

## First & Ten

Chris Bridges



### *Bradley represents a special kind of person, coach*

Many years ago I quickly learned what type of person Ron Bradley was with the media.

Despite all his career wins and his legendary status, Bradley never minded talking about his team. If he won by 30 or lost by 25, Bradley was still available to talk. He believed in giving his players as much publicity as possible. He always put the spotlight on them.

From that standpoint, he was a sports writer's best friend. He always knew every stat imaginable from past games. He returned your phone calls in a prompt manner. He was always thankful you had called seeking information on his team.

Yet, the story of Ron Bradley goes much deeper. He will be forever tied to Walton County athletics working as a coach at both George Walton Academy and Loganville High School.

He remembers games from five, 10, 15, 20, 30 years ago as if they happened last week. His memory, sharp as a tack, is something I've always admired. And what a memory bank he has. From winning state championships at George Walton (in both basketball and football) to making the Loganville High School boys basketball program a winner after decades of mediocre play at best.

High school athletics won't be the same without Bradley, who retired from his second stint from Newton High School last week. While Bradley didn't completely rule out a return to coaching, I got the feeling he might have coached his last game and that is something that is hard to accept.

I have talked with numerous people who say their lives have been so positively impacted by Bradley. It's amazing the impact a coach can have on a young person. For those who don't understand the value of high school athletics, I urge you to spend some talking with Ron Bradley. He'll quickly change your mind.

In terms of basketball, few can match what Bradley has done at the high school level. His career win total of 1,301 may never be matched in Georgia. Already a member of the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame, Bradley will do a little traveling during retirement and spend some time with his favorite scorekeeper, his wife Jan.

While I know he deserves to enjoy retirement, part of me truly wishes he would return to coaching. His positive influence on anyone he is associated with is something our students need more of these days.

I never played for Ron Bradley, but I can honestly say he has influenced me in a positive manner. I always value the times I get to talk with him.

He's like a great story teller of old whom you simply enjoy listening to. He has so much to share you just try to soak it all up. A great man will no longer be coaching and quite frankly it's a sad day for me and for high school athletics.

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