

Lady Eagles Bid for Repeat Falls Short

at Texas UIL Girls Basketball State Tournament -Continued from Front Page-

The Fairfield Lady Eagles made four straight trips to the state's final four. The try for three titles in four years came up a bit short in a loss to Holliday in the Class 3A state championship game at the Alamodome in San Antonio.

"This is a difficult place with tons of pressure," said head coach Sally Whitaker after the game, "you get to this stage and you have earned your spot and to do this four straight years is a tribute to these girls and the effort they have put in over their careers. We were supposed to win the title last year and we did, this season was probably the most difficult to get there and we worked through and made it. I am very proud of my team and their effort."

The region three champions took on region two winners Winnsboro in the semifinals. The Lady Raiders entered with a 31-9 record and returned all state performer Faith Acker. This would be a rematch of the state final last season and the game atmosphere did not disappoint.

Fairfield fell behind in the early moments on a layup by Acker and Shadasia Brackens hit one of two free throws to cut into that early lead. McKinna Brackens hit a short jumper in the paint to take the lead three minutes in. The teams traded scores and Kaylee Williams scored a fast break bucket to lead after the first period 9-6.

The Lady Eagles maintained a three-point lead throughout the first four minutes of the second period. McKinna Brackens drew a foul on Acker and hit the shot. Her free throw put the Lady Eagles up by their largest margin of the game at 16-10. Two scores in the paint by Winnsboro cut the gap to 16-14 and the teams traded scores with Fairfield leading at the half 20-18.

Shadasia Brackens scored with 6:39 remaining in the third for the first points of the second half and opened the lead back up to four 22-18. Kaitlynn McAdoo hit a three pointer and closed the lead to one. Shadasia Brackens scored and led 27-22. At this point, the Lady Raiders went on a 7-0 run to take their first lead of the game since the opening tip. The Lady Eagles got a short jumper by Avery Thaler and Winnsboro answered to cling to a 34-31 at the end of three period.

With the game on the line in the state semifinal, the hero of the game would be Jimilyah Nash. She scored on a cutter to the basket for her first of 11 fourth period points. Blayke Brackens scored on a short jumper on a pass from Nash to close the gap to one. Acker tipped in a miss to maintain a three point lead with a foul and made free throw. Nash nailed

a three pointer and scored on a pass from Thaler off a steal to take a 40-39 lead with 4:57 remaining in the game.

Halle Deaton and Acker scored to put the Lady Raiders ahead and Nash scored leading the fast break. Thaler had a steal and score to take the lead for good. McKinna Brackens and Nash combined to make four free throws to open the lead to 48-43. Winnsboro was forced to foul, and the Lady Eagles closed out a 51-43 win at the free throw line.

"We knew they were a good team and what they returned from last years state championship team. We needed all four quarters to wear them down. I am so proud of this team battling through adversity that was full of difficult moments," added Sally Whitaker in a post-game press conference.

The Fairfield Lady Eagles came from the dressing room and watched the second semifinal game to see their opponent. Holliday's Lady Eagles defeated the Columbus Cardinals 59-40 behind 35 points and 18 rebounds by Jalynn Bristow. Holliday led 29-9 at the half and made that stand up throughout the second half.

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(Photos by Payton Botelho)

HIGH SCORERS in the State Finals were (left-right): Lady Eagles #20 Shadasia Brackens with 20 pts, #21 McKinna Brackens with 22 pts and 10 rebounds, and #30 Jimilyah Nash with 5 pts.

What a great season, ladies!



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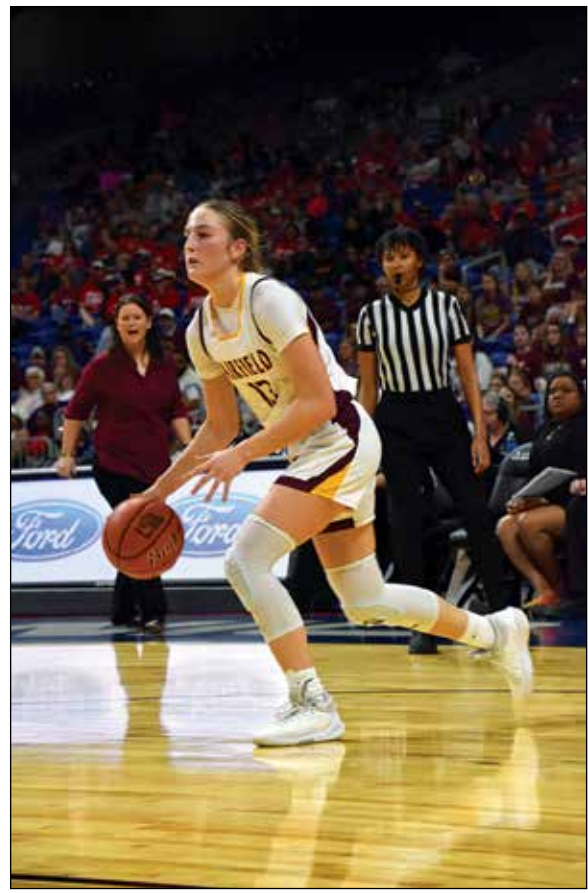
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2023 STATE RUNNER UP GIRLS BASKETBALL CONFERENCE 3A

