

NOT DONE YET



Lady Gators heading back to state after second Region III title

CYPRESS: Dickinson two wins away from 4A state title

By **COREY ROEPKEN**
The Daily News

Brianna Hypolite gave a bashful smile, fully aware the truth was unavoidable no matter how much she wanted to deny it in favor of political correctness.

After Saturday's 76-36 victory over Houston Yates in the Class 4A Region III championship game, the Dickinson High School girls basketball players finally can breathe a sigh of relief. The overwhelming favorites are headed back to Austin for the second straight year.

The Lady Gators expected to do that all season.

"You know it's going to come eventually," Hypolite said after composing herself. "Back in November, people were talking about this weekend. To stay mentally focused that long and get to this point takes a lot of commitment and dedication."

Dickinson (34-4) will join Plainview, Dallas Lincoln and Cibolo Steele at the state tournament Thursday. The UIL will release the pairings today. The semifinals will be played at the University of Texas' Erwin Center on Thursday at 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. The championship game is scheduled for

See **DICKINSON/B2**



TOP: Dickinson's Brianna Hypolite, left, and Morgan Williams chant "just two left" after winning the Class 4A, Region III title on Saturday afternoon at the Berry Center in Cypress. **ABOVE:** Dickinson's Delanah Samuels guards Yates' Sierra Chambers. **RIGHT:** Audri Garcia drives to the basket in the Lady Gators' 76-36 victory over the Lady Lions. Dickinson advances to the state tournament beginning in Austin on Thursday.



Photos by **KEVIN M. COX**/The Daily News

DICKINSON

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3:30 p.m. Saturday.

Yates (25-11) stayed close throughout the first quarter as Dickinson struggled to find its shooting touch. The Lady Gators were 3-for-11 from the field in the first eight minutes but held the lead thanks to eight free throws.

"A lot of teams are going to come out ready to play," Hypolite said. "In the opening quarter, everybody is excited. Yates came out ready to pull off the upset. We held on and showed how well we can play."

Dickinson put the game away with a 20-1 run in the second quarter. Senior LaChandra Johnson scored 10 of her team-high 14 points in the quarter. Six came from two of her hot spots — beyond the 3-point arc in the corner. The Lady Gators held Yates to one field goal in the

second and two in the third. They outscored the Lions 47-9 in the second and third quarters.

The Lady Gators extended their lead despite top scorers Marissa Ashton and Hypolite not making field goals until the third quarter. Ashton had 13 points and three steals, and Hypolite had four points and seven rebounds.

Morgan Williams had 13 points, five rebounds and four assists, Audri Garcia 11 points and Aron Garcia 10 points and six rebounds. Delanah Samuels had three points, three assists and four steals, Javonne Anderson three points, Morgan Meguess two points, Brittany Simmons one point and Tynesha Harris one point.

Although many expected the same four teams from last year's Class 4A state tournament to return this season, Dickinson is the only one of the bunch as Fort Worth Dunbar, Frisco and Marble Falls all lost

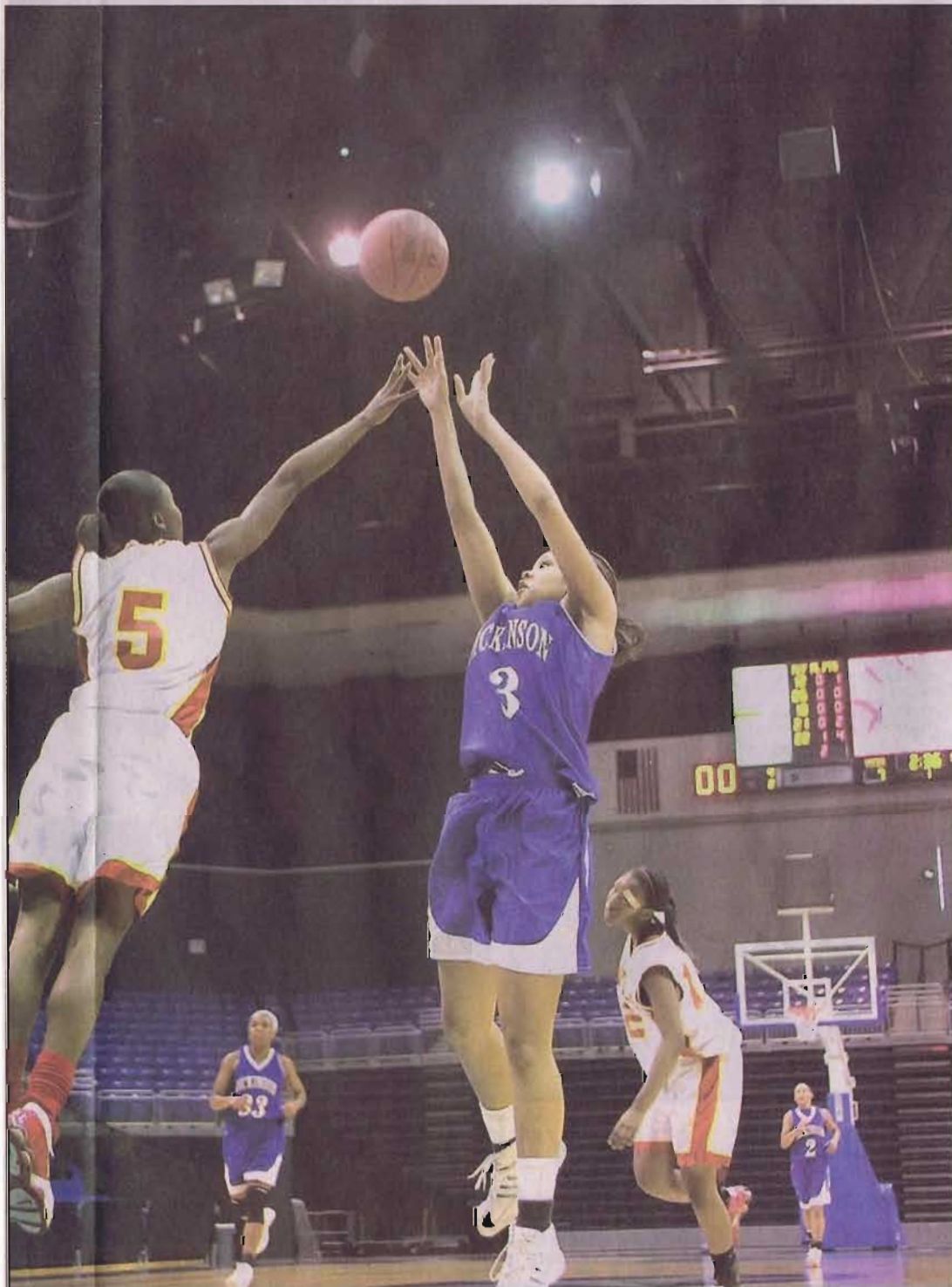
this weekend. The Lady Gators, ranked third in the state coaches poll, will be the highest-ranked team at this year's state tournament.

"A lot of teams were expected to win regional championships this year but didn't do it," Hypolite said. "For us to do it is something special. A lot of people said it was expected, but every night you have to come out ready to play because every team wants to take you out."

Dickinson coach Darrin Samuels said he was aware of the upsets that littered the 4A and 5A girls playoff brackets. Now that his Lady Gators are safely through to the state tournament, he said he doesn't believe it will end with a loss like last year.

"I expect this team will be more confident than the last time we went," Samuels said. "They'll have high expectations and they'll play hard. I fully expect for us to win the state championship this year."

Lady Gators off to state basketball tournament



other early favorites to advance to Austin. Dickinson head coach Darrin Samuels credited his team's experience from last year in avoiding overconfidence.

"It is different," Samuels said. "The first time you're not quite sure what's going to happen. With so many top teams falling - last week we had Fort Worth Dunbar and Frisco go out of the playoffs... things can get pretty unpredictable at times."

In the end, it looked like a typical dominating Lady Gator performance, with four players - LaChandra Johnson, Morgan Williams, Marissa Ashton and Audriana Garcia - scoring in double figures. But Yates (25-11) scored first and kept it as close as 16-12 early in the second quarter.

Then the Lady Gators decided it was showtime.

Yates' shaky first-half shooting (5-for-26), contributed to an insurmountable lead while Dickinson brought the full-court style that made them an early preseason favorite to win the Class 4A title. The Lady Gators strung together 14 straight points in the second quarter, helped by several free throws to take a 38-15 halftime lead. Dickinson hit 23 of 36 shots from the stripe.

"I saw us have some more discipline and stick to the game plan," Samuels said of the second quarter. "I think sometimes, like, when you're a parent and a child's not sure what you're telling them, it's the same thing with players and coaches. And they sort of see their way doesn't

with its press, at one point forcing three straight turnovers for easy fast break layups on the other end. The Lady Gators turned a 45-20 lead into a 61-20 lead with a quarter to play; Yates shot only 2-for-16 from the floor in the third period.

Ashton scored on a jumper and a lay-up early in the fourth quarter to make it 20 straight points for Dickinson until a Yates three-pointer and three jumpers by the Lady Lions' Clyde Johnson, whose 20 points accounted for more than half of Yates' scoring. The Lady Lions outscored Dickinson 16-14 in the fourth quarter, but Samuels put his reserves into the game for much of the final eight minutes.

LaChandra Johnson led Dickinson with 14 points, Williams and Ashton each had 13 and Garcia finished with 11. And Dickinson struggled little on defense after allowing some teams to break their press and put points on the board - even if far from enough to defeat the Lady Gators.

"That was one of the problems in the middle of the season," Samuels said. "We would gamble too much on defense. We would have average players scoring 20 points on us. We were just giving up the rim too much."

But for Yates and Huntsville this weekend, there weren't many easy baskets under the rim. Just getting to the other side of the court was challenging enough.

The Lady Gators cut down the

School's first state championship in a UIL-sanctioned women's team sport, and the first in any sport since the 1977 Gator football team.

"We're a more balanced team that is focused on one goal: winning a state title," Hypolite said. "It's great to go back, but it would be better if we came back with a state title."

Dickinson has not lost to a Class 4A team since Fort Worth Dunbar in last year's state final. Two of the teams that beat the Lady Gators this season - Cy-Fair and DeSoto - will also be in Austin for the 5A state tournament. Dickinson has won 23 straight games and has gone undefeated in District 23-4A for the past two years.

"I expect this team will be more confident than the last time we went," Samuels said. "(We're) a team with higher expectations and a team that's going to play hard. I fully expect to win a state championship this year."

On Friday, Dickinson defeated Huntsville in the regional semifinals by a 83-49 score. Like the Lady Gators did against Yates, the team started slow before putting the game out of reach in the second quarter.

