



Waller County Fire Marshall Brian Cantrell discusses a debris removal contract and issues related to COVID-19 at the Waller County Commissioners Court Meeting held Dec. 2.

## Waller commissioners discuss virus, library

By R. HANS MILLER  
NEWS EDITOR

Waller County commissioners discussed the status of the COVID-19 pandemic in Waller County and extended the county's novel coronavirus testing efforts through Dec. 31 at their Dec. 2 meeting. The court also heard a brief update regarding refurbishment and remodeling at the Waller County Library. County Judge Trey Duhon provided an update on the case counts for the county in regard to COVID-19. He reported a total of 1,282 confirmed cases countywide, of which 1,075 patients were considered recovered. One additional fatality had been reported in the week prior to the meeting, bringing the county's total to 19 since the pandemic began.

"Right now, we're at 151 active cases, so still a higher level of active cases than what we've seen in many weeks," Duhon said. "Not substantially higher than what we saw last week, so maybe the rate of increase is starting to taper a little bit hopefully, but still seeing quite a few cases." Testing provided by Waller County is still ongoing and free to Waller residents, Duhon said. Those seeking a test may visit the county's website at [co.waller.tx.us](http://co.waller.tx.us) and click the links at the top of the page to schedule a test. Testing locations vary by week and tests are conducted Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays through a partnership with AccessHealth.

See **WALLER**, page 5

## HUNT FOR GOLD

### Spartans headed to state for 2nd time

By DENNIS SILVA II  
SPORTS EDITOR

For just the second time in 25 games this season, Seven Lakes was pushed to the maximum five sets in a volleyball game. And for the second time in four years, the Spartans are headed to the Class 6A state championship final. No. 4 state ranked Seven Lakes jumped out to a 2-0 lead, watched San Antonio Reagan rally impressively to tie the game, and then put away the Rattlers to win their Class 6A state semifinal, 3-2 (25-16, 25-16, 21-25, 24-26, 15-12), on Monday evening at the Merrell Center.

Seven Lakes improved to 24-1 and will play Klein (27-0) in the state final Saturday at 3 p.m. at the Culwell Center in Garland. The Spartans are in the state championship once again after falling to Lewisville Hebron in the state final three years ago.

"In 2017, this team was able to watch that team go to state," said Seven Lakes coach Amy Cataline, who has led teams to the state final in 2015 (with Fort Bend Austin), 2017 and now 2020. "To be able to continue that legacy and go back to the state final, they want a different outcome so bad. That's what makes them



Seven Lakes players celebrate after their 3-2 Class 6A state semifinal win over San Antonio Reagan on Dec. 7 at the Merrell Center.

### INSIDE

Seven Lakes' Batenhorst sister act, part two, continues on to state, **SEE PAGE 8**

### SPARTANS AT STATE

#### CLASS 6A VOLLEYBALL FINAL

- Seven Lakes (24-1) vs. Klein (27-0)
- Saturday, Dec. 12, 3 p.m.
- Culwell Center in Garland
- Follow "Katy Times" on Facebook and "@densilva2" on Twitter

special. They want gold, not silver.

"They're playing for not only themselves, but for our school."

They're also playing for their coach. Cataline, so beloved and appreciated by her players, has been oh-so-close to winning it all. In her two trips to the state final, Hebron won each time.

See **SPARTANS**, page 8

## COVID-19 update with OakBend Medical Center CEO

By R. HANS MILLER  
NEWS EDITOR

Two vaccines from manufacturers Pfizer and Moderna may be approved for use in the U.S. in the next few weeks. That fact, combined with discussion about the rising number of cases of the COVID-19 disease the vaccines are intended to fight raise questions after a stressful year of work-safe-stay-home orders, a sickness that has struck family and/or friends and a heavily impacted economy has many asking questions.



JOE FREUDENBERGER

Joe Freudenberger, CEO of OakBend Medical Center offered answers to several questions about the COVID-19 pandemic and its continued impact. A month before the interview on Dec. 4, OakBend had only four hospitalized COVID-19 patients, but had 18 as of that morning and cases were not limited to a subsegment of the population the hospital serves with patients of all ages and backgrounds impacted, he said.

### Current status

Freudenberger said he is concerned about a rise in case numbers. While he does not believe Greater Houston is headed towards the crisis level El Paso has seen, cases across the Houston region are increasing.

"For the last four weeks, the count has been rising steadily - as opposed to the way the count rose in the June-July time frame - where it's going up three, four additional people a day (at OakBend) and sometimes up to half a dozen."

Freudenberger said he expected similar numbers at Memorial Hermann and Houston Methodist West and data from the Texas Medical Center supports that. The lowest number of COVID-19 hospitalizations since the summer spike in June and July is reported at 76 the week of Sept. 21. That number has steadily risen and for the week of Nov. 30, 174 patients were hospitalized at the TMC. The number of newly diagnosed cases diagnosed regionally is similar with 373 new cases the week of Sept. 14 and a jump to 2,373 the week of Nov. 30.

"So, inside the hospital - recognizing the increasing

See **UPDATE**, page 5



COURTESY OAKBEND MEDICAL CENTER

OakBend Medical Center is one of Fort Bend County's primary partners in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic with multiple locations throughout the county. They also operate multiple nursing homes which, as of Dec. 4, boasted zero cases of the deadly virus, though 18 cases were reported in the hospital.

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## First air ambulance launched for K9 officers

By R. HANS MILLER  
NEWS EDITOR

Memorial Hermann announced in a Dec. 4 press release that it has launched its K9-Casualty Care Course and Transportation Service - the first air ambulance service for injured K9 officers in the nation. The course provides K9 handlers emergency care training for their canine partners and a first aid kit specifically for dogs while the Life Flight ambulance services expedites getting K9 officers to veterinary treatment quickly, when needed.

"Memorial Hermann Life Flight has been a leader in trauma care in the Greater Houston community for more than 40 years," said Life Flight Medical Director Dr. Lesley Osborn. "Expanding our services to now include caring for K9 officers - who are also putting their lives on the line - showcases our commitment to our fellow first responders, along with our desire to continue to elevate the standard of prehospital care in this country."

Under the new program, K9s in need of emergency medical care that is critical and are within Life Flight's 150-mile service radius will be transported to Texas A&M university Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, VERGI 24/7 Animal Emergency and Critical Care Hospital or Westbury Animal Hospital. Each of the locations has 24-hour access and has a helipad or designated landing area.

The simulation animal used in training officers is named Jake in honor of the late Dr. James "Red" Duke's dog. Duke helped envision Life Flight and develop it when it was launched in 1976. The K9 Life Flight program was inspired by Duke's love of dogs and the effort to initiate it was led by Rudy Cabrera, chief flight nurse for the Life Flight program.

"As leaders in trauma care and with the support of the community, Memorial Her-



PHOTO COURTESY MEMORIAL HERMANN HEALTH SYSTEM

Officers and Life Flight staff participate in training to transport critically injured K9 officers to emergency veterinary care.

mann Life Flight is always identifying ways to be on the cutting edge of medicine and advances in care delivery," said Tom Flanagan, vice president of the Trauma Service Line and System Integration program for the Memorial Hermann Health System. "Dr. Duke's passion for pre-hospital emergency care and his love for dogs were driving factors in establishing this program. This was Dr. Duke's idea and I'm proud our team was able to make his vision come to fruition."

K9 handlers in the area expressed appreciation and support for the service to K9 officers

from Memorial Hermann, including officers from the Houston Police Department which has sent officers to the training.

"The Memorial Hermann Life Flight K9-CCC program is very important to the K9 handler and police K9 officer's community," said Kristin Uhlin, Senior Police Officer and Handler/Leader with the Narcotics Division Canine Detail at the Houston Police Department. "Our department is fortunate to have this resource and service available to our team so we can continue to protect and service the Greater Houston area."

## OBITUARY



**ALAN RICHARD BEAUDIN**  
1968-2020

Alan Richard Beaudin died suddenly, beloved son of the late Nelson and Doreen Beaudin, twin brother of Christopher Beaudin (deceased) nephew of Doris (Glen) Cantrall (deceased), survived by Aunt MarieBella (Frank) Mollica, Uncle Bill (Susan) Nash and cousins in USA and in Canada.

We shall keep your memory alive by speaking of you often, remembering the good times, laughter and Fun.

## FORT BEND COUNTY

# Junior Service League supports nonprofits

By R. HANS MILLER  
NEWS EDITOR

The Fort Bend Junior Service League has been busy this year, said Colleen Fox, president of the volunteer organization. From last month's Sugar Plum Market held at the Stafford Center to events with the Fort Bend Teen Service League to help its sister nonprofit contribute to the community, the women of the all-female nonprofit have had their hands full this year.

"We're doing basically an organization of the month every month where we try to focus on an organization or a need in our community," Fox said. "So, we just finished November and November was for the East Fort Bend Human Needs Ministry, so we did a food drive for them."

Doing projects for other area nonprofits is a concept the founders of the FBJSJL adopted when it was founded in 2000, Fox said. The women's group works together to identify nonprofits or needs in the community that they can then try to assist or meet, respectively, she said. Each year, the group reviews their position statements - similar to the values statements of a corporation - then identifies organizations that are



A photo of new Fort Bend Junior Service League volunteers from May of this year.

working to meet those values. The group then volunteers with the organizations identified or raises funds for those organizations throughout the year. With the COVID-19 pandemic hitting the Fort Bend community hard this year, many of the 501(C)(3) or similar organizations have seen a seriously increased need from their client base while simultaneously not being able to raise as much funding as they normally would, Fox said.

