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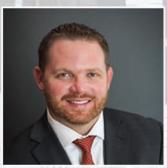
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County football brought thrills from hot August to mid-December



By Rich Flowers, Sports Editor

The football season we welcomed in on those triple-digit afternoons in August lasted well into the Christmas shopping season, thanks to the Malakoff Tigers.

Malakoff once again took us on a long post season ride and a trip to the 3A D1 Championship Game and Athens again qualified for the playoffs, but the 2024 season was quite a bit different from 2023.

Malakoff shifted to a new district, 7-3A, that had them traveling east this year and before it was all said in done they had dusted off the best teams in the region. The Tigers had plenty of tools in their bag they could rely on, beginning with a sturdy defense, punishing ground game or and timely passes from quarterback Mike Jones.

The result was a 15-1 season and state runner-up status.

Athens was picked to make the playoffs, but few forecasts locked in on how solid this team would be. The Hornets were a complete team, shining in offense, defense and special teams. They finished second in 8-4A D2, behind state champion Carthage, voted the best small town team in the nation in one publication. Athens win total of eight was the most in a regular season in about a decade.

Beyond Athens and Malakoff, the successes were a little spottier, but every Henderson County team made a few memories. Brownsboro sent the seniors out with a thrilling win over Bullard. Cross Roads broke even on their non-district slate and Eustace cranked up the offense under coach James Cantrell.

Mabank's hard working defense challenged opposing offenses in a tough district, while Kemp and Trinidad each came up with a pair of wins during the season.

The local teams all got to test their mettle against some of the best in the state. Brownsboro and Athens each took on Carthage, Mabank had a district matchup with Kilgore and Eustace met Malakoff in 7-3A.

We hope this postlude to the season will amplify some of those high spots and rekindle some of those memories.



TOUGH BREAK Steely Malakoff stopped short of repeat title

ANISONWITT .

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By Rich Flowers Photos by Travis Tapley ny other year and we'd be talking about the greatest Malakoff season in history.

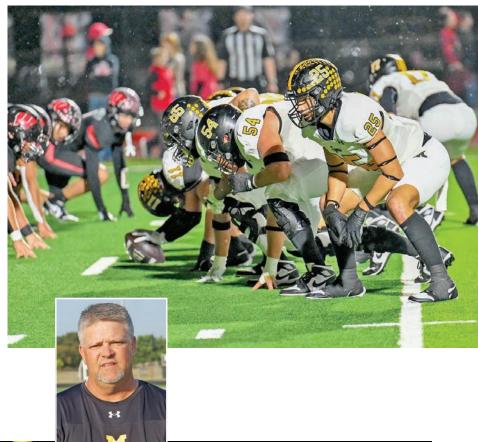
The Tigers' 15-1 season and state 3A D1 Championship Game appearance would be viewed as miraculous considering the week to week challenges they faced climbing the playoff rungs.

All that keeps the 2024 season from being held in higher regard is the fact that 2023 happened.

Last year's Tigers were 16-0, beat Franklin 14-7 at AT&T Stadium and set the bar for all future Tiger teams.

But, for a moment, lets look at the 2024 campaign as the amazing achievement it was for Coach Jamie Driskell's crew.

"If you win 15 wins in one sea-





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son, I'd definitely say that's a success," Driskell said.

Malakoff started the year with some key pieces back from 2023. It never hurts to have a quarterback like Mike Jones, who had thrown for 2,621 yards passing, 31 TDs; 831 yards rushing and 14 Tds in his junior year.

The Tigers were expected to contend for the District 7-3A D1 title, with another Top 10 team, the Winnsboro Red Raiders seen as their biggest obstacle along the way.

Malakoff's win streak was severely threatened at 18, when Madisonville came to town on Sept. 13. The Mustangs jumped on top 7-0 after the first quarter and fought throughout the night to keep the Tigers from getting the upper hand.

Madisonville fed Malakoff a steady diet of running back, Phillip Green who carried 23 times for 194 yards. They owned a 21-7 advantage in the third quarter, before Malakoff fought back to tie the score.

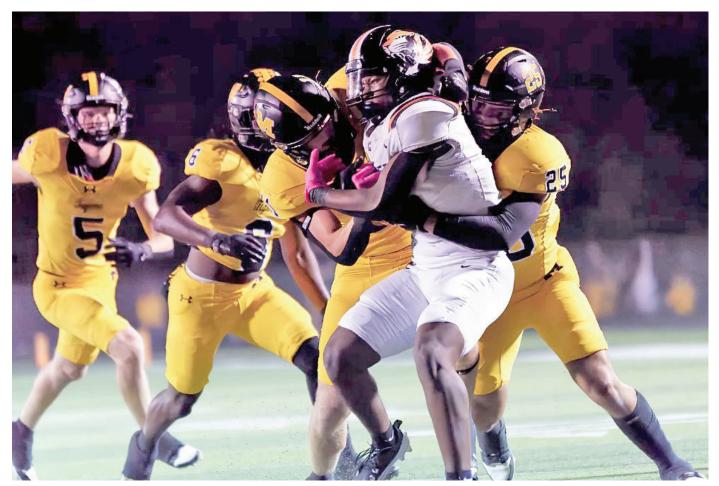
Malakoff trailed 28-21 late in the game when Malakoff QB, Jones, who hadn't had a good night throwing, went back for a last minute attempt. He hit Parker Poteete for a 46-yard score that brought the Tigers within a point. Malakoff handed to Jason Tennyson for the two-point conversion and a 29-28 win.

That was the last close game for the Tigers until they went to Winnsboro to decide the district championship. Malakoff outscored the Red Raiders, 35-28, on a night when Jones ran for 176 and Tennyson, 165.

Malakoff's playoff march began with romps over Tatum and Maypearl. Next came Jefferson who had the firepower to challenge the Tigers, in a 31-21 thriller. Liberty-Eylau followed in a dominant performace for Malakoff at Rose Stadium in Tyler. The Tigers pitched an unexpected shutout, 35-0.

In the state semifinal, The Tigers turned to their power, determination and big game experience to overcome a well coached and patient Paradise team that ate up more than 9-and-a-half minutes in a third quarter drive to go up 19-7.