Ashton led Dickinson with 19 points, Hypolite scored 18, Johnson finished with 16 and Williams pitched in 10.

Huntsville finished the season with a 20-9 record.

Dickinson will begin the state tournament in Austin against Plainview at 8:30 p. m., after the



Dickinson's Marissa Ashton (3) gets a shot off against Houston Yates' Rebecca Ray (5) in regional playoff action February 23 at the Berry Center in Cypress. After a slow start, the Lady Gators won by 40 points, 76-36, to advance to the state championship tournament starting February 28. See our slide show at www.thepostnewspaper.net. Photo by Michael Durisseau

**By James Fremont
For The POST**

CYPRESS - Dickinson's Lady Gators picked up a championship trophy this weekend. Just not the one they've been after.

The Lady Gators (34-4) steamrolled their competition at the Region III basketball tournament

at the Berry Center in Cypress, completing their run through Houston Yates and Huntsville regional bracket that most expected them to win.

Dickinson crushed Yates by a 75-36 count in the region final on Saturday, outscoring their opponents from Houston's Third Ward 47-9 in the second and

third quarters before collecting the regional championship trophy that quickly became an afterthought as it meant Dickinson could start officially preparing for the state tournament.

Before taking the floor at Berry, complacency was the worst enemy for Dickinson and

work right away, they're looking for you for that advice and they listen."

The third quarter saw a similar outburst from the Lady Gators, as Ashton and Brianna Hypolite scored their first points of the game. The team scored 20 straight going into the final period in a run that included a Yates technical foul.

Dickinson became relentless

net once again at Berry Center, a combination indoor arena, auditorium and stadium facility that seats more than 8,000 for basketball and is home to Cy-Fair ISD athletics. Now the Lady Gators will move to a different, familiar floor in an even bigger building - the Erwin Center at the University of Texas in Austin.

And this time, they plan to bring home Dickinson High

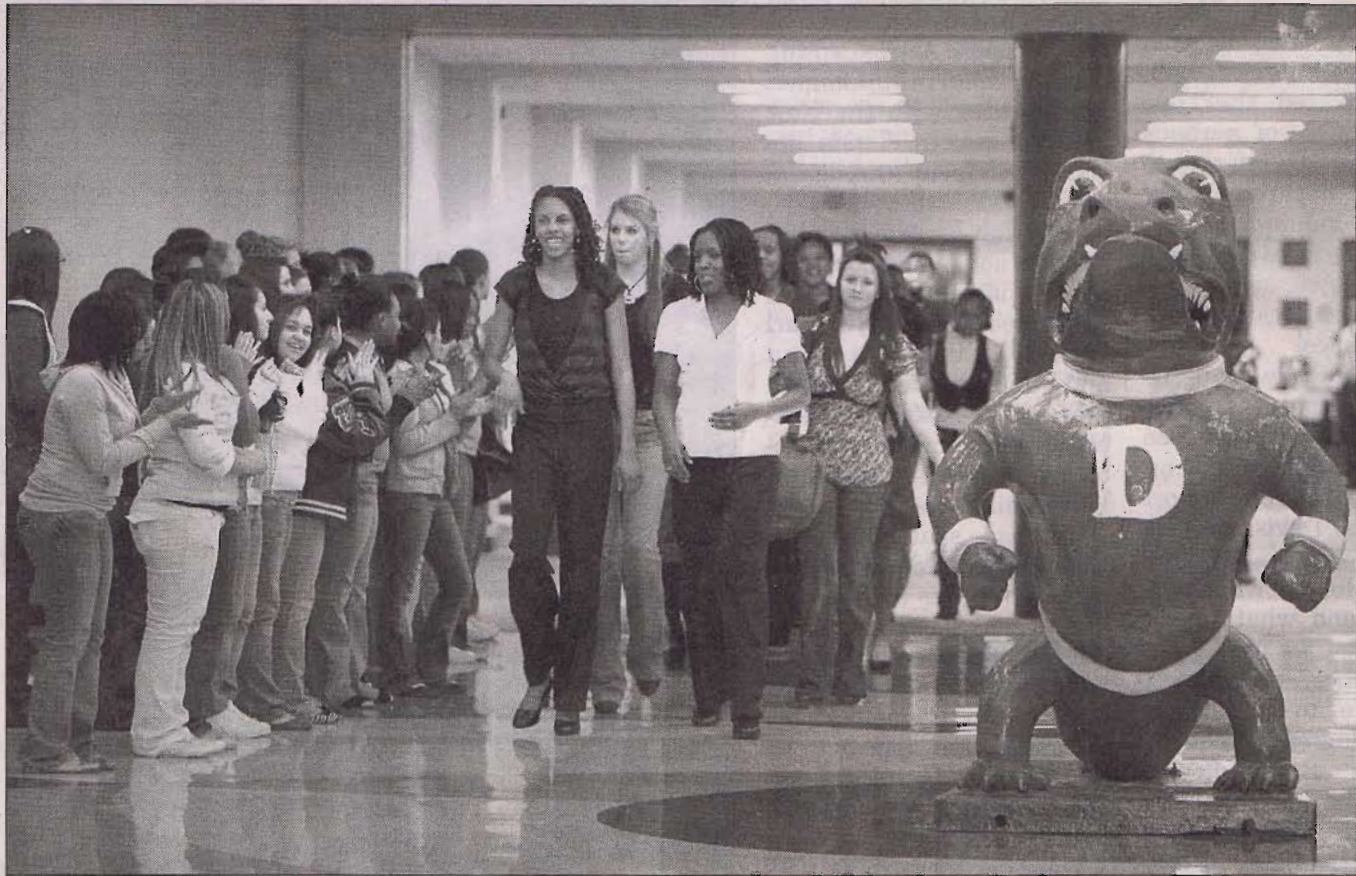
other 4A semifinal between Cibolo Steele and Dallas Lincoln. The finals will be Saturday at 3:30 p. m.

Lincoln was the 4A champion in 2004. Along with Dickinson, two other Houston-area schools - Cy-Fair in 5A and Navarro in 3A - are also at the state

The Lady Gators' Adrianna Garcia (33) hits a layup over Houston Yates' Candice Pace (22) in regional playoff action February 23 at the Berry Center in Cypress. After a slow start, the Lady Gators won by 40 points, 76-36, to advance to the state championship tournament starting February 28. See our slide show at www.thepostnewspaper.net. Photo by Michael Durisseau



HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL



Photos by JENNIFER REYNOLDS/The Daily News

ABOVE: Dickinson High School students line the main hallway to send off the Lady Gators basketball team Wednesday. The team is headed to Austin for the state championship tournament. **BELOW:** Tabitha Townsend presents Morgan Williams with a goodie bag as she gets on the bus bound for Austin.

State shot

Dickinson girls to face Plainview today in the 4A state semifinals

By **JOSHUA BUCKLEY**
The Daily News

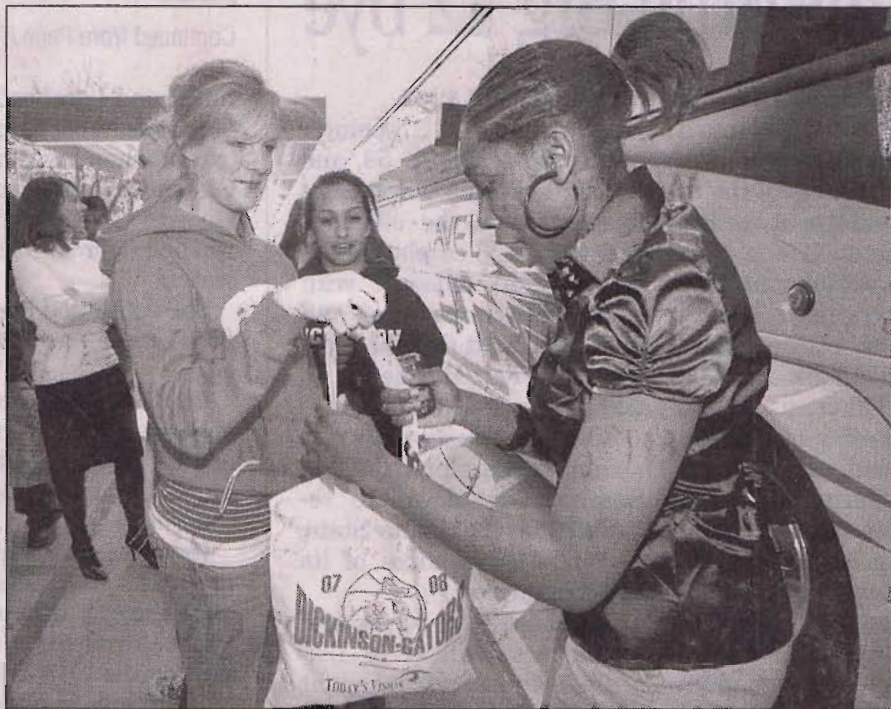
DICKINSON — With the pep band playing and the students cheering in support, the Dickinson Lady Gators boarded a charter bus en route to the Class 4A state basketball tournament on Wednesday.

But make no mistake, this isn't a pleasure trip Austin — it's all business for the Lady Gators.

"Last year, we had the mindset that we might get a shot at a championship," said senior Brianna Hypolite. "But this year, we're going up there to win. I think we are more focused and more intent on getting the victory (today) and winning the championship on Saturday."

Dickinson (34-4) will face Plainview in the state semifinals at 8:30 p.m. tonight at the Erwin Center.

"Definitely the expectation for us is to win this year," said Dickinson coach Darrin Samuels. "But you have to have the courage to be the best. Sometimes you just have to



• Dickinson vs.
Plainview
8:30 p.m. Today

On the Web

Can't make it to the game? Go online to galvnews.com and follow Dickinson's state semifinal contest from your computer as Joshua Buckley and Corey Roepken give updates 'From the Sidelines.'



See **STATE/A8**

STATE

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go for it, and we're going for it this weekend."

Dickinson enters the state semifinals with plenty of momentum after destroying its two opponents in the regionals last week. The Lady Gators beat Huntsville 83-49, followed by a 75-36 win over Yates in the regional finals.

"The team's confidence level is way up," said senior LaChandra Johnson. "We should be able to come out, play hard and do our thing to win."

Samuels said watching his players dominate on Saturday has him feeling good about their chances against the state's best.

"That was the best I've ever seen any team play in a regional tournament," Samuels said. "I'm extremely confident with what I saw this week. I don't want to be too cocky, but we have some players. We can come at you from a lot of different ways."