"Whatever those positioning statements are every year is what we hold in the forefront of our minds," Fox said. "We have a committee called the Beneficiary Review Committee. They are the ones who received the applications for our community assistance

funds - grants. ... That is a grant (area nonprofits) can get one time a year up to \$5,000."

The grant funding and other donations are set up through fundraising activities FBJSJL conducts throughout the year, Fox said. Since its founding, she said, the organization has raised more than \$4.5 million for local causes and even a few special causes outside of Fort Bend County.

"After Hurricane Laura, we did something a little different," Fox said. "Normally, we focus on Fort Bend County, but (so many of us were helped by Louisianans after Hurricane Harvey) and we received so much help from the Cajun Navy and the folks over in the Lake Charles Area."

As a show of appreciation, FBJSJL gathered donations for victims of Hurricane Laura and sent them to the Lake Charles area to help out as a way of thanking them for their Harvey-related assistance.

Volunteering is important as well, Fox said. The ladies of FBJSJL volunteer with PJ's Playhouse, Texana or other nonprofits in the area. Being in the community providing service hours is important to the organization, she said.

"We make it pretty easy to volunteer," Fox said. "It's user friendly. There's a calendar of different places and different times that we have where you can just go ahead and access it and figure out what works into your schedule."

Fox said FBJSJL vets each group and makes sure that the volunteering is structured so members know what's expected when they show up.

One of the things Fox likes most is how much the members of FBJSJL get back from their contributions.

"Along the way, one of the benefits I've made some lifelong friends," Fox said. "That's not really why I joined, I joined because I was new to the area and wanted to know more about the community and meet some people that do some good."

## Jim Baker's Unified Theory Of Everything

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This new book will contain a credible "unified theory of everything" that can explain the very basics of science. Albert Einstein predicted that someone "off the street" was going to do this someday. After 53 years (at approx. year 2000), I decided to include God at every step of the process of trying to come up with a scientific "Theory of Everything". Prior to this, it was about the "only thing" I felt I had not been successful at inventing or figuring out. --- You see, God had already given me the gift of inventing at age 9-10, in His response to my Second Major Prayer. --- By the year 2014, God had allowed me to assemble sufficient knowledge that I felt 95%, of what I needed to figure out, had been accomplished.

One thing I had always wished for, especially as I was approaching the age of 40, is for God to speak to me. Well, when God did speak to me, I liked my first message from God about as much, I suppose, as Abraham liked his message from God, when he was told to sacrifice his son. But God was testing both of us! God was also making us stronger.

There are still two major topics in life to be addressed, prior to publishing the new book. One is a major release of scientific information of the new theory across the U.S.A. The second is starting an evangelical ministry.

Author of new book is a Chemistry graduate (B.S. 1971/M.S. 1978) of Texas A&M (A&I) in Kingsville, TX. He also attended S.A.C. in San Antonio. He has additional hours at SWTSU, Texas Tech U., Boston College, Westinghouse PWR. He has worked at Texas Uranium Operations as Chief Chemist, at South Texas Nuclear Project as Nuclear Chemist during pre-startup, and retired from City of Houston where he was in charge of Technical Services Section of Bureau of Air Quality Control. Owner of BAKER'S BOOKS is also the author of *God's Amazing Answer To Prayer*, in 2012.

Bottom line....  
If it is not toilet paper,  
then it shouldn't be flushed.

Save your pipes and  
your pocketbook.

The cost to remove blockages  
and clean up any sewage spills  
is a hefty cost to all of us.

INTERSTATE MUD

This Week's Puzzle Sponsored by

# Katy Times

## SUDOKU

						8		
5		2	6		8		4	
6						1		9
	6		5	2				
3				1				
				4			5	
		7			4	6		3
	9							
		1	9			7		

Level: Intermediate

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Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test.

### Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers will be provided in next week's edition.

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# Katy Times

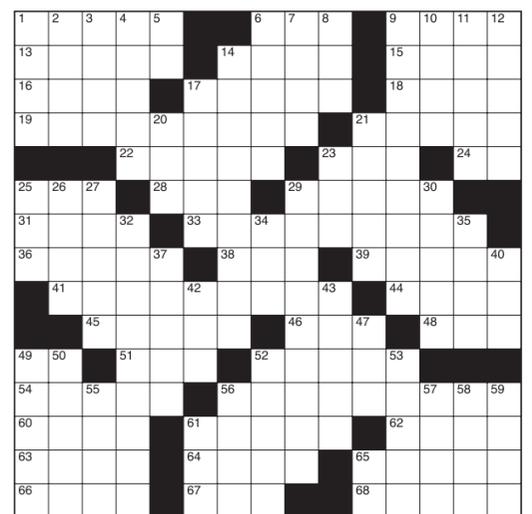
## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

### CLUES ACROSS

- Skateboarders love them
- Popular sports podcast (abbr.)
- Former Ohio State great Michael
- Not dirty
- Earth goddess (Greek myth.)
- A Spanish river
- Pig meat (French)
- Famed astronomer
- Floating ice
- Broadcast
- Aquatic mammals
- Some are bath
- Hip hop trio
- NY Giants' #56
- Small European viper
- Neither
- Multiple Tony-winner Rivera
- Loud noise
- Second year high schooler
- "\_ in comparison"
- Golf score
- Raise
- Pastas
- Easily manageable
- Fathered
- Pouch
- Institute legal proceedings against
- News organization
- Unruly group of people
- Fasten or secure
- Sheets of glass
- Doubled
- Foolish person
- Rooney and Kate are two
- Small, rich sponge cake
- Advice or counsel
- Large wading bird
- Famed British physicist
- Narrow ridges (Swedish)
- Field force unit
- Lying face downward

### CLUES DOWN

- Proof of purchase (abbr.)



- Soap ingredient
- Blackbird
- Single steps
- Tin
- Books have lots of them
- Made of fermented honey and water
- You can get it in a bed
- Room for communal meals
- Early Syrian kingdom
- Provokes dry amusement
- Use with "thou"
- Mollusk
- Grain storage units
- Not a car, not a truck
- Ooze
- N. Vietnamese ethnic group
- Tennis pros group
- Something that's not what it's purported to be
- E. Indian trees
- Beloved December holiday
- Regions
- Metric unit of length
- Peter's last name
- Beige
- 18-year period in astronomy
- Where golfers begin
- Basketball stat (abbr.)
- Frocks
- Soda comes in it
- On approval
- Trims by cutting
- Small finch
- Language Bura\_
- Nothing
- Imbecile (British)
- Tropical Asian plant
- Abba \_ , Israeli politician
- Small freshwater fish
- Indicates position
- Data processing

Answers will be provided in next week's edition.

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## OBITUARY

Lawrence Wayne Huert-er "Larry", 81, Husband, Father, Son and Friend to many, passed away peacefully on December 3, 2020, in Houston, TX. Funeral mass to be held at St. Anthony of Padua Church in the Woodlands, TX on Dec 9 at 11:00am.

Larry was born on April 15, 1939, in Seneca, KS, to Andrew P. Huert-er & Helen Marie (Houlton) Huert-er, graduated from Hayden High School in Topeka, KS in 1957 and served in the United States Marine Corps from 1958 - 1961 in Iwakuni, Japan.

After his service, he earned a Bachelors degree from Washburn University & married the love of his life, Marcheta Lou Gilchrist, on May 16, 1964 at Assump-tion Church in Topeka, KS. After graduation, Larry began a career with Ryder Truck Rental in Topeka, KS. His work took the family from Topeka to Omaha, NE and eventually Spring, TX.

Larry retired in 2000 in Conroe, Tx. He made friends everywhere he lived. Larry lived life to the fullest. He enjoyed hunt-ing, his morning walks, an occasional golf outing, but most importantly spending quality time with family and friends. What made Larry happy...was connecting with people and developing those connections into long lasting friendships. His fam-ily and friends were every-thing to him, his foundation and often what drove him to give more than he received. Larry was an integral part of the lives of his children, grandchildren, and often included their friends as his own. He always jumped at the chance to provide a warm hug, sincere smile and "shot" of SOCO to every person he met. One of his most recent joys was watch-ing his grandson's team, Tompkins High School Fal-



LAWRENCE WAYNE HUERTER  
1939-2020

cons upset the powerhouse Katy Tigers.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Marcheta Lou Gilchrist Huert-er, on September 16, 2013; his brothers, Jack and Dick Huert-er; his sister Sarah L. McGrath and his daughter Kristi Michelle Huert-er Herring.

Survivors include his two sons: Scott A. Huert-er and wife Janin of Pulshear, TX; Michail S. Huert-er and wife Lisa of Nolensville, TN; four granddaughters: Quincey Huert-er, Skylar Herring, Stephanie and Kaitlyn Beni-tez-Strine (step); Five grand-sons: Zachary Huert-er and wife Aubrey; Brock Huert-er, Colby Huert-er; Tristan Herring and Dayne Huert-er; two great grandchildren: Zoey and Miles Huert-er and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Larry's life was defined by faith, family, friends and enormous generosity. His selfless devotion to others, wise counsel and deep Christian faith helped shape the lives of his entire family, as well as the lives of his friends.

To honor his legacy of friendship, love, passion and generosity, the family requests that memorials be made to the Montgomery County Food Bank, <https://mfoodbank.org>, 1 Food for Life Way Conroe, TX 77385.

## HARRIS COUNTY

# Paramedic loses fight with virus

By R. HANS MILLER  
NEWS EDITOR

Harris County Emergency Services District 48 announced via Facebook Monday that Paramedic Gordon Baker lost his fight with COVID-19 and has died from his illness. Baker had been fighting the deadly disease for two months and was placed on a ventilator Nov. 6, but never recovered.