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MOVING AGAINST THE WINNSBORO Lady Raiders in the State Semi-final on Friday, March 3, 2023 are Fairfield Lady Eagles (clockwise from left): #20 Shadasia Brackens, #30 Jimilyah Nash, #13 Avery Thaler, #2 Blayke Brackens, and #10 Kaylee Williams.



(Photos by Payton Botelho)



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TAKING A TIMEOUT TO CONFER with Head Coach Sally Whitaker and her support team are the Fairfield Lady Eagles during the State finals against the Holliday Lady Eagles.

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Holliday never led in the game and would meet the Fairfield Lady Eagles in the state final Saturday morning.

Fairfield and Holliday clashed in the state title game as two of the top five teams in Texas. The Lady Eagles were looking for their second consecutive title and 40 wins for the second time.

The Lady Eagles began the game in a shooting slump that improved as the game progressed. McKinna Brackens hit a pair of free throws, she would be a perfect 6-6 on the day, and took the early lead. Carissa Griffin hit a three pointer to put Holliday ahead for the remainder of the first half. The lead grew to 12-7 with 3:30 remaining in the first period and 15-7 on a three pointer from the corner by Kenna Wood. Holliday finished the last minute on a four point run to lead 19-7. Nash hit a three pointer for the only goal from the field. Fairfield shot 1-13 from the field (7.7%).

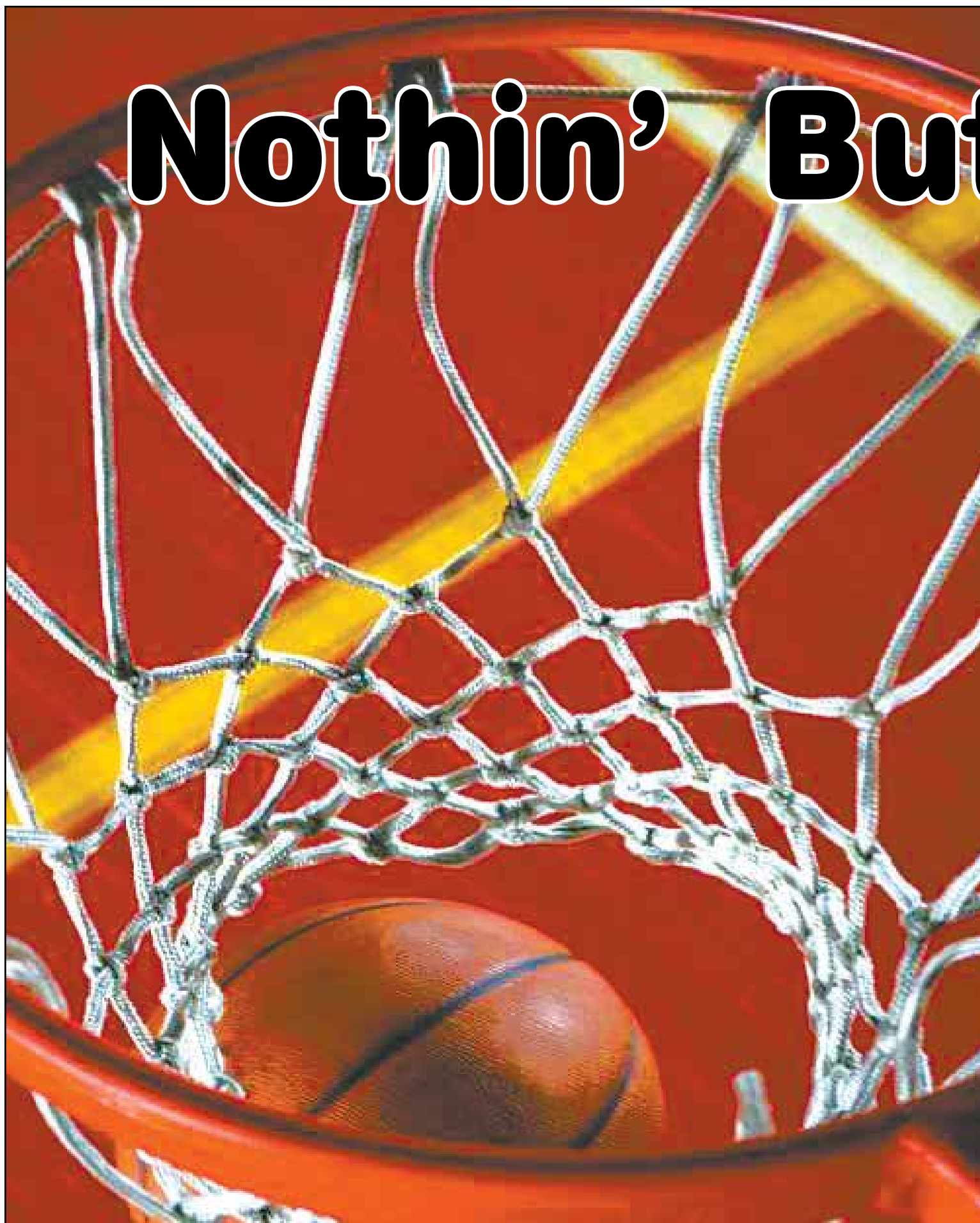
The lead for Holliday stretched to 20-7, the largest of the game, on a free throw by Katy Jo Piper. Shadasia Brackens brought the ball up the court and hit a three pointer. The lead remained at eight for the rest of the first half. Shadasia Brackens scored seven points in the period and kept the lead under ten at the free throw line. Fairfield made only four of 26 shots in the first half and trailed 28-20.

