

# Legend coming to GAC

## Bradley, nation's winningest coach, to head boys hoops

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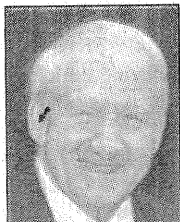
When Tom Kelsey left the Greater Atlanta Christian boys basketball program to coach Belhaven College in Mississippi, the Norcross private school wanted to find a replacement who had a history of winning games.

As it turns out, they found someone who

has won more than anyone in the United States.

Ron Bradley, who led the Newton Rams to the Class AAAAA Final Four this past season, will officially be named the Spartans' new head coach today at a 10 a.m. ceremony at the school.

"I'm real excited about this opportunity,"



Ron Bradley

said Bradley, who retired from Newton following the 2005 season. "I just felt it was too good of an opportunity for me to pass up. It's a place where I feel I can grow and mature and become a better person and a better coach."

He then added, "It's the first year of the rest of my career."

And what a career it's been.

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### BRADLEY BY THE NUMBERS

1,301 Number of career boys basketball victories by Ron Bradley

129 Record-setting number of home games Newton won in a row during Bradley's first stint at school

121 Total number of varsity teams Bradley has coached in his career

61 Number of basketball teams Bradley has coached

50 Years Bradley has been married to his wife, Jan

45 Years Bradley has been a high school head coach

17 Times Bradley has been named region coach of the year

6 Number of sports Bradley has coached

4 State championships Bradley has won (three in basketball, one in football)

## Bradley: 'He's the John Wooden of high school basketball'

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In 45 seasons as a coach, Bradley has an astounding record of 1,301-353 with 24 region titles, three state championships and 11 state finals appearances.

His win total is the highest active mark of anyone in the country and he is only the third coach in national history to break the 1,300-win plateau.

"He's the John Wooden of high school basketball," GAC principal Bill Burton said.

"There is not a person we talked to that was more passionate," said GAC athletic director Tim Vick. "He's just a legend around here, so we are very excited. And he was anxious to get back into the game."

"I don't think we could've found anyone that fits the description of what we're looking for better than him."

Bradley first began coaching at Newton in 1957. During that first tenure, which ended in 1975, the Rams won the state title in 1964 and set a national record with 129 straight wins on their home court.

The veteran coach, who was also a successful girls basketball, baseball and football coach, won two Georgia Independent School Association state titles at George Walton Academy. He then coached at four other schools before ending up back at Newton in 2001.

### THE BRADLEY FILE

- **Name:** Ron Bradley
- **New position:** Head boys basketball coach, assistant athletic director at Greater Atlanta Christian
- **Former position:** Head boys basketball coach at Newton
- **Age:** 70
- **Career record:** 1,301-353
- **Education:** Graduated from Avondale High in 1953; graduated from the University of Georgia in 1957
- **Background:** Star athlete at Avondale who went on to play both baseball and basketball at Georgia; began coaching at Newton in 1957 and won state championship in boys basketball in 1964; also set a national record with 129 straight home victories; won GISA state championships in 1976 and 1985 at George Walton Academy; also coached George Walton football team to 1980 state title; retired from George Walton in 1987, then coached at Trinity Christian for five years; coached at Loganville for three seasons; coached at Piedmont Academy for two years and coached at Port St. Joe (Fla.) for one year; came back to Newton to coach boys basketball in 2001 and was again successful, leading the Rams to the 2005 Class AAAAA semifinals, where they lost to eventual state champion Wheeler; was named national coach of the year for 2004; all told he has coached 121 different varsity sports teams (44 boys basketball, 17 girls basketball, 19 football, 18 baseball, 20 golf and three track teams)
- **Family:** Has been married to wife Jan for 50 years; has four grown children, Brad, Brenda, Bill and Bob, and eight grandchildren



Ron Bradley

coached 29 basketball teams that have won 20 games or more. He has been named state coach of the year four times, his region's coach of the year 17 times and was selected as the 2004 national coach of the year.

On Monday, the legendary coach got a phone call about the vacant GAC job from school officials and was asked if he was interested.

He told them he was.

So on Wednesday he met with school officials again and toured the campus. Both sides came away from the interview extremely impressed.

"It was a great meeting of the minds," said Bradley, a 1997 inductee into the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame. "Everything just seemed like it fit."

On Thursday, Burton and GAC president Dr. David Fincher called Bradley and officially offered him the job.

He accepted immediately.

"They all just did a great job representing the school," Bradley said. "And it's just a fantastic situation. They make you feel so good and make you feel so special. I just hope we can just go in and contribute."

After being notified that Bradley would accept the job Fincher immediately called Vick, who was in his office at the time, to tell him the good news.

"We've got ourselves a coach," Fincher told the AD.

"Yes you do," Vick said with a laugh.

The athletic director could then barely contain his enthusiasm when talking about the legendary coach, who will be taking over a team that was 21-10 this past season and advanced to the quarterfinals of the Class AA state playoffs.

"When I talked to him it was amazing," Vick said. "I had never spoken to somebody who was more passionate about the game and who loves teaching kids and who only wants the best for kids."

"To me it was the perfect scenario. And when you talk to him, it's more than just wins and losses. He's talking about relationships he's had with kids and coaches. That just shows you that he's a man of principle."

It also doesn't hurt that he's a man with 1,301 coaching victories.