



COMMENDATION

AJ's journey to the 50 freestyle state championship began in September 2021 as a sophomore, when against his father's wishes, he left the Key West football team to swim. In that 26-month time AJ lowered his 50 freestyle time by three and half seconds to win State. This is an incredible feat and would not have happened without Lori Bosco, head coach of the Conchs.

In 2021 he placed 20th in the final Regional 4 Meet. In 2022 he won the District Championship, swam at Regionals and qualified for State. AJ met Michael Duderstadt, a 15x All American at Auburn and 2012 & 2016 Olympic Swim Trials Qualifier and started working on turns. By the State Finals, AJ made another drop in time allowing him to take 10th in the state.

After a short stint in basketball in 2022, he decided to focus entirely on swimming. AJ befriended lifeguards at Martin Luther King Pool allowing him to swim after hours, 3 days a week where Michael Duderstadt would help him with speed drills and turns. He swam all winter and spring with Lori and the Bone Island Swim Club, allowing him to swim 2x a day with MLK training. In August he sought out John Shepard at Fyt to cross train 3x a week and get stronger. Swimming 6 days a week, (2x per day) plus lifting weights 3x a week became the normal life for AJ throughout his training in 2023.

In early October, AJ broke the school record for the first time in the 50 free. When States started, AJ started tapering off. This culminated in his Districts victory and then his Regional victory, making him the number one seed in 2A.

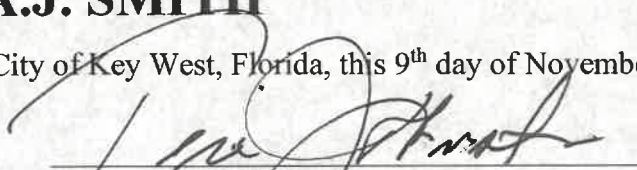
In the State preliminaries meet AJ took 5th place. He made the finals and had 5 hours to regroup. After a slow start, he won with a personal best, another school record and beat the 2nd place swimmer by only :04. He says he always practices the finish!

In recognition of this honor I, TERI JOHNSTON, MAYOR of the City of Key West, along with the entire Key West City Commission, do hereby present this Commendation to


A.J. SMITH

WITNESS my hand and seal of the City of Key West, Florida, this 9th day of November 2023.

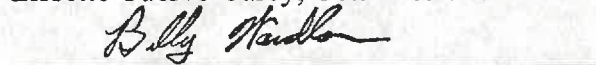




Teri Johnston, Mayor



Lissette Cuervo Carey, Commissioner



Billy Wardlow, Commissioner