Malakoff responded with a 74-yard march, fueled by running back Jason Tennyson, who plowed for consistent yardage despite nursing





an ankle sprain. Tennyson polished off the final 11 yards of the drive with a TD run on the first play of the fourth quarter. Jacob Padron added the point after, leaving Malakoff down by only five, 19-14.

What followed was the defensive play of the game. Facing third and seven, from their own 22, Paradise quarterback, Ayden Winters, rolled out to pass, he was hit and the ball flew to Tigers defensive back, Jack Hustead, who traveled 34 yards untouched for the touchdown.

Malakoff led, 20-19 and elected to go for two to give themselves a three-point lead.

Malakoff stopped Paradise and took over on the 26, be-

charged into the end zone, with about three minutes left.

Malakoff led 27-19 and made it stand up against a late Paradise threat.

The final game featured an excellent Malakoff drive after Columbus took an early 7-0 lead. The Tigers went 80 yards, scoring on a four-yard Jerrion Hall run, set up by a 21-yard pass to James Studley.

After that, Columbus dominated, winning 48-14.

"They're really good," Driskell said of the talent laden Cardinals.

Driskell said the Tigers "gave and gave and gave," until they ran out of gas.

> Even so, the 2024 season continued the legacy of success they've had since Driskell came to town. The trip to the final was the Tigers' third showdown at AT&T Stadium for a state crown since 2018.



ginning a time consuming drive to give themselves a little cushion on the scoreboard. The Tigers reeled off four first downs and faced a third down at the Panthers' three.

Jones again gave the ball to Tennyson, who



Driskell salutes seniors, fans after playoff finish

By Rich Flowers



Malakoff Tigers 2025

1Adrien ChambersSo.WR, DB33Cody SmithSo.2Davion JohnsonJr.WR, OLB34Hayden KingSo.3Reece JacksonSo.WR, DB34Hunter RushSo.3Wyatt WallaceJr.WR, CB50Shawn MeadowsSr.4Jaxson JedlickaSr.QB, S51Elan PaschalJr.5Jack HusteadSr.WR, FS52Ayden SmileyJr.6Jerrion HallJr.RB, OLB54Andrew AdamsSr.7Ryland ShorbJr.WR, FS55Deairius MooreFr.8Lukas WilliamsSr.TE, DE56Jamyron WalkerSr.9Aidan DeanJr.OLB, DE58Bear LeisJr.10Chris ThompsonSr.RB, CB60Brian MeadowsSo.11Parker PoteeteSr.MLB, TE64Landon KeylonJr.12Mike JonesSr.VR, CB66Hunter ReevesSr.13Kayland DavisSr.TE, DE71Ryker JamesSo.14Nasir RossSo.WR, CB59Joaquin FigueroaSo.15Evan LoperSr.TE, DE74James BrysonJr.16Canyon MarshFr.QB, DB99Joaquin FigueroaSo.19Rylan SmithSo.WR, DBJaxon BakerFr.20Jack D	POS.
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Eli Depekal	
24 James Studley Sr. WR, LB	
25 Michael Elliot Sr. TE, DE Neo Perez Jr. Will Self	
28 Elexon Jones Fr. RB, DE	
30 Kehler Whitlow So. OLB, WR Tate Warren So.	
32 Jacob Padron Jr. K Bralynn Womack So.	



Coach Jamie **Driskell**

The sting of Malakoff's only loss in the past two seasons was still on his mind when Coach Jamie Driskell reflected on the year.

His team had battled through six weeks of playoffs after a 10 week regular season and was spent. The final was a 48-14 loss to Columbus, a most unusual outcome for a team that had outscored opponents 731 to 208.

"This group of seniors, hats off to them," Driskell said. "They're just a great group of kids. They're fun to be around. They've done so much for this program the past three years.

The leadership on the team helped their cruise through the stormy playoff seas that required them to play four of the state's Top 5 teams.

"It starts with Mikey (Mike Jones) at the quarterback position," Driskell said. "He's our leader. I think we have 16 seniors and I just love them to death. They're going to be successful

Not pictured: #8 Lukas Williams



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later in life. They've got great work ethic, great character and I couldn't be any prouder of them."

Malakoff fans have been treated to some high level games in recent years and have made their presence felt in Tyler, Frisco, Arlington and wherever the Tigers have gone. Driskell acknowledged the support of the community for the players in his program.

"It's typical, small town football," Driskell said. "Everybody can't wait for Friday night. That's how it is in Malakoff now. We have great support. It's good for the town. I hate that we didn't do well tonight for them, but I think they're going to be really proud of this group of kids." They're going to be successful later in life. They've got great work ethic, great character and I couldn't be any prouder of them. — Coach Jamie Driskell

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Season Records 2024

Athens Hornets

8/30 at Henderson 35-45 9/6 vs Kaufman 35-28 9/13 vs Palestine 35-9 9/20 at Jacksonville 31-0 9/27 at Waco Connally 34-21 10/4 Open 10/11 vs Brownsboro 44-35 10/18 vs Carthage 7-49 10/25 at Rusk 48-9 11/1 vs Center 43-26 11/8 at Bullard 41-6 11/15 Playoff Van 30-38

Brownsboro Bears

8/30 vs Quinlan Ford 0-35 9/6 vs Jacksonville 7-35 9/13 at Fairfield 0-33 9/20 at Caddo Mills 20-56 9/27 vs Van 20-56 10/4 Open 10/11 at Athens 35-44 10/18 vs Rusk 21-35 10/25 at Center 12-49 11/1 vs Bullard 31-30 11/8 vs Carthage 8-57

Cross Roads Bobcats

8/30 Atlas Homeschool 12-55 9/6 at Meridian 35-14 9/13 Open 9/19 vs Jewett Leon 21-41 9/27 at Dallas Gateway Charter 46-32 10/4 Open 10/11 at Kerens 7-40 10/18 vs Price Carlisle 20-56 10/25 at Cayuga 20-34 11/1 at Frankston 7-41 11/8 vs Mildred 6-50

Eustace Bulldogs

8/30 at White Oak 13-50 9/6 vs Buffalo 42-50 9/13 vs Rice 42-14 9/20 at Quitman 16-38 9/27 vs Rains 44-47 10/4 Mount Vernon 42-48 10/11 vs Winnsboro 7-70 10/18 at Malakoff 0-77 10/25 vs Commerce 8-38 11/1 at Mineola 13-56 11/8 Bye