"Gordon touched countless lives throughout his almost 30-year career, as a caregiver, a mentor and a friend. Gordon's clinical skill and compassion for his patients is unmatched as he treated every patient as he would his family," the department announced via its Facebook page.

Baker had worked in emergency services for nearly 30 years in the Houston Metro area and a press release put out by the agency praised him for his skill at his job and his dedication to treating each patient as if that patient were a member of his family.

"He was a compassionate and caring paramedic who had an impact on countless lives during his career. His passing leaves a large void in the lives of his loved ones and every-one who knew him," said HCESD 48 Interim Fire chief John Paetow.

The press release said Baker was an inspiration to his co-workers and while he was no longer there in person HCESD 48 would work to honor his legacy.

"It is with great sadness that Harris County ESD No. 48 announces the passing of Paramedic Gordon Baker. Gordon fought valiantly against the COVID virus, but in the end, he lost the battle. Gordon served with Harris County ESD No. 48 for 11-years. ... Funeral arrangements are pending and we would like to ask everyone to pray for Gordon and those he has left behind," Paetow said.

Information regarding funeral arrangements will be posted at [www.katytimes.com](http://www.katytimes.com) when they become available. A GoFundMe campaign to help the family deal with Baker's medical bills can be found at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/paramedic-gordon>.



CONTRIBUTED BY HCESD 48

Harris County Emergency Services District Paramedic Gordon Baker has died after a two-month fight with COVID-19. Baker worked as a first responder for nearly 30 years and was a beloved member of the HCESD 48 team.

## HARRIS COUNTY

# Deputies arrest identity theft suspects

By R. HANS MILLER  
NEWS EDITOR

In a brief statement on social media, Harris County Constable for Precinct 5 Ted Heap announced that two men had been arrested Dec. 2 in a series of fraud and vehicle theft cases. Andres Estuardo Campbell, 25, and Tuan Vuong, 27, were arrested for the alleged crimes in a joint operation with the Houston Police Department, the statement said.

The two are accused of purchas-ing multiple high-end luxury vehi-cles using stolen identities and later selling them to buyers at a fraction of the cost, the statement said.

Campbell was arrested in associ-ation with 14 open felony warrants from Harris County and other areas across Texas while Vuong was arres-ted on a warrant for robbery.

Additional charges are pending in Harris County and with the U.S. Postal Inspector's Office which is

handling a federal investigation into Campbell's actions.

Harris County's inmate search shows Vuong was booked Dec. 2 un-der a charge of Robbery-Bodily Injury and had a court date of Dec. 4.

Campbell was booked that same day and a bond of \$50,000 each has been set for two separate charges of tampering with a government record. Other charges against Camp-bell are related to actions associated with the alleged identity theft.

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## Some of Santa's biggest regrets

We all know Santa Claus as a "right jolly old elf," but the man carries a well-stocked bag of regrets.

He recently sat down with me to list some of the ways he wished his life had gone differently.

"I don't regret the Island of Misfit Toys real estate venture per se, but I sort of hate that we used an old atomic testing site. I'm cool with a water pistol shooting jelly - but not RADIO-ACTIVE jelly."

"I wish I had found a better business manager to protect my trademark. My FRIENDS have good business managers. You never hear of anybody playing Secret Tooth Fairy or Dirty Easter Bunny."

"I'm sorry I gave up my summer job as Whitebeard the Pirate. Granted, it was always hard making the seasonal switch from '15 men on a dead man's chest' to '15 brats playing with the boxes instead of the toys.'"

"Rudolph is great, but I would have been satisfied with one of those leg lamps from 'A Christmas Story' to guide my sleigh. Hubba hubba."

"I'm sorry that laying a finger aside of my nose no longer gets me up the chimney. It just messes with my sinuses. And most of my preexisting conditions preexist the insurance company!"

"I'm sorry about the untimely coal-mine cave-in, but those hooligans in the Bronx really earned some lumps in their stockings that year."

"Wish I'd had my OCD medication prescription BEFORE everyone started expecting me to make a list and check it twice."

"I'm sorry I skipped all those seminars and didn't keep my accreditation up. My Uber bill is killing me."

"Wish I hadn't unleashed an exorcist on my visitors before realizing they were just the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future. Future had it coming, though."

"I'm sorry I didn't get Mrs. Claus to sign that prenup. It's bad enough all my assets are FROZEN; but she gets half of them if things go south."

"Sure, the NFL is finally looking into concussions involving football players, but nobody cares about concussions from beloved childhood figures colliding with Bert the chimney sweep."

"I'm sorry I locked myself into that commitment of delivering toys to every child in the world in a single night. Really should have set up a recorded



DANNY TYREE

SPECIAL TO THE KATY TIMES

**"I'm sorry that laying a finger aside of my nose no longer gets me up the chimney. It just messes with my sinuses. And most of my preexisting conditions preexist the insurance company!"**

message like 'Your call is very important to us. All our little old drivers so lively and quick are currently busy with other customers. Please stay on the line until April, you little...'

"The whole 'right down Santa Claus Lane' thing was pretty egotistical. At least it's not the Valley of the Jolly Green Giant. Come to think of it, my business manager let him rip off the ho-ho line."

"Sorry I got dragged into the 'reason for the season' debate. Bad scheduling. No Nativity scenes in August. Used to smoke a lot of CAMELS then, but I became a wiser man..."

"I wish I could make a low-key jaunt from the North Pole to some municipality without Springsteen blabbing, 'Saaaaanta Claus is comin' to town!'"

"My biggest regret? I'm really bummed out over that one lap-sitting kid I traumatized by saying, 'Certainly I remember when your parents were kids... long before they adopted...um, er...I mean, long before they conceived you the standard way, which entails...I mean, YOUR parents? Come to think of it, Jack Frost substituted on that route for me...'"



## A Christmas (cell phone) miracle

I've always taken great pride in the tender care I give to my cell phone. Until recently, I could boast that with all of the various cellular devices I've possessed through the years (dating back to the first Motorola bag phone my dad gave me during the Early Iron Age), I'd never once had so much as a bent antenna.

While my three teen daughters seem to enjoy competing to see how high they can bounce their iPhones off of parking lot pavement, my trusty phone case keeps my device safe and secure on the rare occasions when I drop it while fumbling with my wallet to pay for their multiple repairs. Ironically, my sturdy and practical phone case is an object of derision from my daughters, who insist on enveloping their phones in flimsy, fashionable covers whose main protective feature is an over-abundance of glitter.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I spent my Friday evening trying to decide whether to place my middle daughter on emergency life support due to acute Snapchat-deficient syndrome, or race around town trying to find a cell phone repair shop that was still open and could (for the second time) replace her entire screen, which had become dislodged in an incident involving the school cafeteria's tile floor and a corn dog.

While my credit card was still in shock over this costly repair, I suddenly found myself the victim of cruel irony.



JASE GRAVES

SPECIAL TO THE KATY TIMES

Shortly before the Thanksgiving holiday, I spent a solid weekend assembling a Christmas lighting display to rival that of Clark W. Griswold. My neighbors could only gaze on with incredulous envy as I festooned my roofline and front lawn with multiple strings of C9 bulbs (some of them actually working).

Unfortunately, my triumph was short-lived. When I reached for my phone to commemorate this achievement with a photo, I realized that it had become wedged in my pocket against a pair of rarely-used needle-nose pliers, and the unresponsive screen was now streaked with random bars of light. Even my fail-safe troubleshooting technique of turning off the phone and turning it back on again was ineffective.

Suddenly, I panicked! How could I check Facebook every five minutes, or play that game with the little jetpack man? What if one of my daughters tried to text me requesting more cash? As I began to hyperventilate, I remembered the phone repair shop. I could simply take it there the next day

and return to happily allowing this wireless device to control my very existence.

After a fitful night's sleep, I arrived at the shop early the next morning, only to sit in the car a full fifteen minutes past the posted opening time. Apparently, the teenager in charge of the place was still in a drive-thru somewhere waiting for his breakfast burrito.

Unable to tolerate further delay, I drove across the road to another repair shop/tobacco emporium where the technician invited me to peruse his selection of hookah pipes and flavored rolling papers while he dissected my iPhone. After twenty minutes of waiting (and learning all I ever wanted to know about herb grinders) I was informed that the screen I needed was out of stock.

In full freak-out mode, I drove back to the first shop I had visited and found it open - finally! The young technician, having just finished his burrito - no doubt - was able to replace my screen, subtly scoff at my bulky phone case, and send me on my way in about ten minutes.

I'm still a bit embarrassed about the relief I felt having my iPhone working again. As I often tell my eye-rolling daughters, I managed to survive for over twenty years without the luxury of a cell phone - and now I depend on it like a vital appendage. I guess I'm not that different from my girls, after all.

