

WARE COUNTY REWARDED, TOO

Patience Pays for Long-Waiting Ron Bradley

By CHARLIE ROBERTS

While a state Class AA tournament record crowd of 15,150 was discovering that Newton County's boys and Ware County's girls were best by court test over the weekend, the Rams and Gatorettes discovered the meaning of the expression "everything comes to him who waits" — long enough.

Coach Ronald Bradley's Rams, who finished with the best (35-1) high school basketball record in Georgia except for the 27-0 of Cherokee's newly-crowned AAA girls' queens, took everything back to Covington Saturday night except Alexander Coliseum and the AA girls trophy.

Charming Genevieve Strickland's Gatorettes, thanks to brokenhanded Lucy Culpepper and the bouncing of 1-AA foe Dodge County in a "rubber match" victory, 44-35, packaged the girls' crown for its first trip ever to Waycross. And Georgia Tech reclaimed the big-domed roundhouse.

Patience had been the watchword for both conquerors. For no state basketball trophy ever rested before in the showcase of a Ware County institution. And Newton, even though producing numerous strong teams in all major sports, had never muscled open the victory door in the finals of a state competition.

In 1962, Newton baseballers came in second best, and a year ago Stone Cooper's girl cagers failed in the Coliseum finals to beat out Hart County for the honor of becoming the only state AA distaff champion from North Georgia in 14 years.

But this time, on their fourth trip to the state and third under Avondaler Bradley in six years of spectacular 165-17 won-lost success, they made it.

And everyone in Covington was there to see what may be the greatest "little team" in Georgia history—no regular over 6-2 for six years—chop down tall timber from Crisp County (64-49), Rockmart (51-41) and Hart County (71-49), quintets that had won 79 of 91 court battles.

Principal Homer Sharp, 15 years at Newton, stood at

courtside with Dan Bramlett, five years his counterpart at Hart, and watched Bradley's Lilliputians hogtie Bill Ensley's giants. Covington Mayor Walker Harris clapped his hands raw in the stands. They, too, had been men of patience.

Even the game ball wound up in the loving embrace of Newton students, thrown to them over the goal by strong-armed sub Gary Bloodworth from beyond mid-court in a frantic last-second effort to put his name in the scoring column.

This, though, was just the start of the post-game side-show, where pandemonium would have seemed like a lull. Tim Christian, Most Valuable Player award winner in the wake of shooting a tournament record-shattering 78 points; Stanley Harris, Terry Smith, Wayne Hall and Grady Campbell had made their

AA BOYS ALL-TOURNEY

Tim Christian, Newton County; Lyle Martin, Hart County; Jimmy Wuensch, Rockmart; Tommy Bowling, West Fanning; Jimmy Tingle, Headland; Ronnie Hardy, Fairburn Campbell; Doug Burdette, Hart County; Stanley Harris, Newton County; Wayne Hall, Newton County; Steve Fry, West Fanning.

AA GIRLS ALL-TOURNEY

Forwards: Lucy Culpepper, Ware County; Jackie Barnett, Dodge County; Joy Green, Douglas County; Edith Jean Spence, Ware County; Sharon Vaughn, Dalton; Wanda Reynolds, Hart County. Guards: Barbara Rubin, Dodge County; Peggy Thrift, Ware County; Cynthia Warr, North Clayton; Caroline Jeffords, Ware County; Gloria Dixon, Dodge County; Linda Wilson, Hart County.

points, and no such wild shots, in the main event.

All wound up in the winner's circle, where Charlie Cates, aide to GHSA executive secretary Sam Burke, tendered them the title trophy to pass around. Juniors Christian and Harris and sophomore Hall wound up on the all-tournament team.

Christian, hailed as "Georgia best" by a knowing Ensley, had led the charge, hauling down 33 rebounds in three games, hitting 27 of 57

field shots (47.7 percent) and 24 of 37 from the free throw line (65 percent).

Newton, North Georgia's 12th boys AA champ in 15 years and sixth in a row, joined Osborne, Clarkston and Jackson County (Braselton) in giving up-state people a 4-1 edge in 1964 state titles. Only Perry, in Class A, successfully defended the down-state honor.

But Ware and Dodge kept South Georgia girls riding the AA crest. Ware had nicked Dodge in Douglas, 42-36, for the sub-region crown only to lose to the Eastmanites in Valdosta, 36-34, for the 1-AA diadem.

And this was the Ware revenge, blasting Elbert County, 40-22, Douglas County, 39-28, and getting an eyelash lead in late game and freezing Dodge out with Culpepper's cool dribbling, even though Dodge's Jackie Barnett annexed tourney high-scoring honors over Culpepper,

54-51, and Dodge's Barbara Rubin was voted most outstanding guard.

The record-shattering extended even into losing ranks. Headland's Jimmy Tingle set an all-time one-game record of 40 points in a 78-67 setback by West Fanning, a team so good that Ensley vowed, "I just don't see how we beat them (53-51)."

And Culpepper hit what must have been a girls' record shot — from midcourt against Dodge as the half ended.

When the Big Dome lights dimmed, everyone was using that old baseball phrase, "Wait until next year," and with foundation, too. Four juniors and two sophs made the all-star "Big Ten." Hart loses only Roy Cleveland by graduation. Dodge loses only Barnett. The Newtons lose only two. That's one more than they lost (games) this time.



HAPPY NEWTON COUNTY RAMS CAPTURE HEAD COACH RONALD BRADLEY IN THEIR CELEBRATION
Covington Crew Whoops It Up After Trimming Hart County for State Class AA Basketball Title Saturday

Staff Photo—Dwight Ross