



**Wharton County
Junior College**

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MOST VALUABLE PLAYERS

WCJC honors top baseball, rodeo and volleyball athletes at annual banquet

WHARTON, TEXAS – Wharton County Junior College student athletes were recently recognized for their high marks in the classroom and prowess on the playing field.

Athletes from the college's three sports programs – baseball, rodeo and volleyball – were praised individually by their respective coaches during the 53rd Annual Athletic Banquet, held recently in the Pioneer Student Center on the Wharton campus.

Jenny Banker, daughter of the late coach Johnnie Frankie, encouraged the student athletes to follow their dreams and never back down from challenges.

"Don't be afraid to make a difference," Banker said.

Banker attended the banquet to present the coveted Johnnie Frankie Award, an honor bestowed since 1964 upon a single WCJC athlete who has exhibited outstanding abilities or character. This year's winner was volleyball player Brandy Delarosa of Lumberton.

A freshman, Delarosa excelled on the court as a middle blocker and did equally well in the classroom, making the Dean's List. Banker said Delarosa also has a compassionate spirit and a willingness to help out her fellow students.

"She radiates kindness," Banker said.

A pair of volleyball players – twin sisters Macy and Shay Mitchell of Lumberton – were chosen as co-winners of the Dr. Ty Pate Academic Award, which was established in the memory of the late WCJC administrator and former athlete. Kevin Dees, a biology instructor and Division Chair of WCJC's Life and Physical Science Department, presented the sisters with their plaques.

"This award is given to athletes who demonstrate a commitment to the classroom as well as to their teammates," Dees said.

Dees noted that the Mitchell sisters took the same classes and ended up with the exact same grade point average (GPA).

Shay Mitchell was also named the volleyball team's Most Valuable Player, scoring 408 points for the Pioneers during the 2015-2016 season and making First Team All-Conference.

Volleyball coach Brianna Florus noted that the Pioneers had a stellar season, finishing at 8-2 in conference and 26-9 overall.

"It was a season none of us wanted to end," Florus said.

WCJC Athletic Director Gene Bahnsen credited the volleyball team with hitting the books as hard as they attacked the volleyball, with more than half of the team making the Dean's List and several having a perfect 4.0 GPA.

"I've been around a long time and I couldn't have been more impressed with this team," Bahnsen said. "They competed on every play, every serve, every block. It's a great team and we think the world of them."

Pioneers baseball coach Keith Case introduced his 29-man roster and announced to applause that the team has made this year's Region XIV Baseball Tournament, scheduled for May 13-May 16 at Constellation Field in Sugar Land.

Case said a team MVP has yet to be announced as the season is still in progress.

"I'm really proud of these guys," he said. "They have team chemistry and they worked their tails off and the relationships they built will last forever."

Rodeo coach Sean Amestoy shared highlights from his team's winning season, noting that the men's team finished third in the region and will send five cowboys to next month's College National Finals Rodeo in Casper, Wyo. The women's team finished seventh.

For the second year in a row, Most Valuable Player honors went to Reid Zapalac of Smithville. Zapalac is the top all-around cowboy in the Southern Region for 2016.

"This year Reid really developed into a leader, a commanding presence," Amestoy said. "I'm really, really proud of all of our cowboys and cowgirls."

Academic All-Conference awards were presented to six student athletes who had at least a 3.25 GPA, had been enrolled at the college for at least three semesters and had taken at least 36 hours of course work.

Academic All-Conference award winners were:

- Heather Henneke (volleyball), Hallettsville
- Katlynne Wilson (volleyball), Victoria
- Shay Mitchell (volleyball), Lumberton
- Macy Mitchell (volleyball), Lumberton
- Clay Kresta (baseball), El Campo

- Conner Baumgardner (baseball), Kingwood

The 53rd Annual WCJC Booster Club Athletic Banquet was made possible in part by WCJC and the WCJC Booster Club.

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