

Bradley 'as excited' as he was in 1957

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In almost half a century of coaching, Ron Bradley hasn't lost any of his zeal.

"He has mellowed somewhat, in action," said his high school sweetheart and wife of 50 years Jan. "But he's never lost any of his enthusiasm. He's just as excited right now as he was in 1957."

She would know best.

It's a lot easier to count up the number of games Jan Bradley has missed than how many Ron Bradley has coached.

Jan Bradley has been there for all but five of her husband's 1,700-plus games.

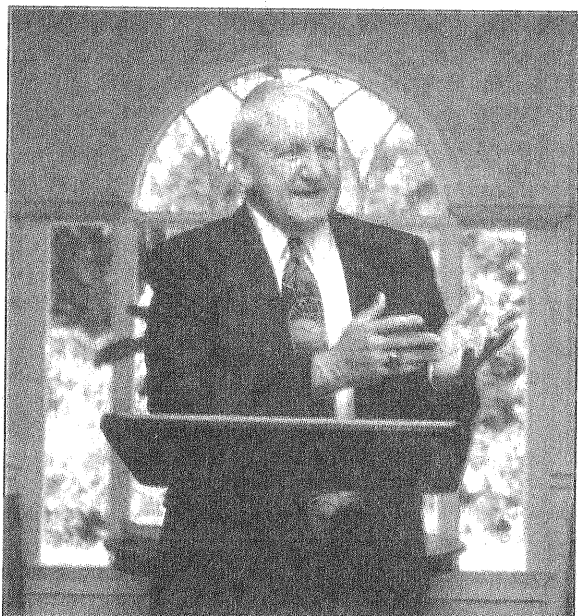
She missed three the first year he coached, staying home with the couple's first child, and one at the passing of each of her parents.

It's been, Jan figures, about 12 years since she missed a game.

So plan on seeing her at Greater Atlanta Christian this year.

Ron Bradley, the nation's winningest active coach,

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Staff Photo: Anthony Stalcup

Greater Atlanta Christian officially introduced Ron Bradley as the new boys head basketball coach on Friday. Bradley has won 1,301 career games.

Coach: Bradley has won four state titles

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was introduced Friday as the Spartans new head coach, ending his third retirement after just three weeks.

Bradley, 70, began coaching in 1957 at Newton and left in 1975 for George Walton after a tremendously successful tenure with the Rams that included a state title in 1964 and a national record of 129 straight home wins over a nine-year period.

A graduate of the University of Georgia, Bradley retired for the first time in 1987. He went back to coaching just two years later.

"He has never, never said, 'I'm not going to coach again,'" Jan said. "Then at the end of 40 years (of coaching) he retired again — for one year."

Bradley returned to Newton in 2001 and was coach there until the end of this school year. During the 2005 season, Bradley and the Rams made the state's final four in their first season at the AAAAA level. Newton was knocked out by Wheeler (which ousted South Gwinnett a round earlier and eventually won the state title), but it was an impressive showing and Bradley added 21 wins to his staggering total.

Bradley is one of only three high school coaches in the United States to win more than

1,300 games. He's won four state championships (three in boys basketball, one in football). He's had 29 teams win over 20 games in a season.

He's been the state coach of the year four times, the region coach of the year 17 times.

Inducted to the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame in 1997, Bradley was named the national coach of the year in 2004.

"But the most impressive thing about Ron Bradley is his wife Jan," GAC athletic director Tim Vick joked at Friday's press conference, sparking a round of laughter and applause.

"The second most impressive thing is his love and respect for young people," Vick said, getting serious again. "I interviewed a lot of people for this job. But I believe there is no one that was more passionate, was more enthusiastic about the game of basketball than Ronald Bradley."

Last week, before this job had been offered and accepted, Bradley was giving a clinic to a church group and Jan was there with their 14-year-old granddaughter.

"He got to giving the instruction on the floor and she turned to me and said, 'Pop really loves to coach doesn't he?'" Jan said. "This was before we knew anything about this (job at GAC)."