



Still going strong

Legendary Bradley 8-3 with GACS

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Ron Bradley keeps rolling right along, impacting the lives of young players, many of whom have parents who were not even born when he coached his first basketball game. And his teams just keep on winning.

Bradley, former head coach of the Newton High School boys' basketball team, has not changed a bit in regards to how he approaches the game on the high school level. In the midst of his first season as head coach of Greater Atlanta Christian School in Norcross, he is tackling another campaign with the vigor of a man half his age.

"A new school is always a challenge, but [it's] exciting," the legendary Bradley said. "Just like my first year back at Newton, it takes a while to get your guys to buy into what you're doing. It's slow in a lot of areas, but we've got some good kids and we're trying to get it going."

Bradley's demeanor remains the same. He is a complex man of compassion and competitiveness. With his team at 8-3 on the year — including an upset of Buford — he still feels his latest group is lacking in what he considers two "must haves" in a successful prep basketball program.

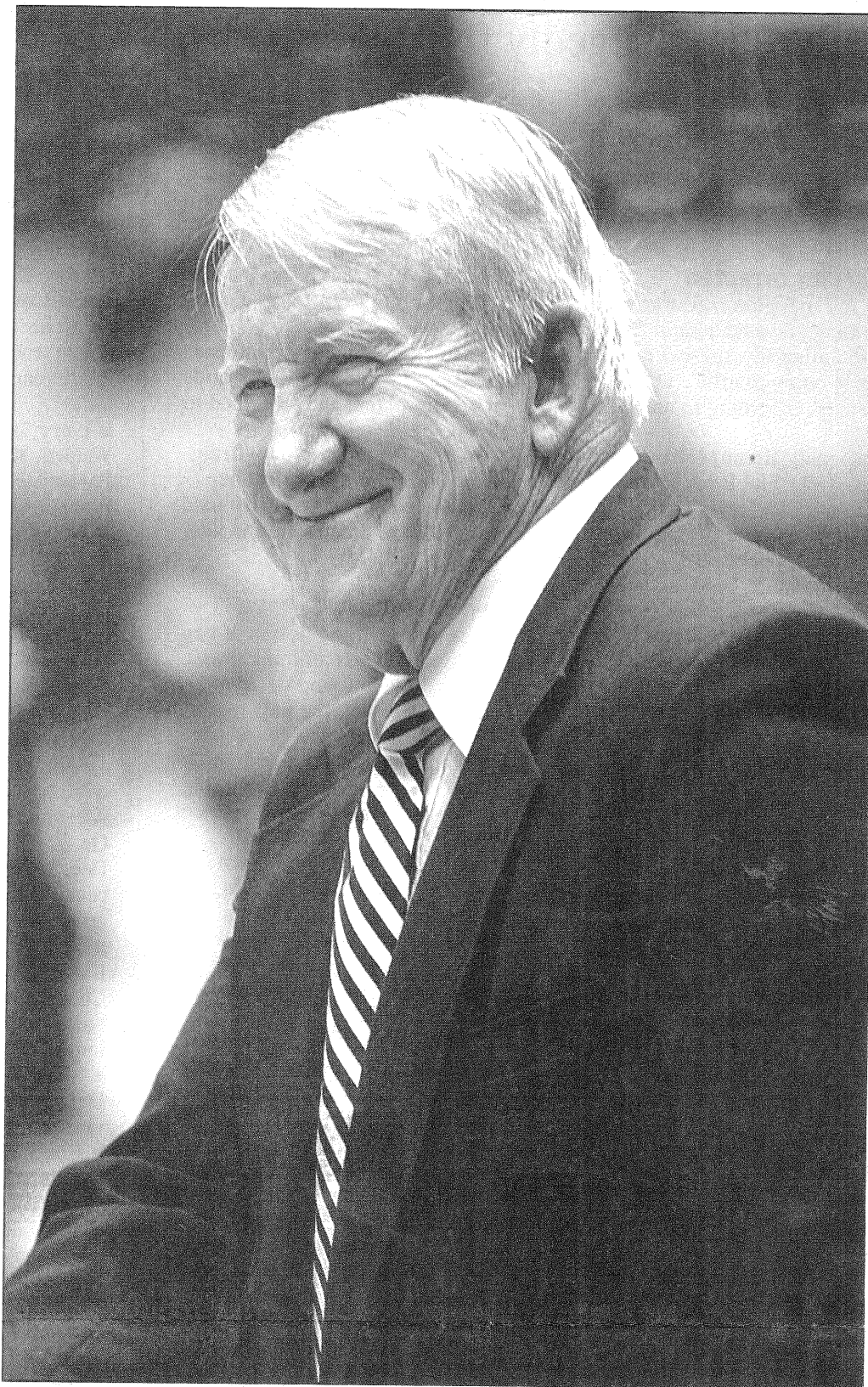
"Well, we're happy with what we've done so far in the early part of the season," Bradley said in his soft Southern drawl. "We still lack the discipline and the fundamentals of the game that we'll need to survive the tough region schedule we play."

GACS plays in Region 8-AA South, considered to be one of the state's toughest regions at the Class AA level, boasting perennial powerhouses like East Hall, Wesleyan and Buford.

Bradley and his Spartans have already pulled off their first upset of the season, stunning Buford by a 64-63 count.

"It was a good win for us," Bradley said, "but we've still lost a couple of games we shouldn't have."

Even so, the Spartans are winning games with three of their starters on the bench with injuries and will likely play without them when they face East Hall in a key 8-AA showdown Tuesday in Norcross.



Mandi Singer/The Covington News

No slowing down: Ron Bradley, now the head coach of the Greater Atlanta Christian School in Norcross, is 8-3 through 11 games with his new team.

Bradley believes that in order to survive the tough schedule ahead his team will have to concentrate on doing the little things it takes to win ball games.

"We're a little different than most [teams]," Bradley said. "We put a lot of emphasis on the little things. It takes a little time for people to understand certain terms and why they're important."

Bradley feels his team will eventually come around and execute the game plan he employs, a fact which could make GACS a threat when postseason rolls around.

Although Bradley is now with another basketball program, he admits he misses the people who had a hand in his success at Newton.

"Jan and I miss the times we had at Newton," Bradley said. "The people were so

nice over there, and we wish them the best. I know if we can get the kids here to buy into the system, we'll be the same as we were at Newton, because everyone was on the same page over there."

Bradley resigned as Newton's head coach in March after leading the Rams to the Class AAAAA State Tournament Final Four in 2004-05.

He had two memorable stints at Newton.

During his first tenure with Newton's boys' basketball team (1958-75), Bradley won 10 region championships in 17 seasons and guided Newton to its only state crown in 1964. He directed his teams to a national-record 129 consecutive home wins during one 9-year span.

Upon returning to Newton prior to the 2001-02 campaign, Bradley led the Rams

to three 20-win seasons and three state tournament appearances. He went 76-39 during his second tour at the school, winning the Region 8-AAAA championship in 2003.

Bradley became the state's all-time winningest coach in 2003 with victory No. 1,255 and its all-time leader for wins as a boys' coach (925) a year later. Bradley's 956 boys' wins rank him seventh nationally; he won 506 of those at Newton.

All told, Bradley has won 1,597 games in three sports, losing only 485. In basketball alone, he is nearly 1,000 games above .500 for his career (1,309-356).

His accomplishments on the sidelines were recognized by Gov. Sonny Perdue, the State Senate and the State House of Representatives earlier this year.