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UNIVERSITY HIGH BAND WILL MARCH IN NO. 1 PARADE

Lesley Clark of The Sentinel Staff

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In just eight years, the University High School marching band has reached the pinnacle: The 350-member band will perform at the 1998 Tournament of Roses parade on New Year's Day in Pasadena, Calif.

It's the latest success - including the 1993 [Sugar Bowl](#) game in New Orleans and the 1995 Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade - for the fledgling band.

"We're only 8 years old, and this is about as big as it gets," band director Patrick Culler said.

The Tournament of Roses parade is the No. 1 band event in the country, televised on New Year's Day to more than 425 million people in 100 countries, Culler said.

Twenty-two bands participate, including 12 high school bands selected through an application process that includes videotapes, recommendations and a history of performances.

The Cougar band got in the first time it applied, Culler said.

The band will represent the Southeast, and it will be the first time since Colonial High School marched in 1965 that a Central Florida

high school band has been selected, Culler said.

But getting the nod is only the beginning. The bands are selected almost two years in advance to give them time to raise money. It will cost about \$825 per student.

The band has raised nearly half a million dollars for the six-day trip, peddling cheesecakes and holding car washes.

"The community has really come through for us," said Culler, who booked flights, transportation and hotels for the 350 students, 158 family members and friends, 32 chaperones and nearly a dozen band directors and school officials.

And the band members must be prepared physically to carry their instruments and play along the five-mile parade route. Band members spent a week at summer camp, running sprints and working out. Since July, they have rehearsed twice a week for two and a half hours.

The players are delirious with anticipation. Their wake-up call for the parade will come at 3 a.m. New Year's Day.

"We're already so pumped up and I don't think I'll sleep that whole night," said senior piccolo player Crystal McMiller, 17.

"This is something that's just out of the world for me," said Louanne Cason, 17, who plays tenor sax.