

# Star Sports

## Never say die!

### 'Cats rally, claim state

BY BRIAN PORTER  
STAFF WRITER

AUSTIN — There was something eerily similar to Thomas Hill, former Lancaster High School and Duke University star, about the way fate smiled Saturday evening on Plano. He had



John Roberson (21) asked the Plano crowd for help and then thanked them Saturday after Plano defeated Humble Kingwood, 60-58, in overtime to earn the Class 5A boys basketball championship.

watched a Christian Laettner jumper from about the same distance in another overtime victory.

The previous one later resulted in winning him a national championship at Duke and the latter one got a championship for his longtime friend, Plano coach Tom Inman.

"Why can't we win this, why can't we win this," Inman asked. "Why can't we be the best team in the state of Texas?"

The stripes on the basketball came to a stop atop the rim and rolled off. Then two successive tips fell outside the goal and Plano won its first boys basketball state championship with a rally to defeat Humble Kingwood, 60-58, at the Frank Erwin Center in Austin.

"I'm selfish," Hill said. "We could have been here when I played at Lancaster. I wasn't going to miss my friend win this. I've seen these kids grow up since sixth or seventh grade."

Plano won the boys state championship eight days after Plano West won the girls state championship. The Plano ISD swept the state's basketball state titles after not having won a state basketball title prior to last week's victory.

The last time the Plano ISD won the boys and girls state championships in the same sport was in 2000, when the Plano West girls won their first soccer state championship and Plano won the boys state title.

"It would have been a great honor just to get both teams down here to Austin," Plano ISD athletics director Cliff Odenwald said. "To win both championships is unbelievable."

Plano won its 29th state championship. The school's last state title also came in 2000, if you're not counting the



Coach Tom Inman celebrates with John Roberson and the rest of his Wildcats after the championship win over Humble Kingwood Saturday night. This was Plano Senior High School's first trip to the 5A state finals and their first championship.

KEVIN M. COX/SPECIAL TO THE STAR COURIER

academic decathlon state championship two weeks ago.

"We weren't going to let this get away," Plano principal Doyle Dean said. "We kept fighting and kept coming back. This is the best year we've had as a district, I think. The Plano West girls were really talented and worked hard, so did our boys team."

Hill, who was on the floor when Laettner's floater fell in a double-overtime regional final for Duke in the what is remembered as the best NCAA tournament game of all time, finds the fate of the ball rolling off the rim as fitting.

"That's how evenly matched these teams were," Hill said. "It came down to inches and Plano got it."

The pair of tips were dangerously close to falling with the final two seconds running off the clock. Then the clock elapsed and the Plano student body sprinted onto the floor at the Frank Erwin Center for the first time.

"Our motto was, 'Let's make history,'

or at least that was the unofficial motto," Plano post Eric Zastoupil said. "We kept saying, let's do something profound. We did. We'll be remembered. We'll be back here in 25 years being remembered for this. We won the state title. We are the state champions."

Plano was down by 10 points at halftime and later in the fourth period. Guard John Roberson led the charge back with the final six Plano points of regulation and a charging call with five seconds left helped Plano force an overtime.

Plano scored first in the overtime and trailed just once. It wasn't without a test. Plano was 0-for-6 on free throws in the final 1:09. Then with 11 seconds left there was a chance it would not win the state title. Nic Wise, who was lethal from three-point range throughout the night, had a bullet of a three-pointer headed for the goal. It drew iron and began to spin. When it stopped, it rolled out and two tips failed giving Plano the championship.

# CHAMPIONS

## Wildcats humble Kingwood, Roberson shoots team to title

BY BRIAN PORTER  
STAFF WRITER

AUSTIN — John Roberson asked the Plano crowd for help. Then he did the rest in a showdown of quick-firing, gun-slinging point guards.

His three-pointer with 2:32 remaining in overtime Saturday was good and though Plano never scored again, it got a good roll on the rim and time expired as the Wildcats clinched their first boys basketball state championship with a 60-58 victory over Humble Kingwood at the Frank Erwin Center.

"I was frozen," Plano post Eric Zastoupil said. "There was nothing else happening for a moment there."

Nic Wise put up a three-pointer for the win with just seconds left in overtime. It began to spin on the right side of the rim and when it came to a stop it tottered on the rim and ultimately drifted outside the cylinder. Then a couple of tip attempts failed and the buzzer sounded on Plano's first boys basketball state title.

"There was nothing going on in this place for what seemed like an eternity," Zastoupil said. "Everything just went blank in my mind."

Plano (29-8) finished the season winning 19 of its final 20 games. Kingwood (36-6) missed a chance to repeat as the Class 5A champion for the first time since Dallas Kimball won championships in 1996 and 1997. It took Plano four appearances in the state championship, but the campus finally got its state title.

"Wise is a great player," Plano coach Tom Inman said. "John (Roberson) is too."

Roberson hit a three pointer for Plano's final points of the third period. He had the team's final six points of the fourth period. Then he answered Wise's three-pointer in overtime and Plano never trailed again.

"He's a player. He's probably the greatest player I have ever played against," Roberson said. "He kept hitting shots and I had to match him. I didn't want to lose."

Roberson, a transfer from Florida, is a magic charm. He played in the 2004 state tournament in Florida and the following year the state championship in Florida. He won a state title Saturday and was named the MVP of the Class 5A state tournament in Texas.

