



1999 State Championship Baseball Team

Year of Induction: **2019**
Year of Graduation: **N/A**

The 1999 Johnson City boys varsity baseball team played baseball the way the game was intended and were rewarded by winning the New York State Class B state title. Johnson City baseball has always had a deep history of success but were always denied the elusive NYS championship. That all changed in the spring of 1999.

The season began with many new faces. Ten of the 15-strong team had no varsity experience and the entire coaching staff was new. First year head coach Troy Smith and assistant Pete Dobransky led a fine group of young men that came together at the right time and place to achieve greatness.

As with many new teams, it took some struggles and adversity before they were running on all "cylinders." But when that happened, they became unstoppable and unbeatable. Through their first 15 games, their record stood at a modest nine wins and six losses. The modesty did not last long with the Wildcats winning their last 11 games to capture the championship.

Their playoff run began against Corning West. Senior pitcher Rich Laganieri made quick work of them by striking out 17 hitters en route to a no-hit shutout. Johnson City's bats put the game away with five runs in the 3rd inning as their team confidence slowly gathered steam.

Next, the Wildcats had to travel to Owego to play their toughest game of the year. They faced a 19-3 team who had their ace on the hill who happened to have struck out 107 hitters in 63 innings. JC was not intimidated. The first four innings were a classic pitcher's duel with the only run coming from a solo home run by Kyle Loucks. This time JC landed the knockout punch with a nine-run 5th inning. With Lee Moschak and Scott Hall on 2nd and 3rd base, Ryan Olbrys and Joe Macarak delivered back-to-back RBI singles. After several more runs, Moschak brought in four with a grand slam to make it 10-0 JC lead. Laganieri again dominated on the mound limiting Owego to six hits and only one run.

Chenango Valley was the only team that stood in the way of JC baseball's fourth Section IV title. It was sophomore lefty Brian Edmunds' turn on the mound and he delivered a five-hit/two-run performance through seven innings. With the game tied, freshman Patrick Riley was called in to pitch. He was near perfect striking out five of the six batters he faced. Riley also provided the game winner in the bottom of the 9th with a single that

scored Vince Vail. Johnson City won the Section IV title 3-2.

JC then defeated Roundout Valley 5-2 to win the state regional behind another strong outing from pitcher Laganieri. After going ahead 4-2, JC closed the scoring when Laganieri drove in Jan Little with a double. Jeff Jankoski made a key double play at second base in the bottom of the 7th to seal the win and sent JC to the state semifinal against Section VI champ Albion who sported a perfect 21-0 record.

Again, JC was unfazed by their opponent. In the semifinal, just about everyone got into the act. Five different JC players knocked in at least one run in the first 2 innings. Laganieri turned in another stellar pitching performance with a 16 strikeout, 2 hit gem. The Wildcats beat the previously unbeaten Albion 9-1 sending JC baseball to its first NYS championship game.

The title game pitted JC against Section III winner Vernon-Verona-Sherrill (23-4). Again it was a total team effort with many different players contributing. The Wildcats were now marching toward its destiny and it was only fitting that the game would go down to the bottom of the 7th, 2 outs, and the bases loaded. It was Scott Hall's turn at the plate and, with the baseball gods looking down, he sent a single up the middle that delivered JCHS its first and only NYS baseball championship.

This team will be remembered not only for their athletic abilities and achievements, but also for the class they showed on the field and respect they had to the game of baseball.