

## Ronald Bradley

*Teacher and Coach Covers More Than X's and O's*

by Steven Colquitt

The first-year teacher sized up the student pretty fast. The student simply wasn't catching on to the subject matter and the teacher thought "this is one of the dumbest kids I've ever been around."

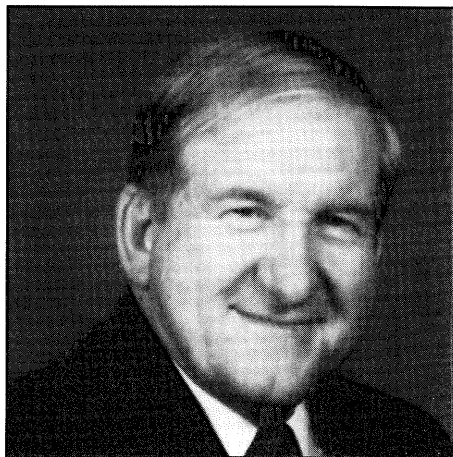
A few weeks passed and the teacher found himself on the way to Atlanta in a borrowed truck to pick up some furniture. Along the way, the truck broke down and the teacher, who was helpless in mechanical areas, was stranded. Soon after, a car pulled alongside and the driver — the student — offered assistance. Within a matter of minutes, the truck was running again and the teacher continued his trek to Atlanta. Along the way, the teacher thought repeatedly about "How dumb I was and how smart that youngster was."

That experience helped the teacher, Ronald M. Bradley, realize that every person has a worth, and that it is his job as a teacher and a coach to help a person realize his or her worth.

"I like to say that I am working with eaglets. They don't know right now how high they are going to fly," Bradley says. "It's like the story about the eaglet who got into a chicken pen. One day, that eaglet saw a beautiful eagle flying and said 'I wish I could fly like that.' One of the chickens told him 'You're just a chicken like us. Stop dreaming.'

"I don't want kids to stop dreaming. I want to see them soar."

For nearly four decades, Bradley has helped kids find their dream and has helped them to soar. He has done it in the classroom as a teacher and he has done it in the athletic arena as a coach. Bradley is in his 39th year as a high school coach. He is now beginning his first year at Piedmont Academy. He entered the 1996-97 season with 1,113 wins leading both boys and girls teams, giving him the most victories among active coaches in Georgia. He has coached squads to 70 team championships, 29 state tournaments, seven state finals and three state championships. Fifty-five of his players garnered All-State honors and one was tabbed as an All-American. In a nine-year span, Bradley's teams won a



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national-record 129 straight home games; in another 10-year span, every starter but three received a college scholarship.

"When you're in it, you don't think about the years," Bradley said. "Every year is special — they're special to me and they're special to the kids. I've always tried to treat each year as special. Once a season is over, it's history and it's time to get ready for the next. I really enjoy what I'm doing. Every year takes on its own personality and it's exciting when you get into it.

"Every day there's a goal, I want to do a better job and I want to help young people be more successful and prepare for their future. They don't know about the young men and women from the past; their year is special to them. They want to be a part of something special, so we do everything we can for that to happen."

Bradley didn't set out to become a high school teacher and coach. He attended Avondale High School, where he was a standout football, basketball and baseball player. He then went to the University of Georgia, earning seven letters in baseball and basketball and being named the baseball MVP in 1957. After college, he took a job in a recreation department in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., "but it didn't work out because I had to put up with a lot of things I didn't have control over, like discipline."

Bradley had been offered a position at Newton County High School in Covington

before going to Florida. He called to see if the position was still open. It was, and he relocated there. That was a marriage that lasted for 18 years, Bradley then spent 12 years at George Walton Academy in Monroe, five years at Trinity Christian in Dublin and the past three at Loganville.

All told, Bradley has coached 104 varsity teams: basketball, football, baseball and golf. And you know what? He's ready to coach 104 more.

"One of the most important things we've got going today is athletics," Bradley said.

"When you're a member of a team, you're a member of an exclusive club. You're going to experience highs and lows in athletics, but you're going to experience highs and lows in life, so you learn how to deal with them.

"I figured out that a young person is going to spend 2,000 hours of his or her own time under my direction, so I've got to teach them more than just how to dribble a ball or shoot a ball or kick a ball. I've got to share values other than just the game itself because I'm working with the most valuable possession a couple has.

"You don't know who's going to attain what in life, but you know they're all going to attain something. I've got to help arm them with anything I can to give them a chance. Happy memories make happy people. I want kids to dream, to reach that dream and then find another dream. Life is a marathon, not a sprint. It takes time."

### Ronald Bradley

**Years Attended UGA:** 1953-57

**Business/Occupation:** Teacher/Coach, Piedmont Academy

**Hometown:** Avondale, Ga.

**Family:** Wife, Jan, of 43 years and children, Brenda, Bill, Bob and Brad

**Memorable Moment of UGA career:**

Just being a part of the athletic program at Georgia

**Athletic Honors — College:**

- \* Earned 7 letters in baseball and basketball
- \* Baseball team MVP in 1957
- \* Baseball SEC Championship in 1954, Runners-up in 1955

