

## Comeback Season

Amid sweeping program changes, The Pack sets deliberate goals to redefine the northwest dance team

The sixteen members of The Pack dance team trickle into the auxiliary gym, all members wearing newly branded tank tops, proudly proclaiming the team's "We Over Me" motto. Lively conversation and laughter fill the stale air of the aux gym before coaches and teachers **EK Pearson** and **Andrea Smith** begin discussing the day's agenda. The girls begin to perform their individually choreographed dances, all followed by applause and positive feedback. Senior and team captain **Bella Stekete** said the uplifting atmosphere was a product of various changes to the team.

"It's a very different atmosphere than it has ever been," Stekete said. "I love what it's turned into and I love what we are creating."

Stekete said due to past events, The Pack felt motivated to change.

"Seeing everyone unhappy with where we were at I think was our motivation to create something that we were gonna love and that we could rebuild into something new and different," Stekete said.

Pearson said changes began with the team name itself; the former Dazzler dance team becoming The Pack.

"To start a new program, you have to have a clear identity and be proud of that," Pearson said. "If we want to start fresh, we need to start fresh."

Junior and team captain **Courtney Krebs** said while the team's time in the limelight felt difficult, she thought it created momentum for this year.

"It almost motivates us to restart and bring the best reputation we can to the new team," Krebs said. "I definitely think the farther we get away from it, the more helpful it is to feel like this is a fresh start. It was a more or less sort of traumatizing experience with those girls and we know in the back of our minds we are not going back to that."

Stekete said the team set intentional, specific goals not only to improve, but to change the program's reputation; one of the main focuses was having a larger presence in the school.

"Our biggest focus this year has been supporting the school in every aspect," Stekete said. "In the past we have focused on competition and making ourselves look the best that we can, and while that's important, it's also important to show we are supporting everyone else."

Junior **Molly Thomas** said she believed the team's willingness to change improved their reputation.

"I think the fact that we are encouraging the change within ourselves and within each other allows for the student body to want what we want," Thomas said.

Thomas said she felt another factor going into improving the team's reputation included the addition of two Northwest teachers to the team.

"I think a lot of people are seeing the dance team in a new way because a lot of people have a lot of respect for EK and Senora Smith," Thomas said. "I think the coaching staff has allowed for the student body to have respect for us. "

Smith said while she and Pearson appreciated the school's respect, they hoped the team's work ethic spoke for itself.

“I think the team has worked hard,” Smith said. “That has helped them gain their respect back.”

Steketee said the team was held to high standards inside and out of the classroom, standards that were important to create a better team culture.

“I feel like there's so much more we can bring so holding that high standard has been helpful to rebranding and improving,” Steketee said.

Steketee said increasing weight on the image of the team allowed for an improved atmosphere.

“[In years past] I never really thought about being an image for the dance team,” Steketee said. “I didn’t think it had much significance in past years but this year I feel we've taken steps to make that known. [We want to be] embodying kindness and encouragement to all those around us.”

Pearson said she and Smith hoped all the trials and changes helped the girls find passion and pride in The Pack.

“We just want them to be proud of their program,” Pearson said. “Be proud of their name, be proud of their identity and be proud of what they stand for.”