

Game Day Marching Band Procedures

By Bill Thomas

Band directors sometimes seem superhuman with all the hats they wear, from music teacher to tour director, counselor, promoter, logistical specialist, and more. Managing all these tasks can be quite overwhelming and lead to inefficiency or even burnout. It is essential to ease the burden on directors by asking parents to help take on some of the tasks associated with performing at football games. When asking for help from others, it is crucial to provide volunteers with clear directions for their service and how it fits into the routine of a football game performance.

Directors have many procedures and standards of operation that we teach students daily. That is true for football games as well. By sharing these procedures with parents in leadership, they develop a greater understanding of what we teach and a stronger respect for us and the content we impart beyond music. One of my mentors used to say, we “teach about life through music.”

I created a document for game day procedures to help me remember all of the things I need to do as a director, but also to give parents a cheat sheet each year. This document grows in importance as students and parents graduate

from the program, and new families join each year. While many veterans share their wisdom with rookie students and parents, it is helpful to have a written guide. Over the years, I have found students and parents respond well to procedures – “This is how we do XYZ in our band.” Written procedures lower stress for students, directors, and parents when everyone understands a complex event’s expectations and needs.



Dr. Bill Thomas is the Director of Bands at Shawnee Mission West High School in Overland Park, Kansas, a position he has held for 19 years. He is a former president of the

Kansas Bandmasters Association, has served as a Fine Arts department chair at Shawnee Mission West High School, and is also the Performing Arts Coordinator for the Shawnee Mission School District. Thomas wrote another article, A Better Booster Group, that was published in the October 2010 issue of *The Instrumentalist* that can provide more insights into enlisting parental help.



Photos by Will England

Game Day Staff

Task	Who is Responsible	Process/Notes
Directors	Paid Staff	Staff employed by the district to lead the Marching Band in all areas of performance. Currently that staff consists of 1. Head Director, 2. Associate Director, 3. Head Dance Team Color/Guard Coach, 4. Assistant DT/CG Coach, and 5. Percussion Director.
Roadies	Parents/Freshmen Students	These parents help load and unload equipment to the band trailer. They also are helpful when setting up the DM podiums/ladders at the stadium as well as field props.
Chaperones	Parents	These parents ride busses to events to oversee and help students with appropriate behavior. Sometimes they are enlisted by directors as extra leaders where needed. For home football games, one parents is responsible to take the West Pride banner and hang it at the stadium. Another parents is responsible to take the first-aid backpack.
Tailgate	Parents	These parents organize the feeding of students at home football games and marching festivals. They are responsible for ordering and managing all aspects of the meal service from utensils, to drinks, and trash.
Uniform	Parents	These parents oversee uniform fitting, hemming/adjusting sleeve and pant length to pressing. They also order shoes and gloves and provide a list to the directors so students are correctly charged for reimbursement. On performance days, uniform parents help students with missing uniform parts or repairs. One parents should also have access to the repair kit at all performances in case a uniform repair is needed.



