

Bradley works magic again this season

The "old master" still has it. Ron Bradley, who has won more basketball games than any high school coach in Georgia, did what many, maybe even himself, thought was impossible earlier this month. Bradley guided his Newton High School Rams to the Class AAAAA Final Four before falling to eventual state champion Wheeler.

You could still hear the excitement in Bradley's voice Monday as he talked about his team's accomplishment.

"It was a year that was unbelievable," said the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame member. "There is no way we should have won the games we won. Our kids achieved so much more than anyone thought possible."

Like a good magician, Bradley seemingly waved a wand and another one of his teams was in the Final Four. It's something he has done many times in the past, but it's something the coach will never grow tired of.

"We have been wondering if this is the year we are going to retire," said Bradley, the "we" referring to himself and his wife, Jan. "However, you have a season like this and you hate to leave after having so much fun."

The Bradleys were preparing Monday to travel to Colorado to watch their son Bill coach in the semifinals. Bill's Thunderridge High School girls team is going for its second consecutive state title.

First & Ten

Chris Bridges



Ron Bradley will be forever tied to sports in Walton County. He coached two state championships as coach of the George Walton Academy boys basketball team. His 1979-1980 Lady Bulldogs finished as state runner-up. Until this season, no GWA girls team had advanced that far. He also helped breathe life into the Loganville High School boys program which for years could be found at the bottom of the standings.

"This year's George Walton girls team had a great season," Bradley said. "I hated that I didn't get to see them play in their last game. We know the hurt that comes with losing a game like that."

Ron Bradley still recalls his 79-80 Lady Bulldog squad which lost a heartbreaker in the state finals. He recalls details of the game as if it was played last weekend.

"We had a great team that season," the coach said. "It may have been one of the most fundamentally sound teams we have ever coached."

Ron Bradley said he and his wife will take a few days to decide about retiring.

"It would be tough to leave, but I know I would like to spend more time with my scorekeeper (wife Jan)," the coach said.

Working magic with a basketball team is something that shouldn't come as a surprise anymore when it comes to Ron Bradley. Yet with every season we continue to be amazed at the magic he somehow pulls off. In reality, there's nothing magical about it. Ron Bradley is simply one of the best to ever work at his craft.