

PIEDMONT BULLDOGS



2015

AHSAA CLASS 3A CHAMPIONS

produced by the marketing department of *The Anniston Star*

Q & A

with Bulldogs coach Steve Smith

Coach Steve Smith has led the Piedmont Bulldogs for 10 years, bringing the team two state championships and shaping its players as athletes, students, and people. You'd think he could take a break after a win, but there's no rest for the coach.

There's phone calls to make, media appointments to keep — a printer that stubbornly refuses to cooperate — and a season to review that includes a near perfect 14-1 run, with five total shutouts.

We caught up with Smith just after the team's decisive 44-7 victory against Bayside Academy that brought home the title to talk about the team's incredible performance, toughness and what their win means for the people of Piedmont:

What made this team stand out the way it did, with such a commanding win?

These guys are extremely tough. This group of kids, they're throwback type players. We had several kids this year play with injuries that would've probably ended a lot of other people's seasons, but they chose to play, even sometimes against doctor advice. The doctors got did a great job of getting them into a position where they could play, but we had three seniors that played this year in the championship game that, on a lot of other teams, would not have dressed out again for the rest of the year. That's a tribute to the toughness and the way these guys believe in each other and pull together.

That toughness, do they learn it, do they build it, are they born with it?

Some kids have it in them, some have it taught to them at home. I like to think that being in the program helps add





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to it, but it's a tough world, and in a tough world you have to be tough to survive and bounce back when adversity comes your way. Every coach will tell you that football teaches life lessons, but these guys epitomize a group that learned how to be tough when tough situations arise.

Some of the players were team managers when Piedmont won the title in 2009, when they were in middle school, so this is a full-circle trip for them. The team that won in 2009, what did it do for them, how they carried themselves as people, that it will do for the current Bulldogs?

I try to tell them all the time that being a football player doesn't make you better than anybody else, that you still have to do what you have to do at school. If anything, the expectations may be greater because you are kind of looked at in a different light. Our community is such a tight-knit community that does such a great job pulling together, when you're able to win a championship, those guys leave a lasting legacy on the

program. There are guys on that 2009 team, people will remember them forever for things that happened in the championship game. The pictures that hang around the field house, the stories that are told. It gives them an opportunity to leave something in the history of our school.

How do you keep the momentum going?

It's harder when you are the hunted than when you're doing the hunt. They already understand that it takes an unreal amount of sacrifice and effort to get to that point, but it takes even more to stay there because everybody's gunning for you. That's what we want to guard against. We want to work harder than we've ever worked before and give ourselves a chance for another run at it.

What's it like for the community with these wins? Does it change things around town in a way you can see?

I definitely think it sheds a positive light on our community. A lot of times

morale tends to fall, but when you have a good school system, and I think we have the best one in the state, when you supplement great academics with a great athletic program it gives everyone in the community a sense of pride. I told everyone when we got back here Friday night, we probably had 1,500 to 2,000 people that met the team back here at the stadium returning from Tuscaloosa. Anything positive we're able to do is for everybody in this town.

What's it like for you, as coach, when you take the team to victories like this?

It's a blessing for me to be a part of such a wonderful school system, our community, our city, with everyone that's part of our organization. It's cool to me to be head coach of a football team in a town that's this tightly knit, where everybody looks out for everybody else and everybody pulls for everybody. It's a cool thing.





Go Dogs!

**Thank you to our parents,
City Council & administration,
business leaders and
community for your support!**

**Piedmont City
Board of Education**

'An overwhelming feeling'

Bulldogs captains talk about their championship season

The four senior captains of the Piedmont Bulldogs are a diverse group, tied together by training, sweat and dedication to the game. We got a chance to talk to them about taking home the title, coming full circle from being managers in 2009 for Piedmont's last title win, their plans for the future and their newfound celebrity:



DARNELL JACKSON

Age: 19 **Position:** Running Back/Defensive Back

Future plans: Sticking with football, and majoring in a physical fitness discipline. "I'd rather be a coach, or a personal trainer, some way to be around sports."

On winning the title: "It's indescribable, still. Since '09 when we were managers, then coming back and doing it again, it's an overwhelming feeling."

On his nomination for ABC's Friday Night Blitz Player of the Year Award: "I just tell people, 'If it weren't for the team, for God, for people sticking by my side and keeping me motivated, I wouldn't be here.'"



BAYLEY BLANCHARD

Age: 17

Position: Receiver

Future plans: "I want to major in physical therapy. I like being around people, helping people out. Physical therapy is related to sports, athletes are going to come in and I can relate to that."

On recognition: "It's been crazy. We go out into the community and everybody recognizes who we are. You don't even have to wear a shirt that says you're on the football team, everyone just knows. It's been fun."

On becoming a role model: "Coach Smith preached to us all season that those kids look up to us. Now that you've won state, they're looking up to us even more, so you've got to keep doing what you're doing and be a good influence."



Congratulations, Piedmont Bulldogs!



*From Mayor Bill Baker,
the City Council,
the City Clerk
and City Employees*

JAMIE CRUTCHER

Age: 17

Position: Tackle

Future plans: To continue playing football if possible, but also to attend a college and become a coach.

About his injury, a broken finger: “The doctor told me I could have my surgery [right away] or we could postpone it until the big game coming up with Madison Academy, and I told him ‘I’ve got to play, it’ll have to wait.’”

On his favorite part of the game: “Probably the contact. I love contact. When you meet that running back right there in the hole and it’s just you and him ... contact. I love it.”

NEONTA ALEXANDER

Age: 18

Position: Running Back

Future plans: College, with a plan to major in sports medicine to stick with athletics.

On the Bulldogs’ teamwork: “Everybody played well, all around. We really played together as a team, like one person playing; we all came together.”

About seeing the last title in 2009: “I thought they were great guys. I looked up to them, wanted to be on the field with them.”





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Bulldogs - #1!

T E A M S P I R I T

**207 Rome Avenue, Piedmont, AL 36272
 (256) 447-6071**

Mission Statement: I Thessalonians 4: 11-12





2015 PIEDMONT BULLDOG SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT
08/28	@Cherokee County	Won 35-20
09/04 *	Ashville	Won 62-21
09/11 *	@Ochattee	Won 40-13
09/18 *	Glencoe	Won 44-26
09/24	@Leeds	Lost 12-29
10/02 *	@Pleasant Valley	Won 49-0
10/09 *	Walter Wellborn	Won 35-0
10/16 *	Westbrook Christian	Won 39-7
10/23 *	@Weaver	Won 35-14
10/30	Oneonta	Won 30-0
11/05 #	Lexington	Won 34-0
11/13 #	Oakman	Won 64-22
11/20 #	@Madison Academy	Won 35-21
11/27 #	@Colbert County	Won 14-0
12/03 #	Bayside Academy	Won 44-7

* notes a league game

notes a tournament game



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Sheila Hill, Executive Director

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