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Bradley seeks another piece of history

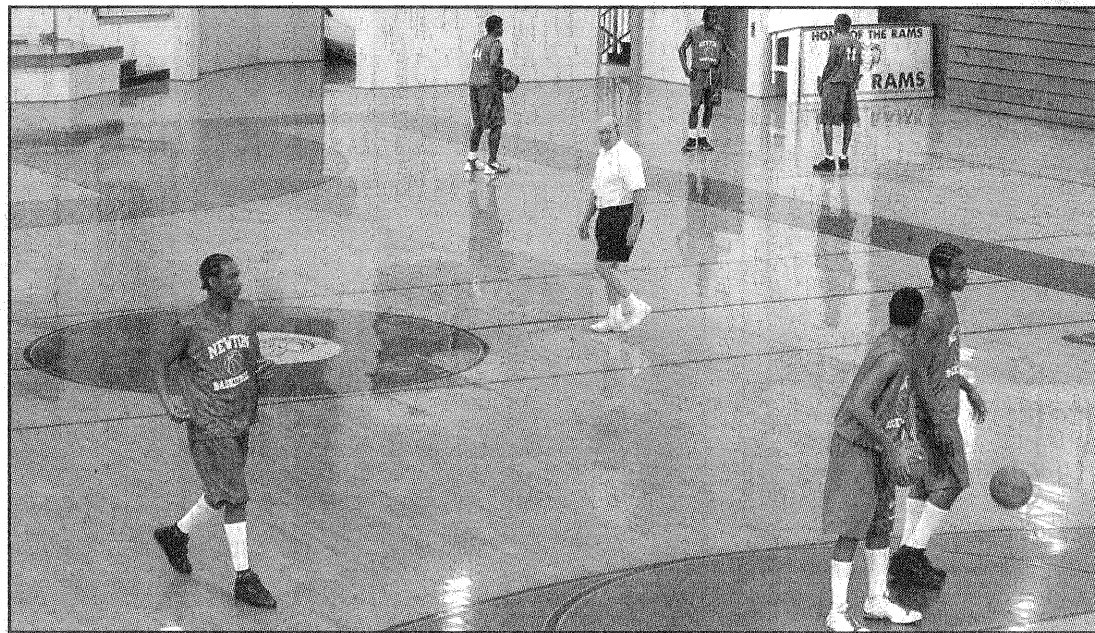
Brian Knapp Sports Editor

Nov. 28 — The year Ronald M. Bradley won his first game as a high school basketball coach, Dwight Eisenhower was in the White House, the Cold War was reaching its height and the Berlin Wall had not yet been erected.



BRADLEY

It was 1958. Now, 1,237 victories later, Bradley is on the doorstep of the immortals. Bradley opened his 43rd season on the sidelines this past week. His status as a local icon long since secured, Bradley stands just 17 wins shy of breaking D.B. Carroll's all-time state record of 1,254



Ron Manson/The Covington News

The Newton boys' basketball team runs through practice drills under the watchful eye of legendary head coach Ron Bradley. Bradley is second on the state's career wins list for high school basketball coaches with 1,238. He opened his 43rd season as a head coach Friday, 17 wins away from breaking D.B. Carroll's all-time mark of 1,254 career victories.

career victories.

The record, as do all, will mean a great deal to a man who has dedicated his life to

teaching the youth of the nation how to make something out of their lives.

"Any time you're involved

in something with millions of other people where whatever you've done is at the top, it's special," Bradley said. "We all

try to be special. But only one coach can be the winningest coach."

His résumé is a study in the unbelievable.

He owns three state championships, an astounding 37 20-win seasons and the national benchmark for consecutive home-court victories with 129 — a record that has now stood for more than a quarter century. He has won games in six different decades, posting a career record that is now a ridiculous 911 games above .500.

"To be in schools where I was allowed to work at my love has been a great joy," Bradley said. "The young people are the most important part of it. We always tried to get them to reach the level they were capable of."

A 1997 inductee into the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame, Bradley first coached the Newton Rams from 1958-1975, leading them to 10

region championships in 18 years and their only state crown in 1964.

The 1964 team remains his crowning on-paper achievement. He led the undersized Rams to a 35-1 record and near-mythic status locally. They won their first 27 games, suffered one later-avenged defeat and then won their last eight, defeating Hart County by 22 points in the state championship game. They were four sophomores, four juniors, two seniors and a freshman. None were taller than 6-foot-1. They have become lovingly known as "Ron's Runts."

Bradley credits his wife Jan, the true love of his life, for much of his success. The two have been married for nearly 50 years and have logged many a mile together.

"She deserves a lot of credit," Bradley said. "She's always been dedicated to what we've tried to do."