



**Wharton County
Junior College**

NEWS RELEASE

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ONE FOR THE RECORD BOOK

WCJC baseball team finishes second in conference, just misses World Series

WHARTON, TEXAS – The Wharton County Junior College Pioneers baseball team's bid for a trip to the junior college World Series ended recently with a heartbreaking loss in the regional tournament.

Despite a valiant effort, the Pioneers fell short in the Region XIV Tournament's championship game on May 18, losing to the San Jacinto Gators, 4-1, in a game played at Concordia University in Austin. The Pioneers had tied up the game, 1-1, in the 8th inning before San Jacinto went on a scoring spree in the 9th to pull away with the victory.

San Jacinto will now play in the National Junior College Athletic Association's World Series, scheduled for later this month in Grand Junction, Colo.

WCJC baseball coach Keith Case said he was disappointed that the Pioneers missed out on the World Series. During his time at Copiah-Lincoln College in Mississippi, Case twice qualified for the big event.

Even so, Case said the Pioneers have no reason to hang their heads.

"Missing out on the World Series hurts because they put in the work and had the passion," Case said. "But I am proud of every one of my players and what they achieved."

WCJC Athletic Director Gene Bahnsen shared a similar sentiment. Like many other college employees, staff and area residents, Bahnsen was able to watch the play-by-play on the Internet, thanks to broadcasts by the Texas Sports Radio Network.

He was impressed with what he saw.

"The kids played great," Bahnsen said. "And we're proud of them. They represented WCJC very well."

The regional tournament was actually played in two locations, beginning at Constellation Field in Sugar Land and then relocating to Concordia University in Austin. The final games of the tournament were originally scheduled to take place at the University of Houston but moved farther inland due to inclement weather.

Case said the travel and the weather took a toll on his players.

“It felt like we actually played in two different tournaments,” he said. “By that final game we were running through bottles of Pedialyte trying to fight off muscle cramps.”

The Pioneers started the tournament well, with an 11-8 victory over Angelina on May 13 and a thrilling 5-4 win over Navarro on May 15. The tournament relocated to Austin on May 16 and the Pioneers suffered their first setback – a 2-1 loss to San Jacinto. That sent WCJC to the losers’ bracket where they faced Alvin on May 17. The Pioneers squeezed out a victory in that game in the 10th inning, winning 4-3.

The championship game was played on May 18, with WCJC again facing undefeated San Jacinto. Running short on rest, the Pioneers held on to a 1-1 tie for most of the game until coming up short in the 9th inning.

“I think the fatigue caught up with us,” Case said. “Baseball is a game of perseverance.”

Case credited his players with giving their best throughout the tournament. He specifically mentioned his pitching staff, which included Isaiah Lybarger of Corpus Christi, Kyle Craft of Victoria, David Leal of Houston, Conner Baumgardner of Kingwood and Joseph Baltrip of Houston.

Of that group, only Leal is a freshman and will be returning next year. Case will depend on his sophomores to build on the momentum generated this season.

“What you want are some guys that take ownership in WCJC and have pride in the school,” he said.

Case noted that the fan support was a significant motivating factor for his team.

“That meant a lot to us,” he said. “I just can’t say enough about the support we received. It pushed us on when we were tired and worn out.”

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