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## County Commission honors WHS Varsity Baseball Team as State Champions



Levy County Commission Vice Chairman Matt Brooks speaks about his days at Williston High School when he played on the high school's baseball team, before reading the proclamation. Seen here, are on the floor row, from left) Baseball Champions - Anthony Griffith, Weston Smith, Zach Tolodxi, Dalton Vonderstrasse, and WHS Head Varsity Baseball Coach Jim Smith (and standing behind the champs, from left) Levy County Commissioner Rock Meeks, Levy County Commission Vice Chairman Brooks, Levy County Commission Chairman John Meeks, Levy County Commissioner Mike Joyner and Levy County Commissioner Lilly Rooks.

### Story and Photos

By **Jeff M. Hardison** © June 18, 2019 at 7:29 a.m.

**BRONSON** -- The Levy County Board Of County Commissioners on Tuesday morning (June 18), issued a proclamation in honor of the Williston High School Varsity Baseball Team.

On a motion by Levy County Commission Vice Chairman Matt Brooks, seconded by County Commissioner Rock Meeks, and by a 5-0 vote, the County Commission unanimously accepted the proclamation.

The proclamation notes that under the leadership and guidance of Head WHS Varsity Baseball Coach Jim Smith, Associate Head Coach Jiwan James, and assistant coaches Austin Etheridge, Marland Williams, Bobby Kavanagh, Troy Battle and Greyson Smith, the team competed on the field at Hammond Stadium in Fort Myers. (This stadium is a completely renovated facility finished in 2015.) The Williston Red Devils won with a final winning score of 4-2 over the Chiefland Indians.

The County Commission, comprised of Vice Chairman Brooks, Commissioner Meeks, Chairman John Meeks, Commissioner Mike Joyner and Commissioner Lilly Rooks recognize the victory by WHS Varsity Baseball Team members Grayson Geiger, Gabe Foster, Ryan Braddock, Conner Neal, Cade Welborn, Jermon Collins, C.J. Strange, Jake Elder, Weston Smith, Logan Head, Jaron Cortese, Michael Reynolds, Ethan Davis, Anthony Griffith, Parker Seay, Dustin Battle, Race Battle, Michael Rey, Dalton Vonderstrasse, Zach Tolodxi, Manager Jacob Turbeville, and Manager T.J. Snead, and the hard work, dedication, perseverance, commitment to and love of the sport of baseball that each player has demonstrated throughout the season.

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Pausing for a photo opportunity after the presentation are (front row, from left) 2019 FHSAA Class 1A Baseball Champions - Anthony Griffith, Weston Smith, Zach Tolodxi and Dalton Vonderstrasse, and (back row, from left) Levy County Commissioner Lilly Rooks, Levy County Commissioner Rock Meeks, Levy County Commission Chairman John Meeks, WHS Head Varsity Baseball Coach Jim Smith, Levy County Commissioner Mike Joyner and Levy County Commission Vice Chairman Matt Brooks. Other members of the team were involved with other baseball tournaments and these four represented the team.

The Williston High School Varsity Baseball Team victory in the 2019 FHSAA Class 1A State Baseball Championship “will go down in the annals of time as one of the greatest moments in Williston High School athletics history,” the proclamation noted.

This heralds the third FHSAA Class 1A State Championship by that school’s baseball team.

“Williston High School has a rich tradition of excellence and accomplishment in academic and athletic competition,” the proclamation noted, “reflecting the highest ideals and traditions of teamwork, discipline, and sportsmanship.”

The proclamation went on to note that “the Williston High School Varsity Baseball Team competed in this sport throughout this historic and remarkable journey, with excellence and distinction, bringing credit to themselves, their parents, Williston High School and the community of Williston.”

Therefore, the County Commission proclaimed that in recognition of the significant accomplishment by the Williston High School Varsity Baseball Team in winning the 2019 FHSAA Class 1A State Baseball Championship, the commissioners congratulate those players -- the 2019 Williston High School Varsity Baseball Team -- "Mighty Red Devils."

They were congratulated “for a job well done,” and the Commission “offers special recognition to Coach Smith and his capable staff for the outstanding success in teaching these exceptional student athletes.”

The Levy County Board of County Commissioners “encourages all citizens to

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commend and applaud the athletes and coaches of the Williston High School Varsity Baseball Team.”

Before Vice Chairman Brooks read the proclamation, he said wanted Williston High School to be recognized for its excellent baseball program, which includes Coach Smith teaching the young men some “great life lessons.”

Brooks said he is happy to see the other final state championship contender against Williston is Chiefland’s team. He said this is another great honor for the county as a whole. As an alumnus (singular male for “alumni”) of WHS and of the WHS Baseball Team, Brooks said -- while the team did not win state champion titles back then -- he is all the more proud of these young men and their coaches.

And he is very happy to know these team members had that experience, and will have those memories from sharing this experience with their teammates.

“A lot of these guys are extremely young,” Brooks said. “So, they are going to be back, and they are going to be hungry to win another state championship. And we’re all looking forward to that.”

Coach Smith, after the presentation, said this was the last year for Chiefland High School Head Varsity Baseball Coach Kyle Parnell.

It was very unique to have two local teams compete for the state championship in baseball, Coach Smith said.

The coach said the Chiefland Indians competed as well as the Williston Red Devils, and the Chiefland players “did a great job.”

It was a win for Williston, Smith said, but it was a win for Levy County as well.

Coach Smith said competition in baseball throughout Levy County shows good sportsmanship.

“We were cheering for Chiefland,” he said, “in that final game (of Chiefland) against (the) Bozeman (Bucks of Panama City) – silently, because we wouldn’t want to offend Bozeman.”

The Indians beat the Bucks 7-2 on May 22, and went on to play Williston, where Williston won 4-2 on May 23.

Williston had a 21-9 win-loss record during the past season.

Coach Smith shared with Chairman Meeks that he sees Bronson High School has a promising coach for its baseball season in the next school year. Chairman Meeks had mentioned that Coach Smith was at Bronson before he went to Williston, and Coach Smith said he missed the sound of the Meeks over the public address system.

Announcing during football games at the football field in Bronson is one of the places when and where Chairman Meeks volunteers his service.