Command Master Chief Donald Henderson honored by former Jacksonville Jaguars All-Pro for "All-Pro Service"

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – Former Jacksonville Jaguars great Donovin Darius honored Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Command Master Chief Donald Henderson on Saturday with his All-Pro Service Award.

The Donovin Darius Foundation’s 2018 Father’s Day Celebration Event was held at Daily’s Place, and honored more than 3,000 fathers and father figures for their roles in the community.

“I truly believe this, and I shared this with him, the legacy you leave is the life that you lived,” Darius said in a personal phone call to FRCSE on Monday. “He’s done a tremendous job of leaving a legacy with the people he’s led, the people he’s served with and the people he’s protected and fought for.

“He’ll forever be remembered because of what he did.”

Henderson is wrapping up a 30-year Naval career in July that has seen nearly every corner
of the globe. In an aviation maintenance career mostly spent aboard carriers, he’s transited the Suez Canal six times. He took part in carrier deployments in support of operations Desert Storm, Southern Watch, Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and Inherent Resolve.

However, he was nominated for excellence in his current role as command master chief – a role that emphasizes training, caring for and promoting the careers of his Sailors.

““To me, he is the perfect master chief. He takes care of his Sailors, and wants to see them promoted, which improves their quality of life,” said the person who nominated him, Greater Jacksonville USO Operations Director, and retired master chief, Bob Ross. “Whenever we get donations, like tickets and stuff like that, his number one thought is always the junior military personnel who otherwise could not afford to attend these events.”

For Henderson, who is used to nominating his Sailors for award

s, the whole ordeal came as a shock. FRCSE Executive Officer Col. Fred Schenk told him they were attending as representatives of the command.

“We were seated at a table in front of the stage when a woman comes and gets me and escorts me on the stage,” he said. “Next thing you know, I’m standing there with Donovin Darius, holding a trophy and thinking, ‘What just happened?’”

For Henderson, though he was honored, the moment came with a sense of introspection.

“I really didn’t feel like I deserved it.”

As it is with most men and women who serve in our nation’s military, Henderson’s distinguished career came with sacrifice. Serving as a father figure to his Sailors came at a cost.

“I’ve always thought of myself as a good example to my sons, given my work ethic and being a provider, serving my country, loving my country and loving my family,” he said. “If I have any regrets, I’d say I truly missed a lot of time with my kids.

“I find that I’m making a lot of it up now, and I’m going to embark on my next chapter of being a better father and a better husband.”

Darius said he wanted to make sure Henderson knew those sacrifices were appreciated.

“At this next chapter of his life, a chapter that may be unknown to him because he’s spent so much of his life in one area, I wanted him to know that I honor and appreciate what he did,” Darius said. “As he moves forward, the positive impact he’s made on so many lives will never be forgotten, but the next chapter will be even greater than his last.”

For Ross, there’s no doubt Henderson has made a tremendous impact.

“The only thing he ever wanted was to see them excel, contribute to the mission and let them know
how important they were – no matter if they were an E-1 or an E-9, they’re part of the team,” Ross said. “I wish I’d had a master chief like him when I was coming up through the ranks.”