

Katelyn Simmons, Michelle Newman,  
Mina McDaniel, Bailey Thomas, and  
Michelle Newnom

Libby Smith, Skylar Devers,  
Chloe Bartine, and Rebekah Fayard



Seven Lakes Sapphires focus on the technique and precision of their moves for competitions, and spirit and showmanship during halftime



The Katy Bengal Brigade has the unique opportunity to perfect their halftime performances since the Tigers often advance to the state playoffs

# *Making the Cut*

## **Katy ISD's Dance and Drill Teams**

Through community involvement and hard work, Katy ISD drill teams take their training, passion, and camaraderie far beyond the 50-yard line

*Written by Shetye Cypher | Photography by Anetrius Wallace*





Sylvia Garcia, Keisha Dumont, Cindy Rodriguez, Maddy Schreiber, Alexis Clark, and Maddi Frost

The Martinettes form a bond of sisterhood after spending hours together every day for practices, games, community events, and more



Logan Patrick, Mackenzie Porch, Kourtney Crow, Hannah Cillessen, and Kathryn Fuller

The Crimson Cavalettes can't wait to establish themselves as an institution of school spirit at Tompkins High School

For any young woman in Katy ISD, drill team is synonymous with friendship, hard work, and the thrill of performing. "They will know what it feels like to win and lose, and they will know how to handle both with grace. They will have a true appreciation for dance as an art and what it takes to be a great performer," says Rosey Fortenberry, dance teacher at Tompkins High School.

### In Sync with the Community

Joining the dance team at a Katy ISD high school is great for the girls' sense of community involvement as well. "[The Cinco Ranch Cougar] Stars have a great love and respect for their team, school, and community and are always volunteering to help the elementary schools out with events," says Samantha Cockerham, dance teacher at Cinco Ranch High School. For example, every year they host a Kick-a-Thon event to raise money for the Ballard House.

### Potential and Heart

Because good form and technique cannot be learned overnight, drill team is something every girl needs to be prepared for. The best way for your teen to get ready is to sign up for drill team and dance workshops whenever possible. It also helps to know what the judges look for.

"I look for potential and heart. The judges look for dancers with good performance quality and potential," says Taylor

High School (THS) dance teacher Darby Boyd, who has a BFA in dance performance from Southern Methodist University.

Elise Nicknish, THS junior, who has been dancing for 13 years adds, "Don't be afraid to be yourself and let your personality shine through your dancing."

If you aren't a dancing veteran, don't feel discouraged. Anyone who truly wants to dance and gives the effort will get their shot. "We work hard with students that have an innate ability and natural talent for dancing that have not had any formal training," says Cockerham.

### Perfecting the Steps

During the regular season, teams from every school in Katy ISD perform choreographed halftime routines for football and basketball games, pep rallies, and community events. In order to be performance-ready for so many venues and appearances, drill teams practice for hours each day, in order to perfect routines.

### Center Stage Spotlight

When the season for performing at halftime is over, the real work starts. Competition season is fierce, fast-paced, and a serious time commitment, so parents should be prepared. "Parents should expect their student to be very busy. We also need them to reinforce the importance of managing and organizing their time, because dance is a year-round activity," says Fortenberry.



Maggie Welch, Sabrina Caminos, Teagan Schmidt, Anna Arneson, Hannah DeFranco, Camille Stanton, Kristy Vogelsang, and Carmon Endlich



Cougar Stars director Samantha Cockerham says that the ideal Star is someone with natural talent, self-confidence, and lots of heart

The teams travel to various competitions throughout the state and sometimes the nation, vying for titles in different categories and often performing multiple routines a day.

But the travel, training, and long days spent with teammates eventually build bonds that will last a lifetime. According to Seven Lakes High School senior, Sarah-Kate Fowler, being a part of the drill team has given her something special. "I

have gained irreplaceable friendships from being a part of the Seven Lakes High School Sapphires. Seeing familiar faces all around the school and having a sense of belonging is something I will always cherish." KM



*SHETYE CYPHER is a freelance writer who is also the journalism teacher and publications advisor at Tompkins High School.*

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Nathalie Tenorio, Bianca Perez, Carmen Alvarado, Marionna Burton, and Cassie Merrow



The Maverick Belles look forward to taking the field and performing a perfectly in sync kick routine



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Saige Shoenfeld, Alem Mengistu, Ana Suarez, Elise Nicknish, Abby Tilford, Kirsten Songster, and Kara Kerr

The Pacesetters have won several national championships for group and solo performances

A big thank you to all of the Katy area high school dance teams. Keep making Katy proud!

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