

Wins and wit kept Howard 'healthy' at Clemson

The death last week of retired Clemson University football coach and athletic director Frank Howard took from us one of the true legends of the game.

Howard, who was 86, spent more than three-quarters of his life at Clemson as a coach, athletic director and citizen. Most people and coaches today jump from job to job. The commitment and loyalty of people like Coach Howard is rare indeed.

Howard was an outstanding football coach and had a record to prove it, but he also could have made a bundle of money as a comedian. Throughout his coaching career, and for many years thereafter until his health began to fail him, he was a much sought-after dinner speaker all across the United States.

As a young sportswriter in the 1960s I had the privilege of covering many Clemson games, and also to hear Coach Howard from time to time at sports banquets. He was always friendly toward everyone.

Howard's daughter and son-in-law lived in Kings Mountain, and later in Gastonia, about that time and because of that connection he was very popular and had many occasions to come into this area. Maybe that's why it gave him such a thrill to "clean out Tobacco Road," as he called it when his team swept Wake Forest, North Carolina, Duke and N.C. State.

Covering a Clemson football game, or hearing Howard speak at a banquet or on his weekly TV show, was always a thrill. You knew you were in the presence of one who had a tremendous amount of football knowledge and would share a little of that, but would also have some hilarious tales to tell.

Two of Howard's most famous quotes evolved from his hiring and retirement.

Howard went to Clemson as an assistant coach shortly after his graduation from the University of Alabama, and in 1940 he was named head football coach. He always liked to tell people that the college president told him not to make his salary public. "You needn't worry about that, Doc," he said. "I'm as ashamed of it as you are."



GARY STEWART
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Editor

When addressing a crowd about his retirement in 1969, Howard loved to say that he retired because of health reasons. "The alumni got sick of me." And, if another coach who happened to have a bad year was in the crowd he'd always turn to that coach and say, "Coach, you're not looking too healthy either."

Like all coaches, Howard said he received his share of hate mail. Once after losing consecutive games to Duke, North Carolina and South Carolina, Howard said he was "hung in effigy" and talked about it on his TV show.

"I didn't have any friends that week," he recalled. "I even went home and my old coon dog, Rufus, growled and bit at me. But the next week we beat Maryland and I went back on TV and told them that the people were talking to me and calling me 'coach' again. But, I said, if I go home and Rufus doesn't growl at me I'll know he's a fair-weather friend too, and I'm gonna go in the house and get my shotgun and come back out and blow his brains out."

A couple of days later, Howard said he received a letter from a woman in Travelers Rest that said, "Do not blow Rufus's brains out. Blow your own brains out and let Rufus coach that football team."

He was a good friend of the late Alabama coach, Paul "Bear" Bryant and Bryant was the object of some of Howard's greatest lines. To hear Howard tell it, Bryant had to be the dumbest man on earth (but, of course, the Bear and everyone else knew Howard was just kidding).

"In 1941 Bear called me and wanted a job as my assistant," Howard loved to tell. "I didn't hire him and that's the best decision I ever made. In six months he would have cut my throat, drank my blood, had my job and had us on probation for life."

Howard said Alabama had to tutor Bryant for two years just to get him in school, and to this day he is the only person in the history of the University of Alabama to serve as freshman class president for six years in a row.

Howard always said the secret to recruiting a football player was to sell his mother on the school, but he said late in his career that he hated recruiting because he not only had to recruit the player but also his parents, the school guidance counselor, the mayor, the senator and the player's girl friend and agent.

"My last year in coaching I was recruiting a boy," he once noted. "I sold his momma and his daddy. I talked so well to the family that the momma came to Clemson and the boy went to South Carolina."

Howard always said his best player ever was Fred Cone, who was an All-American back in the late 1940s. He said Cone was from "Pineapple, Alabama, which is three wagon greasings from Montgomery."

