this is exactly what we need.”

The Cyclones have won two straight games, including three of the last four. Their defense has given up 20 points per game on 329.3 total yards, including 198.1 passing and 131.1 rushing.

Baylor got a big boost from redshirt sophomore kicker Isaiah Hankins last week, who was named Big 12 Special Teams Player of the Week for his efforts. Hankins regained his starting job after losing it two games into the 2022 season.

Aranda said Hankins has established himself as a reliable option moving forward, even if the offense wants to score TDs every drive. He said they know Hankins will step out there and deliver.

“Isaiah is just a way strong example of what can be possible,” Aranda said. “When I think of him, I think of his faith, No. 1. I think of his family, No. 2. And then, I think of how he treats people, and then I think of [how] he’s a great kicker. I think that’s a way cool thing. That’s intentional by him. All that matters to him.”

Baylor is set to kick the homecoming game with Iowa State at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday at McLane Stadium. The game will be live streamed on Big 12 Now on ESPN+.

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Lilly Yablon | Photographer

**MATCH POINT** Junior middle blocker Manuela Bibinbe gets fired up after the team scores a point in a nonconference game against Washington State on Sept. 13 in the Ferrell Center

# Joy without borders: Manuela Bibinbe provides beam of light for Baylor volleyball

**JACKSON POSEY**  
Sports Writer

When 6-foot-3-inch junior middle blocker Manuela Bibinbe walks into a room, the first thing that stands out isn't her height. It's her smile.

"She's great," sophomore setter Averi Carlson said. "I feel like she's grown so much since we started our season, so that's been super exciting to see. And then she's just a fun person to hang around. She's so funny, her smile is just so cute."

Freshman outside hitter Kyndal Stowers said she couldn't agree more.

"She's a hoot," Stowers said. "[I] love playing with her, love being with her off the court too. It's really cool just to hang out with her. ... She definitely just brings joy. Whether she means to or doesn't, she always finds a way to lighten up the room that she's in."

Bibinbe, who's in her first year with Baylor volleyball, began playing the sport in Cameroon to honor her older sister — a star player in her own right whose career was cut short by injuries. She said her sister was a big inspiration.

"She's the first one who started playing volleyball ... back home, but she had an issue with her knees. She has an injury and cannot recover from it," Bibinbe said. "Then, since I

have heard stories about her being such a great player and person back home, then I decided to play volleyball so I can make her proud so I can go wherever she was not able to."

Bibinbe said those early days were mostly playing for fun. Volleyball was primarily a hobby — a fun pastime for meeting new people and "getting to reach goals for my big sister." Before long, Bibinbe started to get good. Really good.

"Growing up, I always knew that I wanted to come to the States," Bibinbe said. "It was such a dream for me to be able to pursue my academic and volleyball career here in the States."

Connections matter, and Bibinbe was able to leverage her relationship with a former junior college athlete into an opportunity to play in the United States. She started out at Missouri State University-West Plains, which allowed her to practice speaking English. Then she caught the eye of Baylor head volleyball coach Ryan McGuyre at a youth volleyball camp. McGuyre was blown away.

"The best leaders are incredible servants," McGuyre said of Bibinbe. "What caught my eye was watching her coach 10-year-old girls. It was just so quick. There's this strong, athletic, beautiful woman that [in] just such a joyful,

tender way she loved helping these young girls play volleyball."

One of McGuyre's former players who is Cameroonian was able to put them in contact, and McGuyre immediately began running Bibinbe through drills.

"I put her drills and different things, and obviously, she looked phenomenal against like 12- and 14-year-olds," McGuyre said. "So we [had to] get her in the gym and watch more film on her. But that's what caught my eye was really her heart and her joy — and then she jumped high and hit hard. ... A lot of people jump high, hit hard, but she does it really well, kind of effortlessly. But [she's] a great culture fit because of her joy, her servant-heartedness and the athleticism."

For Bibinbe, joy isn't a passive reality. It's a goal she pursues daily in light of her Christian faith.

"[My joy comes] from the Lord," Bibinbe said, laughing. "The joy I have is the one he gifted me with. So I don't think it's me doing anything. I think it is God, Jesus Christ shining through me. ... That's where that joy comes from."

Before each game, Bibinbe prays the same prayer during the national anthem: "Lord, let the people around see you in me." As she prays,

she said God gives her joy.

For both Bibinbe and McGuyre, faith is at the forefront — a connection that has made her transition to Baylor much easier.

"I will say it is just a blessing," Bibinbe said. "I don't think in every program you will have a coach who will text you in the morning, 'Hey, how are you?' Who will send you a blessing. Who will ask you, 'How's your day going?'"

"That was not the idea I had of Coach Mac when I first came here, and now I think I can talk to him about anything — not only as my coach, but also as a father. And I think he's such a great leader, great servant, and he makes my job easier. So when I talk about Jesus and have someone who talks about Jesus as well, it makes life easier."

