



Ron Bradley is returning to coaching in Florida after a one-year retirement.

Bradley unretires, back on sidelines

□ **The Call:** Icon who built a dynasty at Newton High returns to coach in sixth decade.

From staff reports

After a one-year retirement, Ron Bradley is returning to basketball.

Bradley, the winningest active high school basketball coach in Georgia, will take his trade outside state lines after being named the head boys basketball coach at Port Saint Joe High School in Florida.

"I had thought something might develop in-state but nothing worked out," Bradley said. "This will be a good opportunity to return to coaching. I am looking forward to the opportunity to work with young people again."

Bradley, who has compiled an astonishing 1,198 career wins, last coached the boys and girls teams at Piedmont Academy in Monticello. He also had stints at Loganville High School and George Walton Academy.

"I feel privileged to now have the chance to coach in my sixth decade," Bradley said. "Port St. Joe has been successful in athletics and the school has excellent facilities."

In 1959, the now 65-year-old Bradley seized the reins at Newton High School, turning the program into a dynasty. In his first five seasons as head coach, Bradley won 130 of his 146 games. Then, in 1964, Bradley brought a state championship to Covington.

His juggernaut of 1964 won its first 27 games, suffered one disputed defeat (a defeat it would later avenge) and then won its last eight games by a 16-point-per-game margin. Bradley's Rams floored Hart County in the Class AA state championship game, beating the Bulldogs by 22 points to finish an historic season 35-1.

"It was a fantastic period in history," Bradley said, during an April reunion on The Square with the team which brought him his first state championship. "What I remember most about 1964 is just how special those kids were and the commitment the town made to them. It was a unique group of guys. They were on fire to play. It was one of those years where everything fit."

"That was the one that didn't get away," Bradley added. "It was our first state championship, and it was very special. When you look back at things that altered the thinking of people, that was one of them."

From 1959 to 1967, the Newton Rams never lost a game on their home floor, winning a national record 129 consecutive games. Today, 36 years later, the record still stands.

Bradley, who has 36 20-win seasons to his credit, spent 17 seasons at Newton before bidding adieu in 1975.

All told, Bradley has coached 56 all-state players, one All-American and won three state championships. He was inducted into the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame in 1997 after nearly 40 years of service to the game of basketball.