Actually, Howard often told, Cone was recommended to him by his sister, who lived next door to Cone's sister in Biloxi, Ms. Cone was coming out of the service at the conclusion of World War Two. Howard said

all colleges were crowded at that time but he had told the Clemson registrar to reserve 40 spaces for him for football players. He said he had to turn in his list to the registrar the next day and had only 39 names and no time to recruit another player, so out of respect for his sister he penciled in Fred Cone's name.

After retiring from coaching, Howard stayed on at Clemson as athletic director for several years. "An athletic director is a football coach that can't win," he said. "An athletic director is just a high-priced secretary in my book. I could do that athletic directing in five minutes. In high school if a coach can't win they make a superintendent out of him."

As popular a speaker as he was, Howard said he never would have thought that he could get up in front of a crowd and give a speech.

In fact, he said he never gave pep talks to his players.

"One time North Carolina was hunting a new football coach and said they wanted a coach who could inspire boys," he said. "They had a coach over at N.C. State named Hunk Anderson. He had so many players with crazy names that he called the team over for a meeting one day and sneezed, and 20 people answered 'present.' But he said if you'd give North Carolina a coach that could inspire boys and give him four big tackles, that in five minutes he'd have all that inspiration knocked out of them."

Mountaineers fall to R-S Central

Kings Mountain High's basketball teams saw second half leads disappear in a doubleheader loss to R-S Central Thursday night at the KMHS gym.

The Mountaineers, playing their third game without the services of their leading scorer Eric Tate, held a 12-point lead in the third period and carried a 10-point lead into the fourth quarter, but the Southwestern 3-A Conference leaders came storming back for a 77-73 win.

Kings Mountain's girls, losers of three straight after opening the SWC season with a win over South Point, held the upper hand for three quarters, but the Lady Hilltoppers outscored them 17-5 over the last eight minutes to post their first win of the season, 34-29.

Larry Sipe's Mountaineers held a 22-33 halftime lead and were on

top 55-45 going into the fourth quarter, but R-S outscored them 32-18 over the final eight minutes to run their SWC record to 3-0 and their overall mark to 7-7.

R-S got a balanced scoring attack, led by Emory Smith with 21 points, Louis McDowell with 17 and Mike Hines with 12.

Alex Burris, starting in the place of Tate, led the Mountaineers with 17 points. Justin Champion had 10 points and 13 rebounds, and Brian Odums and Cedric Smith scored 13 points each. John Sizemore had six points, six assists and four steals.

Kings Mountain fell to 0-4 in the conference and 3-8 overall.

The Mountaineer ladies held narrow leads of 8-5 at the first quarter break, 18-12 at intermission and 24-17 going into the fourth quarter.

Amanda Hutchins, who finished

with 13 points, led the way in the fourth quarter as R-S outscored the Mountaineers 17-5 and won their first game after 13 consecutive defeats.

Tina Welch scored 16 points for KM, which fell to 1-3 in the conference and 6-8 overall.

GIRLS GAME
KM (29) - Tina Welch 16, Hamrick 5, Tammie Welch 4, Ingram 2, Ash 2.

RS (34) - Hutchins 13, Blanton 8, Ledbetter 6, Miller 3, Jones 2, Wright 2.

BOYS GAME
KM (73) - Burris 17, C. Smith 13, Odums 13, Champion 10, Jones 7, Sizemore 6, M. Smith 3, Turner 2, Crocker 2.

RS (77) - E. Smith 21, McDowell 17, M. Hines 12, K. Hines 9, Whiteside 7, Reilly 5, Simmons 4, Martin 2.

Mountaineers sweep East Rutherford

Kings Mountain High's basketball teams broke their losing streaks Tuesday night at home with a doubleheader sweep of East Rutherford's Cavaliers.

Larry Sipe's Mountaineers won 58-54 for their first win in the Southwestern 3-A Conference. The Mountaineers dropped their first five games, four of which they played without the services of their leading scorer, Eric Tate.