But the Lady Gators will face their stiffest competition this Friday in the postsea-

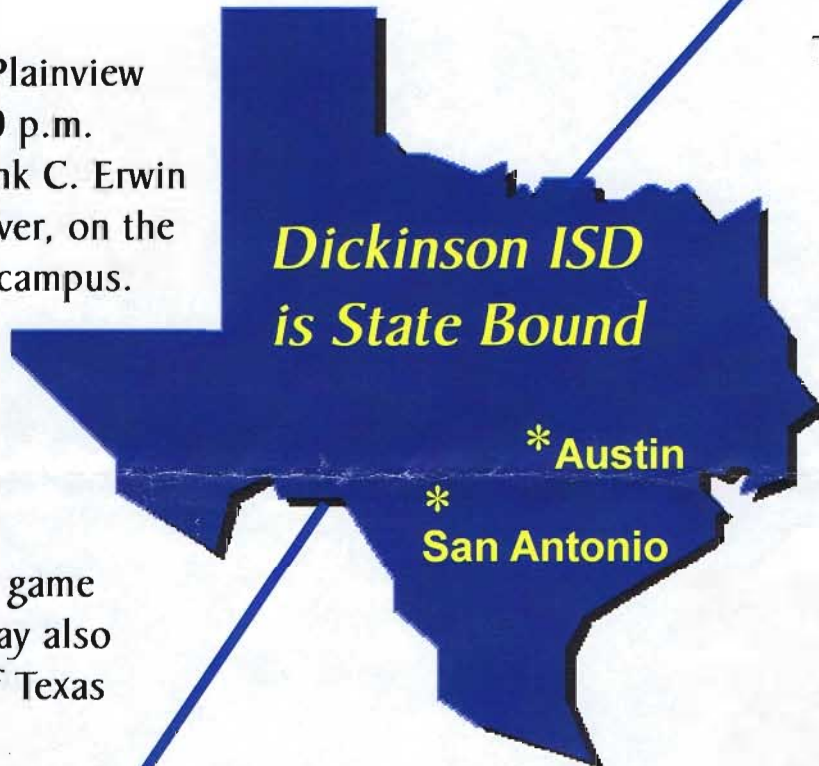


Lady Gator Basketball Team Headed to State Playoffs

*Come show your Gator spirit at
11:30 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 27 along FM 517
and cheer on the team as the chartered
bus leaves DHS and heads to Austin.*

The team will play Plainview
High School at 8:30 p.m.
Thursday at the Frank C. Erwin
Center, 1701 Red River, on the
University of Texas campus.

If DHS wins on
Thursday, the girls
will advance to the
state championship game
at 3:30 p.m. Saturday also
on the University of Texas
campus and play
the winner of the
Dallas Lincoln and
Cibolo Steele game.



The DHS Academic
Decathlon Team
is making history.

This is the
team's first-ever
trip to the
state competition.

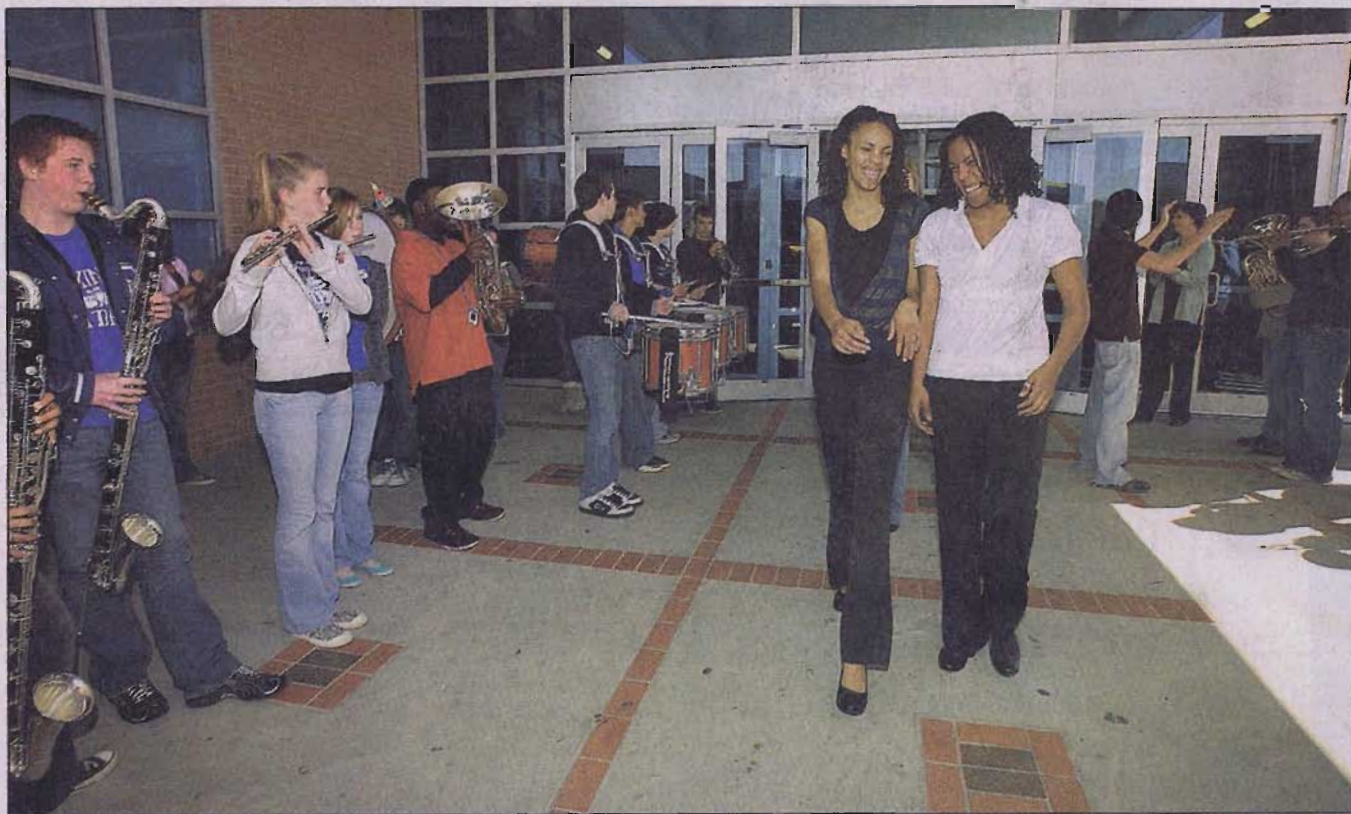
DHS Academic Decathlon Team Headed to State Contest

*Come show your Gator spirit at 11:30 a.m. Thursday,
Feb. 28 along FM 517 and cheer on the team as the
chartered bus leaves DHS and heads
to San Antonio.*

The team competes Friday through Sunday. The public
is invited to attend the Super Quiz event at 3:45 p.m.
Saturday in McAllister Auditorium on the San Antonio
College Campus, 1300 San Pedro Ave. in San Antonio.

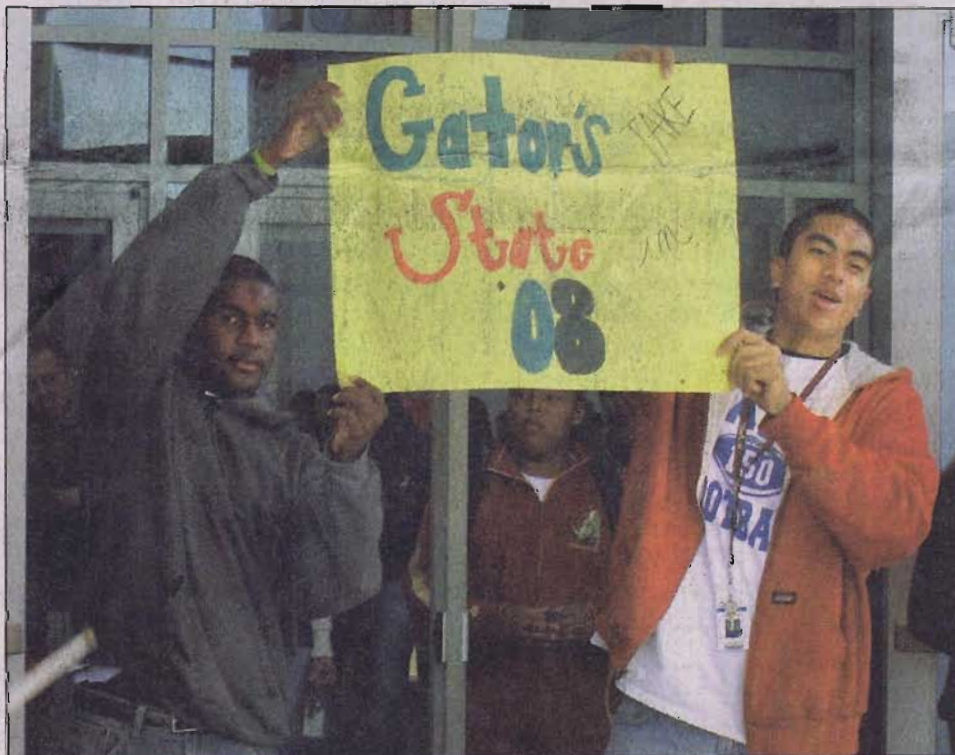


LADY GATORS EMBARK ON 'BUSINESS TRIP'



Aron, left, and Audri Garcia, sisters on the Lady Gators basketball team, lead the team to their bus bound for Austin on Wednesday.

With the pep band playing and the students cheering in support, the Dickinson Lady Gators boarded a charter bus en route to the Class 4A state basketball tournament. But make no mistake, this isn't a pleasure to Austin — it's all business for the Lady Gators. They will face Plainview Thursday at 8:30 p.m. in the semi-finals. The championship game is set for 3:30 p.m. Saturday. The Lady Gators are favored to win the title. For more coverage, see Sports, **Page A7** or go to galvnews.com.



Photos by **JENNIFER REYNOLDS**
The Daily News

Darrell Riley, left, and Yousef Nacouzi, both Dickinson High School football players, cheer on the basketball team Wednesday as the Lady Gators head to Austin for the state tournament.

