

Flower Mound Marcus band wins third straight state title

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SAN ANTONIO -- Can you say dynasty?

Flower Mound Marcus High School won its third consecutive Class 5A marching band state championship Tuesday night, strengthening its status as the premier program in the state.

Finishing second behind Marcus was Hurst L.D. Bell High School, which also finished No. 2 in 2008, the last time Class 5A schools competed in the University Interscholastic League state contest.

Duncanville High School finished third.

Marcus and Bell also finished Nos. 1 and 2 over the weekend in the Bands of America super regionals. That contest, which is not part of the UIL event, was also held at the Alamodome.

The state title for Marcus marked the sixth consecutive Class 5A championship for a band from North Texas.

On Monday, Argyle High School won its second consecutive Class 3A state title.

Thirty-five bands -- including Bell, Marcus, Keller, Haltom and Saginaw high schools -- competed in the preliminary round early Tuesday before 10 moved on to Tuesday night's finals.

Other bands that advanced to the finals included Richardson Berkner, Coppell, Austin Bowie, Carrollton Hebron, Austin Westlake, The Woodlands and Spring.

Bell's field show, *Honor: We Will Remember*, was a tribute to members of the armed forces and included parts of *America the Beautiful* and the soundtrack from the movie *Black Hawk Down*.

"It is a gesture of love and appreciation and respect for those who have provided for the freedoms we enjoy on a daily basis," said Van Mathews, band director. "I think the students have a high level of what they are communicating. It's accurate and heartfelt."

Many in the audience gave Bell's band a standing ovation after its performance, the end of a very long day. Bell's band members were up at 4 a.m. Tuesday to get ready for their 8:30 a.m. performance in the preliminary round.

The Marcus show, called *Illuminaries*, was extremely visual and included lights such as chandeliers and light bulbs.

Toward the end of the show, a student's uniform was switched on, showing off an array of bright bulbs.

Saginaw was competing for the first time in Class 5A. Last year, the band advanced to state in Class 4A.

"We had a good time," said John Canfield, Saginaw band director. "For us, rhythmically, it was a very solid show. We told them, 'The football field is exactly the same as the one at home. They didn't make it bigger.'"

Saginaw drum majors said that advancing to state was an honor and that they felt the community support back home. Before they left for San Antonio, cheerleaders, football players and other students plastered their band hall with signs, wishing them luck.

As they pulled out of the school Monday, Saginaw firetrucks pumped an arch of water over the buses and police escorted them to the freeway.

"The goal is not to win. It's to put in the best performance you can," said Saginaw drum major Lauren Robertson, 17, a junior from Fort Worth.

Keller High's 220-member Indian Band performed a piece called *R'ing*, featuring various types of bells, designed to take advantage of the 2.5-second delay provided by dome acoustics, director Mark McGahey said. The band had its best performance of the season in the preliminary round, Keller band booster president Pat Hedrick said.

"It was a great trip. They're always looking for improvement and we saw that through the entire marching season," Hedrick said. "Every time they performed, they were able to improve on their previous performance; it got better and better."

After Haltom's band marched off the field, members were smiling, cheering and hugging.

"I feel like it was a good reflection of all the past months, days and hours of hard work that we have put in," said Clinton Ross, 17, one of three Haltom drum majors.

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