Kemp Yellowjackets

8/30 at Live Oakwood 14-60 9/6 vs Mabank 7-20 9/13 vs Samuell 17-53 9/20 at Inspired Academy 62-0 9/27 at Rice 17-10 10/4 Open 10/11 vs Canton 0-52 10/18 vs Sunnyvale 14-50 10/25 at Wills Point 0-48 11/1 vs Ferris 7-56 11/8 at Quinlan 3-35

Mabank Panthers

8/30 vs Bullard 6-7 9/6 at Kemp 20-7 9/13 at Wills Point 27-38 9/20 vs Canton 0-21 9/27 Open 10/4 vs Longview Pine Tree 6-38 10/11 at Henderson 10-14 10/18 vs Tyler Chapel Hill 0-45 10/25 at Lindale 0-36 11/1 vs Palestine 10-21 11/7 at Kilgore 0-48

Malakoff Tigers

8/30 vs New London West Rusk 49-0 9/6 at Lorena 34-14 9/13 vs Madisonville 29-28 9/20 at Grandview 42-14 9/27 Open 10/4 vs Commerce 53-6 10/11 at Mineola 47-10 10/18 vs Eustace 77-0 10/25 at Emory Rains 56-0 11/1vs Mount Vernon 70-0 11/8 at Winnsboro 35-28 11/14 Playoff - Tatum 62-13 11/21 Playoff-Maypearl 70-7 11/29 Playoff - Jefferson 31-21 12/6 Playoff Liberty Eylau – 35-0 12/12 Playoff - Paradise -

Trinidad Trojans

8/30 vs Tyler Heat 66-21 9/6 at Gholson 30-64 9/13 at Penelope 22-70 9/20 vs Avalon 14-60 9/27 at Kings Academy 42-92 10/4 Open 10/11 vs Fruitvale 72-26 10/17 at Fannindel 34-55 10/25 at Bynum 34-36 11/1 Mt. Calm 20-67 11/8 at Oakwood 18-68

Final District Standings 2024

District 9-4A D1

School Name	W-L	W-L	PF	PA
Pine Tree	5-1	9-1	256	155
Kilgore	5-1	8-2	331	145
Chapel Hill	4-2	7-3	302	219
Henderson	3-3	6-4	332	286
Lindale	3-3	5-5	292	206
Palestine	1-5	1-9	141	401
Mabank	0-6	1-9	79	275

DISTRICT 6-4A D2

Sunnyvale	5-0	7-3	381	188
Canton	3-2	8-2	271	104
Ford	3-2	7-3	345	231
Wills Point	2-3	5-5	287	233
Ferris	2-3	4-6	270	335
Kemp	0-5	3-7	125	331

District 8-4A D2

Carthage	5-0	9-1	501	111
Athens	4-1	8-2	353	228
Center	3-2	7-3	362	253
Bullard	1-4	2-8	170	309
Rusk	1-4	2-8	159	300
Brownsboro	1-4	1-9	154	430

District 7-3A D1

Malakoff	6-0	10-0	492	100
Winnsboro	5-1	8-2	502	152
Commerce	4-2	4-5	305	259
Mineola	2-4	2-8	257	412
Mount Vernon	2-4	2-8	159	482
Rains	2-4	2-8	257	495
Eustace	0-6	1-9	227	488

District 8-2A D2

Mildred	5-0	10-0	438	101	
Frankston	4-1	7-3	384	273	
Kerens	3-2	5-5	289	208	
Cayuga	2-3	4-6	247	254	
Carlisle	1-4	1-9	252	441	
Cross Roads	0-5	2-7	175	363	



Harris Ratings 2024 Final

According to the Harris Ratings Service final rankings, Malakoff played four of the top five teams to finish the season.

They beat Jefferson, Liberty-Eylau and Paradise, who had a combined 35-7 record, before falling to Columbus in the title game.

3A TOP TEN DIV. I

- 1. Columbus (15-1)
- 2. Malakoff (15-1)
- 3. Paradise (12-3)
- 4. Jefferson (12-1)
- 5. Liberty-Eylau (11-3)
- 6. Franklin (11-3)
- 7. Winnsboro (10-3)
- 8. Edna (14-1)
- 9. Jim Ned (12-2)
- 10. Hitchcock (10-2)



Max Preps Final 2024 Small Town Top 25

Carthage is ranked No. 1 in the nation among small town teams for 2024. The Bulldogs are the Texas 4A D1 state champion. Columbus, the 3A Division 1 champion is 4th overall.

Malakoff, lost to Columbus 48-14 in the state title game. The Tigers are No. 19 in the small town poll.

The Small Town Top 25 consists of schools with an enrollment under 1,000 students in towns with a population under 10,000.

- 1. Carthage (Texas), 15-1, 55.8
- 2. Marion Local (Maria Stein, Ohio), 16-0, 55.1
- 3. Wahoo (Neb.), 13-0, 54.1
- 4. Columbus (Texas), 15-1, 50.1
- 5. West Lyon (Inwood, Iowa), 13-0, 49.6
- 6. Toombs County (Lyons, Ga.), 13-1, 47.0
- 7. Liberty Center (Ohio), 15-1, 46.7
- 8. Coldwater (Ohio), 15-1, 46.6
- 9. Gunter (Texas), 14-2, 46.5
- 10. Elgin (Okla.), 14-0, 46.2
- 11. Grundy Center (Iowa), 13-0, 44.9
- 12. Jackson (Ala.), 14-1, 44.7
- 13. North Polk (Alleman, Iowa), 13-0, 44.1
- 14. Louisville (Miss.), 13-2, 43.4
- 15. Indian Valley (Gnadenhutten, Ohio), 16-0, 41.8a
- 16. Brock (Texas), 13-2, 41.2
- 17. Minster (Ohio), 11-3, 39.6
- 18. Bennington (Neb.), 11-2, 39.5
- 19. Malakoff (Texas), 15-1, 39.1
- 20. Choctaw County (Ackerman, Miss.), 14-1, 38.4
- 21. Andale (Kan.), 13-0, 38.4
- 22. Noxubee County (Macon, Miss.), 11-3, 38.3
- 23. Madison County (Madison, Fla.), 10-3, 38.0
- 24. Hitchcock (Texas), 10-2, 37.8
- 25. Tuttle (Okla.), 13-1, 37.4



