



**Wharton County  
Junior College**

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# NEWS RELEASE

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## AN OUTSTANDING SEASON

*WCJC volleyball team finishes first in conference, earns regional recognition*

WHARTON, TEXAS – The Wharton County Junior College Pioneers volleyball team capped a stellar season with seven players earning regional honors and Coach Brianna Florus being selected Coach of the Year.

The Pioneers play in the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Region XIV, which comprises 11 junior colleges in south Texas. This season, the Pioneers finished 26-9 overall with a conference record of 8-2, tying for first place. The Pioneers competed in the Region XIV Tournament on Nov. 6-8, losing games to Panola College and Tyler Junior College while beating Paris Junior College.

Coach Brianna Florus, in her ninth season at WCJC, said she was pleased overall with her team's performance.

"We reached our goal of finishing first in conference but fell just short of advancing to the national tournament," Florus said. "I know we gave it our very best effort this year, and I am grateful for each and every one of these outstanding student athletes for the time and effort they put into this season. We want to also thank the fans and community who supported us along the way. It was a fun season."

Florus was selected Coach of the Year for Region XIV. This is her second time to earn such an honor. She was named Coach of the Year in 2009, her third year at WCJC. She is a Flatonia High School graduate who excelled in volleyball, basketball, softball, track and golf and played at Blinn College on an athletic scholarship, making All Tournament at the Region XIV Tournament, 1<sup>st</sup> Team All-Conference and earning the Middle Blocker Award at the National Tournament in 2003. She later played at Texas Tech University where she still holds the record for second highest block assists in a single match.

Florus said coaching at the junior college level is her passion – and Region XIV is one of the best around.

"This particular region of the NJCAA is the strongest in several sports, including volleyball, which makes it that much more exciting to coach," Florus said.

WCJC Athletic Director Gene Bahnsen said he is proud of Florus's accomplishments and lauded her work ethic and leadership qualities.

“No one is more deserving,” Bahnsen said. “She has taken this group of ‘local’ girls and molded them into a team competitive enough to play any other team in the nation. We are all very proud of her and her team of outstanding student athletes.”

Florus said she is humbled by the recognition.

“It’s an honor to be recognized by my peers as being Coach of the Year; however, it’s the team’s performance and how well they are able to adapt to the coaching that creates our success,” she said.

Several WCJC players earned regional honors, with Shay Mitchell, a sophomore from Lumberton, being named the Most Valuable Player for Region XIV. She also was named to the 1<sup>st</sup> Team All-Conference, an accomplishment she obtained previously as a freshman.

Mitchell led the conference with 3.15 kills per set and was second in the conference in total number of kills with 365.

“She did a lot for us the past two seasons and is an outstanding offensive player,” Florus said.

Newcomer of the Year recognition went to Becky Blakney, a freshman middle blocker from Giddings. She also made the 1<sup>st</sup> Team All-Conference.

“Becky did well for us this year. She improved throughout the season and quickly became a big threat at the net,” Florus said. “I am excited to see what she will be able to do after the off season.”

Also making 1<sup>st</sup> Team All-Conference was sophomore Emily Flores, an outside hitter from New Braunfels. Flores had to overcome a nagging injury to compete this season.

“Emily struggled last year with an ongoing injury so she didn’t see much playing time,” Florus said. “With rest and recovery this summer she was able to bounce back and start every match this season. She has incredible ball control and is passionate about the sport.”

Making 2<sup>nd</sup> Team All-Conference was newcomer Kelsey Smith, a freshman setter from Cypress. Three players also earned Honorable Mention honors: Macy Mitchell from Lumberton, Tori Zamora from San Antonio and Heather Henneke from Hallettsville.

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