

GOVERNOR'S HONOR

Newton's Bradley given citation by Gov. Perdue

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ATLANTA

The early part of 2005 has been a good one for Newton boys basketball coach Ron Bradley.

Not only did he win his 1,300th basketball game, he took a group of deserving underdogs to the Final Four and he was honored by Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue with a commendation Wednesday at the state Capitol.

"It's real special," Bradley said. "You're representing a lot of young people anytime you receive an honor. There's a lot of other people that have been of great support through the years.

"When you receive an honor of this magnitude there's really a lot of young people receiving that honor, it's not just one person."

In 45 years as a coach, Bradley has inspired 123 football, boys and girls bas-

ketball, baseball and golf teams.

But basketball is Bradley's true love. He has coached approximately 1,654 basketball games winning 1,302 of them — an impressive winning percentage of .787.

During his time as a coach, Bradley has received many acknowledgments from the state legislature and two from sitting governors.

"The last time was when Gov. Carter was in office. We had our picture made with him and the team so its been awhile," Bradley explained. "I've been recognized since then but not with the governor and a picture."

The coach didn't have much time to plan for his presentation. He had heard the rumors circulating for about a week. But it wasn't until Tuesday that everything was confirmed.

"They called me and gave me a time frame between the 16th and 31st. I'm having surgery and didn't want to come in here looking like a wounded duck. I

asked them if they could do it (Wednesday) and they said yes. So they cleared it with the administration and set it up."

When asked what makes a coach good Bradley said that you need to have a love for what you're doing, the commitment of time and the most important thing to never lose focus on is the desire to work with young people. Besides the three major components the willingness to continue to learn is also a vital part of coaching longevity.

After giving his time to young people for 45 years one would think that Bradley has had enough. But the resilient coach and his wife Jan are not sure if they're ready to hang it up yet.

"We've always been told, 'Don't try to make a decision while you're too high or try to make it while you're too low.' We've been at this for a long time and have talked about retiring because we've retired two other times," said Bradley.

"But we still enjoy what we do and I still have a passion for it."