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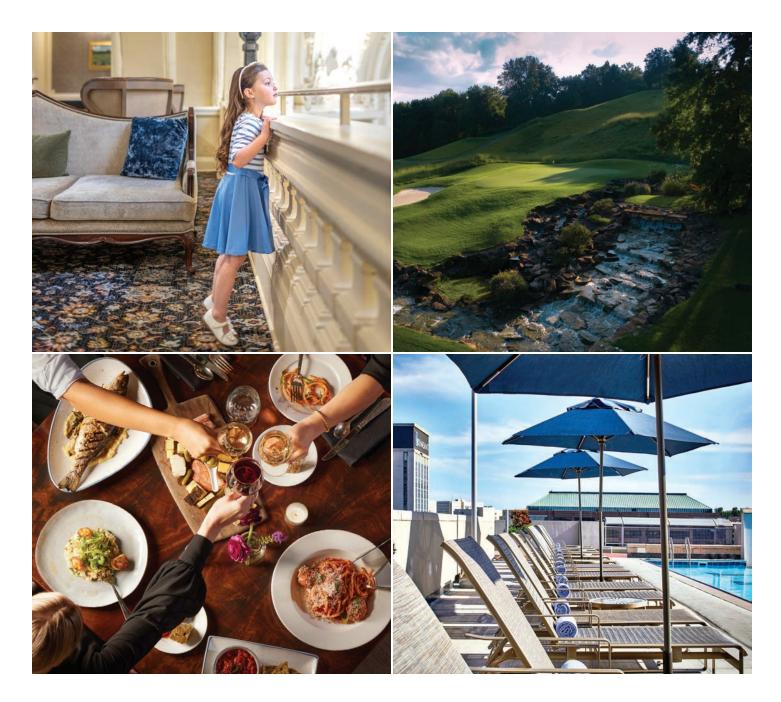
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2024 Team Recaps



ATHENS HORNETS

RUNNING WITH THE WIND Athens weathers opening storm for excellent year

By Rich Flowers Photo by Mark Bennett The Athens Hornets hit the road to Henderson in August with high hopes for the new season, only to be greeted with thunder, lightning and buckets of rain.

Athens fell behind early and lost 45-35. Looking at an 0-1 record and a tough non-district slate, the Hornets rebounded to win their next five, scoring more than 30 every time. Athens finished 8-3 after a 38-30 loss against Van in the playoffs for the Hornet's best season under Coach Zac Harrell and their most regular season wins since 2013.

"We played some really good teams and played high level football throughout the season. And we had definitely a good chance to win that that playoff game," Harrell said.

Kaufman came to Athens in week two. The Lions, who finished 7-5 in a 5A Division 2 district kept pace with the Hornets before Athens closed the door on a 35-28 win. Following the game with the Lions, Athens' defense started to assert itself. They held Palestine to one touchdown and shut out Jacksonville.

Athens opened district at home against Brownsboro and found the Bears to be hard to put away. After leading, 21-7, after one quarter, Athens took a 28-14 lead into intermission. Brownsboro scored in the third to stay on the Hornets' heels going into the fourth quarter.

Athens had an outstanding passing game from Thatcher Diamond, who was in for injured David Richardson. Diamond hit 14 of 19 for four touchdowns. Jase Warren ran for 124 yards on just 10 carries.

Athens lost to Carthage on Oct. 18 and returned home in a showdown to decide second place against another solid team, from Center. Center was a slight favorite.







Best Game: Athens 43 Center 26

Early in the game, Center lived up to billing as an offensive power, jumping to a 10-0 first quarter lead.

Athens rolled up three scores in the second quarter and led 21-20 at the half.

Athens scored two more touchdowns in the third quarter, while the defense tethered the Roughriders in the second half to pull away for the win.

Dray Russell, Eli Carnes and Mason Shelton were all in double digits in tackles.

Richardson hit 13 of 19 for 193 yards and a score. Warren fought for tough yards and scored three times.

The Hornets got down early in the game, but as they did throughout the year, fought back.

"A thing that makes this season pretty remarkable is our team was able to overcome a lot of adversity," Harrell said. "We lost, three offensive linemen before district play started, played two district games without starting quarterback. And really he played the entire season on a hurt foot. So, we were able to overcome some things that I think a lot of teams and programs may not have been able to.

I think that speaks to the culture of our program and how our kids just kept playing for each other and kept believing, no matter what happens, trying to control what we can control."

Harrell said any look at the Hornets' success has to credit the senior captains.

"You gotta start with Jase Warren and Mason Shelton, Harrell said. "They've played three years of varsity football and they both elevated their play to a level that they hadn't even shown in previous years. Jase really took over the running back position and played it better than I think anyone anticipated him playing. That's while also playing almost every down on defense. To play linebacker and running back at our level of play is really a pretty remarkable feat. And Mason Shelton is very similar as far as playing almost every down on both sides of the ball." Harrell said the play and leadership of Warren and Shelton will be hard to replace.

"I think, after them, you have Drayvon Russell also had a great senior season, playing both sides of the ball at safety and outside.

We had a lot of juniors really step up and play big. I think Emmanuel Moore took the next step. If you go back and look at the second half of Waco Connally and that five or six game stretch that he played. He had pretty remarkable numbers and some of the catches he was able to make, one hand catches, that a lot of guys don't make.

Julius Brewer had a great season as a junior taking over the slot position. And, you've got to talk about David Richardson and what he was able to do."

Richardson was not able to run for the second half of the season because of an injury

to his foot. Harrell said his passing was much improved this season and helped keep the offense moving.

On the offensive line, it was Brandon Casas, Jose Pimentel and Gus Wickel, all three of those guys.

Gus had to switch positions, go from right tackle to center, and really came on at the end of the year and started playing really well.

Harrell also mentioned Charles Livingston, Jayden Davis and Eli Carnes as rugged defenders.

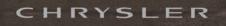
"A lot of guys really stepped up and that's why we're excited about what we have coming back. We have nine starters on offense and six on defense expected to return," Harrell said.





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BROWNSBORO BEARS

BEARS

AGAINSTAWALL Brownsboro battles through tough 2024 slate

REARS

VANDALS

By Rich Flowers Photo by Mark Bennett

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The Brownsboro Bears found their usually potent offense hard to jump start in 2024. The result was a 1-9 record, with a 1-4 district mark.