## Katy Times

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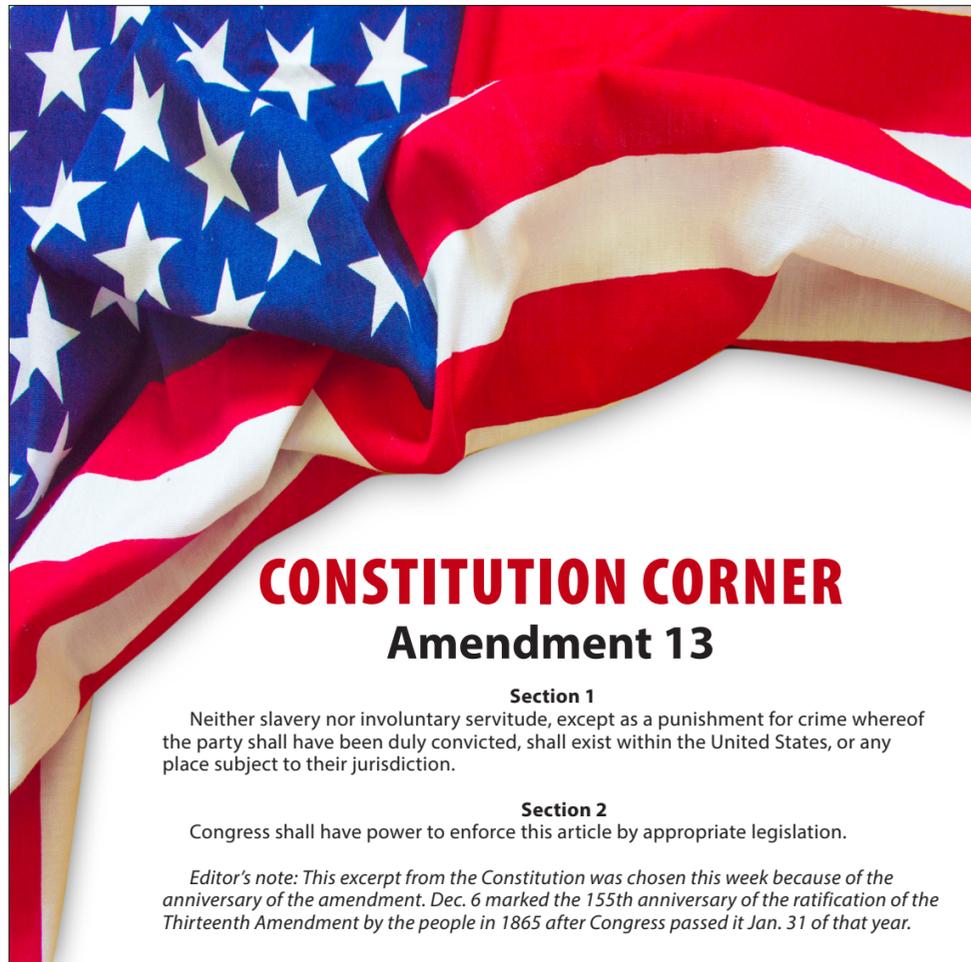
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## CONSTITUTION CORNER Amendment 13

### Section 1

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

### Section 2

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

*Editor's note: This excerpt from the Constitution was chosen this week because of the anniversary of the amendment. Dec. 6 marked the 155th anniversary of the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment by the people in 1865 after Congress passed it Jan. 31 of that year.*

## UPDATE

from page 1

threat level – we’ve taken additional precautions to protect our patients and our staff,” Freudenberger said. “And so, as other county hospitals have done, we’ve gone back to a zero-visitor policy, except with certain exemptions – end of life, things like that.”

Readers wishing to visit hospitalized patients should call ahead or check online to verify visitation policies.

Still, improvements have been made, though more are needed, Freudenberger said.

“At the peak (of the pandemic in the summer) we had positivity rates of 20% or higher,” Freudenberger said. “Presently in Fort Bend County, our positivity rate is at 11%.”

Regionally, TMC data shows a positivity rate of 6.7% as of Dec. 8 with an ideal rate being 5% or less.

### Treatment and vaccines

While he was firm in expressing concern regarding case numbers, Freudenberger did offer pieces of hope regarding the pandemic.

Treatment and mitigation of the spread of the virus have come a long way since the pandemic began, he said. From a mitigation standpoint in hospitals and nursing homes operated by OakBend, things are better due to testing and stronger use of protective equipment and procedures. Nursing home care providers are tested for COVID-19 twice weekly and that has mitigated spread in those facilities. Freudenberger said OakBend had zero cases among patients and workers in those facilities at the time of the interview.

Health professionals have learned how to utilize antibiotics, oxygen therapies and other tactics to fight cases of COVID-19 and prevent the cases from becoming severe, Freudenberger said. Applying some of those treatments earlier has helped, as have some experimental treatments such as convalescent plasma have helped as well as monoclonal antibodies – proteins that mimic the

## CURRENT CASECOUNTS

COUNTY	TOTAL CASES	RECOVERED	ACTIVE	DECEASED
Fort Bend County	25,156	21,680	3,157	328
Harris County	200,397	176,435	21,455	2,492
Waller County	1,328	1,154	155	19

\*Sources: Fort Bend County, Harris County, Texas Department of Health Services

\*\*All case counts are as of 7 p.m. on Dec. 8, 2020

immune system’s ability to fight off antigens such as viruses. Making sure patients move around more has also been therapeutic, he said.

Freudenberger said reinfection appears to be a nonissue. Nationwide, there are only three cases of reported reinfection with the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19. However, after review, it is likely those cases were actually individuals that had a false negative test, were not in fact fully recovered and something caused a resurgence of the disease.

The success and quality of the two vaccines being considered in the U.S. are promising as well, Freudenberger said. Both have been tested on at least 30,000 patients domestically and zero patients reported any side effects to the vaccine.

“These are not vaccines that have, you know, a few hundred doses administered and nobody’s come up with anything. That’s 30,000 people have had (each) vaccine and they have no documented examples yet where somebody has been harmed,” Freudenberger said.

### Other issues

“It is remarkable how much we have learned about this disease in a short period of time, we’ve been finding,” Freudenberger said. “The good news is it’s a worldwide thing, so there are a lot of people that are working to address this.”

From a local and operational perspective, Freudenberger said, while the medical community would rather the pandemic not have happened, it has allowed them to come together to better coordinate patient care.

Because COVID-19 attacks a variety of body systems, physicians of different specialties have had to consult with one another more in order to treat patients successfully. Such practices help provide better care and outcomes for patients and can reduce the cost of care, he said. Prior to the pandemic, hospital departments often worked in silos without consulting one another as often.

Freudenberger said, like many health professionals, he is concerned about the misinformation and politicization of the pandemic. Debates about mask usage, death rates and other issues have distracted from the need for people to work together to keep one another safe, he said.

Freudenberger is frustrated with some members of the public thinking COVID-19 is no big deal. While the death rate is low as a percentage and has become lower since the pandemic began, it is still dangerous, he said. The long-term impact on patient health is also a serious concern, he said, especially when comorbidities such as diabetes, obesity, heart conditions, asthma and similar issues already affect the patient. Some “long-haulers” will see lifelong impacts, he said. The thing hospitals are trying to do is take out the politics of the situation and get area residents to take it seriously to mitigate the impact the pandemic has on the community. While the death rate may be low, the higher the number of people infected, the more people die, he said.

Freudenberger said he has no doubts face coverings work to mitigate the spread of the virus. They prevent spittle – the most common contaminate – from contaminating others and keep people from breathing

**“These are not vaccines that have, you know, a few hundred doses administered and nobody’s come up with anything. That’s 30,000 people have had (each) vaccine and they have no documented examples yet where somebody has been harmed.”**

— JOE FREUDENBERGER, CEO, OAKBEND MEDICAL CENTER

in the virus when used properly over the nose and mouth.

Another myth that frustrates Freudenberger is the notion that hospitals have inflated case numbers to make more money from treating the disease. He said the only payor that increases payment for COVID-19 cases is Medicare and the associated patient must have tested positive for COVID-19 prior to an extra 20% being paid. However, that 20% makes little difference because the average COVID-19 patient remains in the hospital 30% longer than a similarly-ill non-COVID-19 patient, thus making for a losing financial stake from an operational perspective.

“We’re not making a boatload off COVID,” Freudenberger said. “In fact, it’s hurting us (financially) because all the elective procedures where we make our money are down. Our elective cases are down 20% across the (hospital) system.”

## WALLER

from page 1

Waller County Fire Marshal Brian Cantrell said that 53 residents were tested between Nov. 9 and Nov. 14 and that AccessHealth reported a spike in positive cases due to Halloween and was expecting another due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Duhon said he encourages residents to get tested whether that’s because they are experiencing symptoms, want to make sure it’s safe to visit a friend or relative in a nursing facility or any other reason.

“Folks, continue to ... watch your social distancing and wear a mask when you’re in public and so forth,” Duhon said.

Commissioners approved a contract amendment with AccessHealth to continue COVID-19 testing through Dec. 31 to ensure the county maximizes use of CARES Act funding.

“We’re going to end on the 31st and that’s the last of our CARES Act money that we can put towards this,” Cantrell said. “So, the question, I guess, which I just want to bring to the court – I don’t need an answer now – but do we want to continue testing after going into the new year?”

To continue testing, the county would need to use its own funds barring state or federal action to fund the county-level testing, he said. Thus far, using CARES Act funding for testing, personnel and other related expenses, he estimated the county has spent about \$60,000 in CARES Act funding over roughly two months.

Details on how any sort of test-

## OTHER ITEMS

- Commissioners approved an agreement with Bickerstaff Heath Delgado Acosta LLP for services related to redistricting the county for voting purposes at a cost of about \$36,700 for the initial assessment of the county’s population layout.
- Commissioners approved a contract with Aftermath Disaster Recovery for debris removal. The contract would be utilized to help the county clean up after a natural disaster such as a hurricane or flood. Cantrell, who led the procurement process, said Aftermath was recommended to the court after comparing their costs and speaking with references.
- Commissioners opted not to institute a burn ban per Cantrell’s recommendation due to a low fire risk index.

ing in the new year would be paid for would need to be worked out, Duhon said. He then offered to speak with county staff regarding how the county might fund testing out of its budget if federal funding wasn’t available.

“Since public safety is one of our responsibilities, I don’t see how we cannot (continue testing),” Commissioner Walter Amsler said.

It could be up to six months before vaccines which have been in news headlines lately are readily available, Duhon said.

During the time between now and full distribution of the vaccines, the court agreed informally that it may be good to consider how testing could move forward to ensure the public had tools available to be safe.