Another shot

Lady Gators get another try for title

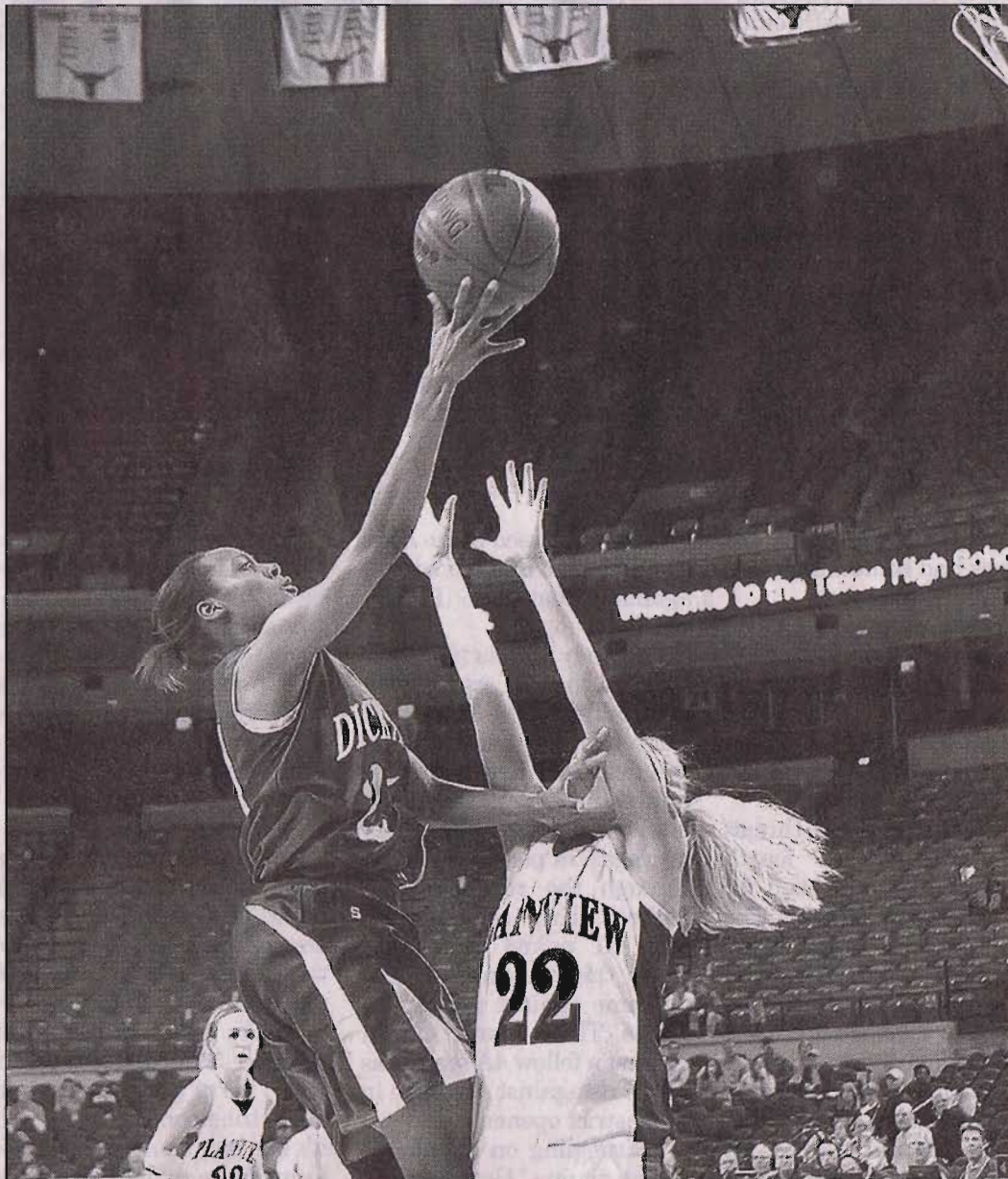
By COREY ROEPKEN
The Daily News

AUSTIN — At this point in the high school basketball season, beautiful doesn't count for much.

The Dickinson Lady Gators were happy to ignore the lack of elegance in their performance Thursday night. They defeated Plainview, 51-42, in a Class 4A state semifinal at the University of Texas' Erwin Center to advance to the state championship game for the second consecutive season.

Dickinson (35-4) will play Dallas Lincoln (28-4) for the state championship at 3:30 p.m. Saturday. Lincoln defeated Cibolo Steele, 73-63, in Thursday's first semifinal.

Used to flying up and down the court and scoring point after point in



Patience the key in victory

Brianna Hypolite couldn't recall how long it had been since the Dickinson Lady Gators had gotten the type of test

it did in Thursday night's Class 4A state semifinal contest against the Plainview Lady Bulldogs.

Joshua Buckley

Sports editor

The shots weren't falling,

and the Lady Bulldogs were doing whatever they could to slow the game down and take away the Lady Gators' athletic advantage.

"They were certainly good at what they do," the senior forward said. "I can't



Dickinson vs. Dallas Lincoln
3:30 p.m. Saturday
in Austin

transition, the Lady Gators fell victim to Plainview's com-

mand of the tempo. The Lady Bulldogs (33-4) used a pick-heavy offense and strong passing to keep the ball for nearly 30 seconds on most possessions.

Dickinson stuck with its game plan as much as possible — something Dickinson coach Darrin Samuels said Plainview's previous opponents, including reigning state champion Fort Worth Dunbar, didn't do.

"There are a lot of teams that didn't make it here because they didn't show that patience," Samuels said. "There are a lot of teams that did not learn their lesson. We were not going to be one of them. I told our kids if we have to win ugly, let's win ugly."

Dickinson led by two points at halftime but Plainview had the upper hand thanks to the tempo going its way. The Lady Bulldogs led 23-21 early in the third quarter, but a 10-3 run gave Dickinson the lead for good. Audrianna Garcia, who scored a team-high 13 points, converted a



Photos by MICHAEL DURISSEAU/For The Daily News

Dickinson's LaChandra Johnson scored on this shot late in the state semifinal game against Plainview Thursday night in Austin. The Lady Gators advance to Saturday's Class 4A state championship game against Dallas Lincoln with a 51-42 win.



The Lady Gators go out to meet their teammates at the end of their state semifinal win Thursday night in Austin against Plainview.

remember having to stay that patient in a game since sometime in the beginning of the season. We had to work hard for everything, and we had to stay focused."

Patience was the name of the game for the Lady Gators to come away with 51-42 victory to advance to their second consecutive state championship game appearance. Dickinson will face Dallas Lincoln at 3:30 p.m. Saturday.

Dickinson coach Darrin Samuels admitted that Plainview kept the Lady Gators from playing their typical up-tempo style. But they found a way to adapt and pull out the nine-point victory.

"There are a lot of teams that didn't make it here because they didn't show that patience," Samuels said. "There are a lot of teams that did not learn their lesson. We were not going to be one of them. I told our kids if we have to win ugly, let's win ugly. I just wanted them to focus on doing whatever it took to win this game to get to Saturday."

Ugly was certainly what the final numbers were for Dickinson. It shot 37 per-

BUCKLEY

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cent in the contest and only had two players in double figures.

The poor offensive performance could have brought up memories of last year's championship game, in which Dickinson shot just 32 percent from the floor and lost 61-52 to Fort Worth Dunbar.

But senior guard Morgan Williams said the team's experience with that situation in this environment is what helped them pull through.

"I think we were too excited early on and were rushing our shots," said Williams, who finished with 12 points. "If this had been last year, we would have panicked in a situation like that. But we didn't get frustrated tonight. We stayed patient and kept fighting."

The shots did start to fall in the second half, when Dickinson shot 41 percent. But it could have been too little, too late, had Plainview not had a worse night from the floor.

The Lady Bulldogs shot 35 percent from the floor, including 2-for-20 from 3-point range. Even worse, they shot a putrid 4-for-13 from the free throw

line, an unacceptable stat for a team with championship hopes.

Some of that could be credited to a Dickinson defense that was just scrappy enough to cause problems to the Plainview's methodical style.

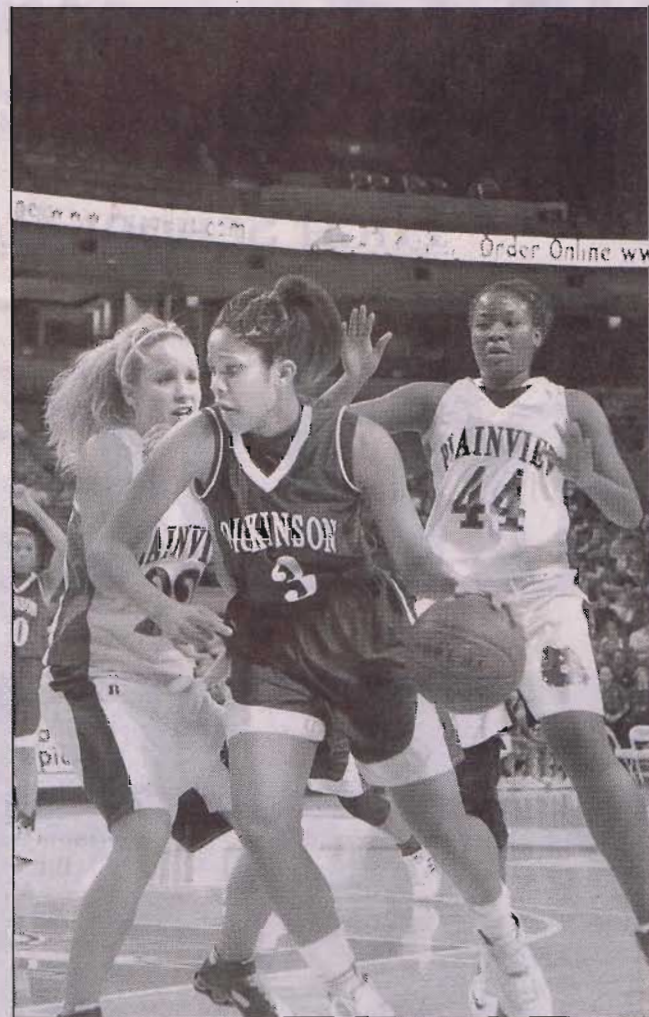
"We had to match their heart, their intangibles and their discipline," Samuels said. "It was a challenge, but our girls were up for it. They never let me down."

One thing is certain — the Lady Gators can't struggle offensively in the title game on Saturday like they have in their last two state games. Lincoln is too athletic and seemed to find its stroke during the second half of its 73-63 semifinal victory against Cibolo Steele.

But Hypolite promised Saturday's contest would be a fast-paced offensive showdown between the top two 4A teams in Texas.

"I think we may combine for 180 points on Saturday," Hypolite said with a laugh. "It will be a completely different game. We're just so glad we are back in this position and we're focused on winning it all this time."

Sports editor Joshua Buckley can be reached at 409-683-5242 or joshua.buckley@galvnews.com.



MICHAEL DURISSEAU/For The Daily News

Dickinson's Marissa Ashton heads for the basket during game action Friday night at the UIL state semi-final game in Austin on Thursday night.

LADY GATORS

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conventional three-point play to give the Lady Gators a 24-23 lead with 5:43 to go in the third.

Brianna Hypolite made a deep 3-pointer on the next possession to answer Plainview's basket. Hypolite scored again one minute later, and soon after that Delanah Samuels scored off a steal to give Dickinson a 31-26 lead midway through the quarter.

