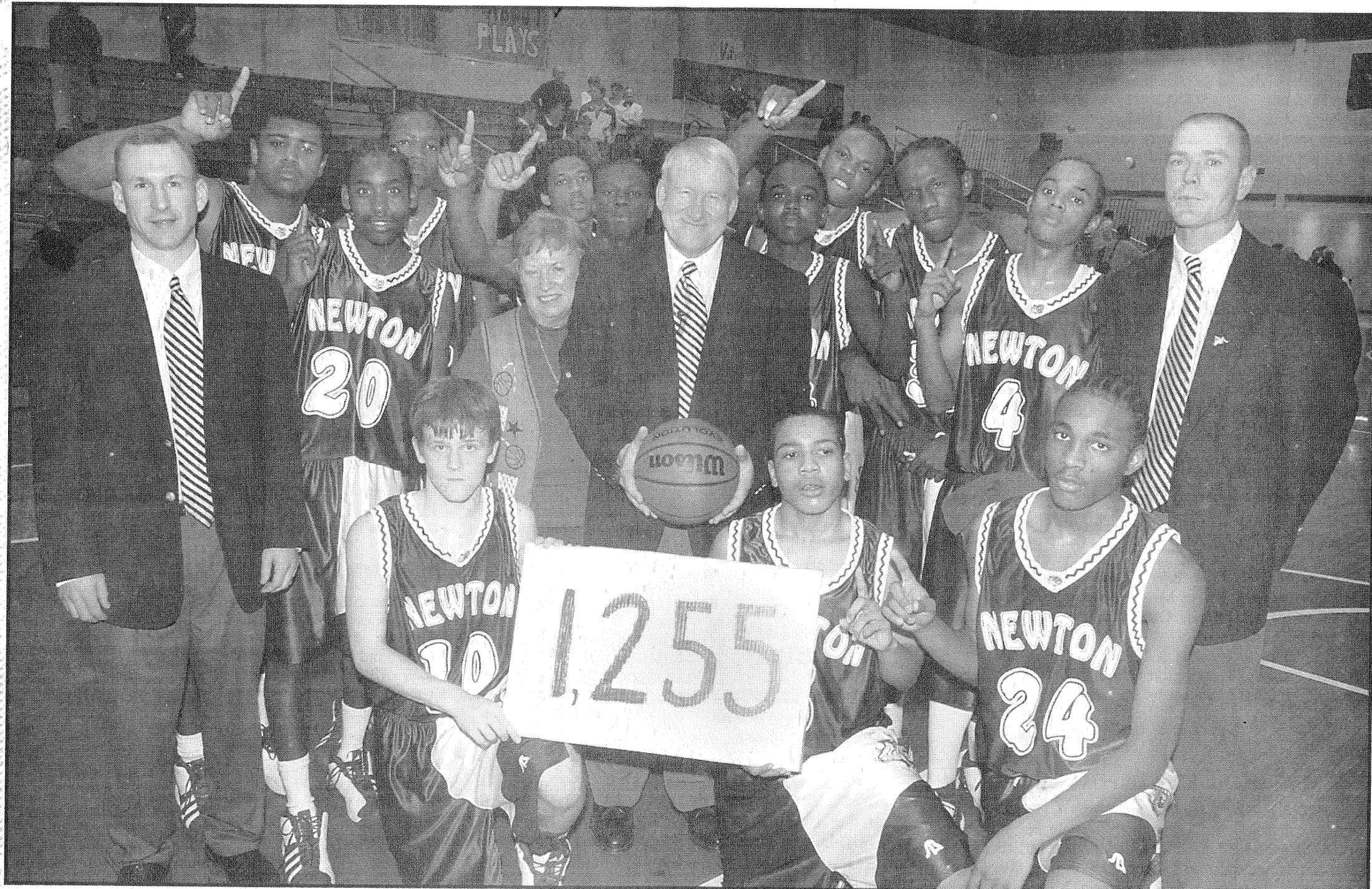


Sports



On top of the coaching mountain: Newton head coach Ron Bradley (center) celebrates his 1,255th career victory with the team that gave him the record-breaking win on Friday night.