At the end of the season Coach Lance Connot praised his team for going to the mat each week against some tough competition.

"I want to tell my players how much their effort has meant to me and my staff," Connot said. "I will sure miss our seniors, and wish them the best for the rest of their life."

One of Brownsboro's best performances was against Athens, who finished second in 8-4A Division 2.

Athens led 21-7 after one quarter, but the Bears traded touchdowns in the second quarter, then cut the lead to 28-21 after three.

The wild fourth quarter saw Athens outscore the Bears 17-14 in fourth for a 45-35

Hornets win.

Adam Thompson hit 18 of 31 for 264 yards to lead the Brownsboro offense. Gabriel Hendricks led with 10 catches for 141 yards.

Best Game; Brownsboro 31 Bullard 30

The Bears picked up a win in their ninth game of the season when they snared the Bullard Panthers, 31-30. The issue was in doubt to the finish.

""I'm super happy for our kids. They have fought and given us all they had, all year" Connot said. "They deserved this win."

The Panthers, who needed the win to put themselves in position for the playoffs, looked as if they were going to pull away in the third quarter.

Up 30-19, Bullard had another chance to score, but the Bears' Bralen Kirkpatrick recov-



ered a fumble, to keep Brownsboro in the game.

Hendricks scored his fourth touchdown of the night on a spectacular 46 yard touchdown pass from Thompson. Kirkpatrick scored the final Bear touchdown on a determined one yard run. That gave Brownsboro its final lead and set the stage for a last ditch Bullard drive. As time ran out, Crew Bowman heaved a 51 yard pass into the end zone, that was caught by Campbell Pawlak.

Chris Frederick reported on the final, frenzied seconds. "The Bullard fans went crazy. But there was a little yellow flag that was thrown and offensive pass interference was called, and the Brownsboro fans went crazy."

The penalty ended the fame with Bullard on the outside, looking in. The Bears' final home game sent the seniors out with a dramatic win.





CROSS ROADS BOBCATS

TOUGH DISTRICT

Cross Roads claws out two wins



Cross Roads rang up some early wins in 2024, but found District 8-2A play tough, en route to a 2-7 season.

After an opening loss, the Bobcats rolled to a decisive win over Meridian, 36-14, on Sept. 6. Coach Brett Zamzow's team repeated the result they got in 2023 on the Bobcats' home field.

The Bobcats' other win was also on the road. On Sept. 27, they beat Dallas Gateway, 46-32. The win over Gateway wrapped up non-district with a 2-2 record.

Cross Roads was in a tougher district in

2024, led by Mildred who finished 12-1 and swept all five district games. Frankston had an outstanding year, losing only to Mildred in district and finishing 8-4. Kerens had a three week playoff run, while Cayuga took the final playoff spot in bi-district.

Best Game: Cayuga 34 Cross Roads 20.

Cross Roads hung tough Oct. 25 against Cayuga on the Wildcats' homecoming night. Down, 21-7, in the second half, Cross Roads got to within 21-14 on a touchdown by Riley Brown. Cayuga padded the lead on a TD pass with 2:58 remaining in the third quarter.

Cross Roads got within seven again heading into the final quarter, but the ball control minded Wildcats salted it away with a final touchdown.

Past 5 seasons 2023 (3-6) 2022 (4-5) 2021(4-4) 2020 (5-5) When the dust had settled on the season, the Bobcats landed six spots on the 8-2A All-District football team as released by the district coaches. Two Bobcats were on the first team offense. Sophomore running back Oliver Tilley was selected as was senior offensive lineman, Ethan Julian. On the first team defense was senior back Riley Brown. Cross Roads placed two on the second team defense. Junior lineman. Owen Perry and sophomore Linebacker Sean Brown earned slots. Senior Bobcat Tristan Himes was a second team utility player.







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EUSTACE BULLDOGS

Better than before

Eustace takes step forward in 2024

By Rich Flowers Photo by Mark Bennett

> The Eustace Bulldogs found the end zone with more frequency this season than last year, but couldn't keep pace with Malakoff or Winnsboro who led District 7-3A D1.

> The Dogs averaged 23-per-game after less than eight points the year before. Coach James Cantrell, who came out of retirement for 2024, before announcing he was hanging up his whistle again at the end of the year, said the Bulldogs would not hesitate to put the ball in the air this season.

In week two, Eustace scored 42 in an eight point loss to the Buffalo Bison. Senior quarterback Rhett Dyer completed 13 of 26 for 263 yards and four touchdowns But that's not all that worked for the Bulldogs. Senior running back Mason Patek carried 26 times for 184 yards and two scores.

The following week, Rice came to the Bone Yard and got bullied by a score of 42-14. Patek again was a workhorse, picking up 195 yards on 30 carries. The 5 feet 9, 160 pound runner scored twice.

On Sept. 27, Rains came to Eustace and won 51-40. Dyer threw for 236 yards and two scores to keep the Dogs within striking distance.



COMMERCE

Best Game – Mount Vernon 48 Eustace 42

On October 4, Eustace went to Mount Vernon and was on the verge of a district win, leading 35-28 after three quarters. The Tigers tied it at 35-all and sent it into overtime. Both teams scored a touchdown and extra point in the first overtime, but Mount Vernon got the only score in overtime two, winning the game with a touchdown.

Dyer was 19 for 29 though the air, hitting four TD passes. Eustace found a running threat in junior Ed Gallet, who pounded out 148 yards on 37 carries. As a team, the Dogs ran for 208 yards.







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KEMP YELLOWJACKETS

CHALLENGING MOVE

Kemp moves into Class 4A Division 2



The Kemp Yellowjackets faced the challenge of moving up in classification in 2024, an always tough undertaking.

The result was a 2-8 season record and an 0-5 mark in 6-4A D2. Coach Tavarus "B.J." Rider entered the fray with a small roster – less than thirty suited up in the orange this year. When asked if many of his players would play both ways, Rider said "all ways," meaning offensively, defensively and on special teams.

The 2024 season extended the string of 2-8 seasons for Kemp to three.

The Jackets' wins were on consecutive nights in September. Kemp hung a 62-0 shutout on Inspired Vision of Dallas and thumped Rice, 17-10.

Kemp rode the arm of junior quarterback Hutson Cromer throughout the season. Cromer could also pick up yards on the run. He often targeted senior receiver, Jayden Freeman, with his tosses.