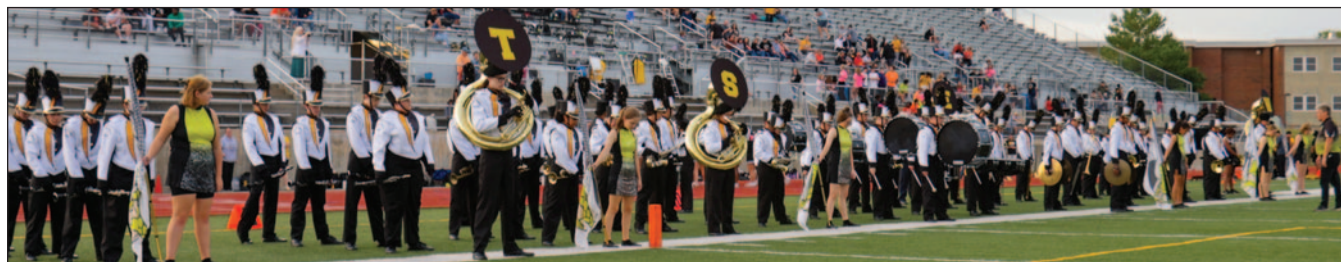
X	Task	Who is Responsible	Process/Notes	Time
	Script	Directors	Cover, pregame, halftime. Include names of DMs, DT, coaches, song titles, soloists, pictures of drill opening and closing sets. Also, include phonetic spellings of names that the announcer might mispronounce. All announcements should be in 14 pt. font and spaced at 1.5 lines for ease of reading. Make three copies – ANN, Asst. Director, Thomas. Send on Wednesday to Announcer.	Morning or Days Prior
	Morning Rehearsal	Directors	Run through pregame, show, show announcements, special activities.	
	Case and Bag	Drumline and Guard	Case drums after morning rehearsal. Put all necessary flags in bags, prepared for loading.	
	Prepare Pit equipment	Pit	Bag cymbals. Lower cymbal stands on carts. Replace AA batteries in all mics. Case piano keyboards.	
	Seat Covers	Parent	Pick up seat covers and place on seats in stands appropriately for students to sit on and keep pants clean.	
	Water jugs/ Cups/Trash Bags/Blue coolers for dinner.	Parent	Take 2-4 jugs of water. Fill with ice from West kitchen or trainers room. Take 300+ cups from band closet. Take trash bags for cups and dinner trash. Ice water bottles in blue coolers for dinner.	
	West Pride Banner	Chaperone Parent	Take banner and bungee cords and hang outside the pressbox on the concession end fence above the seating area so band parents know where to sit. It also promotes school pride.	
	Change into Uniforms	Students	4:00 pm (4:30 pm later in the season) student call time for arrival to begin changing into uniform. T-Shirt, black shorts, black socks, band shoes, and uniform. Check pant length to make sure students are not walking on the hem. Uniform bags get put back on racks when departing for stadium, not left in room, so custodians can clean while we are gone. Hats are carried to stadium in hat box. Gloves can be carried in hat box. If a student forgets black socks, uniform “Band Shirt,” or needs new gloves. the Uniform moms can supply loaner or new replacements for a fee.	
	Load instruments	Students/Parents/ Roadies	When students arrive, large instrument cases should be taken outside and prepped for loading. Sousaphones, baritones, trombones, mellophones, tenor saxes, battery percussion (& harnesses), pit carts and piano keyboards. Roadies oversee the loading of the trailer. Freshmen students help is greatly appreciated. 6-8 parents and 2-4 students needed.	
	Load Sound equipment	Students/Parents/ Roadies	Double check brakes on wheels to make sure they are released. Move sound cart and four speaker cabinets in preparation for loading. Make sure the cables are appropriately wrapped and secured to the back of the speakers.	
	Load DM podiums and Ladders	Students/Parents/ Roadies	Load three DM podiums and three ladders for use at the stadium. Only one ladder is needed for competitions. Sometimes podiums are not needed at competitions. Ask directors for clarity.	
	Load Props	Students/Freshman Students	Prepare prop pipes and hardware. The drops are kept in plastic tubs appropriately marked.	
	Pull Trailer	Parent	Organized ahead of time. 3/4 ton pickup preferred. City Rent-A-Truck can be rented if necessary.	

X	Task	Who is Responsible	Process/Notes	Time
	Unload at stadium	Students/Parents/Roadies	After unloading from busses, students take their instruments and uniforms to the band seating area. Proceed back to the trailer and assist with unloading of other instruments, sound equipment, and props.	At Stadium Prior to Game Time
	Instrument cases	Students	All instruments carried on the trailer should be placed by section along the track (not on the sidewalk) in a neat, uniform line. Like instrument cases should be grouped. Once the students have instruments out of their case, it should be latched and returned to the straight line. Organization and presentation is a must. Small instruments carried on the buses should be kept in the stands. This attention to detail is a declaration of a disciplined organization.	
	Stadium Rehearsal	Students/Directors	Set up as soon as possible after arrival at the stadium for a complete run of the show as well as pregame. We only have the field from 5:00-5:30 pm.	
	DM Podiums	Roadies	Place the three podiums as soon as possible after the trailer is unloaded. 35, 50, 35 yard lines. 50, both legs on the green turf. 35, both legs on the track. After rehearsal, podiums are removed to the track and lowered so spectators can see the game. They must also be out of the way for cheerleaders and dance team to use the track during the game.	
	Props	Students/Roadies	Unload prop parts to infield behind endzone. After rehearsal (during rehearsal for Fr. Students and some Roadies) assemble props for use. If windy, lay props face-first on turf until needed so they do not blow around.	
	Tailgate – Dinner	Tailgate and Chaperone Parents	Set up tables for food and water to the south of the stands between the stands and the drive through gate. Dinner is served at approximately 5:45 pm. All students go through the line first followed by parent volunteers, and directors. Directors will call for seconds after determining that all have been served first. All trash must be picked up and disposed of. Water bottles may be used for dinner and should be chilled in the blue coolers from the band closet.	