Bibinbe has shined in her first season with the Bears, ranking third on the team in kills and block assists as of Oct. 20. Though she said she'd love to play professionally, she's trusting in God's plan.

"Right now, I'm taking one day at a time," Bibinbe said. "I want to go wherever God leads me. ... One of my dreams would be probably to continue to play professional volleyball. I have a pretty [good] idea where I want to be, but I don't know what God has in store. So we're going to let him lead in that way."

## KAUR from Page C2

"When she got here and we started qualifying, I mean, she was basically almost winning qualifying from day one," Goble said. "So I think that her belief in herself and her confidence in her game is really high. You can see that right away. ... Looking back, I mean, it's easy to say this now, but I should've seen it coming."

Ashleen said her main goal is to secure an individual win this year, which is something her sister did four times in the green and gold — a program record. Ashleen added that she wants to boost her ranking as much as possible and make the Augusta National Women's Amateur, a feat Gurleen accomplished in April 2021.

Having coached both athletes, Goble said Gurleen and Ashleen have many similarities and differences. But when it comes to their mannerisms, the head coach, who is in his 13th year, said he can't tell a difference.

"Every once in a while, I'll look over at Ashleen when she's doing something, and it looks exactly like [Gurleen]," Goble said. "Even [how they] twirl the club in their hand. It's a very unique thing that they do, and they both do it, and I don't know anybody else that does it."

Goble also mentioned that he wasn't the first one to accidentally call Ashleen by the name of Gurleen this season. Goble, associate head coach Carly Ludwig and three members on the current team had some overlap with Gurleen, and Goble said a teammate called Ashleen "Gurleen" out on the course recently.

However, the 2015 Big 12 Coach of the Year said he's happy to tackle being intentional about names if it means more talent for his roster. A family tree like that of the Kaur makes Goble willing to juggle the little things.

"I wish they had another sister that was like 13 right now so [we] could just go ahead and line that up as well," Goble said.

Unfortunately for Goble, Gurleen and Ashleen don't have any other siblings. He'll have to suffice with how Gurleen performed and what Ashleen can do moving forward, which he said can be more than he ever thought.

"I can honestly sit here right now and say that she is as good and has the potential to maybe be even better than Gurleen," Goble said. "Her physical game is off the charts, and if we can clean up some of the small mistakes that she makes, then shoot, she can be as good as she wants."



Photo courtesy of Baylor Athletics  
**AN EYE FOR TALENT** Head coach Jay Goble has helped develop 10 All-Americans at the helm, dating back to 2011.

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# Upperclassman returners lead Baylor softball through fall slate ahead of 2024

MICHAEL HAAG  
Sports Editor

Baylor softball head coach Glenn Moore said it's unusual and refreshing to have 21 of 22 athletes return from last year's roster.

On one hand, Moore said he doesn't have to be as technical with his instruction during the fall. The players can lead the team themselves in a lot of ways. And for the three freshmen Moore brought in, he said they're being mentored by "kids that have done everything we've asked them to do."

That's the refreshing part of it. Having such a similar roster to a year ago is still strange to Moore, as he said you don't find that many places across the country. With the addition of the transfer portal and NIL, it's become harder to retain talent as well as recruit it.

Moore said he attributes the strong return rate to the culture in place. Moore, who coached four Baylor teams to the Women's College World Series, said the vibe around the team is the best he's ever experienced.

"And I've had some good teams," Moore said. "I think culture, by the way, is the character of your team. It just so happens that we have great leadership."

The head coach entering his 24th season mentioned seniors right-handed pitcher Dariana Orme and outfielder McKenzie Wilson as being veteran leaders this fall. Moore also threw junior infielder Shaylon Govan into that mix as well, saying the three of them have hit their stride.

Orme was Baylor's ace in 2022, as she was a first-team all-region and second-team All-Big 12 pick. She still managed to pitch a conference-leading 148.0 innings after coming back from a right-arm injury as well as nerve damage to her ribs.

Govan's first year as a Bear came in 2022 after she transferred from Stephen F. Austin. The unanimous first-team All-Big 12 selection played

through a torn labrum and hit a team-best .396 with 11 home runs and 54 RBIs.

Wilson plays in center field for Moore and often bats in the leadoff spot. She had the third best batting percentage (.326) on the team and led the squad in runs scored (53). Wilson had a team-best 59 hits and two triples.

Moore brought Wilson in from Fresno State ahead of the 2022 season. Wilson was part of what Moore called a "rebuilding year" in 2022 in which the team went 32-24 overall and missed the NCAA Tournament. The Long Beach, Calif. native was also a part of the major bounce back, a 2023 season that saw the Bears win 40 games for the first time since they made the WCWS in 2017.