On defense, junior free safety Daltyn Irvin was on

patrol, often putting the stops on opposing ball carriers.

When the all district team was announced, Cromer was named second team quarterback. Freeman picked up a nod for second team wide receiver.

Kemp linebacker, Enrique Apresa, was a second team selection. The middle-linebacker was a leading tackler on the Yellowjackets defensive unit.

With an enrollment of 590, Kemp was by far the smallest school in its new district. Canton is next smallest, with 682.

Best Game: Kemp 17 Rice 10

The Yellowjackets went on the road to pick up their second straight win. In their final non-district game, the Yellowjackets led 7-3 at halftime and kept the pressure on defensively in the second half.

Kemp also put in a tough performance against 4A D1 foe, Mabank. The Panthers jump ahead early, but Kemp stayed in the contest, falling 20-7.



MABANK PANTHERS

Determined defense

Mabank battles in region's toughest district

By Rich Flowers Photos by Mark Bennett

Coming into the season Mabank Coach Zack Hudson knew how formidable the competition would be in District 9-4A Division 1, with two of the states top five teams residing there.

"I think we know what we're going to get each week," Hudson said.

Mabank came out week after week ready to do battle and was consistent on defense throughout the year.

The Panthers scored 79 points on the season and held opponents to 275.

They played Bullard to the hilt in their opener, losing at home, 7-6. Nobody scored until the fourth quarter.

Next up, was a trip to Kemp where the Panthers came out on top, 20-7. Mabank scored twice in the first quarter, but Kemp cut the halftime lead to 14-7. Mabank logged their final score in the third quarter then slammed the door on any Yellowjacket hopes of a comeback.

Several Mabank players were named to the 9-4A All-District team.

Second team honors went to: Wide receiver Daylon Gibbs, Linebacker Kam Wilkinson, Safety Noah Romero, Safety Gavin Foote and Punter Rev Neighbors.

Honorable mention went to: Aaron Roden, Ray Brager, Blaine Foote and Case Holt.

Best Game: Henderson 14 Mabank 10

The Panthers' 14-10 loss to Henderson showed the fight of the Panthers against a district foe that had beaten Athens 45-35 on opening night. The Lions averaged 33 pointsper-game during the season.

Late in the first quarter Henderson had the ball inside the Mabank 20, with no score in the game.

Early in the second period, Mabank squelched the threat when Daylon Gibbs picked off a pass on the 14 yard line. Mabank put together a time consuming drive that ended with a Noah Romero field goal that gave the Panthers a 3-0 lead they would maintain until halftime.

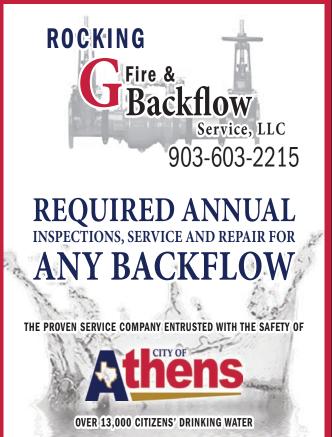
The third quarter opened with Henderson's talented back, Jesstin Starling, running it in from 11 yards out. Mabank answered with their own drive that concluded with a one-yard run by Ethan Baker to put the Panthers up 10-7.

Henderson's Starling closed out another drive by the Lions with about six minutes to go, to win the game for Henderson, 14-10. The win gave Henderson a 6-1 record at the time.





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VISA

TRINIDAD TROJANS

Offense gaining ground

Trinidad snags two wins against tough schedule



The Trinidad Trojans saw their 5-5 mark for 2023 slide back to 2-8 this year.

Their final district game was against eventual 6-Man Division 2 state finalist, Oakwood, 68-18, ending the season with four straight Trinidad losses.

Coach Mike Warren's team opened the year on a brighter note, smashing Tyler Heat, on the road, 66-21.

A number of Trojans contributed to the cause.

Sophomore Colby Brown carried 8 times for 104 yards and three scores. Senior Johan Hornbuckle gained 103 yards on 7 carries and also had three touchdowns.

Quarterback Jack Stevens longest completion went for 30 yards to Kacey Womack. Hornbucke and Brown also had big days running in the loss to Penelope on Sept. 13. Hornbuckle carried 18 times for 114 yards. Brown gained 92 yards on 16 totes.

Jack Stevens hit all three of his passes with the longest a 20-yard toss to Brown.

The Trojans offense came to life in several of their games, scoring 352 points along the way.

Trinidad's highest scoring game was on Oct. 11 against Fruitvale.

Best Game; Trinidad 72 Fruitvale 26

Hornbuckle and Browns were again the one-two punch for the Trojans. This time, Hornbuckle gained 144 on 11 carries, while Brown notched 127 on 14.

Trinidad had seven rushing scores. Brown

contributed three, Hornbuckle added two and Womack crossed twice.

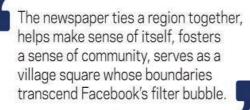
The Fruitvale game was the Trojan's biggest winning margin, but the most tense finish had to be the 36-34 district loss to the Bynum Bulldogs.

Stevens hit on 6 of 13 passes for 82 yards. Most came on a 60 yard connection to Brown. Brown proved hard to contain running the ball, picking up 152 yards on 16 carries and scoring three times. Hornbuckle gained 52 on 13 carries.

Stevens, Womack and Hornbuckle are all seniors on a team with mostly underclassmen.



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TVCC CARDINALS

Solid defense Trinity Valley misses playoffs in up and down year

By Rich Flowers Photo by Mark Bennett

Coach Sherard Poteete came into the 2024 season hoping to improve on last year's second place conference finish and No. 10 national ranking.

After a year of ups and downs, TVCC entered their final game, a 44-21 road win against Northeastern Oklahoma, with a mathematical shot at a playoff spot, but to get there the dominos would have to fall just right.

The Cards had a bye as they watched their playoff hopes evaporate, they finished with a 3-4 conference mark and a 5-4 record overall.

Against NEO, the Cardinals built a 24-0 lead and never looked back. They were up 37-7 after three quarters. In the end, the win helped erase some of the disappointment of falling short in key conference games.

After winner their opener over Independence, Kansas 37-30, TVCC sustained a disappointing 34-30 loss to Cisco and a heartbreaking road loss to Tyler, 14-7 in overtime.

