

Seven wins away from history

Newton's Bradley closing in on state record



Newton's Ron Bradley is only seven wins away from setting a new Georgia record for basketball coaching victories. Bradley has 1,248 victories, which is only six short of the mark set by the late D.B. Carroll. — Photo by Dan Henry

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Newton boys basketball coach Ron Bradley is only seven wins away from making Georgia history.

With seven more victories, Bradley will surpass the late D.B. Carroll, who, with 1,254 total victories (boys and girls), won more games than any other basketball coach in state history.

But Bradley has already made history this year.

He became the 10th-winningest boys coach in the nation with 891 victories when his Rams beat Union Grove Wolverines 56-39 on Dec. 23 at the Henry County Holiday Classic.

Bradley is set to overtake Charles Womack of Hawley, Texas, for the No. 9 spot on the national level. With two more wins, the Newton coach will have 897 victories on the sidelines, which is enough to claim the No. 8 spot in the nation as he sets his sights on the overall Georgia record.

"I hear a lot of coaches say that their record doesn't mean anything," said Bradley. "I wonder how you can coach and not take pride in your record? How can you sell kids on succeeding if you don't have enough pride to care about what you're record is? (The record) belongs to the players.

"We have some special things in store for us. I think a lot of people try to downplay it, but I think it's special. There have been thousands and thousands of coaches in Georgia and to be up there close to that is good. There's a lot of luck involved but also a lot of effort."

CURRENTLY IN his 43rd season, Bradley has 895 boys wins and 353 girls wins for 1,248 career victories.

On his way to passing Carroll, Bradley will have accomplished a

task that only eight coaches before him have done — reach the 900-win plateau in boys basketball.

Bradley's first win came in Nov. 22, 1958, with an 82-34 season-opening triumph over Loganville at Newton County High School.

This season, Bradley can also catch Warren Rutledge as the eighth winningest boys coach in the nation. Rutledge won 904 games.

"We're only five wins away from our 900th boys win. There's only been eight other coaches that have won that many games in their career. We're seven wins away from the record in Georgia. I think it means a lot to a lot of people. I think it'll be real special to get there," said Bradley. "I always thought that when my years are over that Newton County should be next to my name because that's where it all started. The many people that touched my life early and motivated me to continue to coach are right here. I feel it's something special that belongs to the people of Newton County."

The record for boys wins in Georgia is 924 held by the late Eric Staples of Perry. When Bradley surpasses Staples, he will also take over the No. 7 spot nationally.

"AT ONE TIME, I never thought that anyone would get close to his record because back then you could play more games," said Bradley. "Coach Staples was a great coach. I've watched his teams and he was a great coach. He coached back in the time when they didn't have to lock the gym and they left balls on the floor. He told his players that they could come to the gym 24 hours a day. If a guy couldn't sleep, he would go to the gym and shoot. He was truly one of the great coaches of this state.

"But (his record's) down the road. We have more immediate things still sitting here."

At the moment, Cliff Ranew of

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