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**When we were kings:** The 1964 Newton boys' basketball team surrounds head coach Ron Bradley after their title run.

# 1964 champions revel in coach's chase for record

## Bradley still revered by players

**By Brian Knapp**

Sports Editor

Thirty-nine years after they put Ron Bradley on the map with his first state crown, members of the 1964 Newton boys' basketball team still revere the man who gave them direction and changed their lives forever.

Several — including Steve Smith, Eddie Hinton and Stan Harris — were on hand Friday night at Eastside High School when Bradley became the state's new all-time career wins leader, his sixth-ranked Rams chopping down Eastside with stunning ease in a 23-point blowout. For his former players, victory number 1,255 was almost as sweet for them as it was for the man himself.

Through nostalgic smiles, they spoke of the coach who, to them and to countless others, is a great deal more than just a coach.

"Other than my dad, coach Bradley was the most influential person in my life," said Steve Smith, a sophomore with the 1964 state championship team. "All we did was play ball back then, day and night. He had us so well prepared; we knew we were going to win."

Eddie Hinton, himself famous (or infamous) for nearly dropping the 16-inch tall state championship trophy as he crashed down a small flight of stairs in the lobby of the old Americana Hotel in Atlanta, was the only freshman with the 1964 champions. He, too, holds his old coach in the highest regard.

"Some things never change," Hinton said. "It's hard to put into words what he's meant to us. When you walk in the gym,



**Ron Bradley** remains close to members of his first state title team.

the first person your attention is drawn to is Ronald Bradley. He's just that kind of person; there's an aura about him."

Stan Harris, one of the starting forwards for the since-immortalized 1964 team, admires Bradley for his approach, not only to the game of basketball but to life in general.

"He always taught us preparation and discipline, and those things carry over into life," Harris said. "I'll always remember his fairness. Even though he was a good disciplinarian, he was always fair. He just knows how to get the best out of people."

The most-talked-about Newton team to ever lay siege to a basketball court, the 1964 Rams completed a magical season with a 35-1 record. They won their first 27 games, suffered one disputed (and later avenged) triple-overtime defeat and then won their final eight games by a 16-point-per-game margin, unseating Hart County by 22 points before a crowd of 6,200 at the Georgia Tech Coliseum in Atlanta. They were a machine of ingenious making.

"What I remember about 1964 is just how special those kids were and the commitment the town made to them," Bradley said. "It was a fantastic period. They know how special it was."