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Prepping the Pointe

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From practice to center stage, the dance team gears up for competition season.

Silence blisters the air as shadows emerge from center stage. Countless hours of relentless dedication have boiled down to three minutes, as the dance team stands masked in the spotlight of lowered lights and a tense atmosphere. This isn't just an opportunity that allows them to prove their talent and hard work, but it is a performance that encapsulates what dance is all about.

This is the scene at a competition, where the Papillion-La Vista Dance Team will execute both a hip-hop and jazz routine in front of fans, judges and dancers from across the state. For months, the Monarchs have consistently prepared for these competitions in the winter that mark the final stretch of their season. This includes several events locally in December and one nationally in February.

Senior Rylee Snyder and juniors Avery Secord and Maya Lierz are among three of the six upperclassmen who have taken a large role in leading the team.

"We have worked very hard to get to where we are now," Secord said. "It's our job to help people stay motivated and keep everybody positive."

To maintain this chemistry, the team supports and builds each other up. This helps make it easier when it comes time to compete.

"Everyone has honestly improved so much by just being a part of the team," Snyder said. "We just have a really good team dynamic this year."

Recently, the team competed at the Millard North Showcase on Nov. 2, which allowed them to connect everything together for the first time.

"We get to perform and also get a lot of feedback on what we need to work on," Lierz said. "We then go through and fix the areas we saw problems before our first official competition in December."

With such a long season, preparation for these competitions never truly stop, as weekly practices are all about working on making these dances the best they can be.

"Our competition dances are very different from what people see us do at halftime or on the sidelines," Snyder said. "We've been practicing a lot, cleaning our technique and also our choreography."

This time of year also requires a large shift in focus from the style of dances they normally do throughout the football season.

"We have to focus and work harder especially when we get to the winter," Lierz said. "There is definitely a change in the amount of effort and energy people give."

Along with the intense hours in the gym comes many opportunities for special moments as a team to grow and improve together.

"We have gotten a lot closer since the beginning of the year," Secord said. "We all really want to place better than we have in previous years and I think we can do that."

To finish out the year, the Monarchs continue to ramp up the intensity. With their biggest challenges yet, the dance team looks ahead toward the future.

"We're looking forward to seeing all of our growth," Lierz said. "It will be nice to see how all of our hard work has paid off and how much we've improved over the years."

Above: Freshman Hayden Brown dances at the pep rally on Oct. 2. The rally featured performances from the cheer team and dance team. Photo: Carly Peterson

1. Junior Addison Balzer cheers on the sideline of the game against Lincoln Southwest Sept. 12. The dance team performed their hip-hop routine "The Jumpoff" at halftime. Photo: Carly Peterson
2. The dance team looks on towards the band's halftime performance. They sat on the sideline awaiting their turn to take the field. Photo: Surina Burlington