Shadasia Brackens took over the game in the third period and would briefly put the Lady Eagles ahead. She hit a short jumper in the paint and McKinna Brackens added a shot off the glass. Holliday pushed the lead back to nine with some timely offensive rebounding.

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Keeping control of the ball is Lady Eagles #2 Blayke Brackens (far left) as #10 Kaylee Williams is ready to assist. Taking the free throw is #30 Jimilyah Nash (middle) as #13 Avery Thaler and #21 McKinna Brackens get ready for the rebound. Down for the tussle to secure the ball is #20 Shadasia Brackens (far right).



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BATTLING IT OUT AGAINST THE HOLLIDAY Lady Eagles in the State Finals on Saturday, March 4, 2023 are Fairfield Lady Eagles (clockwise from left): #21 McKinna Brackens (with #10 Kaylee Williams ready with an assist), #13 Avery Thaler with a successful block, #30 Jimilyah Nash and #20 Shadasia Brackens hoping to prevent a pass, #20 Shadasia Brackens up for two points as #30 Jimilyah Nash is ready for a rebound, and making a pass is #2 Blyke Brackens.



Proud of our Fairfield Lady Eagles Basketball Team

Incommons Bank is a BIG fan of our local high school athletic teams. Good job by the Fairfield Girls Basketball Team for thier **FOURTH** consecutive trip to the State Finals!



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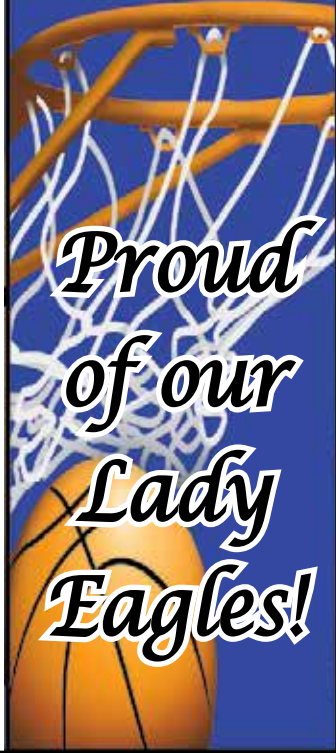
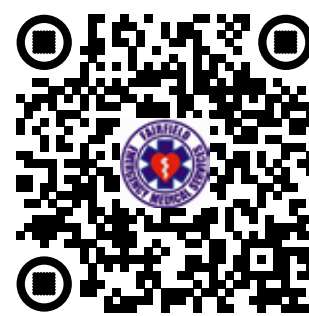
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Shadasia Brackens went on a personal 6-0 run with scores on three straight possessions and closed the lead to 34-30. Holliday would add a point to the lead with solid free throw shooting and put backs by Bristow. Fairfield would close the deficit to 39-34 heading into the final period.