Baylor had six wins over top-five foes, including the only victory over three-time defending national champion Oklahoma. But injuries to Orme, Govan and others derailed the team from making a deep run in its NCAA Regional in Salt Lake City.

"We had some wins that let us know that this wasn't just a one win accidental thing," Moore said. "We were very capable of having gone much further in [the] postseason had we been healthy."

Bringing nearly everyone back and getting athletes healthy gives this squad a chance to "run it back." However, Wilson said she and her teammates want to be able to learn and grow, rather than fixate on running it back with the same mindset.

"It's more of 'let's build off of what we did last year,'" Wilson said.

Baylor was on the cusp of hosting an NCAA Regional, but a loss to Iowa State in the Big 12 Tournament added a ugly blemish on the team right before Sunday Selection. Wilson said this fall has been super competitive given the team's motivation to not only replicate last year's success, but do even better.

A big part of that inspiration is player-led, Wilson said.



RELAY Then-junior outfielder McKenzie Wilson (21) keeps her eye on the ball and gloves a line drive in center field during the Bears' championship game of the Baylor Invitational against Minnesota on Feb. 26 at Getterman Stadium.

"In that sense, it's almost like you're letting the team down when a player is able to hold you accountable in that perspective," Wilson said. "I also think that the players have this motivation within, this intrinsic motivation, [that] this is the year Baylor softball is back."

The Bears wrapped up their fall slate on Oct. 14, and they were able to play against an excess of other schools. Moore said the fall is mostly about intrasquad competition, getting healthy and fine-tuning things before the spring. However, he was really pleased with what he saw in the box from his hitters.

"I saw potentially one of the strongest offenses that we've had in years," Moore said.

Baylor hit .298 as a team last year and returned all four of its athletes that hit right at or over .300 a year ago. Wilson said that strong attack paired with the fact that they're battle tested means this team can go as far as it wants to.

"The sky's the limit for this team," Wilson said. "Man, we're not afraid of anyone."

Moore and Wilson said the early portion of Baylor's spring schedule will include a rematch with Tennessee. Two of the Bears' top-five wins last year came against the Volunteers in Knoxville, Tenn., so both Moore and Wilson are expecting a tough test in a few months.

Moore said he's scheduling a tough slate for his athletes since they

had such a strong year in 2022. He said he wants to make sure they're tested so that they can make a deeper run in the NCAA Tournament.

Wilson said she's pumped to get back out there in the spring and start the year off against one of the best teams in the country.

"Last year we kind of took it to Tennessee — not kind of — we did," Wilson said. "And so they're going to be coming in hungry and that's always the mentality at practice. It's like Tennessee is coming into our house, and how are we going to continue to prepare for when that day comes?"

Baylor hasn't announced its spring schedule yet, so stay tuned for all updates @BULariatSports on X, formerly known as Twitter.

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The logo for the Baylor Club, featuring a stylized graphic of the stadium's architecture above the text "BAYLOR CLUB" in a serif font.



# Thompson, Baylor baseball set up for ‘bright future’



**HOPEFUL** Baylor baseball coach Mitch Thompson looks forward to the upcoming season as fall ball comes to an end.

Kenneth Prabhakar | Photo Editor

**FOSTER NICHOLAS**  
Sports Writer

Given time to reflect on a 20-35 campaign in his first year at the helm, Baylor baseball head coach Mitch Thompson said the squad knew it wasn't going to "set the world on fire." Thompson said it wasn't the Bears' time yet. But after being hired late in the recruiting cycle for the 2023 season, the head coach has a much firmer grasp on this year's group. "The future looks bright with what we're able to do now recruiting-wise and who we're able to bring in here to help us," Thompson said.

Coming off a last place finish in the Big 12 and missing the conference tournament for the first time in program history, Thompson said there was no time to be down in the dumps. The Bears rattled off four wins to close the year, which showed Thompson there was something to build on. "You look back at the season, and while it was disappointing, you can look back and go, 'Gosh, we were so close in so many of these ballgames,'" Thompson said. "The difference might be one player, one play or one pitch. We have to correct this either with different talent, different players, or we have to do a better job getting our point [across as coaches]." The movies might show a baseball head coach kicking back and relaxing when a season ends, but Thompson doesn't live in Hollywood. His summer months were full of recruiting, retooling and looking into the mirror, trying to coordinate how to continue bringing in talent. "That's how we've made a name for ourselves as coaches over the years: being able to recruit and identify talent,"