Tate returned Tuesday night but played only sparingly, scoring two points.

But shooting guard John Sizemore had a big night, scoring 16 points, and Cedric Smith and Sidney Crocker added 12 and 11 points, respectively.

The Mountaineers started fast and finished fast, and in the middle two quarters fought off an East Rutherford comeback bid. Kings

Mountain led 16-11 after the first period but the visitors came back to lead 36-28 at intermission. East Rutherford still led 44-36 going into the fourth period but the Mountaineers outscored them 22-11 over the final eight minutes to win.

The victory improved the Mountaineers' record to 1-5 in the conference and 4-9 overall, while East fell to 2-3 and 5-10.

Kings Mountain's girls also had a fast finish to post a 47-45 victory and end a four-game losing streak. The Lady Mountaineers hadn't won since a narrow win over South Point in their conference opener.

East Rutherford led 24-17 at the half and 36-28 going into the fourth quarter, but the Mountaineers outscored the Lady Cavaliers 19-9 in the fourth quar-

ter. Tammie Welch led the Mountaineers with 17 points and Kisha Hamrick added eight. Lacy Bates scored 16 for East.

Kings Mountain improved to 2-4 in the SWC and 7-9 overall while East fell to 1-4 and 1-14.

GIRLS GAME
ER (45) - Fowler 12, Bates 16, McEntire 9, Ford 4, Melton 4.

KM (47) - Tammie Welch 17, Hamrick 8, Tina Welch 4, Ingram 4, Hunter 7, Cole 4, Adams 3.

BOYS GAME
ER (54) - Cox 4, Williams 15, Watkins 3, Logan 15, Gettys 12, Church 5.

KM (58) - M. Smith 2, Sizemore 16, Turner 4, Tate 2, Burris 4, Crocker 11, C. Smith 12, Champion 7.

SCOREBOARD

(Kings Mountain Boys and Girls Club Basketball League results. All games played at Central School gym.)

12-UNDER
Magic 40, Hornets 26

Magic - Orlando Curry 14, Brandon Roberts 11, Chris Ashe 10, Hornets - Maurice Hunt 12, Micah Burris 10.

Suns 45, Bullets 40
Suns - Cahari Poole 18, Antonio Crocker 12, Bullets - DaShawn Young 15, Dennis Moore 10.

Sonics 42, Bulls 36
Sonics - Tae Roebuck 16, J-Rod Bennett 14, Bulls - Steven McCleave 14, Jermaine Smith 12.

Rockets 52, Heat 41
Rockets - Pierre Owens 16, Tyler Adams 14, Heat - A.J. Link 14, Jeffery Currence 10.

Bullets 42, Bulls 40
Bullets - Dashawn Young 12, Vince Young 11, Sedrick Young 10, Bulls - Jamaal Byers 12, Jermaine Smith 11.

Magic 34, Rockets 32
Magic - Ross Ellis 10, Jason Nichols 10, Hornets - Troy Link 12, Richard Williams 10.

6-UNDER
KM 24, Erwin Center 12
KM - Chavis Poole 7, Kelsy Adams 6, Marcus Poole 6.

9-UNDER
KM 21, Erwin Center 15
KM - A.J. Link 10, Orlando Curry 8.

17-UNDER
Kansas 86, Arkansas 82
Kansas - Jeremiah Johnson 23, Sarabarac Bell 14, Tarbarac Bell 12.

Arkansas - Alex Burris 40, Anthony PettyJohn 21.

Players of the week - Kelsy Adams (7-under), A.J. Link (9-under), Dashawn Young (10-under), Ross Ellis (11-under), Ronald Goode (12-under).

Academic player of the week - Shane Worcester.

Rookie of the week - James Biggers. 12-under standings - Magic 5-0, Rockets 4-1, Sonics 3-1, Jazz 3-2, Suns 2-1, Lakers 2-2, Bulls 2-2, Heat 1-2, Bullets 1-4, Hornets 0-5.

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