



Mike Loveless

Italy High School

Athletic Director / Head Football

Athletic Board Report

March 2026

➤ **UIL Realignment 2026-28**

FOOTBALL

District 8

- Axtell
- Bosqueville
- Dawson
- Italy
- Itasca
- Riesel
- Valley Mills

Rio Vista OUT (3A)
Riesel IN

BASKETBALL

District 19

- Dawson
- Frost
- Hubbard
- Italy
- Itasca
- Kerens
- Malakoff Cross Roads
- Wortham

Mildred OUT (3A)
Cross Roads & Itasca IN

VOLLEYBALL

District 13

- Dawson
- Frost
- Hubbard
- Italy
- Itasca

Rio Vista OUT (3A)
Meridian OUT
Dawson IN
Hubbard IN

Italy GLADIATORS

UIL 2026-28 Districts

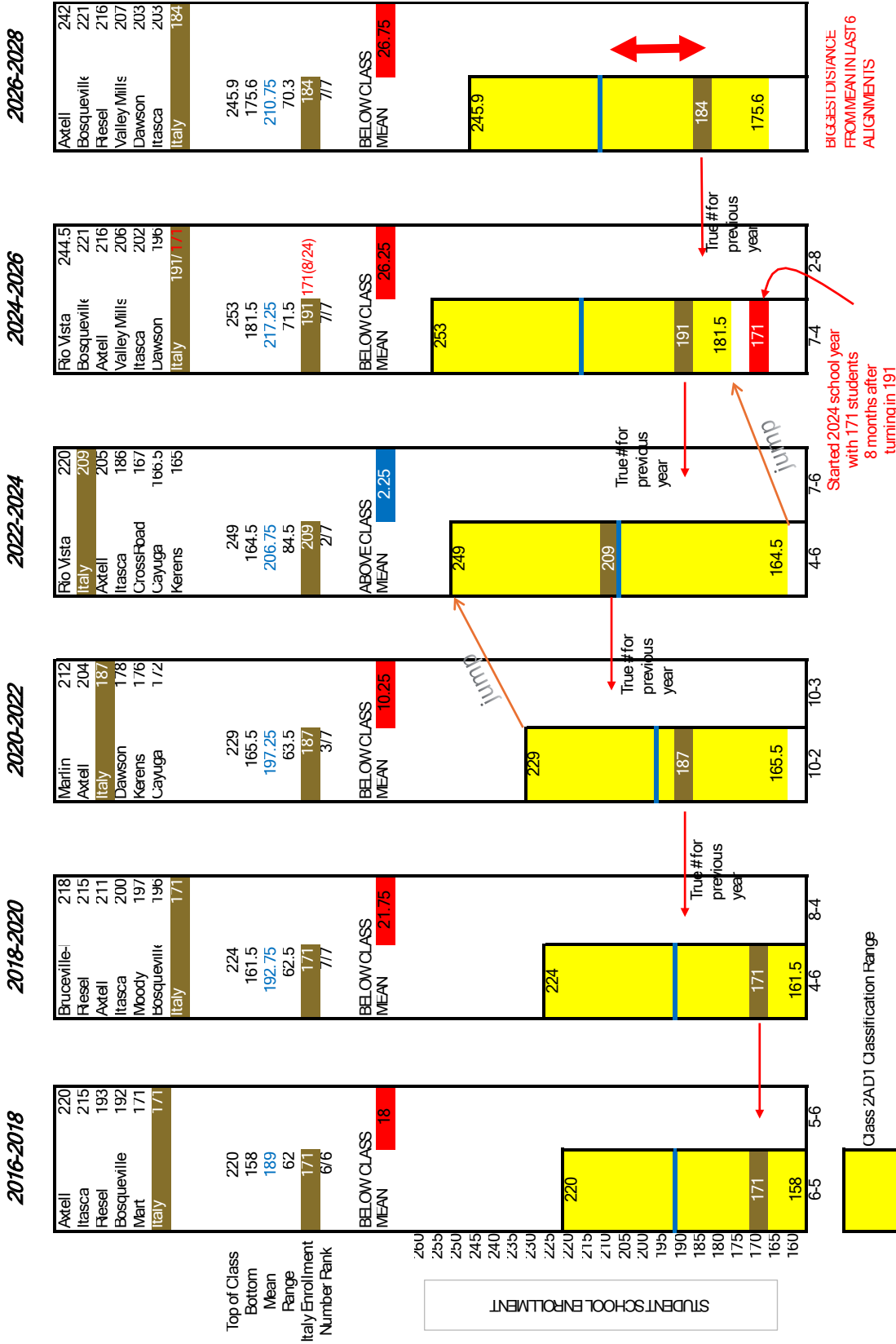
Itasca Itasca Itasca
 Dawson Dawson Dawson
 Bosqueville Frost Frost
 Axtell Hubbard Hubbard
 Riesel CR CROSS ROADS
 Valley Mills Wortham
 Kerens

