



## The Best Thing I Saw at State: From Six to Forty-Eight

### *De'Avery Durham's Historic 48-Point State Title Performance*

By Ethan W. Anderson

The *Best Thing I Saw at State* is a new column that brings to life the moments that make high school sports so meaningful. Through the stories, emotions, and details that often go unseen at the state championships, it captures what the box score can't.



**Lake Charles, LA** — The Class C State Championship game delivered something special.

Game number twenty-two of the weekend delivered one of the most complete and compelling contests of the entire week. It was the only title game that required overtime, and despite being the smallest classification, it produced one of the biggest stages.

At the center of it all was Gibsland-Coleman senior De'Avery Durham, who finished with 48 points in a performance that will be remembered for a lifetime. What made the night even more remarkable was how it unfolded. Durham had just six points at halftime, as Pleasant Hill's defense limited his opportunities and kept him from finding a rhythm early in the game.

That quickly changed.

Durham erupted for 42 points in the second half and overtime, completely taking control of the game when his team needed him most. Possession after possession, he found ways to score, whether attacking the basket, creating his own shot, or finishing through contact. His performance shifted the momentum and ultimately carried the Bulldogs to a championship.



When asked about what coach said to him at halftime, Durham jokingly said, “I don’t think y’all want to know that motivation... Coach got on me and pretty much told me I ain’t playing like myself. Normally I don’t ever have six points. I always go at it like I want it, I had to put my heart into it.”

That message from head coach Roger Jones proved to be the turning point. Jones has built a program that demands accountability and resilience, and his confidence in Durham never wavered.

“I told him never give up. Keep fighting to the end,” Jones said.

As Durham continued to score, another storyline quietly developed. Jones, who played at Pine View High School, once scored 50 points in a playoff game, a mark he has referenced often with his players.

“Now in high school, I played at Pineview,” Jones said. “I scored 50 in a playoff game one night, and I’ve been telling the guys all season I want to see if anybody can break my record of scoring 50.”

For a moment, it appeared that record might fall.

“Coach tells us that every day in practice,” Durham said. “I tried my hardest to beat coach’s 50. I missed that free throw and thought, ‘Dang, I could have really got it.’”

Jones kept the tone consistent, even in the middle of a historic performance.

The determination shown during that game reflected the culture of the program, where high expectations and belief go hand in hand. Durham finished just two points shy of tying his coach’s mark, but the impact of his performance extended far beyond the number itself.

“First, I’d like to thank God,” Durham said. “I’m tired. I played hard. I wanted it bad. We went through so much stuff last year and the years before that, and finally we got a chance to pull it off. I’ve got to thank my coach for pushing me. He stayed on me every second. He told me I’m the controller of the team, so I had to put the team in place to get this victory.”

The game itself required that level of leadership. Pleasant Hill responded throughout the night, matching runs and forcing the Bulldogs to earn every possession. Led by Javonte Ford and Kzirion Holmes, and guided by longtime head coach Randy Carlisle, the Eagles once again showed why they are consistently one of the top programs in Class C.

Gibbsland-Coleman, however, proved equally prepared. Entering the championship as the No. 1 seed with a 28-3 record, the Bulldogs had dominated throughout the postseason. Their path to the finals included decisive wins, but the championship tested them in a different way. They were forced to respond under pressure, and they did so with composure.



To fully understand the significance of the moment, it helps to understand the community behind the team. Gibsland is a small town in Bienville Parish with a population of fewer than 800 people. It is a place with deep historical roots, including its connection to early railroad development and Coleman College, one of the first educational institutions for African Americans in North Louisiana. It is also famously known as the site where Bonnie and Clyde were killed in 1934.



For this week, however, it was known for basketball.

“I’m from a small town, Gibsland, Louisiana,” Durham said. “That’s just a little thing on the map. We want to be seen. It started today, and we made sure everybody knew we were coming.”

That sense of pride extends throughout the program and the community. Gibsland-Coleman is a small K-12 school with a roster that includes players across multiple grade levels, but it continues to compete at the highest level because of its culture and unity.

“I want to tell the kids to just keep grinding and never give up,” said senior forward DeMarquis Durham. “I see a lot of kids that look up to me. Stuff like that means everything. Just keep working hard. It’s going to come.”

That message reflects what makes high school sports unique. When a team is aligned with a common goal and guided by

strong leadership, it can achieve at a level that goes beyond expectations tied to size or resources. Yet another reason high school sports go beyond the game.

Roger Jones has built that standard at Gibsland-Coleman. From leading the Bulldogs to a state championship in 2022 to returning again with another title run, his program continues to reflect discipline, belief, and resilience.



Durham's 48-point performance will be remembered, but what stood out most was the way it happened. A quiet first half turned into a dominant finish. A coach's long standing scoring mark became part of the moment. A small town found itself at the center of the biggest stage.

Those are the moments that define championship week, and those moments are the reason this column exists.



**Author's Note:** *In my role as the Director of Communications, I have the unique privilege of attending nearly all sanctioned LHSAA State Championship events. Although the schedule is demanding, I have the privilege of seeing student-athletes from all walks of life, united by two things: their participation in Louisiana high school sports and their pursuit of a state championship. In my first year in this role, I've gained a deeper appreciation for high school athletics and for all the dedication that goes into making each season and event possible. Although my current role involves less writing than my previous positions, it has given me the opportunity to return to something I've always loved. While much of my work now focuses on press releases and public statements, I also have the chance to reconnect with my passion for feature writing, this time highlighting what I consider the purest form of sport: high school athletics. The goal is to highlight the best thing I saw at each state championship and share the unknown stories behind these events, capturing memorable moments for student-athletes, coaches, administrators, officials, and fans.*