

Photo Illustration

2012 KSPA Regional Contest

Description

You are a staff member of Ad Astra High School's The Star. Your editor has asked you to create a photo illustration based on the story provided.

School Info

Name: Ad Astra High School
Location: Aspera, Kansas
Mascot: Box Turtles
Enrollment: 850 (grades 9-12)
School Colors: Green & Gold
Yearbook: The Honeybee
Newspaper: The Star

Contest Info

This is a **carry-in** contest.

Please attach **your assigned contest number** in the upper right-hand corner on the back of your photo.

Do not put your name on the entry. If you do, your entry will be disqualified.

Students are not to request help or advice from anyone other than the KSPA Executive Director. All work must be that of the contestant.

Assignment

Using the information provided in the story, design a photo illustration that is no larger than 8 inches wide by 10 inches high (though it can be smaller). It can be a vertical or horizontal. The photo illustration may be submitted in color or black and white, and should be printed on 8.5 x 11-inch paper.

You must include a brief paragraph describing the effects applied to the photo and explaining how your photo illustration helps tell the story.



Team chemistry plays large part in Ad Astra athletic teams' successes

This past school year, Ad Astra High School achieved unprecedented success in the athletic department, with two state titles to its name.

Coaches, players and administrators all say these accomplishments cannot be attributed to pure player skill alone. What they do point to, however, is something they call "team chemistry" — the bond that holds players together and keeps them accountable for one another.

Ad Astra's most successful teams have incorporated rituals — everything from team dinners to "interrogations" and prayers — to help build that chemistry.

The Box Turtles are simply mimicking a national trend.

The San Diego Padres, for instance, have become very supportive of "non-baseball team bonding," which for them includes fishing tournaments, rap battles and free-throw contests, according to the New York Times.

The AAHS football team demonstrated their powerful team unity in their KSHSAA Class 5A State Championship game against the nationally ranked Centennial High School Snail Darters. Centennial entered the game with a 14-0 record; Ad Astra was 10-3.

The Box Turtles were definite underdogs, but Ad Astra won 15-13 on a last-second field goal by Gary Yepremian.

"[Centennial] had a lot of really good players and a lot of guys that are going [Division 1], but we were definitely closer and I think that definitely showed on the field," senior co-captain Zach Braff said.

Braff said the Turtles became increasingly unified as the season went on, but did not start out with great chemistry.

"Our very first game we played Burlington, and that was probably our closest game," Braff said. "They were a pretty good team but we've definitely played a lot harder teams, and we just kind of improved each game and I feel like that's why we did so well."

Braff, along with senior co-captains Steve Bono, Tommie Glazier, Quincy Adams, Kelly Anderson, Billy Cullen and Ted Williams, tried to encourage team bonding on and off the field.

"We would still be hanging out over the weekend and stuff and that definitely played a huge role, especially in our defense," Braff said. "Just kind of knowing how we all play and playing together

was definitely a huge part of our success."

Though each player has his own way of getting in the zone before a game, the football team had a few ways of bringing everyone together.

"As a team we would all go say a prayer in the middle of the field, so that was kind of our pre-game thing," Braff said.

The team also developed off-the-field rituals, including paying homage to former Turtle and current NFL quarterback Vic Michaels, a member of the AAHS Athletic Hall of Fame.

"The one consistent thing everyone does is tap the picture of Vic in the locker room before we go out," Bono said.

In addition, several players' families hosted Thursday night cook-outs for various player groups. Linemen, for example, would meet at Cullen's family's home, while the backs got together with the Glazier family.

"We weren't all together, but we were able to share stories and fun and generally just get to know each other better," Cullen said. "Besides, my dad's an awesome barbecuer — is that a word — doesn't matter, because he grills a mean steak."

Like the football team, Ad Astra's baseball team strives for team togetherness, but in a sport that often celebrates individual greatness more than football does.

"We've had team dinners, but not at anybody's house" co-captain Bono said. "We had probably five by now, normally once a week on Thursdays. We go out to dinner at Oasis [Bar and Grill] or Triple-H (Henry's Hofbrau Haus)."

Ad Astra's girls' soccer team bonded through pasta feeds, "interrogations" and team dress-up days.

"Within pasta feeds we do things like 'interrogations' — nothing serious — just asking them questions about their personal life," senior co-captain Donna Kershner said.

Kershner said it made a huge difference in a season during which the Turtles finished third in the state.

"We did have some new players which weren't as integrated from the beginning, but I think we did a good job of bringing everybody in and our chemistry was very strong by the end of the season," Kershner said. "It's all about the chemistry. You can have the best players in the world, but if they don't like each other, they're not going to be champions."