

...Calling an Audible

(Continued from page 3)

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in spring 2020, it hit TSD hard. Some 40% of the 500 students live on campus—they come from all over the state—and many concerned parents kept their children home. Other players fell ill.

Football is a physical sport that requires numbers—11 players per team on the field at any one time. It began looking like the Rangers might not have the numbers to field a team, much less compete, as the pandemic tore through its roster.

TSD belongs to the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools, which also sponsors six-man football, with smaller teams that play on shortened fields. To keep playing, the Rangers downsized.

“To continue to have a football program, it was the best decision that we ever made,” says athletic director Chris Hamilton, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative. “However, we had to deal with some very upset community members and explain to people that we just couldn’t make it as a full team.

“So it took time. The community kind of went through a grieving process.”

And the team went through, well, a shrinking process. An 80-yard field was marked at their on-campus stadium, even as the goalposts remained in place for a 100-yard field. Illness and injury occasionally limited the 20-person roster to seven players.

But they won. And kept winning, through a 63-32 state championship victory over crosstown power Veritas Academy, which had routed them in a preseason scrimmage.

“Winning the state title as a Deaf school is way more challenging than winning the national title,” writes Kylar Sicoli, a senior wide receiver on that team, in an email. “A Deaf school will always win the [Deaf] national title. We never won a football state title, so we made history.”

Sound of Success

Winning the state title was another step in dismissing preconceptions hearing people might have.

“They think that we have low IQs or we can’t drive. Things like that,” says quarterback Xiovan Tomlinson, a third-generation deaf player at TSD. “But really, deaf people can do anything.”

Montanez points out that he’s seen studies that deaf drivers are safer because they aren’t easily distracted and “have a lifetime’s learning on using their peripheral vision. It’s the same in football.”

AD Hamilton, who joined the school in 2001, says this is nothing new.

“Historically, Deaf teams have been oppressed just as deaf people have been oppressed, but hey, we’re here,” he says. “We’re doing this. We

can do it. We’re just like you, and we’re better than you in some cases.”

Jermiah Garcia played most of his life in the hearing world and was a budding standout as a freshman at Shoemaker High School in Killeen, but he didn’t feel he got the proper support, academically or socially. So, encouraged by his interpreter, a TSD alumnus, Garcia transferred to TSD for his sophomore season in 2022.

“I was really lost trying to communicate with my teammates. I couldn’t have my interpreter on the field,” Garcia says. “My interpreter would tell me, some of the students are saying that you can’t do this, you can’t do that, you can’t play.”

Teammate Niven Zhang is more succinct. “I just feel like going to a public school would be really a waste of time because there’s a lot of logistical things that we have to work out with interpreters,” he says. “Here at Texas School for the Deaf, everything works just like it should.”

Montanez knows his players are in the right place for success.

“Too often, when they’re being coached by someone who doesn’t understand them (tends to be hearing), things fly over their head,” he writes. “When coaches like me are able to communicate clearly, in depth and spatially, I can see the ‘aha’ moment in their eyes and faces.

“I love seeing that.”

Help Ahead

One of the main challenges of a football player not being able to hear is, not surprisingly, communication.

Whistles. Audibles. Referee warnings. In-game coaching. Fans. Trash talk.

“Oh yeah, every opponent we go against has a lot of trash talk,” junior Theo Savannah says. “Then we show them we can play.”

Midway through the 2023 season, AT&T introduced a field-leveling technology, equipping helmets with 5G-augmented reality lenses that can display text.

NCAA rules, which many high school associations, including TAPPS, follow, prohibit electronic devices in helmets, but Gallaudet was granted a one-game waiver to use the technology. The Bison promptly ended a four-game losing streak.

Sicoli, one of several TSD alums playing for the Bison, writes that the technology could help them avoid late hit penalties caused by not being able to hear the ref’s whistle.

“That could be a game changer for some deaf players,” Sicoli writes. “Also the helmet would help the coach and players communicate during the game. The coach always has difficulty getting the player’s attention.”

David Goodnight, a referee from Somerville who is a member of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, doesn’t know ASL—few who officiate TSD games do—but officiating deaf teams’ games is an ongoing education.

(Continued on next page)

Water Weekly

For the week of 08/26/24

Water conditions

The latest drought map for conditions as of August 20 shows an increase in the area of the state impacted by drought for the third consecutive week. Drought has reached its largest extent since December 2023. An additional 20 percent of the state is vulnerable to drought in coming weeks.

Drought conditions

40% now
30% a week ago
26% three months ago
79% a year ago

Intensity

None
D0 Abnormally dry
D1 Moderate drought
D2 Severe drought
D3 Extreme drought
D4 Exceptional drought

Map courtesy of the U.S. Drought Monitor

U.S. seasonal drought outlook

August is shaping up to be hotter and drier than normal for Texas, triggering recent drought expansion. And according to the latest predictions from the National Weather Service, we won't see any improvements any time soon. In fact, continued drought expansion is anticipated in Texas through the end of November.

Map courtesy of NOAA

By Dr. Mark Wentzel, Hydrologist, Office of Water Science and Conservation
Kellen McMurry, Government Relations | Kellen.McMurry@twdb.texas.gov | 512-475-1589
Media Relations | MediaRelations@twdb.texas.gov | 512-463-5129

www.twdb.texas.gov

STERLING COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Commissioners' Courtroom
609 4th Ave.
Sterling City, Texas 76951

This budget will raise more revenue from property taxes than last year's budget by an amount of \$242,055 an increase from last year's budget. Tax Rate is increased by .0303841. The property tax revenue to be raised from new property added to the tax roll this year is \$13,414.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, we invite all attendees to advise us of any special accommodations due to disability. The Sterling County Commissioners' Courtroom is accessible to person with disabilities. If assistance is needed to participate, please call the office of County Judge at (325) 378-3481. Please submit your request as far in advance as possible before the meeting if you wish to attend.

WHAT: Public Hearing regarding Sterling County's Budget for Fiscal Year 2025

WHO: The Commissioners' Court of Sterling County

WHEN: Monday, September 9, 2024 – 8:55 a.m.

WHERE: First Floor of the Sterling County Courthouse, Commissioners' Courtroom, located at 609 4th Ave., Sterling City, TX

AGENDA: 1. Open Meeting and Determine Quorum
2. Take Public Input Concerning the County Budget for FY 2025
3. Adjourn Meeting

Posted this the 30th day of August, 2024.

Mike Knittel
County Judge
Sterling County, Texas

Attest: Jerri McCutchen
County Clerk
Sterling County, Texas

NOTE: The Commissioners' Court of Sterling County may discuss, deliberate and take all appropriate action on any matter listed on this Agenda. Items on this Agenda may be taken out of the order listed. Any testimony before the Sterling County Commissioners' Court may be taken under oath pursuant to §81.030 of the Local Government Code.

FILED August 26, 2024
AT 8:23 o'clock
JERRI MCCUTCHEN
County Clerk, Sterling County, Texas
By _____, Deputy