Ron Manson/The Covington News

Alone at the top

Ron Bradley passes the late D.B. Carroll as state's new all-time career wins leader

Newton High's
Ron Bradley
Ron Manson/
The Covington News

By Brian Knapp
Sports Editor

The Newton boys' basketball team left its definitive handprint on Eastside's backside Friday night.

Legale Floyd lit up a dungeon-esque gym with a game-high 18 points and eight rebounds to lead five Newton players in double-figure scoring as the sixth-ranked Rams systematically destroyed Eastside 66-43 at Eastside High School, escorting head coach Ron Bradley to his record-breaking 1,255th career victory.

As a team, Newton (17-6, 7-1 subregion) had more than three times as many assists (19) as it did turnovers (6) and forced Eastside into 27 misses in its first 33 attempts from the field in a near picture-perfect performance.

Floyd drove home an emphatic dagger with 4:55 to play, sinking his fifth three-pointer to up his team's lead to 30 points. Silence fell upon Eastside's supporters.

"Under this kind of pressure, you don't expect your kids to come out and dominate like we did," Bradley said. "We came out extremely strong."

Because of foul trouble, Newton seemed to be in real jeopardy early as senior forward Antwone Smith went to the bench with his third foul with 3:33 to play in the first period. The Rams led 8-5 at Smith's departure; he returned to a 26-18 lead. They never skipped a beat.

Newton caught Eastside (17-6, 5-3 subregion) flush on the jaw in the third quarter, outscoring the Eagles 22-8 to land its knockout blow. Smith hit a pair of mid-range jumpers and delivered a pivotal three-point play, and Floyd dropped in two three-pointers to spearhead the charge.

"By the end of the third quarter," said Eastside head coach Tommy McWhorter, "I knew there was no way we could win the game."

Its confidence long since shaken, Eastside collapsed to its knees.

Newton's lead swelled to 53-26 early in the fourth period on another three-pointer from Floyd and a Quint Middleton jumper. It moved to 60-30 before the Rams stopped swinging.

Held to eight points in the first meeting between the two schools, Floyd let the game come to him, peppering Eastside with long-distance artistry and a feathery touch. He hit five of his six attempts from behind the three-point arc as Newton won for the 10th time in 12 games.

"It was a whole lot different this time," Floyd said smiling. "We played defense and offense this time. They couldn't just play me."

Darius White chipped in with 14 points and eight assists for Newton, which improved to 3-0 all-time against Eastside. Vincent Scott threw in 13 points and snatched a game-high 10 rebounds. Smith (11) and Middleton (10) also scored in double figures for the Rams, who looked the part of a new-age juggernaut.

The loss, his team's third in four games, left McWhorter near despair.

"I don't know if we can recover from this," McWhorter said. "The way we're playing, I don't know about our mental toughness. I don't know if we can be found."

Bruce Smith poured in a team-high 13 points — nine in the second half — for the Eagles, who shot a miserable and uncharacteristic 28 percent (17-for-60) for the game.

"I think we came into the season looking at these games with Newton as our championships," McWhorter said. "If that's the case, we're really in some trouble."

The win moves Newton into position to clinch the south sub-region against Salem at 7:30 p.m. tonight at Newton High School. A victory would give the Rams a first-round bye and the right to host the quarterfinals in next week's Region 8-A AAAA Tournament.

Eastside, meanwhile, opens a two-game season-ending road swing at Loganville at 7:30 p.m. tonight. The Eagles have won the last two meetings between the two schools.

RON BRADLEY BY THE NUMBERS

Newton head coach Ron Bradley moved into first place on the state's all-time career wins list with his 1,255th victory Friday night at Eastside High School. Here's a brief look at some

129

From 1959 to 1967, the Newton boys' basketball team won a national record 129 consecutive games on its home court under Bradley's watch. The record still stands, and

56

Bradley has coached 56 players who went on to receive all-state recognition.

36

Bradley has posted an

9

Bradley is one of only nine men in United States history to have won at least 900 games as a boys' basketball coach. He picked up his 900th victory as a boys' coach

922

Bradley would have to lose more than 900 consecutive games — 922 to be exact — before his record fell back to the .500 mark. In other words, he could go 0-30 for the next 30 years and still