Dickinson extended its lead thanks to Plainview's poor shooting. The Lady Bulldogs made 2-of-20 shots from 3-point range despite consistently finding open shots. Hypolite said the main reason for so many open shots in the first half was Dickinson's lack of communication on defense.

Darrin Samuels said his players had something to do with all the misses.

"Having an open shot you have to rush is not so open," he said. "They got the ball in their hands, but I don't think they got their feet set. Otherwise, they wouldn't be 2-for-20."

Plainview may have threatened more in the fourth quarter had it not been for poor free-throw shooting. The Lady Bulldogs made 3-of-8 from the foul line in the last eight minutes. They did, however, have a chance to cut the deficit to five points on several occasions in the final four minutes. They never did.

"Our kids did a good job slowing the tempo down and keeping a high-octane offense in check for a long, long time," Plainview coach Danny Wrenn said. "Bottom

line is we missed some open shots. You have to make those against a team like (Dickinson)."

The Lady Gators had their own misfortune on offense, especially in the first half. They shot 33 percent from the field and had nearly as many turnovers (seven) as made field goals (nine). They averaged 74 points per game through the regional tournament. They scored fewer than 51 points four other times this season, but they all came against ranked 5A teams. Their lowest output against a fellow 4A team was 59 points against Angleton in the district opener.

"(Struggling on offense) is disheartening," Hypolite said. "You have to fight through it. You always have to plan on something not going your way and adjust to it."

Hypolite had a game-high 12 rebounds to go with her seven points. Morgan Williams had 12 points, four steals and four assists. Marissa Ashton had nine points and six rebounds, LaChandra Johnson six points and three steals and Delanah Samuels four points and three steals.

Dickinson began this season with no intentions ending their season before the final night. The Lady Gators have accomplished that goal. Now they'll have a chance to end this season on a high note.

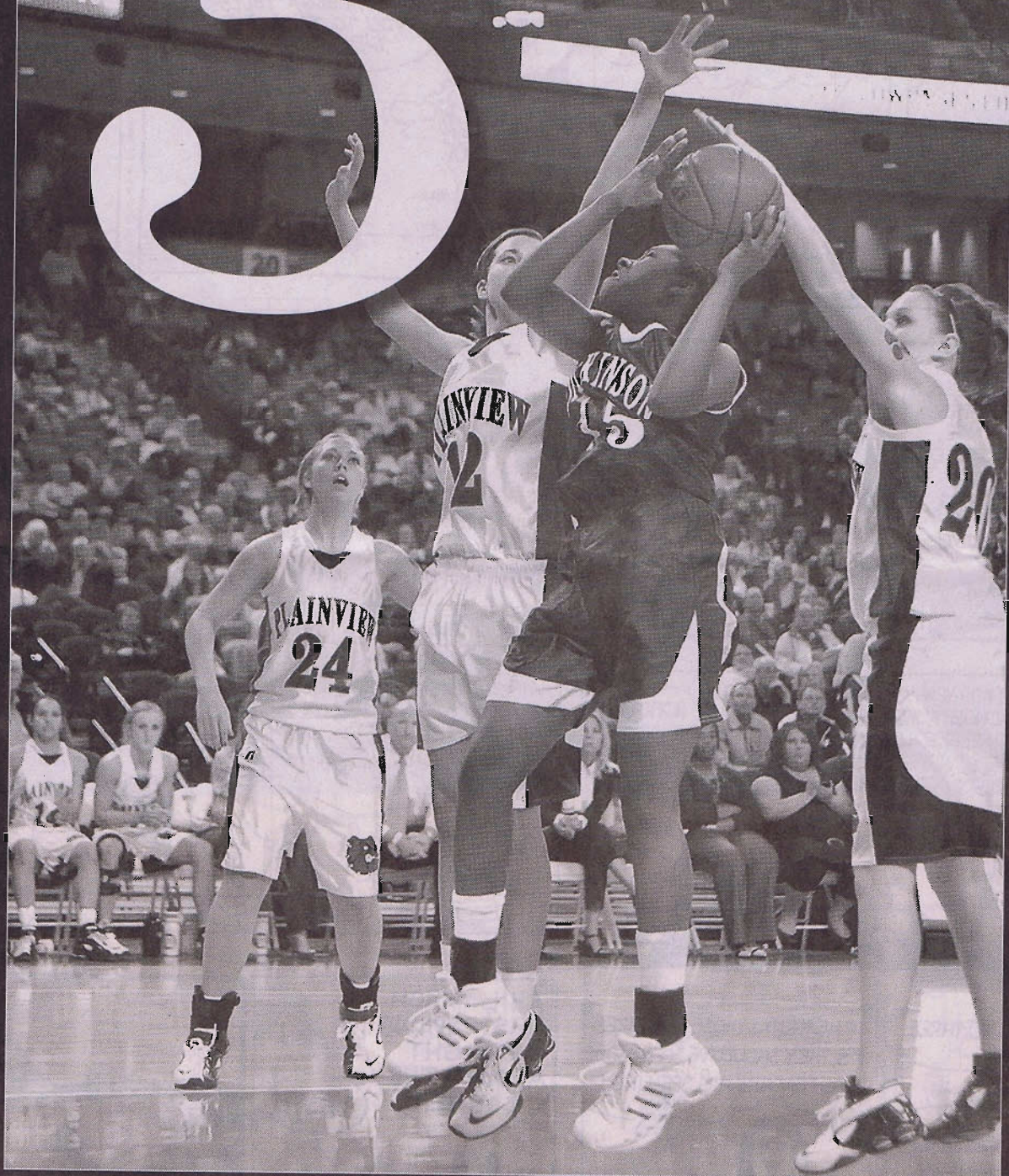
"You're going to see a lot of heart Saturday," Hypolite said. "We're going to leave it all on the floor. For four of us, it's our last game in this uniform. We're really focused on winning."

Sports reporter Corey Roepken can be reached at 409-683-5211 or corey.roepken@galvnews.com.

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

3

Keys to a Dickinson state championship



MICHAEL DURISSEAU/For The Daily News

Dickinson's Morgan Williams goes up for a shot against the Plainview defense during the state semifinal game in Austin on Thursday. The Lady Gators face Dallas Lincoln today for the Class 4A state basketball championship.

BEAT LINCOLN AT

ITS OWN GAME

1 Dickinson had to play out of its element on Thursday to defeat Plainview in the state semifinals. After averaging 74 points during the season, including 71 points in the postseason, the Lady Gators had to slow it down and managed just 51 points.

But don't expect another low-scoring chess match in today's final. Lincoln is athletic like Dickinson and will want to play an up-tempo style.

That's OK for Dickinson coach Darrin Samuels.

"Dallas Lincoln wants to run," Samuels said. "We're going to accommodate them. We'll have a fun night. I'm looking forward to playing them. It should be a classic state championship game."

Lincoln may have the athletes to play an up-tempo style, but it plays right into Dickinson's strength. As long as the Lady Gators are hitting on 40 percent of their shots, they should be able to come up with the victory.

WIN THE

REBOUNDING BATTLE

2 This game could be decided by second-chance points, since both teams figure to throw up shots early and often. Dickinson had 12 second-chance points against Plainview, but was outrebounded by the smaller Lady Bulldogs.

Lincoln features a 6-foot-1 senior center in Derneccia Livingston and a scoring 5-foot-9 power forward in Kimetria Hayden. Hayden had 17 points and seven rebounds in the Lady Tigers' semifinal contest.

With rebounding likely to be key, Audrianna Garcia becomes one of the most important players for the Lady Gators. She had a great game against Plainview with a team-high 13

rebounder, but she may be drawn a little further outside on defense. That leaves Garcia and Marissa Ashton to patrol the paint.

If Garcia can keep Lincoln from crashing the boards and scoring second-chance points, then Dickinson should be in good shape.

STOP TAYLOR

MORROW

3 The Lady Tigers' senior shooting guard set a state record Thursday in their state semifinal win with seven 3-pointers. Six different players held the previous record of six since the 3-point line came into effect in 1979.

Granted, Taylor Morrow had plenty of open looks during her 7-for-14 performance from behind the arch. Steele's coach apparently forgot to tell her team they may want to guard the sharp shooter.

So how can the Lady Gators slow down Morrow? The best way would be to have Hypolite shadowing her to make sure she doesn't have any open looks. Hypolite has the length that would force Morrow to adjust any shots.

But if Hypolite has to play closer to the basket to help win the rebounding battle, then the Lady Gators may want to think about bringing Delanah Samuels in off the bench to guard the point guard, and slide Morgan Williams over to shut down Morrow.

"If we can play good defense, then we don't have to worry so much about scoring more points than we did (Thursday)," Williams said. "We only need to score two points if we keep them from scoring any."

It's unlikely Dickinson's plan is to play for the first 2-0 game in state title history. But whatever the plan is, Dickinson needs to learn from Steele's mistakes and can't let Lincoln's best shooter get hot.

Sports Editor Joshua Buckley can be reached at 409-683-5242 or joshua.buckley@galvnews.com.

Lady Gators fall in state final, 50-47

By Michael Durisseau
The POST

For the second consecutive year, the Dickinson Lady Gators made it to the state championship tournament in Austin. For the second time, the Lady Gators made it to the championship game. For the second time, the Lady Gators did not come home with the Class 4A championship trophy.

Despite being the highest ranked team in the tournament, the Lady Gators were expected to be in Austin again this year, especially with the vast majority of the team returning from last year. More interestingly, Dickinson was the only team from last season to make a repeat appearance in Austin. Last year's 4A champ, Fort Worth Dunbar, was eliminated in the regional final by the Plainview Lady Bulldogs.

In the semi-final game against Plainview, Dickinson was down by three at the end of the first quarter, and were not doing their best on offense, scoring only 10 points. The Lady Gators were up by two at halftime, but fell victim to the slower tempo of

courtesy of a three point goal and another basket by Brianna Hypolite, and a bucket by Delannah Samuels. A 10-3 run later in the third period gave Dickinson the lead for good.