TVCC quarterback, Champ Harris finished second in conference passing. He hit 61.8% and averaged 175.8 yards through the air.

Best Game; TVCC 13 Blinn 10

The Cards traded blows with their old rival for four tough quarters and emerged with a much needed win in the conference race.After Paul Singleton III intercepted a Blinn pass, the Cardinals took the lead on a 41-yard pass from Champ Harris to Jaquan Lowman. Ty Powers shoed the PAT for a 7-3 lead which the Cards took into the dressing room at the half.

The Cards passing game connected again in the fourth quarter to give TVCC a little daylight. Harris passed 13 yards to Antony Shelton for the Card's second TD, with 9:13 left in the game. The PAT was blocked, leaving the Cardinals up 13-3.

Blinn scored on a Rylan Wooten three-yard

run and tacked on the PAT at the 1:18 mark to get with 13-10 left.

The Cardinals recovered the on-side kick, which came from the Cardinal 35-yard line after penalties on the touchdown and PAT attempt.

Noah Baker led the TVCC defensive effort with 12 tackles, including eight solo stops.

Photo by Travis Tapley





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TRINITY VALLEY

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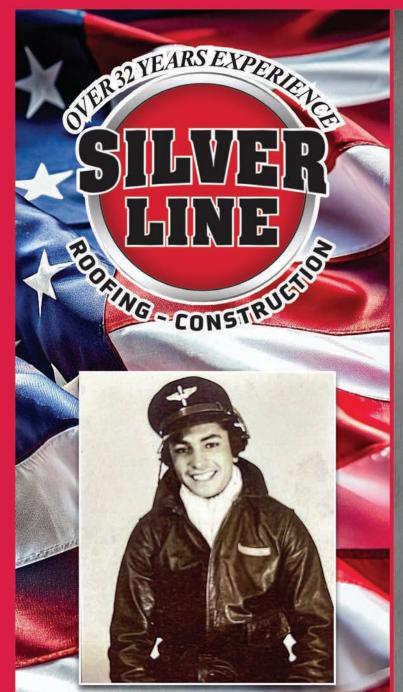
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February 5-16

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February 7 - April 4

Mark your calendars for a relaxing evening at the Arboretum's First Friday Happy Hour, starting in February. Bring friends and unwind surrounded by nature while enjoying soda, tea, lemonade, beer, wine, or ice cream. First Fridays will take place February 7, March 7, and April 4. The cost is \$10 for two tickets which are redeemable for beverages or treats.

February 8

Just in time for Valentine's Day, the Arboretum will host a Build-a-Bouquet Workshop from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 8. Learn how to craft beautiful bouquets, preserve flowers, and explore the best blooms to grow for your garden. This thoughtful experience is perfect for creating a gift for someone special or yourself. The cost is \$25 for Arboretum members and \$40 for non-members. Registration is available online at easttexasarboretum.org/workshops-and-hikes.html.

February 14 HAPPY VALENTINES DAY

Texas A&M Singing Cadets, Friday, Feb. 14, 7pm, Athens First Methodist Church, 225 Lovers Lane, Athens; FREE CONCERT; Hosted by NAMI Greater Athens, Texas

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> Sunday, February 9th Super Bowl Watch Party

Thursday, February 13th Dueling Pianos: The Killer Keyz

Saturday, April 26th Concert Fleetwood X

Saturday, May 10th Dueling Pianos: The Eighty Eights

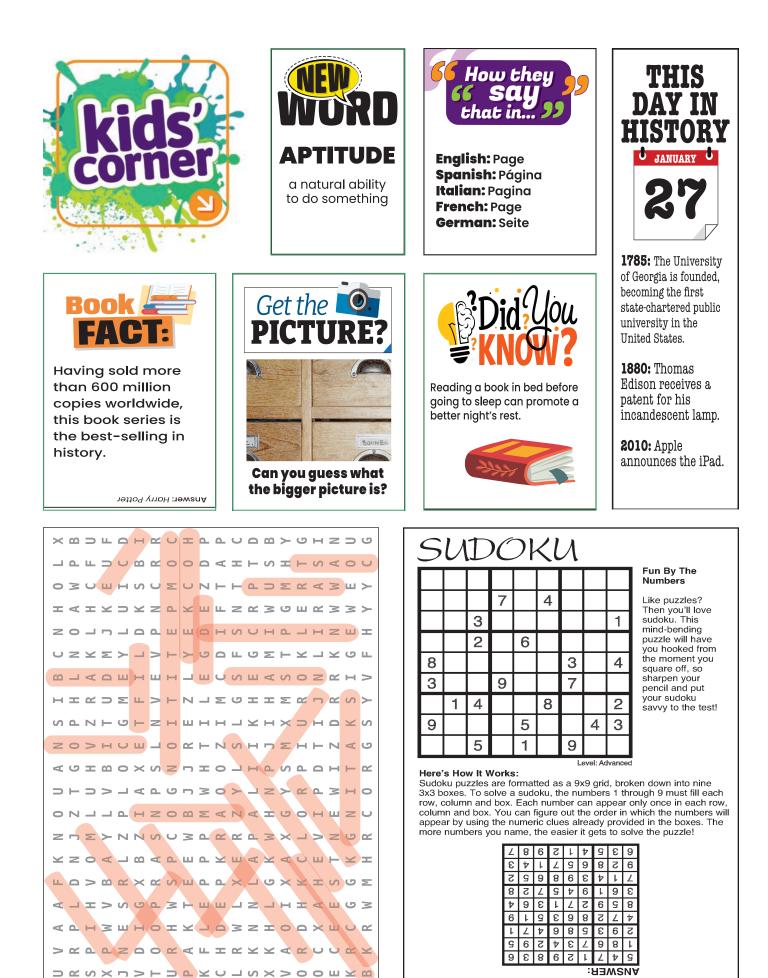
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WORD SEARCH

