

THE MARK VINSON AWARD

Awarded in the 5A/6A Game



Mark Vinson was the starting catcher for the Brandon High School baseball team his junior year in 1983, but lost that position when the leukemia he had been battling for five years prevented him from playing on a regular basis.

Perhaps the remainder of Mark's inspiring life is best told by the *Jackson Daily News* Sports Editor Rick Cleveland. The following excerpts are taken from Cleveland's article which appeared shortly after Mark's battle with leukemia ended in the summer of 1984...

"Saturday was All-Star Day in Mississippi. Hometown heroes, all recently graduated from high school, converged on Jackson for the various All-Star Games. This is the story of one All-Star who wasn't present. Brandon's Mark Vinson died July 19 after a five-year battle with leukemia. He was 18 and a genuine hero, on the field and off.

Vinson crammed a lot of living -- and giving into his 18 years. By all accounts, he never made a single concession to the disease which eventually took his life. He had many interests, but baseball was his passion. He played catcher, easily the sport's most physically demanding position, and was a good one. But he did so much more. He also played on the Brandon High soccer team, was an honor student, vice president of his senior class, vice president of the student body and an Eagle Scout. He was manager of the Brandon High football team and the catcher for the Jackson 96ers, 1983 State Champions in the Connie Mack League. He was active in his church and in Candle-Lighters, a support group for young cancer patients.

Two of his foremost goals were to graduate on time with his class, and to make the All-Star Baseball Team. He graduated with honors and was selected to play in the All-Star baseball game although his illness prevented his playing in it."

Mike Vinson said of his son, "One thing Mark taught us. It's not so much the quantity of life as the quality. Our son got an awful lot done and an awful lot out of living in his 18 years."

RECIPIENTS OF THE MARK VINSON AWARD

- 1985: Randy Newell, Meridian
- 1986: Todd Nace, Hattiesburg
- 1987: Kyle Morris, Clinton
- 1988: Carl Henderson, Starkville
- 1989: Bob Braddy, Jr., Murrah
- 1990: Charles King, Northeast Jones
- 1991: Jeffrey Johnson, Clinton
- 1992: Dexter McLeon, Meridian
- 1993: Chris Wright, West Jones
- 1994: Brett Causey, Clinton

RECIPIENTS OF THE MARK VINSON AWARD CONTINUED

- 1995: Jason Walters, Petal**
- 1996: Benji Vance, Grenada**
- 1997: Brandon Skelton, Clinton**
- 1998: Gerard McCall, Meridian**
- 1999: Lea Milton, McComb**
- 2000: A.J. Ray, Madison Central**
- 2001: Bart Smith, Oxford**
- 2002: Matt Creighton, Quitman**
- 2003: Justin Henry, Vicksburg**
- 2004: Mitch Moreland, Amory**
- 2005: Kelly Weems, Harrison Central**
- 2006: Anthony Triplett, Forest Hill**
- 2007: Trent Hartzog, Lawrence County**
- 2008: Todd Barnthouse, Northwest Rankin**
- 2009: Michael Vinson, DeSoto Central**
- 2010: Taylor Stark, Northwest Rankin**
- 2011: Mitchell Babb, South Panola**
- 2012: Isaac Glenn, Madison Central**
- 2013: J.G. Miley, Tupelo**
- 2014: Gage Teer, Brandon**
- 2015: Keegan James, DeSoto Central**
- 2016: Drew Windham, Ocean Springs**
- 2017: Games Cancelled**
- 2018: 5A/6A Game Cancelled**
- 2019: Landon Rogers, Lewisburg**
- 2020: Games Cancelled**
- 2021: Hunter Hines, Madison Central**