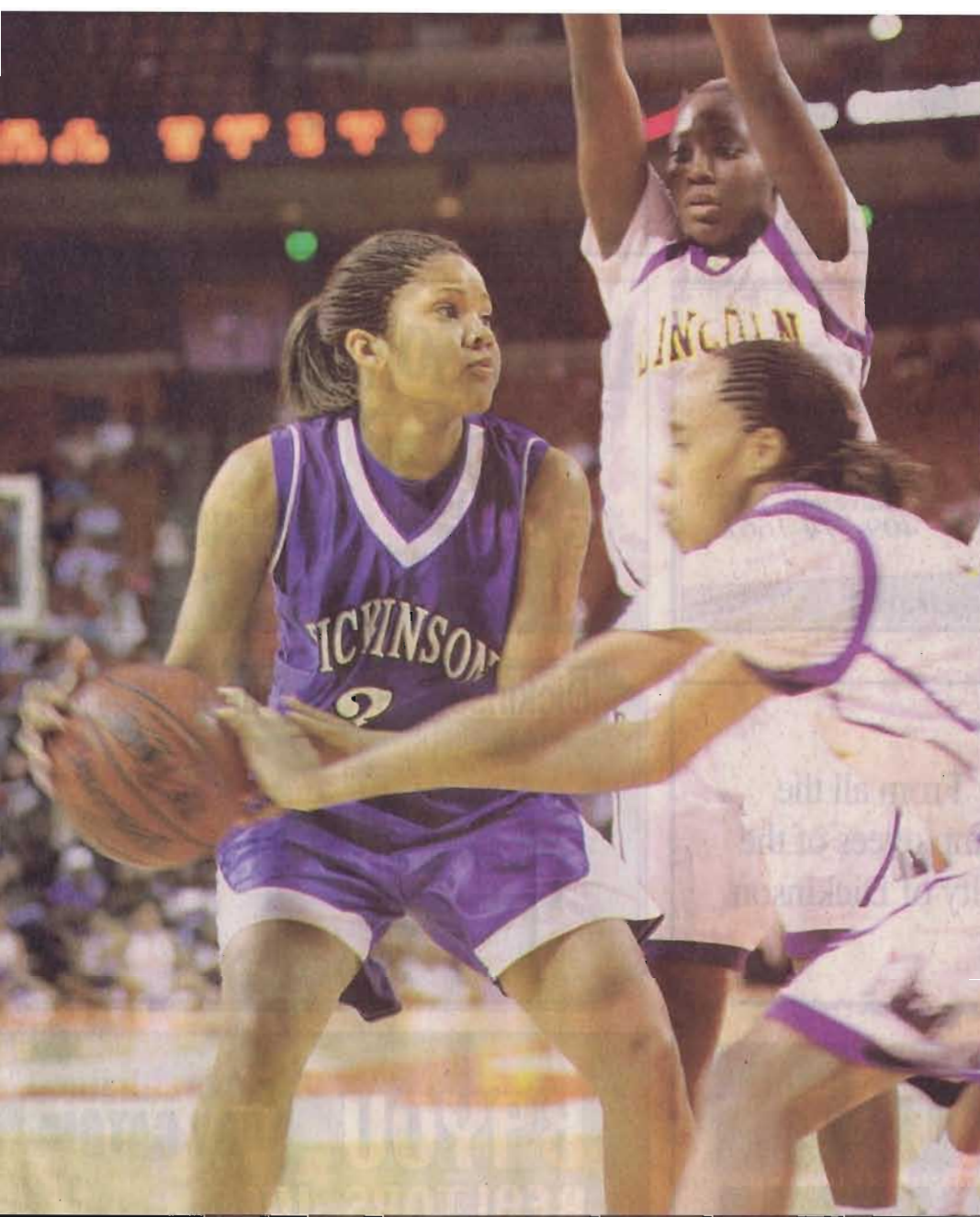
In the fourth quarter, Plainview had opportunities to cut the lead below five points, but their difficulties in finding the basket from the foul line (3-8) kept them from doing so.

Dickinson won 51-42, thanks in no small part to the defense's ability to change shots, especially from the three-point arc. The Lady Bulldogs were 2-20 from outside the line for the game.

Hypolite had a game high 12 rebounds to go with seven points in 28 minutes of action, and Morgan Williams had 12 points, four steals and four assists in her 28 minutes. Marissa Ashton had nine points and six rebounds, LaChandra Johnson six points and three steals, and Delannah Samuels four points and three steals.

As a team, the Lady Gators only shot 33 percent from the field, had seven turnovers and only nine field goals in the first half. For the game, they





The Lady Gators' Marissa Ashton (3) gets the ball stolen from her by a Dallas Lincoln player during the game March 1 at Erwin Center on the University of Texas campus in Austin. Ashton had 14 points and 13 rebounds in a 50-47 loss to Lincoln. Dickinson was unable to become state champion in their second consecutive trip to the state finals. More photos available on our website, www.thepostnewspaper.net. Photo by Michael Durisseau

Dickinson's LaChandra Johnson eyes her Lady Tiger offensive assignment during the game March 1 at Erwin Center on the University of Texas campus in Austin. In her final high school game, Johnson had nine points in a 50-47 loss. Dickinson was unable to make state champion in their second consecutive trip to the state finals. More photos available on our website, www.thepostnewspaper.net. Photo by Michael Durisseau

Tigers after the first period, and a 10-point lead at the end of the first half.

Dickinson presented a balanced scoring attack, with five different players scoring in the first quarter.

Lincoln changed their defense, though, in the second half, and was able to chip away at the Lady Gators' lead. Dickinson, after scoring 33 points in the first two quarters, could only muster 14 points the rest of the way.

It seemed that Dickinson caught a break when an offensive foul was called at the 1:15 mark.

With the Lady Gators clinging to a one point lead with 22 seconds left in the game, the unbelievable happened. Through a pair of turnovers that led directly to four Lady Tiger points, Dickinson lost 50-47.

Dickinson gave up the ball on a steal in the frontcourt, then another turnover on a pass to the interior was converted for a score with just over eight seconds left.

Hypolite fell, face down, on the floor when the clock expired, and Ashton slowly walked back to the bench. The team again heard the roar of the crowd that was not for them.

Johnson was almost inconsolable, and both Garcia and Johnson shed tears.

In their final high school game, Audrianna Garcia had 10 points and five boards, Johnson had nine points; Hypolite and Williams had six points. Hypolite also had six rebounds.

Ashton had 14 points and 13 rebounds to lead

Dickinson. After the game, Coach Darrin Samuels said that the loss was more difficult than last year's: "It's disappointing, and it's just a part of life. There is going to be somebody who wins and somebody who loses out of those two teams. You just hate to be on the losing end. Samuels also pointed out that Lincoln made the plays they needed to win.

Samuels feels like the team will be back at the state championship next year, even without four seniors, and the move to District 24-5A. "If I'm coaching at Dickinson we'll be back at state. We have all the players we need to do what we need to do."



Dickinson coach Darrin Samuels

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State loss doesn't deter Lady Gators' best fans

SPORTS: Some
already looking to
return next year

By **COREY ROEPKEN**
The Daily News

AUSTIN — Ayeisha Ashton pointed to several sections of red- and white-clad Tuscola Jim Ned High School supporters and declared that

they had nothing on Dickinson Lady Gator fans.

The Jim Ned fans were in the midst of watching their Lady Indians dominate the Class 2A state championship game at the University of Texas' Erwin Center. Ashton and the rest of the Lady Gator fans were anticipating their chance to do the same.

"Like that red team over

See **LADY GATORS/A4**



KEVIN M. COX/The Daily News

Dickinson students Rene Salinas, Anthony Smith, Trevor Kelsay, Colby Ginn and Joey Meza cheer on the Lady Gators during the Dickinson vs. Dallas Lincoln UIL Class 4A state championship game Saturday at the Erwin Center in Austin. The Lady Gators fell to the Tigers, 50-47.

Extra points

- Get more coverage of Dickinson's 50-47 loss in the state finals in Sports, **Page B1**.
- If you missed the game, check out the "From the Sidelines" blog at galvnews.com to see how the action unfolded.
- Dickinson's Living Faith Academy boys team wins the state title for the second straight year. See Sports, **Page B3**.





LADY GATORS

Continued from Page A1

there, it's going to be all blue over here," said Ashton, the aunt of Dickinson junior forward Marissa Ashton.

"We're going to be screaming and yelling. We're going to have some good disagreements with the referees. We'll be there for our girls. We're going to be deep up in here."

The three-hour trip to Austin wasn't enough to hold back Dickinson fans who filled most of five sections. Some arrived for Thursday's semifinal victory over Plainview. More showed up to watch Saturday's 50-47 loss to Dallas

Lincoln.

Many of them made their second straight trip to the state tournament after watching Dickinson lose to Fort Worth Dunbar in the 2007 state championship game.

The Lady Gators had a large legion of supporters throughout last season. They had even more this season when it began with lofty expectations of another chance on the season's final night.

"We are more focused this year than last year," said Dottie Williams, mother of Dickinson senior guard Morgan Williams. "Last year, it was just exciting because Dickinson had never been here before. It's been exciting this year, too. Every

game I feel like I'm about to dress out and play."

Larry Erskin and Clay Jesse might be the most tenured Dickinson fans. They sat in the stands Saturday to finish a combined 86 years of watching the Lady Gators. Jesse has worked in maintenance at Dickinson High School for 30 years. Erskin graduated from Dunbar High School in 1958 and has been attending games since 1952.

Both arrived for Thursday's semifinal and have been watching as much basketball as they can. Erskin said he couldn't remember any other Dickinson girls team advancing past the second round of the post-season.

"They were a lot slower back in the day," he said. "They didn't even think about making it this far."

Ayeisha Ashton and Martha Ashton, Marissa's grandmother, celebrated their first trip to Austin (Marissa played for La Marque last season) by shopping.

They bought purses, coats, shoes and shirts and giggled about having another chance to do it next year if the Lady Gators return for Marissa's senior year.

"That would be great," Ayeisha Ashton said. "I will definitely come back next year."

Sports reporter Corey Roepken can be reached at 409-683-5211 or corey.roepken@galvnews.com.

DALLAS LINCOLN 50, DICKINSON 47

Not again!

