



Tiger Tea: Tigerettes Take on Orlando

Members of the HHS Dance Team take a once-in-a-lifetime trip

Article, Grace Gerst, Writer, Photographer

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On January 16th, the Tigerettes dance team traveled to Orlando, Florida, to start an exciting four-day trip. The upperclassmen had the opportunity to watch the UDA nationals, which is the largest and one of the most well-known dance competitions. Along with watching the competition, the girls got to spend a day at Disney World and Disney Springs, where many memories were made, and a lot of money was spent.

For those who don't know much about the competition, UDA nationals is the largest streamed competition in the entire world. Millions of people watch it online on the website Varsity Sports, as well as people streaming it on TikTok and Instagram. UDA Nationals have been around for more than 40 years, but recently it has been the "Girls Superbowl", an event most girls are preparing for every year. The different categories, such as HipHop, Jazz, and Open Pom, have different styles and many opportunities for different choreography.

This year, the event took place in the ESPN Wide World of Sports building at Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando. The building holds between 5,000 and 7,000 people, which creates a loud and entertaining environment for the girls to dance in. The 2026 winners were the University of Nevada-Las Vegas for HipHop, the Ohio State University for Jazz, and the University of Minnesota for open pom.

Unfortunately, the UDA (dance) and UCA (cheerleading) competitions fell on the same weekend, as well as a high school soccer tournament in the same building, so the city of Orlando was packed. It was hard for the girls to get from place to place with the number of people in one area. Additionally, the venue was overbooked and sold way more tickets than the facility could hold. With this overbooking, there were no reserved seats, and it was first come first serve for everyone. The girls couldn't get up from their seats to use the restroom or to eat food because they didn't want someone else to take them.

The trip started with a bright and early wake-up at 3:00 am on Friday. Everyone met at head coach Erin Monchino's house to do bag checks and eat a light breakfast. The team arrived at the St. Louis International Airport at around 5:30 am, boarded their flight, and arrived at the Orlando Airport by 11:30 am. After they landed, the girls went to the hotel rooms to get unpacked before quickly leaving for UDA performances.

When the Southern Illinois University Saluki Shakers performed, the dancers had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be down in the pit during their performance.



A picture of the team members posing with their coach, Erin Monchino

Tigerette senior Skyla Triplett said, "Being down in the pit was an unforgettable experience, and I want to do it again." When LSU performed their Hip-Hop routine to Kendrick Lamar, the girls went crazy. They even got ideas for their own HipHop routine, which ironically is also Kendrick Lamar.

The following Saturday, they were up bright and early once again at 4:30 a.m. and stayed in the event center all day watching each and every performance. After LSU performed, they left the arena, and senior Maddie Martin made a TikTok video of the LSU dance team, which got over 100k views.



The Tigerettes pose with Goofy and Mickey Mouse at Disney's Epcot.

They then Ubered over to The Magic Kingdom. Herrin Tigerette senior Faith Burgner says, "Magic Kingdom was my favorite place because it did indeed feel magical. The air smelled so good it was unreal."



With the UDA stage in the background, the girls smile and excitedly wait for the next performance.

They didn't ride many rides, but they were very pleased to finally get to walk around and stretch their legs after sitting for many hours. After the park closed, they got some food and then headed back to their rooms.

Skyla Triplett exclaimed, "Our rooms had food everywhere and smelled like Parmesan wings. It was so bad that it could be compared to a middle school boy's room. Luckily, we just had to sleep in them." Unfortunately, the girls finally got to bed around 2 am.

Just like Saturday, Sunday was another early wake-up day. After all of the awards from the UDA contests of the day, the girls Ubered over to Epcot. They waited in the Gardens of a Galaxy line for more than two and a half hours, but all of them said it was worth it. Once again, they got to their rooms very late and had to prepare for another early morning as well as pack.

On Monday, the girls decided to visit Disney Springs to shop and spend more time in the nice weather before their flight home. They headed to the airport shortly after they got done shopping and arrived in St. Louis around 10 pm.

Faith Burgner said, "I hated coming home because it was freezing and I could smell the St. Louis air." The girls got home late, making it a long but worthwhile trip.

The girls who had the privilege to attend the trip had a great time and said all of the money spent was worth it. They all had many memories to share, and they can't wait to go back in the next couple of years.