

GOING IN HEAD FIRST



Gray, with Savannah Tatum

THE BUDDHA TRADITION IMPACTS COLOR GUARD'S SUCCESS

BY MOLLIE PING

The endless hours of practice. The heart and dedication. And of course, rubbing a bald head for good luck.

For the past 12 years, the nationally-ranked Wando Color Guard has tributed their good fortune to a pre-performance ritual: rubbing their former coach's head, **Michael Gray**.

"I don't know how it started. Even before I was a freshman, it was always a thing. Michael is a big, muscular bald guy... he reminds us of Buddha when you rub his head for good luck," captain **Julia Wakser**, 12, said. "He really thinks it's a big spiritual thing."

Three years ago, Wando recruited coach **Sarah Price** to advance the color guard program while Gray transitioned to working on set design.

"It's a silly thing they do at competitions... it's a tradition that's happened before I was here. He's been here 10 or 12 years," Price said. "And he was kinda here when they started becoming a program and a 'force to reckon with'."

The team's success is not only tributed to 'rubbing for luck'; Color Guard requires an immense amount of time commitment and management. The girls are constantly perfecting

their flag routine on and off the band field.

"My entire life is [Color Guard]. Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, we have rehearsal until 8 o'clock, and Saturdays in September we are completely booked with mini-camps all day and competitions included," **Mattie Sturmer**, 12, a Wando Band legacy, said. "It takes up most of my time."

After placing 7th at the Bands of America Grand National Championship in 2014, Price reflected on the team's methods of motivation and successful strategies that have carried through to this fall season.

"We try not to set goals... our goals are to have a successful overall season," Price said. "We're not trying to say 'we need to beat this program' or 'we have to win this' but sometimes they end up being state champion." Price said.

Whether the team's success is derived from their intense weekly practices or rubbing a bald head for good luck, the Wando Color Guard continues to excel in state competitions.

"While it's fun to believe in that sort of connection, a good season is really composed of all the blood, sweat, and tears you put in," captain **Sam Connell**, 12, said.

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I THINK, THEREFORE I AM: (inset) **Jordan Davis**, 12, performs the flag routine for the Wando Band 2016 show. "It's been a lot of work since we're coming from our last Grand Nationals, being 7th in the nation, so we have a lot to work up to and a lot to fight for this year," Davis said.



photographer m. manke



photographer m. manke

TWIRLING TALENT: (top) **Sydney Holladay**, 12, holds two flags high in a stance during a halftime performance "The biggest thing about this season is that we've gotten so much done already and usually it takes us until October to learn the entire show but we learned the whole show in August which is insane because that never happens... we're very ahead of any other time," Holladay said.

HEAD HELD HIGH: (above) **Marianna Murray**, 12, strikes a pose at the end of a performed song. "I'm really excited for Grand Nationals; I feel like it's the best band we've ever had at this point... work ethic is a lot higher than we've ever had... whenever there's a bunch of girls climbing the fence and they're being ripped off and then **Sydney Holladay** [12] comes up and climbs it and it's this big, profound moment cause she strips off her jacket and it's kinda a new change in the show and it defines a change in human perception," Murray said.



photographer m. fleming

What is the most aesthetic part about color guard?

45% Flags

17% Costumes

38% Dancing



photographer m. clement

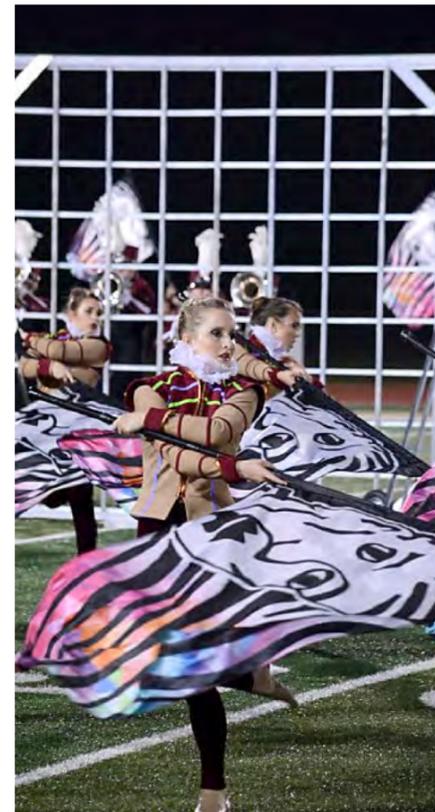


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WAVE OF THE FLAG: (above left) **Anna Rae Hammes**, 12, holds her flags at the LCI Competition arranged by Wando with her fellow color guard teammates. "This was during our closer at LCI. LCI was probably the most rewarding and fun experience, just being with all the girls and being with the band and seeing other bands performing.... It's a lot tougher [this season]," Hammes said.

POP, LOCK, AND SQUAT: (above) **Lauren Garrett**, 11, and her teammates perform a synchronized move. "Right on the hit is when we do a little toss and catch [the flag] like that... right at the end of a very stressful song, and it's very intense... it's like the final thing before the pretty song," Garrett said.

A PRIDEFUL PERFORMANCE: (left) **Jasmine Allen**, 12, looks ahead and focuses on her coach and the music to dance with the band's beat: "We all have a ripple so like anytime there's a downbeat with band, we react to that music [called a slice]... Guard is very intense this year, we don't have time to sit down. It gets overwhelming sometimes, but it's rewarding," Allen said.



photographer m. manke



designer k. pottengill; photographer n. warner

WE STAND TOGETHER: (above) The Color Guard team performs with the band during a halftime performance during the Fort Dorchester game. "With band and guard I learned how to be a part of a group, how to work with others and how to accept others," **Jane Jacobs**, 10, said. "Being a part of this guard I have developed skills necessary to survive in the real world. I have become a hard worker and dedicated to my work. These people are who I have made friends with and have become my family. Without band, I would have been lost at Wando."

GROOVY AND GRACEFUL: (left) **Jayna Cullen**, 12, watches her cues and walks through the steps in her head during a halftime show. "Remembering all the routines and keeping up with the timing can be hard... it's fast paced. Right after you do one thing, you have to go straight into the next set," Cullen said.

ELEGANT

CHAZA BOWDEN



"I am inspired to see the whole entire show in full form when its on the field... and I see all the visual stuff and hearing the band play. I like seeing that."

HANNAH ROSIER



"We are working towards something bigger than we have since last year."