Lady Gators walk away with another runner-up trophy after a stunning loss to Dallas Lincoln





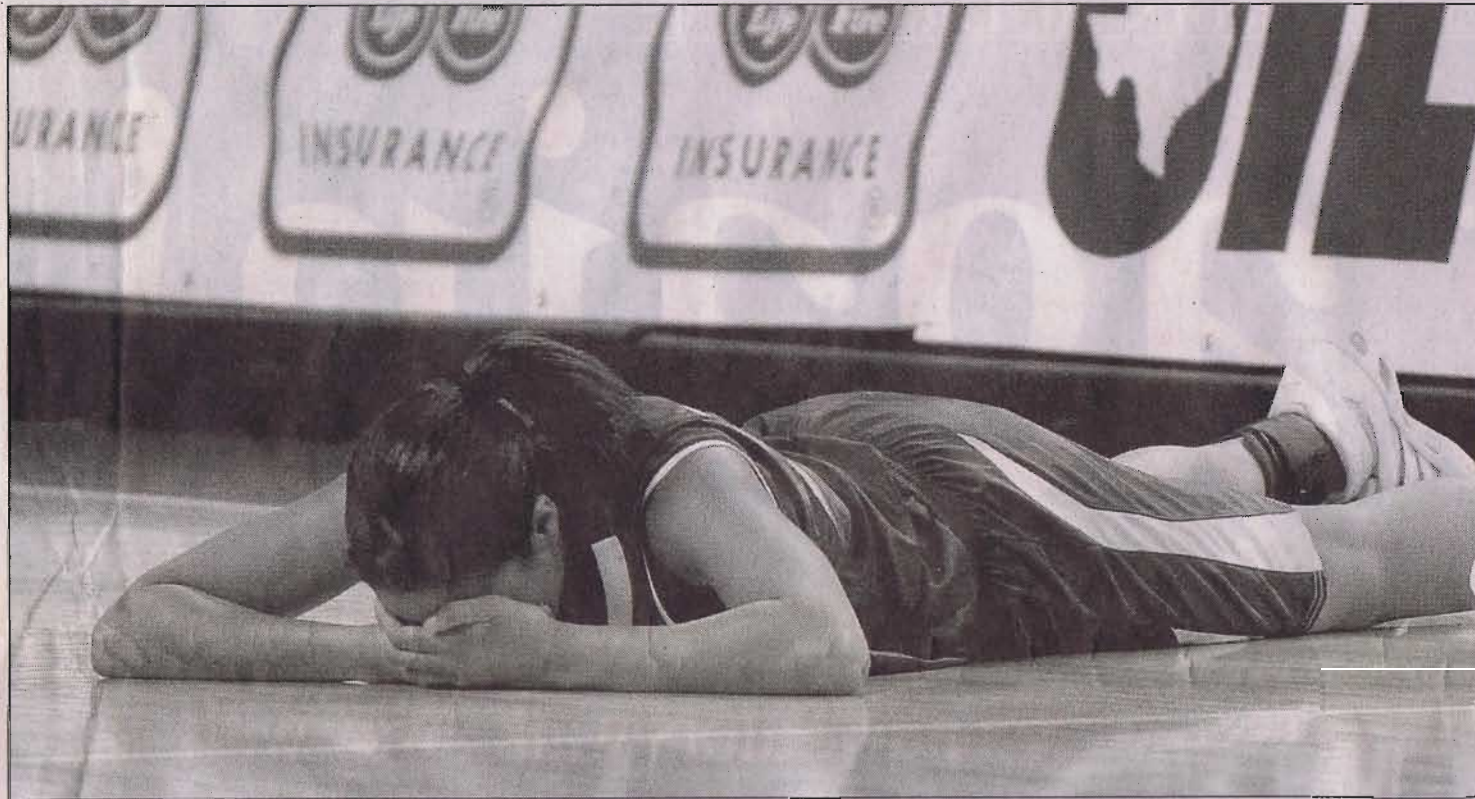


Dickinson's Aron Gara, left, and LaChandra Johnson react after their UIL Class 4A state championship game against Dallas Lincoln on Saturday at the Erwin Center in Austin. The Lady Gators fell to the Tigers, 50-47, becoming the state runner-up for the second year in a row.

KEVIN M. COX/The Daily News

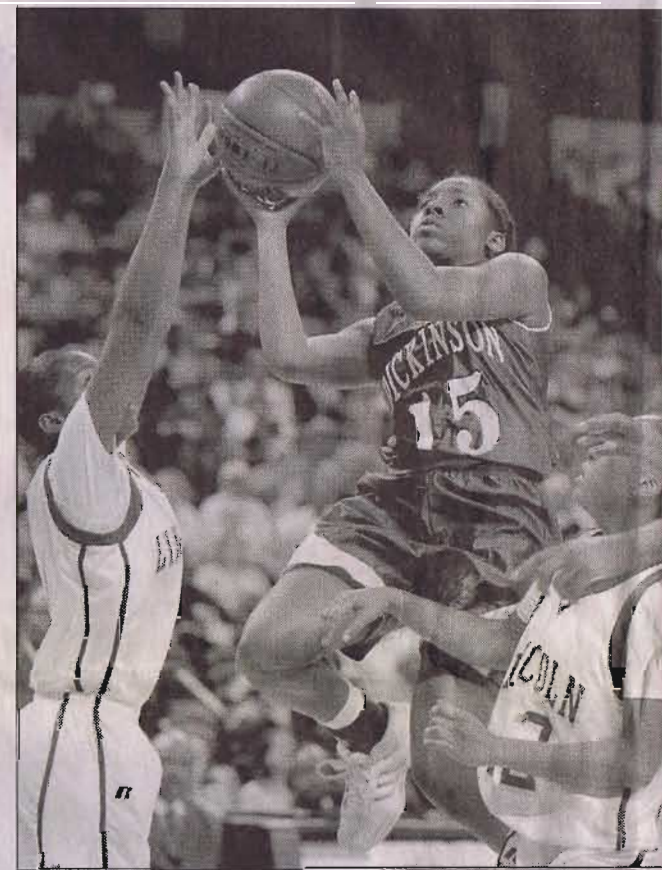
CLASS 4A GIRLS BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Another heartbreaker in Austin



Photos by KEVIN M. COX/The Daily News

Dickinson's Brianna Hypolite lays on the floor after the final buzzer at the Erwin Center in Austin. Dallas Lincoln beat the Lady Gators, 50-47, in the Class 4A title game Saturday. Dickinson's finished second at the state tournament for two consecutive years.



Dickinson's Morgan Williams drives between two Dallas Lincoln defenders for a shot at the Erwin Center in Austin.

Late run lifts Lincoln over Dickinson in Class 4A finals

By COREY ROEPKEN
The Daily News

AUSTIN — The principal coaxed the four seniors to pose for what, at that moment, felt like the most disappointing photo of their lives.

Less than three minutes earlier, Morgan Williams, Brianna Hypolite, LaChandra Johnson and Audrianna Garcia could taste Dickinson High School's first girls basketball state championship.

Now they were huddled around the Class 4A state runner-up trophy with blank stares and tears, wondering why they weren't holding the winner's award.

A stunning turn of events left them and the rest of the Lady Gators with a 50-47 loss to Dallas Lincoln in Saturday's state championship game at the University of Texas' Erwin Center.

The Lady Gators (34-5) led by one point with less than 30 seconds to go but committed two turnovers and surrendered two layups in the final 22 seconds to watch their dreams crash suddenly before their eyes.

"That happens in sports. It doesn't happen a lot, but it happened to us," senior Brianna Hypolite said. "It was unexpected, but it does happen. It hurts a lot."

Dickinson had the upper hand throughout the first half Saturday and built a 10-point lead. It appeared the Lady Gators might erase the hurt they felt after losing last season's champi-



defenders for a shot at the Erwin Center in Austin.

Loss proves a tough one for Lady Gators coach

Darrin Samuels is normally a stoic man.

He rarely gets angry during a game while he coaches from the sidelines. He won't jump up and down celebrating a big moment.

The most emotion he'll show is when a smile comes across his face while bragging about his players.

But as the Dickinson girls basketball coach spoke to the media following the team's 50-47 loss to Dallas Lincoln in the Class 4A state championship game Saturday, his anguish was apparent.

Tears welled up in his eyes and he had to pause for a moment to keep his composure.

This loss hurt — more than any loss could.

"It's upsetting," Samuels said as he struggled to fight back his emotions, "and it's just part of life."

This wasn't how the season was supposed to end for the Lady Gators. Not this group of seniors that had been with Samuels since he became their coach in 2004.

In the four years before his arrival, Dickinson had combined for 27 victories. But with the help of the talented trio of Brianna Hypolite, Morgan Williams and LaChandra Johnson, Samuels turned the program



Joshua Buckley

Sports editor

way basketball is played in the Houston area. I don't think you're going to see too many people pass the ball 90 times

game after this team leaves.

"They have done things students behind them will wish to do when they're the same age. They've done things nobody ever has at Dickinson."

Dickinson basketball will be a lot different beginning next season, with the school moving up to Class 5A beginning in the fall. Region 5A is typically filled with powerhouse programs that sit near the top of national and state rankings. Dickinson got a small taste of that competition during its tough preseason schedule and came away with four losses.

The Lady Gators do have talent returning next season. Forward Marissa Ashton will be a senior, and she's already proven to be a premier scorer. They'll also have several key reserves from this season's team — namely center Aron Garcia and

...game to ...
Dunbar.

Even when Lincoln (29-4) put into the Dickinson lead in the third quarter, the Lady Gators did enough to hold the momentum. They trailed in the game's opening minute but not again until there were 22 seconds left in the season.

Most Valuable Player Kismetria Hayden began the

Dickinson's Marissa Ashton shoots while Dallas Lincoln's Breanna Johnson defends during Class 4A state championship game Saturday at the Erwin Center in Austin.

15-second rally with a steal in the forecourt. She dribbled to the hoop for a lay-up that gave Lincoln a 48-47 lead. Lincoln stole the ball again before Dickinson could get it past half court. Britney Gowans got the pass in-

side the three-point arc and scored an uncontested lay-up for the final points.

Dickinson had the ball with 8.9 seconds left, but never got the ball past half court for a potential tying shot. Dickinson coach Darrin

Samuels said the nature of the turnaround caught him off guard.

"I've been with these kids since I've been the head coach, and you know what

See **DICKINSON/B3**

around from District 23-4A doormat into a state juggernaut.

Those three seniors finished their high school careers Saturday with 107 victories. But the 108th victory — the one earned on championship Saturday at the Frank Erwin Center — eluded them for two-straight seasons.

They won't get a third chance.

"We accomplished a lot this year," Williams said. "We were hoping it was en route to a championship. But we came up short a second time.

"The fact now is that it's over. We don't have any high school games left."

Samuels has heaped praise on that trio over the years for the ability to help him change a culture at Dickinson. Those Lady Gators didn't have players who preceded them to look up to. They didn't have many banners to look up during practice for inspiration.

That won't be the case for future Lady Gators after the accomplishments of this group the past two years.

"They're the best team ever to play basketball in Galveston County," Samuels said. "They have changed the

guard Delanah Samuels — who should slide into the starting lineup.

Still, for the first time in four years, the Lady Gators won't have Hypolite, Williams and Johnson. That's a tough task for any team to replace three players of that caliber.

Does that mean the window is closed for Dickinson to bring home a girls state basketball championship? Not a chance, said Samuels.

"If I'm coaching at Dickinson we'll be back at state," he said with a confident tone. "We have all the players we need to do what we need to do."

