

Showing off what they've got

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
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Gallup Bengal Girls Dance Team prepares for upcoming season

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During halftime at Gallup High football and basketball games, the Gallup Bengal Girls Dance Team show their team spirit by performing highly energetic, and well-choreographed routines.

When they're not performing at the games, the dancers are competing in dance meets across the state, and sometimes out of state.

Last year's season concluded with the New Mexico Activities Association State Spirit Championship. The Bengals were the runners-up in the 4A dance category.

One of the current team captains, Jordan Krause, who is a senior this year, remembers how she felt during the moment she found out they had won second place.

"When they announced we got second I was a little bit bummed that we didn't get first, but I knew that the next year we were going to take first, so I wasn't that sad," she said. "I'm so proud of us for getting second because we worked so hard for that."

Krause is one of three senior captains this year. She said she is planning on attending the University of Texas in Austin, Texas next year, and that she's going to continue with dancing in college.

In addition to the captains, the team is led by instructor Kristy Tiley. She is a math teacher at Gallup High School, and she has been working with the dance team for 25 years.

"My favorite part about coaching is getting to watch the dancers grow not just within dancing and improving every year, but also just being good students and being leaders in the school," Tiley said during an interview with the *Sun*.

Lillie Swatzell, another senior captain, has been working with Tiley since she was five years old. As her senior year gets started, Swatzell said she's going to miss Tiley and the Gallup Bengals Girls Dance Team.

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"I'm going to miss the team that we have now. It's a great team and we all get along," Swatzell said. "[I'm also going to miss] just being able to dance on a good team. [Not] having a great coach like Kristy is going to be the hardest, and just not being able to be on that pit floor at state, or not being at all the basketball games or the football games."

Swatzell said she is either going to attend UNM-Gallup to get her nursing degree, or join the Air Force to serve as a nurse.

The third team captain, Kaylah Lee, said she was also going to miss Tiley.

"I love dance, and I love her as a coach and I love my team. I just want to keep doing it. I've been doing it for so long and It's just a part of me," Lee said.

As for the future, Lee wants to continue dancing in college, although she doesn't know where she'll be going yet. She plans to study psychology.

In February, the Bengals participated in Dance Team Union Nationals in Nashville. Tiley said she is hoping they'll be able to go again in 2023.

The team's first competition of the school year is scheduled for Nov. 12. The Bengals are hosting it at Gallup High School.

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