"We got back and won, this time," Roberson said. "It feels so good. We have the state championship. I love Plano. I just love the city of Plano. This is for everyone. I'm never moving again."

"We're shaving coach's head. He's



Joseph Fulce (24) scored the first points of overtime and the Texas A&M signee helped Plano to its first boys basketball state title at the Frank Erwin Center, home of the Texas Longhorns.

gonna get a tattoo. There's going to be some crazy things happening in the next 24 hours."

And some crazy things happened to allow Plano to win. The Wildcats were down by 10 points at the end of the first half and in the fourth quarter. Roberson

led the rally and eventually hit the game-winning shot.

Plano, the No. 18 team in the final TABC Class 5A state poll, gave the campus its 29th state championship. It was the first overtime game in 14 years and Plano missed six straight free throws to close

overtime, but pulled out the win.

Kingwood turned to Mike Singletary in the first period and Nic Wise in the second period to compile a comfortable 33-23 advantage halftime margin.

Singletary hits a pair of three pointers and a field goal in the first period and reached double-figures scoring with 1:20 remaining in the first period.

Wise and Justin Winkfield were the only other Kingwood players to score in the period, but Plano trailed 19-11 entering the second period.

Wise converted 3-of-3 foul shots on a three-point attempt and converted a three-pointer in the first period. He hit two more three-pointers in the second period and went 2-of-3 from the line in the period after again drawing three shots after being fouled on a three-pointer. Wise was 5-of-6 from the free-throw line and 3-of-5 from the perimeter in the first half.

Joe Fulce was about all of Plano's offense in the first half. His 10 points was more than half of the scoring by the team.

Fulce went 5-of-8 from the field in the first half, continually hitting mid-range turnaround jumpers.

Kingwood was hot, though. The Mustangs converted 9-of-20 field goals and 6-of-10 three-pointers in the first half. The team also went 9-of-13 from the free-throw line, while Plano sank 4-of-4 shots.

Plano led twice in the first half and then Kingwood made a charge. John Roberson hit the first shot of the game from three-point land for the second time in as many days and Plano had a 3-0 advantage. Lawrence Mann later hit a field goal and both ends of a two-shot foul to give Plano a 7-4 advantage.

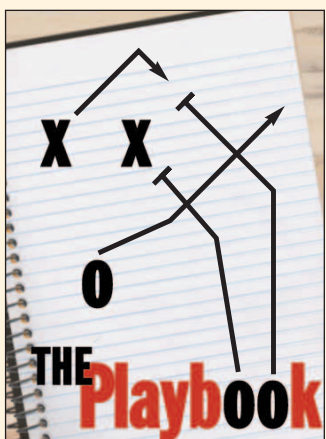
Kingwood took over with an 8-0 run. Plano answered with a field goal and Kingwood closed the period on a 7-2 run. A 4-0 run to open the second period helped Plano trim the margin to six points and Fulce had a pair of baskets to answer Kingwood shots in the final five minutes of the first half.

Dondre Wise was the knife. He hit a fadeaway three-pointer from the corner at the buzzer. He had left the court and was headed to the locker room before his shot fell from the sky and snapped the net.

Plano 60, Humble Kingwood 58

Kingwood	.....	19	14	14	7	4	—60
Plano	.....	11	12	17	14	6	—58

Kingwood (36-6) — Nic Wise 32, Mike Singletary 12, Justin Winkfield 5, Trevin Harris 4, Donald Wise 3, Brian Heis 2.  
Plano (29-8) — John Roberson 24, Joe Fulce 16, Eric Zastoupil 8, Lawrence Mann 6, Tyler Roof 4, Nathan Christian 2.



KEVIN COX/SPECIAL TO THE STAR COURIER  
Texas governor Rick Perry presents the Class 5A boys basketball state championship to the Plano Wildcats.

### Unlisted, but remembered

Missing in the UIL boys basketball record book is one appearance in the UIL state tournament for Plano.

Plano is credited with appearances in 1952, 1980 and 2006, but not in 1955. The team included Sam Shields, currently a football and track assistant coach at Plano. The Wildcats played in the Class A tournament at a time when a third-place game took place. Shields remembers the team having four seniors advance to play college basketball.

### What a deal!

A three-seat set of tickets to the Class 5A state championship game held by a Plano fan went for \$100 Saturday outside the Frank Erwin Center in Austin

The seats were closer than the remaining \$10 seats being sold in the upper deck. Ticket sales outside the ticket office was a common occurrence at the state tournament, offering the only remaining seats into the lower seating bowl.

### All-American likes Plano

Among the stars at championship Saturday at the UIL Boys Basketball State Tournament was one rooting for Plano.

Thomas Hill, a Lancaster graduate and back-to-back NCAA champion at Duke in 1991 and 1992, was among the first to enter the Frank Erwin Center for the Class 5A championship. He wore a Plano Wildcats shirt.

The connection was with Plano coach Tom Inman, who says he has been friends with Hill since he was 15. Hill sat courtside on the row immediately behind the Plano bench.

### Wildcats hit the big time

The Plano Wildcats played their first basketball game in front of a radio and television audience Saturday.

The television broadcast was by Fox Sports Southwest, which is expected to have a replay today. The Class 5A championship was the only televised title game of the tournament.

### CONTACT US

The Plano Star Courier sports section is published Wednesday-Sunday. All submitted items, including news, announcements and achievements, will be considered for publication on a space-available basis.

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