

## GSW's Barksdale reaches milestone with 450 career wins in 23 seasons as head coach

By Su Ann Bird,  
"Sompin' Special" columnist  
Reprinted with permission from  
The Sumter Free Press Jan. 16, 2002

Georgia Southwestern State University Athletic Director and head basketball coach Randolph Barksdale may have been a self-described 'gym rat' growing up, but he has accomplished a milestone many coaches never even achieve.

"All I ever wanted to do was coach. Growing up I lived in the gym and hung around coaches. My daddy used to tease me and say 'one day you're going to grow up and get a job,'" said the 48-year old who has been coaching since he graduated from college in 1976.

"It's just a sign of getting old," laughed Randolph Barksdale when he was asked about his 450th career victory as a head basketball coach at the collegiate level. Then on a more serious note he added, "I feel blessed. I had an awful lot of help getting here. I had good players, administrations that wanted to win, and a lot of good people helping me and supporting me."

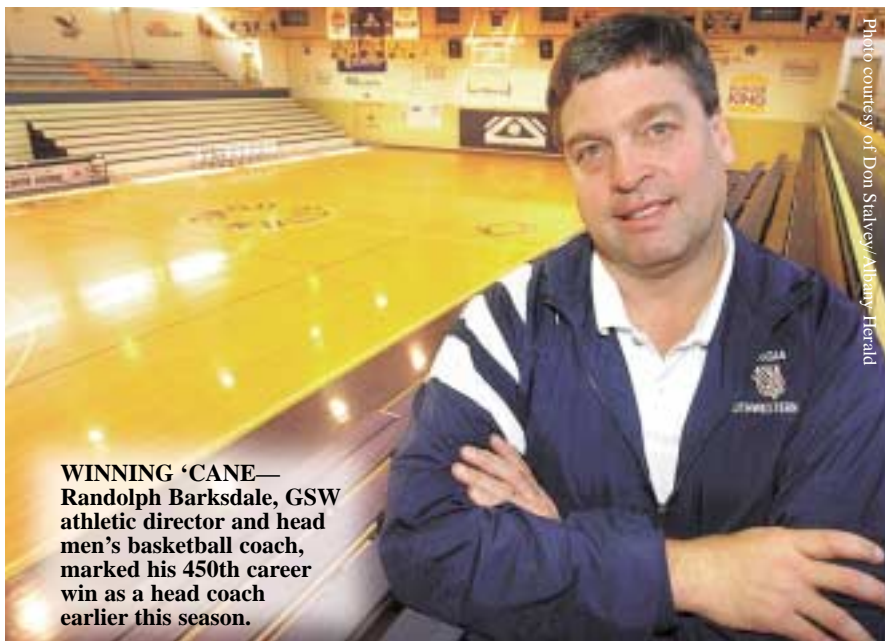
The GSW Hurricanes defeated Emmanuel College 87-82 in overtime in Franklin Springs, Ga., Jan. 7, to give Barksdale that magic win in the middle of his 23rd season as a head coach.

"I really didn't know that this was my 450th victory until Ricky Burgess told me," said Barksdale. "I was just happy to win. We had beaten a tough conference team in overtime on the road, so I was pleased with the win even before I knew that this was the 450th."

Randolph Barksdale began his career as a head basketball coach on the campus of Georgia Southwestern State University in 1979-80, when the school was still known as Georgia Southwestern College.

That first year was rough. His team finished the season at 6-18. "That was the only losing season I've ever had. It's a good thing Dr. Bob Clark, the GSW athletic director then, didn't fire me after that first year, or I might not have made it to 450," laughed Barksdale.

Barksdale stayed at GSW for seven more years and worked at turning the program around. He posted a winning season the next year and two years after that led his team to a conference title and the school's first trip to the NAIA National Tournament in many years.



**WINNING 'CANE—**  
**Randolph Barksdale, GSW**  
**athletic director and head**  
**men's basketball coach,**  
**marked his 450th career**  
**win as a head coach**  
**earlier this season.**

Photo courtesy of Don Statkevich/Albany Herald

"I guess I would have to say that the 1983-84 season was the most special because that was the first time we won our conference. I had a good group of players and that was the first year we made it to the national tournament," said Barksdale.

That may have been his first title and trip, but it was not his last. His teams went back to the national tournament in 1984 - 85, 1985 - 86, and in 1986 - 87. After the 1986-87 season Barksdale decided to leave Americus and move closer to his parents. He accepted the head coaching job at DeKalb South Junior College and coached there from 1987-1995. All the time he kept winning.

Then in 1995 he had the opportunity to return to Georgia Southwestern. "Not many people ever return to a place once they leave," admitted Barksdale. "But we really liked this community and the people and missed the college atmosphere that we had here. I feel very fortunate that Athletic Director Dr. Steve Cobb hired me to come back."

That was six years ago and during the 14 years he has been at GSW, Barksdale has 287 wins and only 133 losses. His overall record including his stint at DeKalb South Junior College is 450-245. That comes out to an average of 20 wins a season.

But even though he loves winning, coaching and the competitiveness of the game, Barksdale says his greatest thrill comes from the players. "I enjoy the kids. I like to win like everyone else, but I love to see the kids develop, grow and go on to become successful adults. That's the most gratifying part of all."

And that's why Randolph Barksdale would be "Sompin' Special" even if he didn't record 450 wins in 22 1/2 years.

## 'CANES MAKE NATIONAL TOURNEY

By Matthew Brown - Reprinted with permission from the Americus Times-Recorder

A season of consistent play in one of the NAIA's toughest basketball conferences paid off for GSW's men's basketball team. With a 22-12 record and fourth-place finish in the Georgia-Alabama-Carolina Conference, the Hurricanes of head coach Randolph Barksdale earned one of 17 at-large bids to the NAIA Division I national championship tournament. The event began March 13, at the Municipal Auditorium in Kansas City, Mo., and was sponsored by Buffalo Funds.

"I think our team really improved as the year went on," said Barksdale, who took the Hurricanes to nationals for the fourth time as head coach and first time since 1999. "It's been a team that, we would play well against the good teams, and against the bad teams we didn't play as well. It's probably the furthest (improvement) I've ever had a team come from start to finish."

GSW went on to be defeated in the first round of NAIA National Championship by #4 McKendree (Ill.) (30-4), 87-71. The 'Canes final national ranking was #27.