“The general public needs to understand that it’s going to be a while before the vaccine becomes readily available to members of the general public,” Duhon said.

Prior to the discussion regarding COVID-19, commissioners heard an update regarding the status of the County Library renewal

project from Waller County Construction manager Danny Rothe.

Rothe said roofing and finishing touches to the exterior of the building are being addressed and that the building is fully enclosed to allow contractors to finish interior work. He also said siding is going on the building and should be finished soon and drywall, window and door installations would be in the works soon. One of the few delays was planning for a different style of entry door due to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines to move away from double doors that he needed to look into. However, he said that may save money in the long run because single doors are easier to maintain.

“I don’t expect any more problems,” Rothe said. “We’re dried-in now (so the contractor) should be able to go (forward easily).”

Payment to Dahvar Construction and Design for about \$41,000 for work performed on the library already was approved by the commissioners court following Rothe’s construction update.

## TEXAS

# Capital highlights: vaccines, elections and new HP HQ

By CHRIS COBLER

SPECIAL TO THE KATYTIMES

Texas is ready to distribute 1.4 million doses as soon as the COVID-19 vaccine receives federal government approval.

Gov. Greg Abbott said the vaccines should be arriving the week of Dec. 14 and would be distributed to qualifying providers. Health care workers are the first in line to receive the medication, which needs to be given in two shots. Also first in line are residents of long-term living care centers, the Texas Department of Health Services announced.

Texas’ population is about 29 million, so the line is long. The state agency also announced the list of 109 hospitals in 34 of Texas’ 254 counties that will receive the first doses.

“The State of Texas is already prepared for the arrival of a COVID-19 vaccine and will swiftly distribute these vaccines to Texans who voluntarily choose to be immunized,” Abbott stated. “As we await the first shipment of these vaccines, we will work with communities to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.”

### Electors set to vote

Texas presidential electors will convene Dec. 14 to officially cast their votes.

The ceremony will start at 2 p.m. in the gallery of the House chamber in the State Capitol. The Texas election code calls for electors to meet on the first Monday after the second Wednesday of December.

Texas Secretary of State Ruth Hughs congratulated the governor, election workers and the voters for their efforts with this year’s elections.

### The way from San Jose

Another California company is moving its headquarters to Texas.

Hewlett Packard Enterprise will relocate its global headquarters from San Jose, Calif., to Spring. The new headquarters will open in early 2022, the Texas Economic Development Corp. announced.

HP Enterprise already employs 2,600 people in Austin, Plano and Houston. The announcement did not specify how many new jobs would be added with the move of the headquarters.

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## 2020-2021 KATY AREA VARSITY SPORTS RESULTS & SCHEDULE

To submit scores, news or schedules, email [dennis.silva@katytimes.com](mailto:dennis.silva@katytimes.com)

### TUESDAY, DEC. 1

#### GIRLS BASKETBALL

- Paetow 66, Brenham 46

### THURSDAY, DEC. 3

#### FOOTBALL

- Paetow 40, Deer Park 21

### FRIDAY, DEC. 4

#### CLASS 6A REGION III FINAL VOLLEYBALL PLAYOFFS

- Seven Lakes 3, Katy 1

#### FOOTBALL

- Seven Lakes 30, Cinco Ranch 22
- Morton Ranch 31, Clear Brook 13

#### GIRLS BASKETBALL

- Tompkins 39, Cinco Ranch 36
- Seven Lakes 46, Katy 33
- Taylor 56, Morton Ranch 18
- Magnolia West 51, Paetow 41

### SATURDAY, DEC. 5

#### FOOTBALL

- Katy 48, Mayde Creek 12

### MONDAY, DEC. 7

#### CLASS 6A STATE SEMIFINAL VOLLEYBALL PLAYOFFS

- Seven Lakes 3, San Antonio Reagan 2

### TUESDAY, DEC. 8

#### GIRLS BASKETBALL

- Magnolia 62, Paetow 44

### FRIDAY, DEC. 11

#### CLASS 6A DIVISION I FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS

- Tompkins vs. Fort Bend Travis, at Legacy Stadium, 6 p.m.
- Seven Lakes at Ridge Point, at Hall Stadium, 7 p.m.

#### CLASS 6A DIVISION II FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS

- Katy vs. Elkins, at Rhodes Stadium, 7 p.m.
- Taylor at George Ranch, at Mercer Stadium, 7 p.m.

#### GIRLS BASKETBALL

- Cinco Ranch at Mayde Creek, 7 p.m.
- Katy at Tompkins, 7 p.m.
- Taylor at Seven Lakes, 7 p.m.
- Waller at Paetow, 6:30 p.m.

#### BOYS BASKETBALL

- Alvin at Morton Ranch, 7 p.m.
- Cinco Ranch at Alief Taylor, 7 p.m.
- Seven Lakes at Klein, 7 p.m.
- Katy at Cy-Woods, 7 p.m.
- Mayde Creek at Oak Ridge, 7 p.m.
- Taylor at Cy-Ranch, 7 p.m.
- Paetow at Waller, 6:30 p.m.

### SATURDAY, DEC. 12

#### CLASS 6A STATE VOLLEYBALL FINAL

- Seven Lakes (24-1) vs. Klein (27-0), at Culwell Center in Garland, 3 p.m.

#### BOYS BASKETBALL

- Elkins at Tompkins, 1 p.m.
- Aldine Davis at Mayde Creek, 3 p.m.

### MONDAY, DEC. 14

#### GIRLS BASKETBALL

- Fort Bend Dulles at Cinco Ranch, 7 p.m.
- Katy at Royal, 7 p.m.
- Paetow at College Station, 6:30 p.m.

#### BOYS BASKETBALL

- Klein Cain at Katy, 7 p.m.
- Alief Taylor at Taylor, 7 p.m.
- Cinco Ranch at South Houston, 7 p.m.
- Seven Lakes at Pearland Dawson, 7 p.m.

### TUESDAY, DEC. 15

#### BOYS BASKETBALL

- College Station at Paetow, 6:30 p.m.

### FRIDAY, DEC. 18

#### GIRLS BASKETBALL

- Mayde Creek at Katy, 7 p.m.
- Seven Lakes at Morton Ranch, 7 p.m.
- Tompkins at Taylor, 7 p.m.
- Bryan Rudder at Paetow, 6:30 p.m.

#### BOYS BASKETBALL

- Morton Ranch at Seven Lakes, 7 p.m.
- Katy at Mayde Creek, 7 p.m.
- Taylor at Tompkins, 7 p.m.
- Paetow at Bryan Rudder, 4:30 p.m.

# Tigers ready for 'actual season'

By DENNIS SILVA II  
SPORTS EDITOR

Because of COVID-19, Katy High has had a handful of football games rescheduled this season. There have been considerably fewer practices as well, and those practices have been, well, different; during a recent two-week period, the Tigers did not tackle.

So when Tigers coach Gary Joseph said his team's greatest stride this season has been its resiliency, it's not merely coach-speak.

"You get rescheduled five or six times during a season, and it's easy to throw up your hands and use it as an excuse," Joseph said. "They've had to learn adversity and change is part of growing up. Hopefully, they can take that with them when they go on. But it's an up and down rollercoaster and being resilient is the biggest thing for them."

No. 9 state-ranked Katy is 8-1 heading into the Class 6A, Division II playoffs, beginning with its bi-district game Friday, Dec. 11, against 2-5 Elkins at 7 p.m. at Rhodes Stadium. The Tigers were placed in the DII bracket when Seven Lakes beat Cinco Ranch, 30-22, on Dec. 4, putting the Spartans in DI with Tompkins and sending Katy to DII with Taylor.

After his team's win, Seven Lakes coach Jimmy Hamon joked about expecting a thank-you card from Joseph. The DII bracket is generally considered the lighter road to state, opposed to the big-school titans that consume the DI side. Had Cinco Ranch beaten Seven Lakes, Katy



RAY BORCHERT | RAYBORCHERTPHOTOGRAPHY@GMAIL.COM

See **TIGERS**, page 10

Katy High coach Gary Joseph talks to his players on the sideline during their game against Mayde Creek on Dec. 5 at Legacy Stadium.

# Spartans' victory over Cinco Ranch impactful for many

By DENNIS SILVA II  
SPORTS EDITOR

The entire state tuned in to Seven Lakes' 30-22 win over Cinco Ranch in their District 19-6A finale on Friday, Dec. 4, at Legacy Stadium.

The win-or-go-home affair resulted in the Spartans qualifying for the playoffs for the second time in three years and kept the Cougars out of the postseason for the third straight season.

Seven Lakes (3-5) plays Ridge Point (5-2) in a Class 6A Division I bi-district playoff game Friday, Dec. 11, at 7 p.m. at Hall Stadium in Missouri City.

"It feels amazing," said junior linebacker Scott Stanford, who had a 37-yard interception return that set up a touchdown in the second half. "At the beginning of the season, no one expected us to be in the playoffs. We weren't supposed to win any game, except this one maybe. But we did it."

See **PLAYOFFS**, page 9



RAY BORCHERT | RAYBORCHERTPHOTOGRAPHY@GMAIL.COM

Seven Lakes senior running back Nick David-West runs for a touchdown during the Spartans' win over Cinco Ranch on Dec. 4 at Legacy Stadium.



RAY BORCHERT | RAYBORCHERTPHOTOGRAPHY@GMAIL.COM

Now the leader of his team, Paetow senior running back Damon Bankston is hungry to help the Panthers leave their mark in the playoffs.

# Bankston, Panthers look to handle business in playoffs

By DENNIS SILVA II  
SPORTS EDITOR

As a junior last season, Paetow running back Damon Bankston rushed for 1,097 yards and eight touchdowns, with 286 receiving yards and four more touchdowns. Bankston averaged 8.4 yards per carry and 22.6 yards per catch.

