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Lancaster High School Boys Basketball Team Brings Home First State Title

San Antonio, Texas/Lancaster ISD

On March 14, in San Antonio, Texas, the Lancaster High School Boys Basketball team solidified its place in history by winning the 5A State Tournament. In a community adorned with Track and Field state championships titles, the 2015-5A Basketball State Championship fits right in with the Lancaster ISD tradition of winning.

The Tigers earned the coveted state title after defeating the Beaumont Ozen Panthers 59-47 in front of a crowd of more than 10,000 people at the Alamodome. With the win over Ozen, the Tigers increased their winning streak to 28 games and improved to a 34-4 record for the season.

"It was an awesome feeling to hold that trophy up in front of our family, friends and community members," Head Coach Ferrin Douglas said. "My boys worked hard to bring this championship back to Lancaster."

Despite receiving 22 team fouls during the game, the Tigers' strong defensive pressure and beyond the arch 3-point shots, led the team to victory over Ozen. UIL officials named senior post Elijah Thomas as the Most Valuable Player of the state tournament with 17 points, nine rebounds and three blocks during the game.

"My focus was to distribute buckets and put fear into the other team's heart. My mindset was to attack and stay strong because the game meant the absolute most to everyone," Thomas said. "I felt blessed to be awarded the MVP trophy. I found out after the game I was the first 5A MVP in San Antonio."

Senior guard Antwon Portley had a game high of 21 points and displayed solid ball handling skills after junior starting point guard Deon Barrett left the game with an ankle injury.

"I was thinking this is my senior year and I did not want to go out with a loss," Portley explained. "I just stepped up, filled the position and did what I needed to do to lead the team."





The Tigers were able to maintain their lead during the first half of the game due to the strong defensive presence of junior post Nate Morris and Thomas who both tower over their opponents at 6'9". The Tigers proved to be too much for Ozen whose physical play and free throw opportunities were not enough to top Lancaster.

"Our guys knew that it was going to be a really physical game. Ozen is a really scrappy team and we knew that we would have to match their intensity," Douglas said. "I couldn't have asked for a better group of young men and coaching staff. Hard work truly does pay off."

The team motto, Every Possession is Vital (E.P.I.V), provided the motivation needed to finish the season as the 5A state champions. According to the most recent Texas Association of Basketball Coaches poll, the team is now ranked number 1 in Texas and number 5 in the nation, a tag that Coach Douglas has wanted for his basketball program for some time now.

"Lancaster basketball has always worked hard. Being ranked among the top five in the nation is something that I always knew we could do. Now that we have reached that goal, nothing changes. We will continue to work hard," he said.

The City of Lancaster plans to recognize the basketball team at its next council meeting on Monday, March 23. Then, on Tuesday, March 24, the Lancaster ISD Board of Trustees will honor the team at its meeting. The district's Athletic Department and the City of Lancaster are working together to organize a parade to honor the history-making team. Details about the community celebration are coming soon.

As far as next year's team, the Tigers will have four starters returning and an experienced bench that saw valuable game minutes this year. With height in the post-position, speedy guards and natural athletic talent, the thought of returning to the state tournament has already crossed Assistant Coach Joseph's Mayberry's mind.

"We wanted to be the first team ever to bring home a state championship," he said. "Getting down there wasn't enough we had to seal the deal. We reached our goal and it feels great and we definitely wouldn't mind going back to back."



The Lancaster Public Schools serve more than 7,000 pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students in 11 schools. The mission of the Lancaster Independent School District, a leader in providing innovative, quality programs, is to educate every student with the knowledge; skills; and principles to succeed and contribute in a competitive and technologically advancing world by providing rigorous and engaging learning opportunities that promote diversity; create an environment of integrity and respect; and establish a commitment to continued improvement in partnership with families and community.

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