

The Dallas Morning News

Texas' Leading Newspaper

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WHAT PEOPLE EARN

Parade's salary survey peeks into Americans' pockets everywhere.

▶ **GuideLive:** Finally, *The Sopranos* returns.
▶ **TV Week:** Ed Bark gives the first episodes of the final season an A.



Area schools claim titles

HIGH SCHOOL FINALS

Roosevelt.....61 S. Oak Cliff.....76
Carr Ranchview 46 FW Dunbar.....58
Plano.....60 More coverage,
Kingwood.....58 1, 12-13C

IN SPORTSDAY

Townsend column: The selection committee faces a tangled mess. **1CC**
Whitmire column: The Jayhawks will bring a different team to the Big 12 final today after collapsing against Texas two weeks ago. **1CC**
■ Blank NCAA bracket, **2CC**
For complete coverage, **1-3CC**



MICHAEL AINSWORTH/Staff Photographer
Eric Zastoupil (left) of Plano battles Humble Kingwood's Justin Winkfield for a ball during the Class 5A final in Austin. Plano came from behind and won in overtime.

BIG 12 MEN'S TOURNAMENT

(at American Airlines Center)

SATURDAY'S RESULTS

Texas.....74 Kansas.....79
Texas A&M.....70 Nebraska.....65

FINAL GAME

Texas vs. Kansas.....2 p.m. today

BIG 12 WOMEN'S FINALS

Oklahoma.....72
Baylor.....61

Blackstone column: With Courtney Paris dominating the game, Oklahoma proved it's the best in the Big 12 and deserving of a No. 1 seed. **1CC**

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Log on for a blank NCAA bracket, photo galleries from the Big 12 tournament, results and coverage from other tournaments.

SMU's big idea for Bush library

Exclusive: Still under wraps, proposal likely to be batch of buildings for tourists, scholars

By **DAVID DILLON**
Architecture Critic

In an aggressive bid to win the Bush presidential library, SMU envisions a complex of buildings that could include a high-tech museum and archives, a public policy institute, a conference center and offices, all aimed at raising the school's national profile and making it a prime destination for schol-

ars and tourists.

A spokesman for the National Archives in Washington confirmed that Southern Methodist University retained Hillier Architecture of Princeton, N.J., to prepare a conceptual master plan for the coveted project, tentatively plotted in the southeastern quadrant of the campus, bounded roughly by Airline Road, North Central Expressway and SMU Boulevard.

"It is intended to extend the mission of the library into the entire university," said a supporter who has seen the plan SMU pre-

See **SMU Page 12A**

Chance of storms



High: 84 Low: 52
Metro, Back Page

NATION

Ex-Bush adviser charged with theft

Former domestic policy adviser Claude Allen was arrested and charged with claiming phony refunds for more than \$5,000 worth of merchandise at department stores. **9A**

Also: A Chicago newspaper found that covert CIA operatives could be tracked down through simple Internet searches. **13A**

TRAVEL

Cancún comeback

Dallas' favorite getaway is largely recovered from Hurricane Wilma. Check out the city and other popular trips in a special Mexico edition. **II**

SUNDAY LIFE

Oswald slept here

Patricia Puckett Hall remembers a quiet tenant at her grandmother's rooming house who paid his rent on time, warned children not to hurt one another — and gained worldwide infamy.

Find **Sunday Life** wrapped in the **Travel** and **New Homes** sections

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Is your child SAFE? on this bus



MICHAEL AINSWORTH/Staff Photographer

Athlete George Phillips III of Roosevelt High School in Dallas hugs principal Leon Dudley as they prepare to join Daria Peace on their team bus at the Erwin Center in Austin. Area students log thousands of miles each year on charter buses.

Few districts check records of firm, driver before field trips

First of two parts

By **MICHAEL GRABELL**
Staff Writer

Parents rely on schools to provide safe transportation when their children go on field trips.

But few school districts in the Dallas-Fort Worth area know the safety record of the charter bus companies they hire, check the backgrounds of their drivers, or inspect their vehicles.

Instead, they take the word of companies at face value and depend on overtaxed federal and state inspectors who use a flawed safety rating system to take dangerous bus companies off the road, according to an analysis by *The Dallas Morning News*.

The gaps leave risks. According to recent complaints filed by school officials:

■ A bus full of Richardson sixth-graders could have gone up in flames after the driver rewired the bus's electrical system with a coat hanger.

■ Plano band members had a driver who

had to wipe his face with a wet cloth just to stay awake.

■ And a Garland Spanish class was about to board a bus with a tire in such poor condition that the district's mechanic said it "could disintegrate at any time."

After 23 Hurricane Rita evacuees were killed when a charter bus burst into flames near Dallas in September, *The News* reviewed the safety records of bus companies hired by 26 public school districts in the area.

Most schools use well-known companies rated highly by government regulators and in good standing with the Better Business Bureau.

Officials said they put safety first, relying on recommendations from other districts and having teachers and coaches fill out customer satisfaction surveys.

But even hiring good companies didn't stop situations that put children on dangerous buses with dangerous drivers.

See **HOW Page 20A**

Coming Monday

How did Dallas and Highland Park schools

end up using a bus company with a problematic paper trail run by a man convicted of cocaine trafficking? The story of one contractor that slipped through the system raises questions about how school districts check the bus companies they hire.

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Safety checks: Find out which bus companies your school district uses and their safety records.

Governor almost wasn't

After years on ranch, Perry saw climate was right for politics

By **CHRISTY HOPPE**
Austin Bureau

AUSTIN — Rick Perry believes he is governor because it rained one day and thawed another.

Otherwise, today he would certainly be a commercial pilot or maybe a West Texas rancher. But fate, driven by barometric or divine pressure, changed the weather, his life and the future of Texas.

ELECTIONS '06

Strayhorn, Friedman campaign for signatures, **3A**

"I don't think things happen by coincidence. I think there's a grand plan out there, and if you're paying attention, that the Lord speaks to you through a lot of different ways," Mr. Perry said recently over a relaxed lunch of enchiladas and french fries.

The plan might be grand, but its margins have been tiny. He eked out a victory over populist Jim Hightower in the race for agriculture commissioner in 1990.

See **RURAL Page 29A**

Milosevic dies in cell at midtrial

By **ARTHUR MAX**
Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Slobodan Milosevic, the former president of Yugoslavia and architect of a decade of war that claimed more than 200,000 lives and tore the Balkans apart, was found dead in his prison cell here on Saturday morning, the U.N. war crimes tribunal said.

Mr. Milosevic, 64, who suffered chronic heart ailments and high blood pressure, apparently died of natural causes and was found in his bed, the U.N. tribunal said, without giving an exact time of death.

The so-called butcher of the Balkans has been on trial at The Hague since February 2002, defending himself against 66 counts of crimes, including genocide, in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo.

See **SOME Page 24A**



Slobodan Milosevic



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