FOOTBALL District 8-2A D1 R2
 BASKETBALL TRACK & CC District 19-2A R3
 VOLLEYBALL District 13-2A R2
 SOFTBALL BASEBALL *To be determined at a later date!*

Find Work-Be Tough-Be Better-Be Remembered
 Don't be Lost, Late, or Lazy – Have Direction, Integrity, and Pride (Drive)
 "Protect Our Legacy"
 How Will You be Remembered?

Last 6 UIL Realignments for Italy ISD - Football

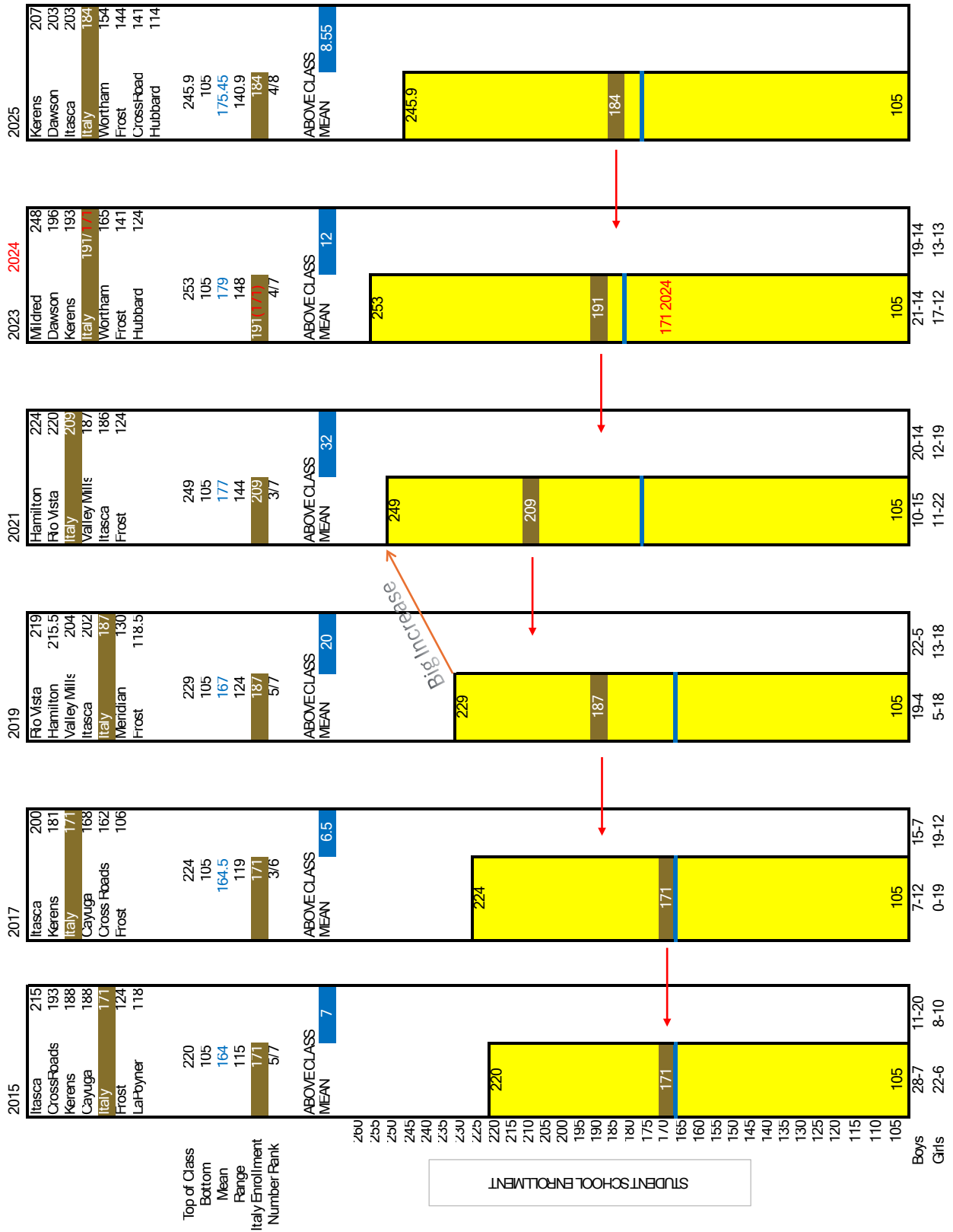
Italy Winning Tradition



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Last 6 UIL Realignmentments for Italy ISD - Basketball

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Italy Football since 1976

	STATE	CLASS	RANGE	ENROLLMENT	RECORD	ITALY
19	76	-	77 B	<124	<124	11-1 12
	77	-	78 B	<124	<124	10-0-1 11
	78	-	79 B	<129	<129	11-2 13
	79	-	80 B	<129	<129	4-5-1 10
	80	-	81 A	<134	<134	9-3 12
	81	-	82 A	<134	<134	10-3 13
	82	-	83 A	<139	<139	11-3 14
	83	-	84 A	<139	<139	11-2 13
	84	-	85 A	<134	<134	7-3-1 11
	85	-	86 A	<134	<134	14-1 15
	86	-	87 AA	135-284	>135	8-4 12
	87	-	88 AA	135-284	>135	9-2 11
	88	-	89 AA	145-299	>145	7-3-1 11
	89	-	90 AA	145-299	>145	10-2 12
	90	-	91 A	<139	<139	12-1 13
	91	-	92 A	<139	<139	12-1 13
	92	-	93 AA	145-284	>145	11-2 13