It wasn't enough.

"After last year," Bankston said, "I knew I had to work on my game."

Bankston wanted to be the total package—fast and tough. He knew he'd be the No. 1 back this season after sharing ballcarrying duties with Jonathan Jolly last season. So, he put on 10 pounds of muscle while focusing on sustaining his speed.

"I took my game to another level, where I can still be elusive but even harder to tackle," said Bankston, now 5-foot-11 and 190 pounds.

See **PANTHERS**, page 9

# First all-Katy ISD regional final one to remember

By DENNIS SILVA II  
SPORTS EDITOR

History was made on Friday, Dec. 4, when Seven Lakes and Katy High matched up in the Class 6A Region III volleyball final at the Merrell Center.

It was the first time two Katy ISD teams competed in a regional final volleyball playoff game.

Seven Lakes won, 3-1 (22-25, 25-20, 25-16, 25-17), over the Tigers to win Region III, but the game's significance went well beyond the score.

"We knew we weren't playing for ourselves," Seven Lakes junior Mayo Olibale said. "We're playing for everyone that was here watching us. We made history, and it's awesome."

The 2020 Spartans are the ninth Katy

See **HISTORY**, page 8



DENNIS SILVA II

Katy High and Seven Lakes coaches and players pose for a photo prior to their Class 6A Region III volleyball playoff final on Friday, Dec. 4, at the Merrell Center. It was the first all-Katy ISD regional final in the sport.

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**NOTICE OF RECEIPT OF APPLICATION BY COMMISSIONERS' COURT TO REVISE A SUBDIVISION PLAT FILED FOR RECORD WITH THE COUNTY CLERK**

**APPLICATION:** Cristobal and Maria Ramos, Baudelio Marin Covarrubias, Sandra Vergara Aquino and Maria Teresa Marin, owners, are requesting to be allowed to revise Lot 5 of Rosebud Subdivision. The revision will be to partition Lot 5 into two lots. These newly configured lots would consist of Lot 5A (3.500 acres) and Lot 5B (1.500 acres). Rosebud Subdivision is situated in the Juan A. Padillo Survey, A-48, Waller County, Texas recorded in Volume 702, Page 938, in the Official Public Records of Waller County, Texas.

This replat request, if approved, will only revise the applicant's property.

**PUBLIC HEARING:** A public hearing will be held during the regular session of Commissioners' Court on December 23, 2020 at the Waller County Courthouse, 836 Austin St., Hempstead, Texas, 77445.

**950 PUBLIC NOTICES**

**Public Notice**  
AT&T Mobility, LLC is proposing to construct a new telecommunications tower facility located at 205 Windsor Glen Drive, Katy, Harris County, TX 77450. The new facility will consist of a 33-foot wood pole telecommunications tower. Any interested party wishing to submit comments regarding the potential effects the proposed facility may have on any historic property may do so by sending comments to: Project 6120010244 - CTJ EBI Consulting, 6876 Susquehanna Trail South, York, PA 17403, or via telephone at (219) 313-5458.

**NOTICE TO BIDDERS**

**Owner:** Mason Creek Utility District  
**Owner's Office:** 847 Dominion, Katy, TX 77450  
**Project (the Work):** Concrete pool deck replacement for three pools at Mason Creek Community Center  
**Project location:** In Western Harris County at 20201 Kingsland Blvd., Katy, Texas 77450  
**Owner proposes to let a contract** for the Project and seeks bids. Generally, bids must be signed, sealed and physically submitted at Owners Office by January 6, 2021 at 11:00 AM, when they will be opened and publicly read, all in accordance with the Contract Documents, which are: (i) on file at the Owner's Office where all bidders may examine them and get copies; (ii) incorporated herein by reference, including prevailing wages; and (iii) posted on civcastusa.com. A pre-bid conference is set for December 18, 2020 at 8:00 AM at the Project location. /s/ James "Trey" Hamblet, Project Officer.

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# Batenhorst sister act continues

By DENNIS SILVA II  
SPORTS EDITOR

Seven Lakes senior outside hitter Ally Batenhorst played for a state championship as a freshman alongside her older sister, Dani, a senior hitter at the time.

Batenhorst wasn't about to miss out on an opportunity at state with her younger sister, junior setter Casey.

The Nebraska signee had a program-record 35 kills to lead Seven Lakes to a 3-2 win (25-16, 25-16, 21-25, 24-26, 15-12) over San Antonio Reagan in the Class 6A state semifinal on Monday, Dec. 7, at the Merrell Center. The Spartans return to the state final for the first time since 2017, when they fell to Lewisville Hebron.

"We've talked for so long about doing this, even since the end of last season after what happened," said Casey, referring to the Spartans' abrupt elimination in the area round of the playoffs against Cy-Fair. "I just knew this was going to be our season. Ally's gotten so much better and is so amazing. With her leadership, I knew we could get here, and I thought it'd be really cool if she could go to state with both sisters."

No one was more thrilled than Batenhorst. A return to state has been on her mind since her freshman season. It's been her drive to return with Casey since last season.

"I'm so excited," Batenhorst said. "It's unreal I get to go again with another sister. She's been working so hard and doing so well, just getting better and better. As we've grown together, we've gotten this connection down and she's become a really good player."

Seven Lakes plays Klein (27-0) in the state final Saturday, Dec. 12, at 3 p.m. at the Culwell Center in Garland. The Spartans are 24-1 and ranked No. 4 in Class 6A in the state.

"Ally has been the leader of this team," Seven Lakes coach Amy Cataline said. "She's a clutch player and playing with so much heart. She's been there before and knows what it takes. She's telling the girls and also living it out. Her focus, her drive, her resilience, her poise ... everyone's following, and they want it just as bad."

"I'm overjoyed with her leadership."

The state semifinal game was the fourth time this season the 6-foot-4 Batenhorst has had 30 or more kills in a game. She has done it twice in the playoffs.

Against Reagan, she was exceptional. She had 26 kills in the first three sets, mixing hard swings with



Seven Lakes senior Ally Batenhorst (front left) and junior Casey Batenhorst (front right) are enjoying the Spartans' remarkable run to the Class 6A state volleyball final. Ally is returning to the state final after making it with her older sister, Dani, in 2017. Now with younger sister Casey, she's hoping the second time can bring home a state title

soft tip points to keep the defense guessing. Batenhorst is averaging 7.2 kills per set in the playoffs.

"She's a good player," Reagan senior libero Maddie Correa told the San Antonio Express-News. "She's got the height and she's very athletic. We tried to stop her as best as we could."

Batenhorst's stirring performance came just three days after she blistered district rival Katy High for 28 kills in a 3-1 Seven Lakes win in the regional final.

"She's a solid player. She's crafty," Katy coach Karen Paxton said. "She's tenacious on defense. She's got an incredibly high volleyball IQ. She's going to get her kills and be an impact player."

Batenhorst has a violent swing, almost as if she's hoping to crack the floor every time she hits. Each time she rises to attack the ball, she said, she only thinks about how badly she wants to win.

But over the years, Batenhorst's substantial growth has been mental. She's more versatile, able to move along the net and get a good swing whenever she wants it, and smarter. She now knows to not just hit for power but hit efficiently. A soft swing or tip will score a point just as a hard attack will. Her hit percentage of 34.2 is, by far, a career best.

Batenhorst's maturity is also represented in her leadership. She has taken ownership of this year's Spartans.

Before, Batenhorst was comfortable taking a backseat to seniors. Now

that she's a senior, however, with one last opportunity to win state, she has made her voice heard as much as her example is seen.

"Ally is amazing," junior hitter Emma Schroder said. "She helps me with everything, whether I'm making a mistake or doing well. She's there for me. She has been huge for me as far as understanding how to get better and how this team can be better."

Batenhorst credits Cataline for encouraging her to be more of a leader.

"I've grown so much since my freshman year and worked so hard," she said. "I had always struggled being vocal and asserting myself as a leader, but over the years through club and (Junior Team) USA and playing here, I've grown into that."

Players yearn to please Batenhorst. They see how hard she works and how badly she wants to win. No one has seen that more on a first-hand basis than Casey, who has thrived in her own right with 40 or more assists in a game three times during these playoffs.

"It's so cool to play with such an amazing athlete. Ally's my role model," Casey said. "She works so hard and she's so enthusiastic ... she's everything I want to be. She's a true leader with her emotions and mentality, as well as her game. When she tells me, 'Hey, good set,' it means everything to me. I'm just so excited we get to go to state."

"She got second last time and I just hope we can get first this time. It makes me so happy to watch her excel."

## HISTORY

from page 6

ISD program to make it to state in volleyball. Seven Lakes' second state appearance in four years is the district's most successful volleyball era since Taylor made the state tournament twice and regional final one other time from 1990-1994.

The Spartans beat San Antonio Reagan, 3-2, in the Class 6A state semifinal on Monday, Dec. 7, to advance to the state championship game on Saturday in Garland. Seven Lakes has an opportunity to become Katy ISD's first volleyball state champion.

Seven Lakes coach Amy Cataline, in her fourth season at the helm of the Spartans, knew of Katy ISD's talent in volleyball when she was at Fort Bend Austin, her previous stop.

"It makes me very proud to be a part of Katy ISD volleyball," said Cataline, citing the district's competitiveness and rich quality of coaching in the sport. "Even before I got into this district, I knew how stellar athletics was in Katy ISD. The support sports has in the district is phenomenal, and it lived up to every inch of what I thought of it from the outside looking in."

Katy was an early power in volleyball.