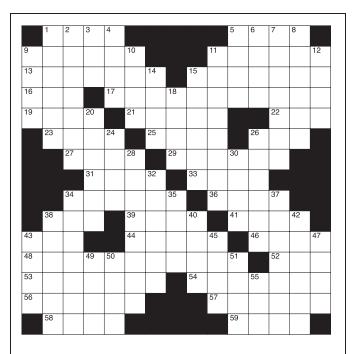
U	V	Α	Α	F	Κ	Ν	0	U	Α	Ν	S	Ι	В	С	Ν	Н	0	L	Х	
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S	Ρ	Ι	Н	V	0	М	L	U	Н	V	Ζ	R	Α	Κ	L	Н	С	F	U	
X	Ρ	W	V	В	Α	Υ	L	V	В	Ι	Т	U	D	Μ	J	Κ	Е	U	F	
J	Ν	Ε	S	R	L	Ζ	Ρ	L	0	С	G	Μ	Е	Υ	L	U	Ι	С	D	
V	D	Ι	G	Х	В	Ζ	Ι	Α	Х	Е	Т	F	Ι	L	D	Κ	S	В	Ι	
Т	0	0	Ρ	R	Α	S	Ν	Ρ	S	L	Ν	V	Е	V	Ρ	Ν	С	R	R	
U	R	Н	W	S	Ρ	С	0	G	Ν	0	Ι	Т	Ι	Т	Е	Ρ	Μ	0	С	
Р	Α	Κ	Т	Е	Е	W	В	J	J	R	Ε	Ζ	L	Υ	Е	Κ	С	0	Н	
K	F	L	Е	Ρ	Ρ	Ρ	Μ	W	Н	Т	Ι	L	Е	G	D	Ε	Ζ	D	Ρ	
C	Н	D	Е	Ρ	Κ	R	Α	0	0	Ζ	Ι	Μ	С	D	Ι	F	Т	Α	Ρ	
L	R	W	L	Х	Е	R	Ζ	Υ	L	S	L	G	S	F	S	Ν	Т	Н	С	
S	Κ	Ν	Ν	L	Α	Ρ	Α	L	Ι	I	Κ	Н	Е	G	С	R	Ρ	Т	D	
X	Κ	Н	L	G	Κ	W	Н	Ν	Ρ	J	Ι	Н	Α	М	Ι	W	U	S	В	
V	Α	0	Ι	Χ	Α	Χ	G	Υ	S	М	Х	Μ	S	Т	Ρ	G	М	Н	Υ	
0	R	D	Н	Κ	С	L	0	R	Ρ	Ι	U	R	0	Κ	L	Ε	R	Т	G	
0	С	Х	Α	Н	Е	V	Ι	Ρ	D	Т	Ι	J	Ν	L	Ι	R	Α	S	Ι	
Е	С	Е	Е	S	Т	Ν	Е	W	Ι	Ζ	D	R	R	Κ	Ν	W	W	Α	Ν	
K	R	С	G	G	Κ	G	Ν	Ι	Т	Α	Κ	S	Ι	G	Е	W	Е	0	U	
В	Κ	R	W	Μ	Н	R	С	0	R	G	S	Υ	V	F	Н	Υ	Υ	С	G	
Fin	Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.																			

WORDS

AXEL BLADE BREAKAWAY CHECK COAST COMPETITION DISCIPLINE EDGE FLIP HOCKEY ICE JUMP LIFT NOVICE PROGRAM RINK ROLLER SEASON SINGLES SKATING SPEED SPIN WARMUP ZAMBONI



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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. "Loser" rocker
- 5. Partner to relaxation
- 9. Mixing
- 11. Winged nut
- 13. Expression of blame
- 15. Vast ocean
- 16. Comedienne Gasteyer
- 17. Multiply
- 19. Meat from a pig (French)
- 21. Related
- 22. Rocker Stewart
- 23. Surprise completely
- 25. Loon
- 26. Canister
- 27. Large, deep-bodied fish 29. Takes forcefully
- 31. Oil cartel

CLUES DOWN

- 1. ____ Aires, city
- 2. Coarse grass
- 3. Type of gene
- 4. Door handle
- 5. Competition
- 6. Muslim ruler title
- 7. Hunting expeditions
- 8. Large mollusk
- 9. Bind securely
- 10. Former U.S. presidential candidate
- 11. 2-point plays in football
- 12. Breezed through
- 14. Type setting
- 15. Felt for
- 18. Codified rules
- 20. Small dome

- 33. Palmer and Hepburn are two
- 34. More than one
- 36. Places down purposefully
- 38. Pitching statistic
- 39. Type of sword
- 41. Witnesses
- 43. Body part
- 44. Mixes slowly
- 46. Satisfy
- 48. Strong belief
- 52. One's physique (slang)
- 53. More frightening
- 54. Soup cracker
- 56. Teaches
- 57. One who carries something
- 58. Actor Sean
- 59. Changes
- 26. Male reproductive gland
- 28. Controversial beliefs
- 30. Z Z Z
- 32. One who confines another
- 34. Bishop
- 35. Garlands
- 37. Bird that flies by the coast
- 38. Optical device
- 40. Greek goddess of discord
- 42. Some are "Rolling"
- 43. Formerly (archaic)
- 45. Thrust a knife into
- 47. German river 49. Atomic #26
- 50. Make a grotesque face
- 51. Primordial matter of the universe
- 55. Chinese philosophical principle
- 24. Chevrotain



Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to skating.



Answer: Roller

	S	D	0	М						Ν	Ν	Э	Ь	
Я	Э	Я	A	Э	В				S	Я	0	T	Π	T
Э	Ν	I	T	٦	A	S		Я	Э	I	Я	A	С	S
α	0	В		Y	Т	I	S	0	I	Ð	Т	٦	Э	Я
Э	Т	A	S		s	Я	I	Т	s			Э	~	Э
	S	Э	Э	s		Э	Э	Ь	Э		A	Я	Э	
		S	T	Э	s		٦	A	Я	Π	٦	Ь		
			S	Э	Э	α		С	Э	Ь	0			
		S	Э	Z	I	Э	S		н	A	Ь	0		
	Ν	I	Т		Т	I	Μ	Т		Ν	Π	T	S	
Δ	0	Я			Э	Т	A	Ν	Э		С	Я	0	Ь
Э	Т	A	Я	Э	Е	I	Г	0	Я	Ь		A	Ν	A
С	Ι	Н	I	С	A	Ь		Е	0	0	Я	Ь	Э	Я
A	Я	A	Μ	A	S				ย	Ν	I	S	Π	Е
	Т	S	Э	Я						К	С	Э	В	

Parting shot ...

Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you cannot be successful or happy. — Norman Vincent Peale



Photo by Travis Tapley



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