	93	-	94 AA	145-284	>145	9-2 11
	94	-	95 AA	145-294	>145	4-6 10
	95	-	96 AA	145-294	>145	10-2 12
	96	-	97 AA	150-304	>150	11-2 13
	97	-	98 AA	150-304	>150	14-1 15
	98	-	99 AA	160-344	>160	11-2 13
	99	-	00 AA	160-344	>160	9-4 13
20	00	-	01 AA	170-344	>170	7-4 11
	01	-	02 AA	170-344	>170	10-3 13
	02	-	03 AA	180-344	>180	10-3 13
	03	-	04 AA	180-344	>180	11-2 13
	04	-	05 AA	190-389	>190	8-3 11
	05	-	06 AA	190-389	>190	7-4 11
	06	-	07 AA	195-414	>195	0-10 10
	07	-	08 AA	195-414	>195	5-5 10
	08	-	09 1AD1	<199	<199	4-6 10
	09	-	10 1AD1	<199	<199	5-5 10
	10	-	11 2AD2	200-284	>200	5-5 10
	11	-	12 2AD2	200-284	>200	7-4 11
	12	-	13 1AD1	100-199	>100	9-5 14
	13	-	14 1AD1	100-199	>100	6-5 11
	14	-	15 2AD2	105-157	>105	2-7 9
	15	-	16 2AD2	105-157	>105	6-5 11
	16	-	17 2AD1	158-220	171	6-5 11
	17	-	18 2AD1	158-220	171	5-6 11
	18	-	19 2AD1	161.5-224	171	4-6 10
	19	-	20 2AD1	161.5-224	171	8-4 12
	20	-	21 2AD1	165.5-229	187	10-2 12
	21	-	22 2AD1	165.5-229	187	10-3 13
	22	-	23 2AD1	164.5-249	209	4-6 10
	23	-	24 2AD1	164.5-249	209	7-6 13
	24	-	25 2AD1	181.5-253	191	7-4 11
	25	-	26 2AD1	181.5-253	191	2-8 10
	26	-	27 2AD1		184	
	27	-	28 2AD1		184	

Possible changes that could have contributed to Gaps.