The Tigers lost to Phillips in the 1967 Class 2A state semifinals and fell to Brady in the 2A state semis the following season. In 1976, Katy lost to New Braunfels in the 3A state semis and fell to Cy-Creek in the 1989 5A state semis.

The Mustangs turned the tide in their favor at the turn of the decade, losing to Dumas in the 1990 4A state semis and falling to Austin Westlake in the 4A state final the following season.

Katy and Taylor made regional final appearances in 1993 and 1994, respectively. Cinco Ranch fell to Westlake in the 2009 5A state semis, and Seven Lakes was upended by Lewisville Hebron in the 2017 6A state final.

But never before had two Katy ISD programs competed against each other in a volleyball regional final. That is, not before last week.

Seven Lakes was 22-1 and

Katy was 19-3 entering the game. Seven Lakes senior and Nebraska signee Ally Batenhorst had 28 kills to lead the Spartans. Senior Perris Key, a University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley signee, had 12 kills to pace the Tigers.

Seven Lakes and Katy finished first and second, respectively, in District 19-6A this season. Two of Katy's four losses this season were dealt by Seven Lakes. Seven Lakes' only defeat this season came against another district rival, Tompkins, in a 3-1 setback in mid-November.

Seven Lakes had to beat Cinco Ranch—the fourth seed out of 19-6A that beat 2019 state finalist Ridge Point and 2019 regional finalist Cy-Fair in these playoffs—in the regional quarterfinals and a relentless Katy squad to earn its way to state. Cataline called Katy coach Karen Paxton "a legend."

Paxton was appreciative of what the game represented about the district.

"It shows the hard work that all of our coaches put in," Paxton said. "There's so much work that goes in. We have amazing coaches and solid programs and you have to play your best every single night in this district."

"I'm happy it's a Katy ISD team moving on," Paxton added. "I know Seven Lakes will represent us and make us proud. At the end of the day, we want them to win for Katy ISD. It shows just how tough our district is."

Prior to the game, both teams gathered together on the Merrell Center court for a quick photo op. For the players, they'll likely realize the magnitude of the moment later, whether weeks, years or decades from now. Their focus and attention were on the game.

But there was certainly a sense that this wasn't a typical playoff game. It meant more. The deepest into the volleyball postseason two Katy ISD teams had played each other came in 1994, when Katy and Taylor competed in a Class 5A Region III semifinal won by the Mustangs, 2-1.

"It's different," Batenhorst acknowledged after the win. "It's exciting, super competitive and super personal, because we know them so well. It was a cool experience."

## SPARTANS

from page 1

"We're not done yet," senior Mayo Olibale said. "That's the goal. We want to do this for Coach Cat. She's been to state so many times and we want to win it for her. As long as we knock off the unforced errors and keep our side under control, I know we can win."

Senior outside hitter and Nebraska signee Ally Batenhorst set a school record with 35 kills to lead Seven Lakes. She broke her previous record of 32.

"Leave everything I have out on the court, go as hard as I can, give everything I have," Batenhorst said of her play. "It's my senior year and I would've given anything to go back to the state championship."

It was the fourth time this season Batenhorst had 30 or more kills in a game. She had 10 kills in the first set, eight apiece in the next two, five in the fourth, and four in the fifth.

"It was intense, back and forth, super close," Batenhorst said. "I think we started off really strong and just got too comfortable in the third set. We got down a bit and we had to pick each other up and fight through it. It was long, it was hard, it was exhausting, but

we overcame. We really fought as much as we could."

Seven Lakes senior Peyton Sykes, one of the team's top servers and a strong hitter, went down early in the first set due to a leg injury and did not return to the game. It was a tough sight for the Spartans to watch as she had to be helped off the court.

Still, Seven Lakes stayed focused. Sophomore Grace Lanier (three aces) and junior Mia Blum (three kills, six digs) stepped up in place of Sykes and served and played admirably along the back row.

Junior Emma Schroder (eight kills) and Olibale (four kills) took advantage of attack opportunities, and junior setter Casey Batenhorst brilliantly spread the ball around to keep Reagan from homing in on her older sister. Senior Katarina Teahen was critical with three kills and two blocks in the fourth set.

"I have confidence in everyone I set," Casey Batenhorst said. "Everyone has excelled in the past few years on this team ... when I can set Emma, Mayo, Kat, I know they can get a kill. I know what they need. Spreading out the offense has been huge so that defenses can't camp out on Ally."

Defensively, senior libero Kailey Bickel was spectacular closing gaps and keeping

balls alive that looked to be easy points for Reagan. Olibale was dominant closing blocks. Reagan 6-foot-2 senior Nyah Anderson had 25 kills but did not have consistent support around her. Fourteen of Anderson's 25 kills came in the third and fifth sets as she was relatively quiet in the other three.

"No. 15 (Anderson) is a really talented hitter, but in practices we go up against Ally, top four in the nation," said Bickel, who had 19 digs. "Just playing against Ally in practice gives us confidence that we can stop any hitter."

It was a great game, intense and competitive. But through it all, even with all of Reagan's spectacular rallies and the dramatics late in the game, Cataline never saw her team waver. She saw a team that has been through a lot already this season, including a shutdown because of COVID-19 and a slew of injuries and knew had to respond to adversity.

When her team's season was on the line, her team rose to the task.

"It was the poise we had," Cataline said. "One of our starters goes down in the first set, and we didn't get rattled. We stayed with it. We had ups and downs and lead changes, and we kept rolling. The whole match, I could sense we were in control."

## 2020 SEVEN LAKES SPARTANS

RECORD: 24-1

NO.	NAME	CLASS
1/23	Kailey Bickel	Senior
2	Grace Lanier	Sophomore
3	Mayo Olibale	Senior
4	Emma Manuel	Senior
5	Casey Batenhorst	Junior
7	Blayne Burke	Senior
8	Peyton Sykes	Senior
9	Amanda Thompson	Senior
10	Katarina Teahen	Senior
11	Andrea Urzua	Junior
12	Mia Blum	Junior
13	Kaia Nickel	Senior
14	Ally Batenhorst	Senior
15	Adreina Mireles	Senior
16	Emma Schroder	Junior
17	Sameena Burns	Freshman

Head Coach: Amy Cataline  
Assistant Coach: Diane Price  
Assistant Coach: Danielle Flannery  
Assistant Coach: Eric Nenninger

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SPORTS

PLAYOFFS

from page 6

Our team believed and our coaches believed. It was our grind and effort. Every rep, every-one went hard. Our backs were up against the wall and we didn't want to go home."

The Spartans' win was also consequential on a state-wide scale, as it placed No. 9 state-ranked Katy High in the Division II bracket of the 6A playoffs, which is generally considered the lighter road to state opposed to the big-school titans that consume the Division I side. Had Cinco Ranch beaten Seven Lakes, Katy would have been in the Division I bracket.

The Division II side consists of the smaller enrollment playoff schools from each district. It means Katy will avoid defending state champ North Shore, which has eliminated the Tigers from the playoffs each of the last two seasons, and three of the last four years. Duncanville, the state runner-up in Division I the last two seasons, is also out of the way.

"If you looked around at the slate of games (last) weekend, we had one of the more meaningful games in the Greater Houston area because of what it meant for Katy," Seven

Lakes coach Jimmy Hamon said. "That's what it's like when your big brother's a stud. It's kind of neat, and I'm sure there were a lot of Tigers rooting for us. I hope I get a thank-you card from (Katy coach) Gary (Joseph)."

The Spartans jumped out to a fast start in securing their playoff berth. They led 14-0 after the first quarter on a six-yard scoring catch by junior Brayden Phillips and a 73-yard scoring run by senior Milton Jones.

Senior Nick David-West added a 35-yard touchdown run 28 seconds into the second quarter. By halftime, the Spartans led by three touchdowns and Jones had 107 yards on nine carries.

"We just read the way the defensive line read our tackles and our guards," Jones said. "If they slanted in, we went for outside runs. If they slanted out, it was inside runs. We got a lot of life out of our run game."

Senior quarterback Cristian Beltran's 1-yard run a little more than two minutes into the third quarter gave Seven Lakes a 27-0 lead. That's when Cinco Ranch fought back.

Not long after Beltran's keeper, sophomore receiver Seth Salverino hauled in a 55-yard pass from sophomore quarterback Gavin Rutherford to put the Cougars on the board. Junior Keegan Sneedon's 46-yard field goal

made it 30-7, Spartans, with 4:04 left in the third.

But in a span of a little less than four minutes in the fourth quarter, the Cougars scored 15 points to cut their deficit to eight. Rutherford scored on a 1-yard run to the outside and senior running back Caleb Leapheart handled a 14-yard catch-and-run score from Rutherford, with sophomore receiver Noah Abboud scoring the two-point conversion.

"Our guys saw a heck of a team that played so hard in that second half," Hamon said. "What I told our guys is that's what it feels like to play against a team with their backs against the wall. Every round of the playoffs, that's what it's going to be like. There's no tomorrow."

Seven Lakes was able to hang on despite the late scare. The Spartans were outgained 327-315 in total yards, but they won the turnover battle 3-1 and forced Cinco Ranch into a one-dimensional offense.

"We knew we'd be able to stop the run," Stanford said. "We knew they'd pass it, so we worked all week on getting drops, manning up, different coverages, sending the blitz. Just making No. 12 (Rutherford) uncomfortable. We did a good job in the first half, but the second half it was only OK."

It has been a strenuous season for Seven Lakes, even during a campaign unlike any other for all Texas high school football teams. There was a 20-day period where the Spartans had to suspend athletics due to a COVID-19 outbreak. There was rescheduling of multiple contests, including the one against Cinco Ranch.