Bristow hit a mid-range jumper to add to the lead in the first minute of the fourth period at 41-34. McKinna Brackens looked to be coming out of her shooting slump (1-12 in first half) with a turnaround in the paint. Nash cut to the basket for a score and McKinna Brackens added another on a move past Bristow to cut the lead to 43-40 with 4:53 remaining in the game. McKinna Brackens scored on two possessions after misses by Holliday and took their only lead of the game at 44-43. Bristow banked a score off glass to regain the lead. She added another and then a score by Wood pushed the lead back to eight with less than two minutes remaining. Holliday closed out the game hitting 11 of 12 free throws in the final minutes to take the state title and a 58-47 win.

McKinna Brackens scored 22 points and pulled down 10 rebounds in her final game as a Fairfield Lady Eagle. Shadasia Brackens was in her final game as well and score 20 points. Jimilyah Nash added the remaining five points for Fairfield. Bristow led Holliday with 21 points and 14 rebounds.

An emotional head coach summed up the four year run with tribute to her Division I athletes more than the loss. She reflected "Our girls did what they always do. They played hard and it did not work out. You don't always

NONE SHALL PASS as Fairfield Lady Eagle #20 Shadasia Brackens (top right) spreads out her arms to prevent the advance of her opponent. (continuing clockwise): #13 Avery Thaler goes up for two points; #5 Lillian McBean rushes to keep on guard; #21 McKinna Brackens reaches for the basket.



(Photos by Payton Botelho)

-FISD Basketball-
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Proud of our

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Varsity Basketball Team

Blayke Brackens, Kristavia Nelms, Lillian McBean, Addison Posey, Kaylee Williams, Avery Thaler, Charlee Brackens, Jaci Abram, Shadasia Brackens, McKinna Brackens, and Jimilyah Nash.



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Blayke Brackens
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Kristavia Nelms
Junior
PG