Youth select sports, often called travel or club sports, gained significant popularity in Texas **beginning in the early 1990s** and exploded in prevalence between 1995 and 2005. Driven by parental anxiety regarding college admissions and the pursuit of scholarships, this trend shifted away from local recreation towards year-round, specialized competition. [DFWChild +1](#)

- **Rise of Select Culture:** While organized sports have long existed, the "select" or "club" model, aimed at elite competition in sports like baseball, soccer, and volleyball, became widespread in Texas during the 1990s, with a major surge observed by the early 2000s.
- **Key Drivers:** The rise in Texas was fueled by the belief that top-tier competition was necessary for advancement, leading to earlier specialization and intense, year-round training, sometimes causing high burnout rates by age 13.

Texas high school student transfers, particularly in athletics, have increased significantly in popularity and frequency in the **late 2010s and early 2020s**, mirroring the rise of the NCAA transfer portal. While student movement has always existed, the trend gained major momentum due to a more permissive culture surrounding school choice and, more recently, legislative attempts to allow one-time, penalty-free transfers for athletes. [e](#)

Approximate start of multi-million \$ youth sport industry
Late 90s - Early 2000 (select sports)

Possible hit among suburban areas

2012-Arlington ISD maade all schools open to tranfers.
First bigschool to allow transfers

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Italy Winning Tradition

In retrospect, there are many attributes that MAY have affected Italy athletic success over the years. Through my experience (especially in the DFW area) some of those attributes that have affected player movement were:

- Club or “select” sports that introduce players to other options (or being told “half” truths) for their development like specializing for bigger schools and playing year-round (marketing by club teams for \$\$\$)
- Private schools – Affect bigger schools but NOT necessarily a reason for families to leave Italy.
- Individualized trainers offer introductions and communication to specialize or relocate to play elsewhere.
- Open transfers (most schools) in surrounding area gives options when things get tough or difficult.
- Demographics also can change which has affected many communities over the years.

These are only possibilities, but being aware of the possible reasons is how we educate ourselves on how to grow PRIDE, LOVE of Italy, and the attractiveness of “Being a Gladiator”. No matter the reason, there are differences in times from when I played and now. When I played football, my options were fight through it or Dad was going to put a hoe handle in my hand and “chop cotton”. The option was so miserable to me that Italy football became my life and my dreams. When there is only one option you learn to LOVE and make the best of it with PRIDE and DEDICATION. Those times are gone.

“Wanting to be a Gladiator” has lots of competition for our Youth today and it is way more difficult to build up Pride and Tradition when there is a way out, something else to do, or another organization to be a part of. We must be BETTER than we have ever been and “market” and “defend” our school. It is a tough battle, but it starts with the JH and Elementary believing in Gladiators and wanting to be a part of something special and consistent. It’s okay to play club (select) because sometimes it’s the only option but just come back to the coaches who will NOT lie to you and have your best interest at heart and are not doing it because of the money.

I want our program to influence families to want to move to Italy and be a part of it, but above all I am going to fight to the end to ensure that we keep the kids we have. I have already had many communications with people who I thought may be infringing on our population and those conversations quickly become one-sided.