"It was so different than any other time I've been in this situation, just because of the ups and downs and rescheduling and waiting," Hamon said. "We were supposed to play this game (three) weeks ago. We were ready on (November) 19th and then it got rescheduled. That took some anticipation and energy out of the guys."

But the players pulled through. They never quit, never wavered. Attitudes and energy stayed steady, if not hopeful. The result is the playoffs.

"The mindset was to get the job done," said Jones, who finished with 128 yards on 15 carries. "We stayed focused. We put everything together and we were fired up. There was a time when we had no idea if we'd have a season. But we just worried about playing and practicing and kept striving. We knew what we wanted, and we wanted the playoffs."

PANTHERS

from page 6

Defensive coordinators can attest to that. Bankston has torched any and all opposing coverages this season, compiling 1,389 rushing yards and 13 touchdowns, averaging 8.6 yards per carry. He also has 71 yards on nine catches and 24 yards on two kick returns.

That type of production is why many around the Paetow program are puzzled as to why Bankston does not have the attention from colleges that some of his peers do. He has been the offensive cornerstone for a young program that has 16 wins to four losses in its last two seasons. Bankston runs a 4.44 40-yard dash and bench-presses 255 pounds.

Colleges should be breaking down his door to get his commitment.

"I don't know," coach B.J. Gotte said. "It's a great question. I try and tell people, and shout from the rafters, that they need to put this kid on their team. COVID has a lot to do with it. Had he been able to go through spring football, run track

and go to summer camps, he would have a lot more attention. But it is what it is."

One overlooked element of Bankston's game—one of many—is his durability. To prepare for being the primary target of opposing defensive game plans this season, he learned to never take a rep off during practice. Ever.

He works so hard during practices, Bankston said, that games come easy to him. And while offers and recruiting may consume the minds of others, Bankston is preoccupied only with getting better and leading his team.

"I obviously feel like I'm one of the top talents out there," Bankston said. "I feel like I'm really slept on. But it's God's plan, really. Whatever God has in store for me, I'm just going to follow through and roll with it."

Bankston and the Panthers have rolled right back into the playoffs in just the program's third year of varsity play. Paetow (8-1) plays Baytown Lee (7-2) in their Class 5A, Division I bi-district playoff matchup on Friday, Dec. 11, at 7 p.m. at Stallworth Stadium in Baytown.

The Panthers fell to Whitehouse, 35-10, last year in a bitter playoff debut.

"Last year, when we got into the playoffs, we were just so excited to be there, we didn't focus on winning," Bankston said. "We were in the moment too much. This year's team, that's not an option. We're going to play to handle business. Nothing more."

Gotte said he has a team that "competes to win." That wasn't necessarily the case last season for a young program that was 8-3 and making its first playoff appearance after a 3-7 inaugural varsity season.

"Last year, I felt like we got there and we showed up to play in a playoff game, and Whitehouse showed up to win a playoff game," Gotte said. "This year, we're showing up to win a playoff game. That's the difference."

The Panthers have experience this season. Bankston is a year better. Junior quarterback C.J. Dumas Jr. has another year of varsity under his belt. The defense is more consistent and comfortable with another year in coordinator Jason Hinkelman's alignment-oriented scheme.

"We're a lot more connected as a team," senior defensive back Carl Simon said. "We have a lot more chemistry. Everybody connects with everyone else and everyone trusts everyone else. We play for each other."

This Paetow senior class was with the program as freshmen when the school opened in the fall of 2017. Gotte said he loves the culture, camaraderie and chemistry built by the seniors.

"They're playing hard and playing for one another, and they're competing to win," he said. "I feel like they're not just happy to be here. Hopefully we can back it up."

A perfect example was the Panthers' 40-21 regular season win over Class 6A Deer Park in a non-district game on Thursday, Dec. 3. It was a meaningless game with nothing at stake. But the Panthers played as if their season was on the line.

Deer Park went up 21-17 in the third quarter, and Paetow responded with 23 unanswered points to run away with the convincing win.

"Games are never over with us," Simon said. "I feel like even if we make mistakes, we know we can

pick ourselves back up and keep going. This team finishes."

After scoring two touchdowns on his first three carries, Bankston was rarely used the rest of the first half as junior Jacob Brown and sophomore Damyrion Phillips got some time in the backfield. Once Deer Park rallied from a 17-0 deficit, however, Bankston was put back in. He promptly scored on a 30-yard run to put the Panthers back on top. A 46-yard scamper down the left side set up an easy 1-yard score by senior fullback Randle Kelley moments later.

"He's a senior and he knows he's the guy," Gotte said of Bankston. "He's taken on that responsibility and he takes pride in that. You look at the second half, we leaned on him and he responded and did what we expect him to do. He knows this is his year and he's done a great job leading his guys."

Bankston is taking these playoffs personally. The Panthers are following his lead.

"It's a lot on me, but it's a lot on everyone," Bankston said. "We're all one. The O-line does a good job, C.J. does a good job, the defense does a tremendous job. I feel like we can just play as a team, nobody can beat us."

The Katy Times

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## TIGERS

from page 6

would have been in the Division I bracket.

Division II consists of the smaller enrollment playoff schools from each district. It means Katy will avoid defending state champ North Shore, which has eliminated the Tigers from the playoffs each of the last two seasons, and three of the last four years. Duncanville, the state runner-up in Division I the last two seasons, is also out of the way.

The last time Katy won a state championship was in 2015, which was also the last time it went Division II.

"We don't really look at that stuff," senior running back Jalen Davis said. "Say if Cinco would have won, we would've gone DI. Regardless, we're going to focus on ourselves. Whatever is in front of us, we won't back down."

That much is certain, and it goes

back to Joseph's satisfaction in his team's mental toughness. Katy players and coaches have been affected by the coronavirus.

The diligence in protecting the spread has been noteworthy. Joseph said balancing the "necessary evil" of attending to coronavirus protocols with the need/want to work his football team as necessary in order to improve is a delicate measure.

"It's very hard," he said. "Everything is new. It's a day-by-day thing. We've had our share (of cases), and we've just got to continue working. The great thing about having a good program is you have some depth, so if some get sick you can have others step up. That's a good thing."

Indeed, it's not as if Katy is working with its back against the wall. The Tigers are considered a heavy favorite to come out of the Class 6A Division II playoffs with their ninth state title.

That's largely because of a potent running attack anchored by Davis and his sophomore younger brother, Seth. Joseph has been able

to strategically limit Davis's carries this season so that he is fresh for the playoffs.

In eight games, Davis has carried the ball 108 times, an average of 13.5 per game. No. 1 backs at Katy have typically averaged around 20-plus carries per game in the past. Last season, Ron Hoff averaged 20.8 carries per game. The year before, Deondrick Glass averaged 20.4.

Davis still compiled 966 yards and 16 touchdowns, and Seth earned invaluable reps and experience as the No. 2 back. Seth had 123 carries for 991 yards and 11 touchdowns. For the first time since 2017, when Katy had Glass and Josh Oglesby sharing duties in the backfield, Katy has a true 1-2 punch at running back.

"We have to have depth at that position," Joseph said. "When you're an I-formation and one-back football team like we are, you have to have two backs to be successful. Jalen will be fresh going into the playoffs. Seth is a great complement. We're looking forward to that part of it."

As impressive as the running game and offensive line have been, however, the rock of this year's Tigers is the defense, particularly the line of seniors Cal Varner III and Cohen Dearman, and junior Malick Sylla.

"They're showing out every game," senior defensive back Hunter Washington said. "Overall, I think our defense is becoming more of a brotherhood each game, knowing we have to play together if we're going to win together"

The Tigers have always had dominant defensive linemen. This year's, however, look to be on another level. New defensive line coach A.J. Blum, a former D-line coach at the University of Houston who coached current Buffalo Bill Ed Oliver, has been an essential addition because of his demanding style and attention to detail.

"He's about more intensity, more power," said Sylla, a five-star prospect. "Putting your hands in the right place, outside shoulder to inside shoulder. Ripping, power

stuff. It's all the little things that can make a difference."

A prolific running game and a stingy defense. Throw in stout special teams, led by senior punter Fuller Shurtz, senior kicker Nemanja Lazic and junior returner Bobby Taylor. It all sounds familiar.

Battle-tested recipes for success at Katy, and elements that have been backbones for a trying season.

But it will only get more difficult. There will not be rescheduling of games during the playoffs. If a team finds itself affected by COVID-19 and cannot play, it will have to forfeit, and its opponent will get a bye that round.

Just one more drastic hurdle in a season plagued with them.

"It's been a confusing season, but we never let it get to us," Davis said. "The virus affects everybody. We hate to see it. We're going to just keep doing what we can. We're ready to start the actual season. Everybody is 0-0. We've already got our minds ready for what's ahead of us."

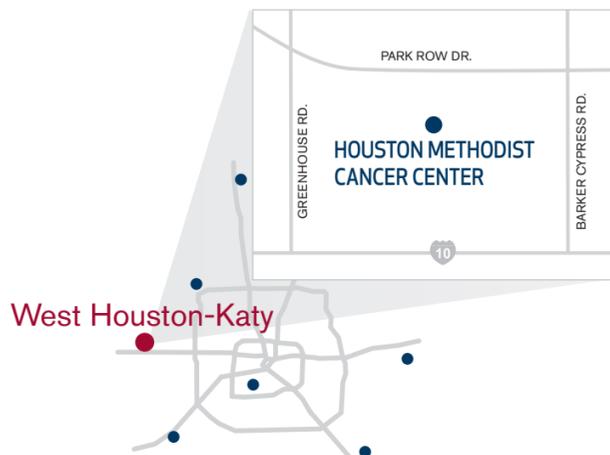


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