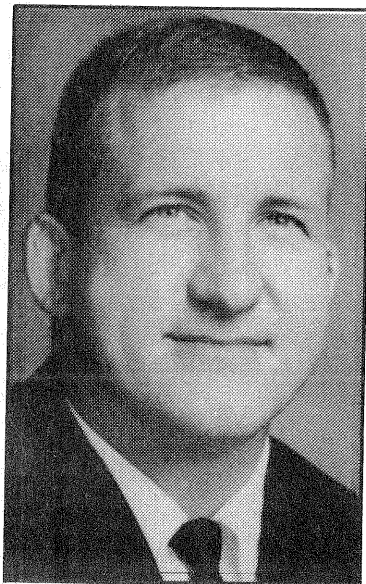


Bradley reminisces about past success as new season begins



Ron Bradley is shown above (center) with Rep. Denny Dobbs (right) and Recreation director Tommy Hailey at the 1993 Dixie Boys World Series.



Ron Bradley during his years as Newton's coach.

From staff reports

Loganville head basketball coach Ron Bradley likes to compare his latest coaching assignment to that of his first job here in Newton County.

Now entering his 38th year of coaching, Bradley – a legendary figure in these parts – returns to the east metro area at Loganville High School, an institution that has longed for hardcourt success.

“This reminds me of my first year at Newton County,” said Bradley on Monday evening. “When I came there in 1957, they had never won a region championship before, but once we got things cranked up, the fever hit.”

And how. In 18 years at Newton County, Bradley's charges collected one state championship (in 1964) and numerous region

crowns, in addition to posting a world-record 129 consecutive home victories (In addition, Bradley has been on the winning end of more than 1,000 high school athletic contests). Suffice it to say, when the Rams were at home during that eight year stretch, they were impossible to beat.

The streak

“The main thing I remember about that how easy it was,” said Bradley of the home winning streak. “We felt that all we had to do was show up at the gym and we'd win. On the night the streak ended, we had three starters out with ankle injuries, and even then we didn't think we could possibly

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Bradley: 'I'm not coaching sports - I'm coaching young people'

From front page
lose."

Bradley left Newton County High School in 1975 and after two years of retirement returned to coaching in 1977 to oversee the athletic program at George Walton Academy. After a dozen years in Monroe, Bradley and his wife Jan left there for a new challenge, this one in Dublin at tiny Trinity Christian School.

"We weren't sure that was a fit," said Bradley of Trinity. "But they told us that the Lord wanted us there, but He hadn't told us that yet. After thinking about it a long time, we decided to go there. They had told us that they either wanted to make something out of the school or close it down.

"I promised them five years. When we first got there, Trinity had about 100 students. They had over 400 enrolled when we left."

Earlier this year, Bradley agreed to return to the public school basketball wars earlier this year, taking over a Loganville Red Devil program that was 8-13 a year ago and 3-18 in 1992. Since 1957, Loganville reportedly has had but one winning season, when it went 13-12.

Ahead of schedule

The Red Devils, who hosted Social Circle last night in their first home game under Bradley, got the 1994-95 season off to a good start last week, capturing three wins and the championship trophy in the Jefferson Tip-Off Tournament. Loganville defeated Oglethorpe County in the first round, bested Dacula in the semifinals and then slipped by Banks County in overtime in the tourney finals.

"We certainly got off to a good start," he said. "We had to come from behind to beat Dacula and we were down by three at the half against Banks County. But we hit 12

of 15 shots in the third quarter to get back into it and won in overtime 69-63.

"I tell you, it's exciting. There's a lot of good things going on here and people are starting to get excited about that. Our kids are on fire; they're putting forth a good effort and it has been a joy to work with them."

When asked if he felt a noticeable difference between coaching at a public or private school, Bradley said, "Kids are kids. You can put kids anywhere and they'll play.

I've been well blessed to be able to work with many fine young peo-

ple over the years, but these kids are special. I don't know when I've been so pleased. I don't think a day goes by when at least one player won't come by and thank me for practice. Loganville is really a special place."

Bradley said that in rebuilding the Loganville program, he "started slow" but adds that interest is already growing.

"I thought it might be a while before we built up a fever, but I've found that the people here really care for their young people," he said. "They've got something here now that they haven't had in a while

- a successful program.

"We started slow here because I didn't want to run everybody off. We definitely put some heat on them and they've responded. It's a joy to see the players' parents come to our practices. You can really tell they care. I thought that it might take a while here, but we're already ahead of schedule."

Focusing on hoops

The 1953 graduate of Avondale High School is also pleased that at Loganville he'll be able to concentrate on coaching basketball. At George Walton and Trinity, Bradley

was charged with overseeing a variety of sports, including baseball and football. At Loganville, he'll focus on basketball and will also coach golf in the spring.

"I just came here to work," he said. "I can remember when I first started in his business how excited I was about coaching. And I don't love it any less now than I did when I first started. I can't wait to get out there every day. I'm happy that now I have the opportunity to coach my love, which is basketball.

"But my attitude has always been that I'm not coaching sports - I'm coaching young people."

Bradley celebrated his 60th birthday last week and he and Jan (his high school sweetheart) celebrated 40 years of marriage this year. The Bradleys have two sons who are coaches - twins Bill (who coaches at John Milledge Academy in Milledgeville) and Bob (who coaches at Brentwood Academy in Sandersville). Their oldest son Brad lives and works in Marietta and their daughter Brenda, who is married to Newton County native Lt. Col. Paul Elliott, lives in Washington, where her husband works at the Pentagon.

The Bradleys have five grandchildren and "one more on the way."

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