Thompson said. "Then, once we get it here, we can coach it and we can improve it. That's what we're going to continue to do, and I think kids want to get better, and they want to be around other kids that are hungry." Before fall camp started, Thompson said he could see the changes his players worked on during the summer. Redshirt sophomore outfielder Gavin Brzozowski, junior catcher Cortlan Castle and transfer redshirt junior outfielder Enzo Apodaca played summer ball to gain more experience. "I was in Iowa this summer playing in the Northwoods

some experience, and we have some guys who can step in. "They've improved. They've shown that improvement. They're continuing to improve, and they've improved again this fall." When the athletes returned to Waco, Thompson said he set his eyes on his first full recruiting class and saw the fruits of his labor. However, he said the incomers looked different from how he anticipated the rest of his Baylor tenure. "We have 51 players out here right now," Thompson said. "It's the most we will probably ever have in the fall. It's more than I want to have, but coming off of last year, we needed to bring in a huge recruiting class, and we needed to try and flip the program and get it turned back in the right direction. I've been very happy with what we've seen so far." Filled with versatility and heavy competition, Thompson said there's a competitive atmosphere for the fall to emulate the cutthroat nature of stiff conference competition come spring. He noted there has already been tremendous growth in the outfield and that he feels like the lineup can compete at a high level.

“My coaches tell me that my walk-up song is ‘I want it all and I want it now.’”

**MITCH THOMPSON | HEAD COACH**

League," Castle said. "The greatest thing about that is that it was a lot of repetition and a lot of games. It's hard to mimic anything else, so just playing was a really big benefit for me, and I think I learned a lot doing it. I think that's benefited me a lot so far." Others like junior third baseman Hunter Teplanszky and senior outfielder Hunter Simmons stayed in Waco to work on their craft. "You think back to this time last year, we were returning two home runs off of our entire ballclub from the year before," Thompson said. "We're not doing that now. We're returning guys with

The clock is slowly ticking through the fall and winter months, but Thompson said he and the squad are excited to show improvement in hopes of making a run at shocking the college baseball world in the upcoming season. "My coaches tell me that my walk-up song is 'I want it all and I want it now,'" Thompson quipped. "That's just the way it is, and that's probably true. I'm a really impatient guy, and I do want it all, and I want it now. So give it to me now, and let's do it."

Scan to hear Mitch Thompson’s interview on Don’t Feed The Bears — our weekly sports podcast.

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Lilly Yablon | Photographer  
**KILL IT** Junior middle blocker Manuela Bibinbe prepares to serve against UCF on Oct. 22 at the Ferrell Center.

# Acro & tumbling, volleyball pumped for less congested home in Ferrell Center

JACKSON POSEY  
Sports Writer

Baylor's national champions are getting a new home.

That's true of men's and women's basketball, as the newly constructed Foster Pavilion nears completion across Interstate 35. It's also true for acrobatics and tumbling, which is preparing for its move to the newly vacant Ferrell Center.

Baylor's eight-time defending NCATA champions currently call Marrs-McLean Gym their home — even though it isn't the most glamorous spot on campus.

"Moving to the Ferrell Center will be bittersweet, just to leave this spot," head acrobatics and tumbling coach Felecia Mulkey said. "This is our living room. That's what we call Marrs-McLean Gym, is our living room. And we've trained for many national championships here, so it'll be bittersweet."

Mulkey said that with the move, she'll miss the "energy" students bring to campus — not to mention Baylor's new bear cubs, Judge Indy and Judge Belle, who live just a short walk from Marrs-McLean.

Mulkey called them her "new bear neighbors across the corner."

Still, sharing space in the middle of campus was less than ideal. The team could only use the gym during a specific three-hour window each day, making scheduling around classes a nightmare. Mulkey said the Bears have been practicing with "the minimal amount of things" a team could use: 13 mats the team pulls out for practice, a few extra mats on the side and

a spotting ring for tosses. Getting a permanent practice home in the Ferrell Center will allow the team to use more equipment.

The scheduling issues have been even worse for volleyball, which has been splitting time with men's and women's basketball in the Ferrell Center. That arrangement means the team has occasionally had to practice as early as 6 a.m. and as late as 7 p.m.

Head volleyball coach Ryan McGuyre said for the players, the new time flexibility is going to be the most important thing.

"I think that freedom is going to really help the mental health of the student-athletes," McGuyre said.

Due to locker room locations, volleyball is expected to take over what is currently the women's basketball practice gym, while acrobatics and tumbling will take the (identical) men's gym. But more than a simple change in practice location, McGuyre said the move should help game environments as well.

"When we can get a volleyball-specific floor down the road, it's what will make the atmosphere better and then just help our athletes with recovery [between games]," McGuyre said. "I think aesthetically, the fans will enjoy it too. And it's come to a volleyball-acro venue, and we can celebrate the successes of this volleyball program and have a place where acro can showcase the successes of their amazing program."

The Foster Pavilion is scheduled to open for basketball games early next year, with the men's team hosting Cornell on Jan. 2 and the women's team playing its Big 12 home opener against TCU the following night.



Scan here to read about how Scott Drew and Nicki Collen are feeling ahead of their move to the newly constructed Foster Pavilion.

## Lariat Laughs





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