MAKING
She’s done everything she could... rehearsed every move, practiced every chant. After the rigorous tryout, her nerves were wracked as she approached the list of new cheerleaders. Is she on it? Could she be on it? She is.

What it Takes to Cheer in Katy!

by Shetye Cypher
“Tryouts were very intimidating and stressful; however, when I went in there, everything just fell into place,” says Meagan Montgomery, co-head varsity cheerleader at Katy High School. “It was a lot of hard work and preparation the few days before, but it all paid off.”

What it Takes to Cheer
A good cheerleader must have a collection of skills. Everything requires coordination, timing, flexibility, and strength, along with a happy smile. A cheerleader since the age of five, Madye Creek High School junior varsity cheerleader Brooke Hilbrich feels that cheerleading has a lot to do with competing against all cheerleaders. “To be a cheerleader today you must keep in shape so that you can stay ahead of all the other girls on the team who may try to take your spot,” says Hilbrich. “Cheerleading has evolved into a sport, as the kids must be very athletic and agile to perform the elite stunts and routines that are now commonplace in the cheer world,” says Madye Creek High School Varsity Cheer Sponsor Shauna Baker. Locally, it has two veins: competitive cheerleading and school cheerleading. Most school cheerleaders have been involved with competitive cheerleading as well.

Cheerleading Prep Work
Many cheerleaders prepare by taking gymnastics or cheer classes at a competitive cheer gym. Bethany Dykes, varsity co-captain at Cinco Ranch High School, has attended tumbling classes and has taken lessons in cheer dance. She also works on conditioning and endurance at a local gym. “Total body strength and endurance is needed for stunting and tumbling. Also, much flexibility is required for jumps and stunting. Coordination and dancing skills are a must for the dances, cheers, and chants,” says Dykes.

Not Popularity but Dedication
Even though people assume cheerleaders must have the best social lives, their commitment takes up roughly 10 months out of the year. According to Baker, cheerleaders cheer at football, volleyball, basketball, track meets, weightlifting...
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matches, as well as working concession stands. That, balanced with maintaining their grades, keeps them pretty busy. “It’s really difficult because cheerleading takes up so much of your time,” says Hilbrich. “I have to stay up really late to finish all of my homework, sometimes I’m up until 2 a.m.”

**Katy ISD Cheerleader Selection Process**
The selection of high school cheerleaders is done by knowledgeable, impartial judges observing the candidates in a series of activities performed on a single afternoon in March, April, or May.

**Pre-tryout Clinic**
Each campus schedules a pre-tryout clinic to acquaint candidates with skills and techniques on which they will be judged. Attendance at the clinic is strongly encouraged.

**Tryout Format and Judging**
The tryout process is organized and facilitated by the cheerleading instructor. At least three impartial judges are used for tryouts. Candidates perform before the judges individually or in randomly assigned small groups. Tryouts often include group cheer, individual cheer, new cheer, jumps, dance routine, and chants. Each judge scores the candidate’s performance using a numeric scale. The twelve candidates eligible for varsity with the highest rankings are the new varsity cheerleaders. The twelve candidates eligible for junior varsity with the highest rankings are the new junior varsity cheerleaders. Cheerleading is not a popularity contest anymore, but a test of athleticism and skill. KM

*S. SHETYE CYPER is a freelance writer who lives with her husband and son. She has lived in Katy intermittently since 1976. She has written for several Houston based publications and is also the Journalism teacher and Publications Advisor at Mayde Creek High School.*

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