Even if Samuels can back up his bold prediction and lead the Lady Gators to the title in Class 5A, it still probably won't feel as good as it would have felt to be on the winning end Saturday.

Samuels struggled to fight back the tears, knowing he will never be able to lead the talented trio of the last four years to the glory they worked so hard to accomplish.

For the stoic coach, that's what has to hurt the most.

Sports Editor Joshua Buckley can be reached at 409-683-5242 or joshua.buckley@galvnews.com.

STATE NOTEBOOK

Garcia sisters, Ashton experience something new

AUSTIN — The Dickinson Lady Gators were the only team from last year's Class 4A girls state basketball tournament to return this season.

But playing for a state title was a new experience for three of the key players.

Senior Audrianna Garcia and junior Marissa Ashton both started for Dickinson this year after transferring before the season. Sophomore Aron Garcia, Audrianna's sister, was the team's top reserve forward.

Ashton and Audrianna Garcia performed well in Saturday's 40-47 loss to Lincoln in the state title game. Ashton finished with 14 points and 13 rebounds, while Garcia had 10 points and five

boards.

Ashton may have finished as the title game MVP had Dickinson held on for the victory.

Audrianna Garcia won't get a second opportunity at a state title. However, Ashton and Aron Garcia will next season.

Ashton said the pressure is on next season to win for the group of seniors that didn't get the opportunity to hold up the championship trophy. There are plenty of lessons those four seasons taught her for the future.

"They taught me to be determined and keep working," Ashton said. "Always put the team before you put yourself."

Only one team better in 4A

The loss to Lincoln was the first Dickinson had suffered at the

hands of a 4A this season.

Its previous four losses this year were against some of the top 5A teams in the state.

In fact, two of the teams that defeated Dickinson — Cy Fair and Desoto — played for the Class 5A title Saturday.

They know the feeling

Dickinson isn't the only Galveston County team to experience the letdown of finishing as state runners-up. The High Island Lady Cardinals lost in the 1969 Class B title game to Lamesa Klondike, 62-48.

But the Lady Cardinals second-place finish came after back-to-back Class B state titles in 1967 and '68. High Island defeated Quitaque 48-39 in '67 and beat Lamesa Klondike 53-40 in '68.

New challenge next season

Saturday's title game was the final contest for the Lady Gators as a member of Class 4A. Dickinson moves up to 5A beginning in the fall, and will compete in 24-5A.

Dickinson had success against its future district foes this season. It defeated Ball High 67-36, Clear Brook 108-29 and Clear Lake 77-44.

The Lady Gators lose four starters from the squad that destroyed those 24-5A squads. Still, Dickinson could enter the season as the district favorites.

"We have all the players we need to do what we need to do," Samuels said.


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Dickinson fails in state championship bid again

The Lady Gators' (from left) Audrianna Garcia, Aron Garcia, LaChandra Johnson, Morgan Meguess, and Brianna Hypolite shed tears or stare as a reaction to their 50-47 loss to the Lady Tigers March 1 in Austin at the Erwin Center on the University of Texas Campus. Dickinson made a second straight visit to the state championship tournament, but again finished second in the state. See Section B for the complete story and commentary. More photos available on our website, www.thepostnewspaper.net.

Photo by Michael Durisseau



OUR
LADY
GATORS

BEAT LINCOLN AT

ITS OWN GAME

1 Dickinson had to play out of its element on Thursday to defeat Plainview in the state semifinals. After averaging 74 points during the season, including 71 points in the postseason, the Lady Gators had to slow it down and managed just 51 points.

But don't expect another low-scoring chess match in today's final. Lincoln is athletic like Dickinson and will want to play an up-tempo style.

That's OK for Dickinson coach Darrin Samuels.

"Dallas Lincoln wants to run," Samuels said. "We're going to accommodate them. We'll have a fun night. I'm looking forward to playing them. It should be a classic state championship game."

Lincoln may have the athletes to play an up-tempo style, but it plays right into Dickinson's strength. As long as the Lady Gators are hitting on 40 percent of their shots, they should be able to come up with the victory.

23-4A All-District selections announced



able Player, and was one of six team members, including
 Chandra Johnson (upper right) to be chosen for the 23-4A All-
 District Team for 2008. The Lady Gators were the only team
 in last season to repeat their appearance at the state champi-
 onship earlier this month in Austin.
 Photo by Michael Durisseau

Michael Durisseau
POST

The District 23-4A postsea-
 son basketball selections were
 announced last week. Teams
 in the Post's coverage area
 were well represented, with a
 number of players chosen
 as the state-finalist
 from the Dickinson Lady Gators, along
 with Coach Darrin Samuels,
 who was chosen as the
 District 23-4A Girls Coach of
 the Year. Samuels, who will
 be leaving the Dickinson
 school system at the end of
 the academic year as
 announced last week, guided
 the Lady Gators to two
 regional championships, and
 had appearances in the state
 championship final in his four
 years at Dickinson.
 On the boys side, District
 23-4A champ La Marque's
 first year head coach Cedric
 Mason was pegged as the
 Coach of the Year. Mason
 took over for Chris Johnson,
 who left to take on a new pro-
 gram at Clear Creek
 Independent School District's
 Clear Springs High School.
 Freshman Dedrick Archie
 received the nod for
 newcomer of the Year.

23-4A Girls

MVP: Brianna Hypolite,
Dickinson

Marissa Ashton, Dickinson;
Apreia Booker, Texas City;
Brianna Hypolite,
 Dickinson; **LaChandra**
Johnson, Dickinson; **Morgan**
Williams, Dickinson; **Teasia**
Woods, Texas City

Second Team Selections

Demetra Alexander, La
 Marque; **Natalie Blain,** La
 Marque; **Audrianna Garcia,**
 Dickinson; **Precious Payne,**
 La Marque; **Delannah**
Samuels, Dickinson

Honorable Mentions

Stephanie Burnett, Texas
 City; **Shannon Caldwell,**
 Dickinson; **Aron Garcia,**
 Dickinson; **Markeah**
Hunton, La Marque;

Academic All-District

Apreia Booker, Texas City;
 Shannon Caldwell,
 Dickinson; Tracy Comelly,
 Texas City; Aron Garcia,
 Dickinson; Audrianna Garcia,
 Dickinson; Rebekah
 Hamilton, Texas City;
 Brianna Hypolite, Dickinson;
 Effie Ministerio, Texas City;
 Delanah Samuels, Dickinson;
 Manda Serenil, Texas City

23-4A Boys

Co-MVPs: Donta Evans,
La Marque, Dajon King,



La Marque's Donta Evans (pictured) was chosen as the Most Valuable Player in District 23-4A this season. Head coach Cedric Mason was tapped as the Coach of the Year. The Coogs were eliminated from playoff contention in the second round.
 Photo by Michael Durisseau

Keith Myers, La Marque	Chris Rellford, La Marque	Undre Stoker, Dickinson; Ricky Williams, Dickinson;	Academic All-District
Second Team Selections	Honorable Mentions	Greg Wilson, Texas City; Jim Wooten, La Marque	Chavis Barron, Texas City; Cameron Pratt, Texas City; Ryan Purser, Dickinson
Kenny Harris, Dickinson;	Joseph Jones, Dickinson;		

1 (**CERTIFIED QuickBooks ProAdvisor**) **Cheryl Moon**

+1 (**CERTIFIED QuickBooks ProAdvisor**) **Tax Preparation**

=2 (*help!*)

Well, so far we have the math right.
 Who do you turn to when the numbers aren't coming out right?



Swoosh!



SLAM DUNK



NO LIMITS



FREE THROW

Above the rim!



SLAM DUNK

1
NUMBER



NO LIMITS

FREE THROW

Above the rim!

ALL STAR



★★★
2
POINTS

NOTHIN' BUT NET



Above
the
rim!



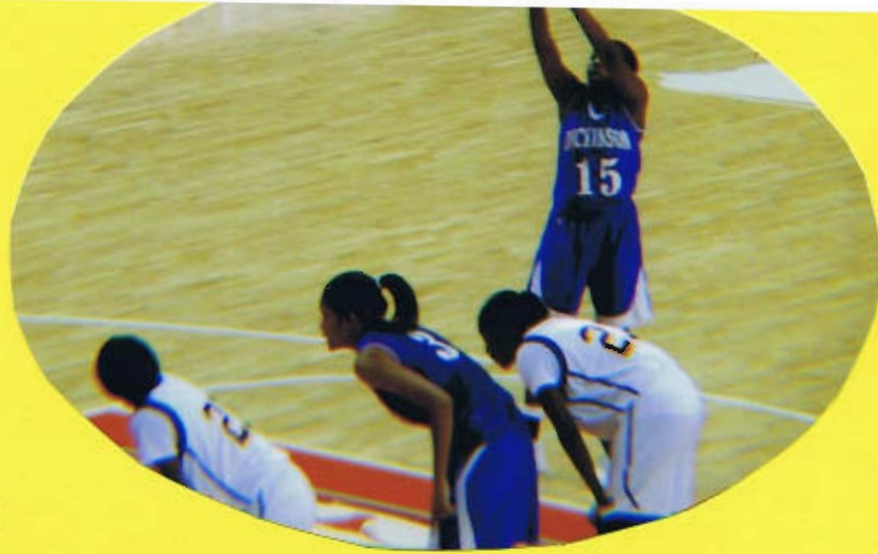
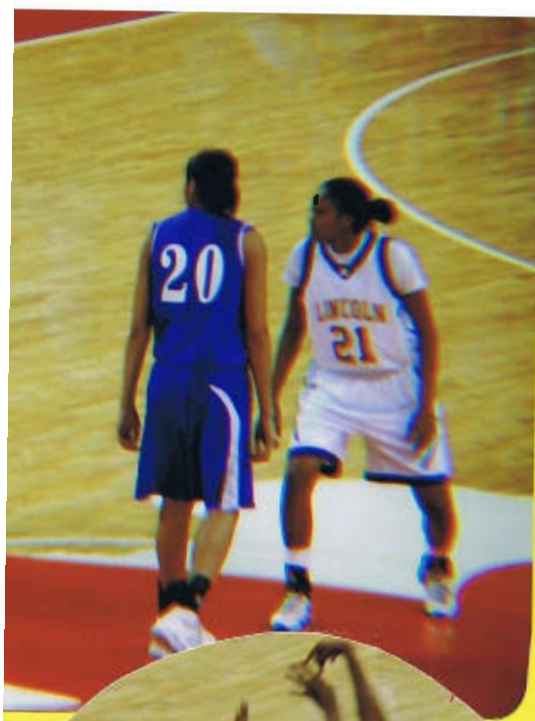




FULL
COURT

if you can't stand the heat
you can't play my *game*





fast — break



FULL COURT