➤ **Girls Basketball**

Our High School Women’s Basketball Program has a total of 22 young women. 12 varsity players consisting of 3 seniors, 2 juniors, 3 sophomores, and 4 freshmen. Our JV consists of 10 players. 7 freshmen, and 3 sophomores. While the season didn’t quite go as we hoped of making it to the playoffs, it came down to the very last game of the year between us and Kerens fighting for the last spot in the playoffs. The Lady Gladiators overall record was 13-13. Prior to this year there were only 4 players who had varsity playing experience. Along the way the Lady Gladiators experienced many accomplishments this year. Junior Tatum Box accomplished 1000 career points. Freshman Scout Robinson hit the game winning 3 pointer against Avalon with 3 seconds left to go in the game. Senior Ta’Nyria Fennell sank 2 free throws in the Avalon game to close their lead to just 2 points with 8 seconds left to go in the game, and Senior Jaslyn Acosta sank the free throw to seal the victory against Mildred at home on senior night.

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This was the Lady Gladiators first time beating Mildred in district play in two years. This year we played in the Celeste Invitational Basketball Tournament and The Eustace Invitational Tournament. Our Captains for the year are as voted on by the team are: Senior, Jaslyn Acosta, Senior, Ta’Nyria Fennell, senior, Arhiana Johnson, and junior, Tatum Box. JV’s overall record for the year was 6-2. Junior High Basketball has 26 young ladies in the program. (8 more than last year). The 7 th and 8 th grade teams participated in the Coolidge Junior High Tournament where 7 th grade won the championship and 8 th grade got second place. 7 th grades overall record was 9-1. 8 th grade’s overall record was 4-6

Other Highlights:

- Leading scorer this year was Tatum Box with 512 points for the year averaging 20.5 point per game.
- Game high for points this year is Tatum Box with 38 points.
- Leading rebounder – Arhiana Johnson
- Assists leader – Tatum Box
- Steals Leader – Tatum Box
- Shot Block Leader – Ta’Nyria Fennell

All-District Selections

1st Team -Tatum Box

2nd Team – Arhiana Johnson

2nd Team – Ta’Nyria Fennell

Honorable Mention – Sasha Babers

Honorable Mention – Avery Garcia

Honorable Mention – Jaslyn Acosta

Honorable Mention – Makayla Johnson

Academic All District:

Alyssa Penner

Joanna Graciano

Brenna Reeves

Scout Robinson

Avery Garcia

Makayla Johnson

Sasha Babers

Tatum Box

Arhiana Johnson

Ta’Nyria Fennell

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➤ Boys Basketball

Jr. High Basketball

Our junior high teams finished the district season strong! The 7th grade team captured the District Championship, and the 8th graders battled their way to a 3rd-place finish.

We also had a combined 7th and 8th grade team that competed in several games and showed tremendous growth throughout the season. With over 35 athletes participating this year, morning practices were always full of energy. Despite the numbers, we made it a priority to ensure every player got meaningful reps and quality development time.

JV

JV finished the season on a strong note. We were a very young team that took some tough losses early, but as district play progressed, they began to figure things out. They found ways to win key games and competed hard every night. Even in close losses, they showed heart, resilience, and a willingness to fight until the final buzzer. No matter the opponent, it was always a battle.

Varsity

Varsity made significant strides this season. As it was my first year, there was an adjustment period early on as the players adapted to a new style of play and expectations. We lost a few close games early, but the boys continued to buy in and grow. As the season progressed, they really began to understand and execute what we were building — and they impressed me with their development.

We faced challenges competing against larger schools, but those games served as valuable lessons. Our focus was on playing with heart, competing at a high level, and improving each time we stepped on the court. That growth is still a work in progress, but we're headed in the right direction.

We finished district in 3rd place, won our bi-district playoff game, and advanced to the second round before falling to a strong basketball-only program that was solid from top to bottom.

Overall

I'm proud of the way our players competed and represented our program. They played hard, embraced the grind, and learned to appreciate the results that come from consistent effort. The future is bright, and we're excited to keep building.

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Joanna Graciano

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Scout Robinson

Avery Garcia

Makayla Johnson

Sasha Babers

Tatum Box

Arhiana Johnson

Ta'Nyria Fennell

Jasenio Anderson

Mon, Mar 2, 7:43 AM
(1 day ago)

to me

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