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Dixie County Bears beat Williston Red Devils 13-12



Williston Red Devils prepare to enter their home field, and then come out of a cloud of carbon dioxide to start the game.

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## Story, Photos and Video

By Jeff M. Hardison © Oct. 2, 2016 @ 4:17 p.m.

**WILLISTON** -- The thrill of victory coursing through the veins of each player, coach and fan of the Dixie County Bears and the agony of defeat felt by the Williston Red Devils must have been as powerful as it gets Friday night (Sept. 30) as the home team lost a nail biter, even though those young gridiron warriors from Williston kept hope alive for fans up to the bitter end. The fiscal year had just ended for all municipal and county governments that day. The sun had set on the completion of that year and the future of the Fiscal Year 2016-17 hovered in the unseen future daybreak, officially of Saturday and most functionally on Monday.

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However, every bit of private business and government action was laid aside by coaches, players and spectators.



**Matt and Angie Brooks, and their children Baylin, Berkley, Brityn and Bowen were recognized at the start of the game. Matt Brooks and Derrick Wise were listed as 'The 12th Man' for this game for their contributions to the Red Devils. Both Brooks and Wise graduated in 1996. Wise, who owns a tax and accounting firm, was unable to attend the game Friday due to a death in his family.**

*The Lord's Prayer*, led by legendary Williston High School Head Varsity Baseball Coach Scott Hall, and the *Star-Spangled Banner* played by the WHS Marching Band and directed by WHS Band Director and Music Teacher Clay Cobb, opened the event with traditional and proper respect paid to God and country.



**The WHS Band performs the *Star-Spangled Banner*.**

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After those moments, no one knew what the near-future would unfold. The next few hours took everyone together to the place where all high school football events transcend. Certainly, that place is not the same on every field, and the experience is obviously different for each human. Yet, there is a commonality and to experience that game in Williston on that night is very singular.

Both head varsity football coaches shared their perspectives after the meeting of the two teams.



**At halftime, Matt Brooks holds Bowen Brooks as Baylin Brooks also poses for a photo opportunity. Brooks, who is a co-owner of B4 Signs and Advertising, was recently elected to be a member of the Levy County Board of County Commissioners. He currently serves on the Williston City Council.**

## WHS COACH

WHS Head Varsity Football Coach Head Varsity Football Coach Justin Wentworth said Dixie County's players made the plays they needed to complete when they had to.

The coach said the 13-0 score showing a lead by DCHS at the end of the third quarter was not enough to extinguish the flame or the fight in his team of players.

"Two touchdowns is nothing in high school football," Wentworth said. "Maybe in the NFL it might be something. "But we get that great turnover – right there, right after a score – and that's big time stuff, you know, our kids are doing. And we are learning to do."

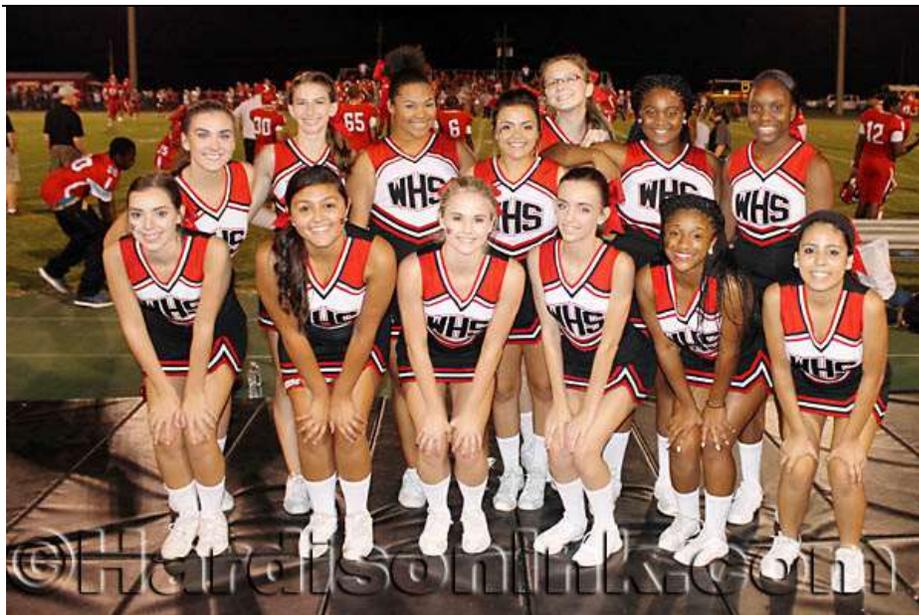
The coach told the players right after the game that he and assistant coaches David May, Calvin Strange, Jay Crooms, Ric Whittington, Stephen Godbolt and Wayne Williams were all proud of what they have shown they learned since the start of the year.

He let the players know, too, that he understands the pain they feel from a one-point loss, and this is something they should feel. Wentworth explained his words.

"If they're not hurting," he said, "then that means they are numb and this game's not for them. Football is an emotional sport. You're supposed to hurt after a game like this – especially one where you had so many opportunities.

"It's different if you're blown out, or the game is 55 to nothing, or whatever," he continued. "You can be numb to that. But the one-point losses hurt worse than anything else."

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## The Red Devils cheerleaders

### DCHS COACH

DCHS Head Varsity Football Coach Brent Wilkerson was pleased with the win. "It wasn't pretty," Wilkerson said, "but it was a win."

The Bears were missing some of the starters due to

injuries suffered when they played Trenton, Wilkerson said.

"We had some young kids step up," Wilkerson continued. "Hats off to Williston. They made some plays. They played hard and they did a good job."

### THE GAME

The first Bear to score was Aaron Dawson on a pass. Then, Wyatt Higginbotham is the player who scored a point after touchdown with a kick for the Bears.

Bears' Clifford Jackson took a punt back for a touchdown, accounting for their 13-point lead at halftime.



The WHS Band performs at half-time.

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In the second half, Williston got the ball to Gerard Williams III to score a touchdown. The conversion play after that was unsuccessful.

However, Williston then scored after a fumble by Dixie County was recovered.

The 13-12 score remained until the end.

The Williston Red Devils' defense remained a force to be reckoned with. With 1:41 remaining in the game, Dixie County had the ball.

The Bears were at third down on the five-yard line and were looking to score, when a Red Devil player intercepted.

Red Devils were making some progress when they were at fourth down and 1:02 remaining.

That's when the Bears' Britton Rollison intercepted. With 53 seconds to go and the ball at the Williston 30-yard line the game essentially faded into history. The players on both teams lined up, shook hands, went to their separate ends of the field and listened to their coaches' end of game speeches.