X	Task	Who is Responsible	Process/Notes	Time
	Dress into full uniform	Students/Uniform and Chaperone Parents	6:15 – Put on full uniform. Moms hand out plumes.	Game Time!
	Meet to warm-up	Students/Directors	6:23 – Meet in curve of track (drumline) or Green area behind endzone (hornline, dance team) to warm-up, focus, and receive final reminders.	
	Move to track/sideline	Students	6:32 – Move to track in lines. Move up to sideline after teams leave for the locker room. Students at Parade Rest - no moving.	
	DM Podiums	Roadie Parents	Prepare DM Podiums for placement for performance (see above for positions) after teams leave the field. When DM's dismount after fight song, podiums can be struck until needed at halftime.	
	Pre-game begins	Students (DMs)	6:40 – On cue from Dr. Thomas (having received “Go” from Mr. McAtee) DM calls band to attention, move drumline onto the field, Run-on begins.	
	Pregame Order	Students	1. Run-On cadence, 2. Stand Up and Cheer, 3. SSB, 4. Alma Mater, 5. Fight Song, 6. Cadence to Team Tunnel. 7. Fight song when team enters, 8. Run off field	
	Drumline to perform for student section	Drumline	Drumline performs for student section in “Hype manner.” Rest of the band moves behind drumline and stays out of way of cheerleaders on track moving back to band seating area.	
	Plumes	Parents	Parents receive plumes from students prior to them re-entering the stands so they are not damaged.	
	Game	Students	Cheer on the team. No cell phones in the stands. Our job is to play and encourage our school and team. Drink water from the coolers and cups. Clean up trash into the provided trash bags. Watch DMs and directors for starting and stopping cheers and tunes. We pride ourselves on starting and stopping together. No eating or drinking colored liquids during the game.	
	Halftime	Students/Uniform, Chaperone, Roadie Parents	Drumline puts on harnesses (under jacket) with six minutes left on the clock. Students begin departing the stands at 5:00 minutes on the clock. Students receive plumes from mom's on the track. Meet with Dr. Thomas to talk through the show. Take place on sidelines/track as needed to prepare for field entrance. Stay on track until the half is ended.	
	After halftime	Students/Parents/Roadies	March off the end of the field, talk through show with Dr. Thomas. Upon dismissal, mom's gather plumes and put back in Plume Bag. Roadies and Fr. Students remove sound equipment and podiums from sideline and props from field to prepare for loading. Make sure all equipment is safely away from field for safety of players and cheerleader and dance team.	
	3rd Quarter off	Band Students	Go to stands. Remove uniform jacket. Pull sleeves inside out, fold neatly and lay on bleacher cover. Enjoy 4th quarter with friends. Get concessions if desired. Be back in the stands with your instrument ready to play “The Band is HOT” at the intermission between 3/4th quarter. Do not be late. You are not to be anywhere in the stadium with your jacket still on (except the band area) during 3rd quarter.	
	4th Quarter	Band Students/Directors	Play through the end of the game. Pick up trash in the band seating area and place in bags passed throughout the band.	

X	Task	Who is Responsible	Process/Notes	Time
	Post Game	Students, Directors and Roadies	At the game's conclusion, play the fight song at the buzzer. Unsnap the ties under the bleacher seat covers. When the football team comes to the student section, play the Alma Mater with Cheerleaders and Dance Team followed by the Fight Song. Dismiss to load the trailer and busses. Pit helps move their equipment into place. All other students with instruments to transport on the trailer, hand deliver instruments to the appropriate area or parent to load - then go to their respective bus for loading.	Post Game
	Band room changing back into street clothes	Students, Directors, Parents	Go back to uniform room and retrieve uniform bag. Remove uniform and hang appropriately on hanger making sure that the pant crease is hung to the edges of the hanger to maintain the crease. Jacket is hung and buttoned into place so it won't fall off the hanger. Shoes are not to be carried in the uniform bag. Hang bag on rack in appropriate location. Hat is replaced in appropriate cubby. Gloves may be left in the hat box. Students who borrow shoes must return them to the Uniform Moms in the Uniform Room. If not returned, the student will be charged for their use. Chaperones return First Aid backpack and West Pride banner to the uniform closet. Water jugs and coolers are returned to the band closet.	



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