

Includes Retired Social Science professor

Four inducted into Sports Hall of Fame

By Cal Bryant ('73)

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Chowan paid tribute to three former athletes and a retired professor in late November when they were inducted into the prestigious Sports Hall of Fame at the eleventh annual banquet.

Those enshrined were Woodie Safrit ('64) of Myrtle Beach, SC; Dr. Lisa Dabney ('75) of Winterville; Wayne Yates ('61) of Apex; and Warren G. Sexton, retired Social Science professor of Murfreesboro.

The induction ceremonies were held in Thomas Cafeteria before a capacity crowd of friends, family and former athletes. Earlier in the day, the honorees were introduced during halftime ceremonies of the Chowan-Newport News game in Garrison stadium.

During his 36-year teaching career at Chowan, Warren Sexton stressed the importance of strong academics. He was described by a former student as having the ability to "make the most-feared student-athlete shake inside his proverbial boots." The student added that "inside of this 'lion' of an educator was the heart of a kitty-cat as far as athletics were concerned."

"I never imagined 36 years ago that I would be standing here tonight," stated Sexton, who retired last May following a sparkling career that included his 21-year chairmanship of the Department of Social Science plus a 12-year term as chairman of the Athletic Committee.

"I always stood firm on three major athletic principles at Chowan," Sexton noted. "Topping that list was that a student-athlete's main purpose is education; two, to have the best possible facilities to support our athletic programs; and, three, to provide a good environment for our fans."

"If I did make a contribution to the student-athletes at Chowan, then I did it with the help of my family. This (clutching his Hall of Fame plaque) is something Warren Sexton didn't achieve alone. This is an accomplishment of the Sexton family."

Sexton, who refereed high school athletics for 37 years, was referring to a family broadcast team consisting of his wife, Carol, son, Warren Jr., and daughter, Jean Elizabeth, who provided radio coverage of Chowan College football games.

"You may not know this, but one of the biggest reasons behind why we're gathered here tonight is Warren Sexton," stressed Dr. Bruce E. Whitaker, president-emeritus who hired Sexton back in 1959. "He was instrumental in the founding of the Braves Club and was a charter member of that organization. He believes, as I do, that the best classroom in which to teach about life is sports."

Joining Sexton in the Hall of Fame Class of 1995 were Dr. Lisa Dabney, Woodie Safrit and Wayne Yates.

Maintaining one of the highest grade point averages in the history of Chowan College athletics, Dabney was a three-sport standout for the Lady Braves from 1973 to 1975 by excelling in volleyball, basketball and tennis.

A team captain and All-Conference performer in volleyball and

basketball, Dabney earned Female Athlete of the Year honors in 1975 as well as Best All-Around Student.

"My only regret is that my father (the late Eugene Dabney, Jr.) isn't here to see this, but I know he's looking in on us," said Dr. Dabney, presently a resident physician at Blackstone (Va.) Family Practice. "All I did at Chowan was what my parents asked and taught me to do — study hard."

Continued Dabney, "One of the first decisions I made as a young adult was to come to Chowan College. It was a great place to grow

Following his 1964 graduation, Safrit went on to compete in the Southern Professional League and the Continental Football league before realizing his ultimate goal — the National Football League. He spent one season with the San Francisco 49ers and two years with the Detroit Lions before health problems forced an early retirement.

"I want to thank Chowan College, especially Jim Garrison," said Safrit, who currently is one of the top real estate agents in Myrtle Beach, SC. "It's very hard to not get choked up. Thank you so very much."

A native of Apex, Yates was another fortunate transfer to Chowan after attending Baylor University for one year.

Affectionately called the "Roadrunner" by his basketball teammates, Yates was a two-time All-Conference performer for the Braves in 1959-61.

"We came here together in 1959," said former teammate Mike Graffeo, who inducted his friend. "Wayne had that North Carolina twang and I had a thick Boston accent, but we communicated just fine on the basketball court. He was a blur on the court. That's why we named him the Roadrunner and he 'beep-beeped' his way onto the All-Conference team."

"I was so surprised when I got the phone call about the Hall of Fame," admitted Yates, who now resides in Pensacola, Fla. "I had two brothers who also attended Chowan, and I wanted to make sure they had the right one."

In perhaps the lightest moment of the evening, Yates' mother, when introduced, asked why he hadn't mentioned that she was a basketball player as well.

"You taught me everything I know about the game," answered Yates to his mother.

Each of the new inductees was presented a Hall of Fame ring — Dabney by Coach Collins on behalf of King Athletic Supply; Safrit by Gattis Hodges representing Georgia-Pacific Resins; Sexton by Herman Henderson of Henderson Child Care; and, Yates by Jack Goldberg on behalf of the Braves Club.

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—Dr. Bruce E. Whitaker
President Emeritus

and learn and I'd like to thank Coach (Janet) Collins and the Braves for my Hall of Fame nomination."

Dr. B. Franklin Lowe, vice president for academic affairs, made a proper identification of Dabney during the induction presentation.

"If I were asked to describe the ideal student-athlete, the name of Lisa Dabney would immediately come to mind," observed Lowe.

According to veteran athletic director and former football coach James Garrison, one of the best days of his life was when Woodie Safrit made his decision to transfer from Western Carolina College to Chowan.

"What Woodie became here at Chowan was one of our favorite sons," voiced Garrison. "He was one of the best punters we ever had and evidently he was very, very good because he is one of 23 athletes we have had at Chowan who have played professionally. Woodie Safrit was the first."

The eleventh group to be enshrined in Chowan's Sports Hall of Fame included, left to right: Wayne Yates of Apex, Woodie Safrit of Myrtle Beach, SC, Dr. Lisa Dabney of Blackstone, VA, and Warren Sexton of Murfreesboro.

