

# Newton's Bradley to retire

## Legendary coach plans to step aside

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COVINGTON — Newton High basketball coach Ron Bradley announced his retirement for the third — and probably final — time Tuesday.

Bradley announced his retirement, effective at the end of the

school year, in a letter to Newton principal Dave Easterday.

Bradley retired for two years in 1987, then again for a year in 1999. Both times, he found a job that was more attractive than retirement. He wouldn't rule out a similar return this time, but said he planned on staying retired right now.

"I don't know what the Lord has

### THE BRADLEY FILE

- Career basketball record: 1,301-353
- State championships: Boys basketball 1964, '76, '85. Football 1980.
- Varsity teams: 121 ■ Varsity basketball teams: 61 ■ Years coached: 45

in mind," he said. "I thought I was through years ago.

"I am excited to have the time to do some things."

Things on Bradley's to-do list include vacationing along the Gulf Coast and more trips to Colorado, where son Bill Bradley has

coached back-to-back girls state champions and has a 62-game win streak.

Mostly, he wants to be around Jan, his wife of more than 50 years.

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Staff Photo

Newton basketball coach Ron Bradley announced his retirement Tuesday. He is wrapping up a 45-year career.

## Bradley

talent and develop it," he said. "You have got to play to your talent."

Bradley, a graduate of Avondale High School and the University of Georgia, made a name for himself as an athlete before he became a legend as a coach. He played on the 1952 state baseball champions at Avondale. He also played on a championship six-man football team at Avondale before playing baseball and basketball at Georgia.

He played on an SEC championship baseball team in Athens. Basketball, though, was another story. The Bulldogs, then as now, were no power in the sport, but he says the struggles taught him as much as winning did.

Coaches on those teams — Lyman Howard at Avondale basketball, Calvin Ramsey in football and Georgia baseball skipper Jim Whatley — taught him lessons that he tried to pass on to his players over the years.

"I hope we showed some values to them," he said. "They have to be able to compete in life."

In many cases, those lessons stuck.

Tommy Hailey, now Newton Country recreation director, played baseball for Bradley.

"I remember the lessons he taught us about life," Hailey said.

"A part of me would love to see him coach forever, but family comes first. He has given so much."

Bradley said reaching the decision to retire was easier after Newton's unexpected run to the state semifinals, but he

said he thought he would reach the same conclusion regardless of how the season turned out.

"I have some great memories from this team," he said. "It was the most surprising team I have ever coached."

Still, as he and Jan have for several years, Bradley waited until well after the final game to make his decision.

"We talked about it and almost did it last year," he said. "We just felt like it was time."

Bradley endorsed Rick Rasmussen, his top assistant, to be his replacement.

Newton plans an open search for Bradley's replacement. His departure, while not entirely unexpected, does create a void in the athletic department.

Tracey Curtis, Newton's AD, said Bradley will be missed.

"Coach Bradley has done an excellent job as a coach. His kids are fundamentally sound. He's done an excellent job working with what he's had to work with and got the most out of them.

"He's done a great job from a coaching aspect, teaching the kids character and he's done an excellent job. We'll miss him as a coach.

He's brought class to the school as far as being a class act and knowledge of the game. He's very respected in the state as far as his coaching abilities. He's a top notch person who's known to be a very wise person when it comes to the game."

— Sports Writer Manny Fills contributed to this report.