

Eyes With Pride

On November 7 of 2008, Yousef Malallah stood on the sideline of Buddy Echols Field. He was dressed in a stunning white band uniform with a silver sash across his chest. A gold medal hung around his neck.

It was Senior Night at Coppell High School. The voice of Middle School Band Director Joey Ashbrook boomed from the loudspeaker.

“Put your hands together,” Ashbrook said, “and come support those fighting Cowboys to victory tonight as the band plays the CHS fight song, led by Senior Assistant Pit Captain Yousef Malallah...”

Malallah strode purposefully up the steps of the drum major’s podium. He raised his hands. His eyes gleamed with intensity.

The moment was years in the making. Malallah, born with Down Syndrome, dreamed of leading the band. He practiced conducting on the sideline during each marching performance. The problem was, only a drum major could “officially” conduct.

Band director Scott Mason encouraged Malallah to apply for drum major his sophomore and junior years. Though he was not selected, Mason had a plan for his passionate student's senior year. He contacted the Malallah family and proposed that Yousef lead the band on Senior Night.

Malallah conducted with military precision. An occasional smile cracked through his steely expression. When the song ended, he cut the music off with an exuberant flourish. The crowd roared in approval and began chanting Malallah’s name.

After each performance the band stands to attention proclaiming that they hold their eyes with pride. With the help of Scott Mason, Yousef Malallah showed Coppell what those words truly mean.

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