



Tina Lopez/C&S Media

AJ Overstreet fights through contact as he drives into the lane for Wylie East's win over North Garland.



Tina Lopez/C&S Media

Parker Overstreet protects the ball in Wylie East's win over North Garland on Feb. 4.

Overstreet brothers determined to make playoffs with East

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When looking at famous siblings who have played together on the same court or field, it's usually as opponents. Jason and Travis Kelce will be facing off in the Super Bowl this Sunday. Pau and Marc Gasol both excelled in their careers in the NBA, but only shared the court as foes. But down here at Wylie East, two Raiders' siblings—AJ and Parker Overstreet—are creating magic on the basketball court together, as teammates.

This magic didn't just materialize overnight but has been the culmination of years of hard work. Both brothers have been playing since they were six years old and have shared the court for

much of that stint.

That longevity, paired with the innate connection that siblings have, has made playing basketball together enjoyable, according to the brothers.

"It's fun because we know how each other plays and our play styles because we've been playing with each other for a long time," AJ Overstreet said. "The chemistry is there."

Their chemistry with one another hasn't just developed in the gym in real game situations but has matured in recreational settings like the front or backyard.

Parker Overstreet also believes that being on the same court with his brother as his teammates gives them an advantage.

"We just connect different," he

said."

It's evident to everyone on the outside as well that the connection is special, especially their head coach.

"You can tell the connection they have," Wylie East head coach Brent Kelley said. "There's a couple of times in district play where they've just given each other a look and you know they know what the other is thinking."

District play has been where the Overstreet brothers have excelled so far during the 2022-23 campaign, especially as of late. After starting 4-6 in District 9-6A play, the Raiders have now rattled off four consecutive wins to vault themselves back into the playoff discussion, with the Overstreet brothers being the leading reasons for it.

In the Raiders' victory over their

crosstown rival Wylie Pirates, the brothers combined for 22 points. Parker contributed 14 points along with three rebounds, two assists and two steals. AJ put up an all-around effort with eight points, eight rebounds, five assists and two steals. That win, which avenged a previous loss to the Pirates earlier in the season, meant a lot to everybody involved but was especially exciting for the Overstreet brothers.

"It was kind of fun to get back on them," AJ Overstreet said. "It's a big game, Crosstown Showdown. So, you know, it was lit. It was fun."

In their next contest against Lakeview Centennial, the brotherly backcourt once again shined, with Parker scoring 16 and AJ adding 14 in another Wylie East victory.

The two brothers' goals, both individually and for the team, are the same.

"Playoffs," Parker Overstreet said. "I want to go deep in the playoffs."

"Wylie East isn't known for being a big basketball team," AJ Overstreet said. "I want to change the culture and say, 'I helped turn the program around, and I did it with my brother.'"

East sits in fifth place in District 9-6A with a record of 8-6. Their final two games of the regular season are against Rowlett and Naaman Forest, two teams that the Raiders lost to earlier in the year and who also is in front of them in the standings. The Raiders will need to win both of those games to guarantee themselves a spot in the dance once the regular season ends on Feb. 14.



Tina Lopez/C&S Media

Bryn Geppert shields the ball from the Wylie defensive player.

East outscores opponents 71-0

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Knowing his team was that close, coach Christensen and his staff noticed some differences between his team and Wakeland's he could adapt. He wanted to build a positionless soccer team in the offseason, where any single player could succeed at any position on the field.

"We wanted to train a little bit differently this season and so far, it's working," Christensen said. "We noticed some things against Frisco Wakeland in the playoffs last season and felt like that could've been us. We wanted to take what we saw and evolve our team into training every player the same technically and teach them the movement off the ball to help everyone succeed at any position on the field."

The team is off to a blister-

ing start on offense, averaging 5.9 goals per game, but it can only truly be matched by Wylie East's defense to start the season, which has held opponents to zero goals in 12 games.

Between a deep, experienced and confident backline of defenders and senior goalkeeper Breanna Wooten, Wylie East has been a fortress this season, allowing very little pressure or goalscoring opportunities. Wooten has 54 shutouts as the goalkeeper for the Lady Raiders, as she's set to break the school record with her performances this season.

"The ability to trust our goalkeeper is, in my opinion, one of the best in the state, it helps our defense play with confidence," Christensen said. "There's a lot of trust back there and that is most import-

ant for a good defense to succeed."

Wylie East continues its season on the road Friday against Lakeview Centennial before hosting Rowlett next Tuesday, Feb. 14. As the team approaches the halfway point in district play, conversations about how far this team can go this season have started to pop up. Coach Christensen and his team are embracing that challenge.

"When you add our depth and talent, the fact that any one player can have an awesome day for us, it's sort of the recipe for success," Christensen said. "I'm not saying it's going to be a state championship year, but I'm not saying it's not going to be either. This year feels like we're clicking on all cylinders at the right time of the calendar year."

Plano East must regroup after late loss in season

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reverse the ball around the perimeter for a shot, but it was good recognition from Isaiah [Brewington] to make the pass and great on Jordan for finishing it."

Despite the momentary high, Plano East missed two free throws down the stretch that could've helped seal the game and opened the door for Plano late. The Wildcat's win put them at 10-1 in the district, one game ahead of the Panthers who they have now defeated twice by a combined score of three points.

Despite the loss, the Panthers continue to impress as one of the surprise basketball teams of the season, climbing the state rankings as they continue to win games. They're currently 27-4 on the season and 9-2 in District 6-6A after the loss, good enough for second in a competitive district. The high win numbers aren't for a lack of being battle-tested either, as a look across the state rankings would see Plano, Lake Highlands, San Antonio powerhouses Brennan, Veterans Memorial and Reagan, along with several other competitive programs. While the Panthers have managed to scrap a few wins against some of the best, they're ready to take the next step and make a playoff run this season.

"Whatever it takes to make the next step, I think we have it and we just have to prove it," Wester said. "We've proven we're very good and it's one of the most highly-rated teams in school history. We've lost four games to teams ranked in the top eight, but we've competed and we're hoping to rebound from the disappointment of that game."

Plano East wraps up the regu-



Roosevelt Joubert/C&S Media

Jordan Mizell led the team in scoring in Plano East's 52-50 loss to Plano on Saturday, Feb. 4.

lar season with two more games, hosting Hebron this Friday before traveling to Flower Mound next Tuesday, Feb. 14. With just a couple of games left to recover before the end of the regular season, the Panthers have already clinched a playoff spot but are battling for district seeding.

"It's a tough battle for playoffs, with some competitive teams ahead of us," Wester said. "The last time we lost to Plano, I was really impressed with how the players responded and played well in their next game. I'm hoping we can do that again this time."