Lillian McBean
Junior
Guard



Kaylee Williams
Freshman
PG



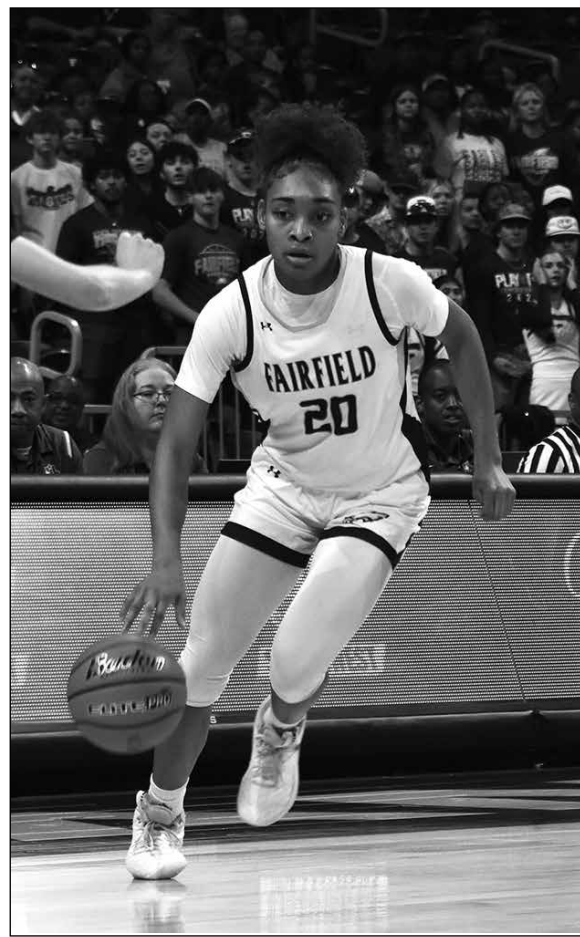
Avery Thaler
Junior
Post



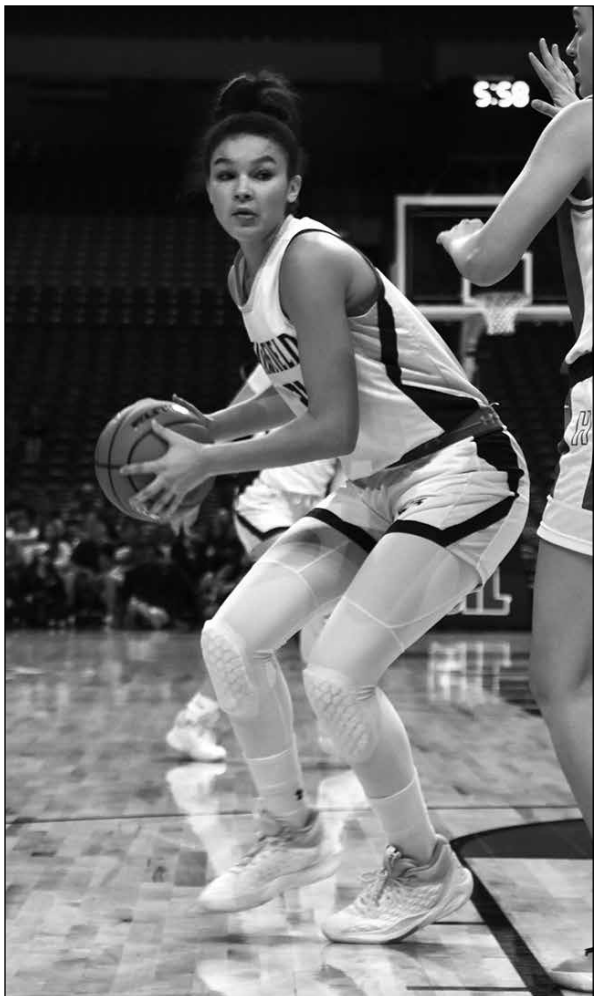
Charlee Brackens
Junior
Guard



Jaci Abram
Sophomore
Post



Shadasia Brackens
Senior
Guard



McKinna Brackens
Senior
Forward



Addison Posey
Sophomore



Jimilyah Nash
Sophomore
Guard

Good Job, LADY EAGLES!

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get the fairy tale ending that you want. My two seniors led beautifully and led a team with relatively little experience to a state championship game, and I think that this is one of their greatest accomplishments."

Shadasia Brackens and McKinna Brackens finish their career with a 138-11 record over their four year career and played the most games a player could possibly play leading up to the final weekend of the last four seasons in the Alamodome at the state final. The senior players had 26- 2 playoff record, the only two losses in a state final to Brownfield in 2021 and Holliday at this state tournament. Shadasia Brackens takes her talents to Denton as a member of Eagles at the University of North Texas. McKinna Brackens will move her basketball skills as a top recruit in the basketball program at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas.

The Fairfield Lady Eagles will return some talent to the lineup as they say goodbye to their highly decorated teammates. Freshmen Kaylee Williams and Blayke Brackens will return as sophomores with a ton of experience. Jimilyah Nash was crucial in the playoffs with her shooting and tough defense. Avery Thaler will return to the middle as a top rebounder and scorer for next season. Fairfield basketball is in good hands as they rebuild a core group with some young talent to take this team into a new identity.

On a personal note, covering this team has been one of the highlights of my media career. When you can watch a team dominate district games and playoff games and end two of four seasons at the state's top team, there is so much to admire. Shadasia and McKinna have always been kind to me when I needed information and Coach Whitaker is a wonderful coach to work with in getting information and access to a team of this caliber.

I will continue to cover Fairfield Lady Eagle basketball and know that they are in the best of hands. I only hope that the fans of this program appreciate the ride they have been on and continue to offer their support as this team rebuilds. I thank you for the opportunity to cover Fairfield High School. The coaching staff, administration, and athletic director John Bachtel are some of my favorites and I only hope that I can put their student athletes in print and display their positive skills and they enjoy the results of their successes.

Fairfield Lady Eagle basketball returns next season with a new look but the same leadership will take them to new heights, and we support them in all their new goals.

Scott Batts reporting.



(Photos by Payton Botelho)



STATE RUNNER UP MEDALS are presented to the Fairfield Lady Eagles and their coaches by FISD Superintendent Dr. Jason Adams, High School Principal Sonya Gibson, and Athletic Director John Bachtel.



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2022-2023

Fairfield High School LADY EAGLES

# 2 Blayke Brackens	5'9	Forward	Freshman
# 3 Kristavia Nelms	5'5	PG	Junior
# 5 Lillian McBean	5'4	Guard	Junior
#10 Kaylee Williams	5'6	PG	Freshman
#13 Avery Thaler	5'10	Post	Junior
#14 Charlee Brackens	5'7	Guard	Junior
#15 Jaci Abram	5'8	Post	Sophomore
#20 Shadasia Brackens	5'11	Guard	Senior
#21 McKinna Brackens	6'1	Forward	Senior
#25 Addison Posey			Sophomore
#30 Jimilyah Nash	5'7	Guard	Sophomore

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