



Richard Holm | The Daily Herald Halifax County Schools Board of Education Chairman Claude Cooper, left, Superintendent Eric Cunningham and Coach Nominee Charles Chambliss take a moment for themselves.

The first Hall of Fame honors athletes

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By Richard Holm

rholm@rrdailyherald.com

WELDON — The first, The Best of Halifax Athletics Hall of Fame, honored athletes from 1965 to 1985 Saturday at Halifax Community College.

Halifax County Schools Assistant Superintendent Tyrana Battle said the district wanted to recognize individuals for the achievements they made, and to be an example for students within the school system.

“It’s a way the school system can bridge the gap with the community and recognize those trailblazers that had come before us,” Battle said.

HCS Superintendent Eric Cunningham sparked the idea of a hall of fame, she said.

“When I first arrived in 2016, I heard about these epic athletic contests between all of the schools back in the day,” Cunningham said. “I wanted to recognize and show our children where they come from, and they’re standing on the shoulders of giants, and if they did it then, what can they do now in the 21st century?”

He recalled a time when he attended Richard Bland College and came across a man named Theodore “Blue” Edwards.

“We had some epic battles,” Cunningham said. “He went on to play at East Carolina, and I then got a scholarship at Liberty University, and that’s when I read about Delaney Rudd because he was at Wake Forest at the time.”

Edwards is a retired professional basketball player who went on to play in the National Basketball Association. He now coaches at Greene Central High School in Snow Hill.

Cunningham said he attributes his character to athleticism.

< Athletics saved my life,” he said. “It taught me all the skills that I needed to be the man that I am today, and we just need to build on it.” >

Cunningham emphasized the importance and purpose of the hall of fame ceremony.

“I am extremely proud of all of the honorees here today, and I want our children to know that there are role models here in Halifax County and they can learn a lot from them,” he said. “Everyone represents a lighthouse, and as we become this lighthouse district, we must tell our stories of how we overcame our obstacles, how we’ve persevered, how we’ve endured, and how we got along together. I want our children to learn that.”

HCS Board of Education Chairman Claude Cooper said in a speech during the ceremony, that he came to the district 50 years ago, and that it never crossed his mind that something like this would happen.

“Dr. Martin Luther King had a dream, I did too,” Cooper said. “ I dreamed that one day, that this day would come.”

After his speech, he mentioned that nearly everyone in the room he either coached or coached against.

“Some of the coaches complained that The Herald didn’t publish their stuff,” Cooper said. “But the Herald has always published my stuff, because I always had awesome teams.”

He said that he could walk up to any table and be able to share stories.

“I love these people to the nth degree, and that’s why I guess I got so emotional,” Cooper said. “I won over 600 games as a coach, but I had the pleasure to coach varsity boys and girls. I think that’s why this is so special to me. It means so much to this county.”

Cooper said the event marks planting the roots for more hall of fame events every year.

“I am more than proud of Halifax County Schools, and that is why I have not left,” he said proudly. “I was a principal for 23 years, I worked here for 40 years before I retired, have been on the school board for three years and now I’m serving as the board chairman. Heaven to me is right here, yes sir.”

Hall of fame nominee Rickie Clark said he was being inducted into the football hall of fame of ’72 to ’75.

“Seeing some of the people here I actually played against, that I could recognize and it brings back memories,” Clark said as he looked around. “But, I think this is great that the county would take time, and naturally money, to recognize some of the kids that come through.”

He said a lot of the athletes at the event were either still coaching or teaching others as a way of contributing.

“This absolutely sets an example for younger generations, because it gives them something to strive for,” Clark said. “In this day and time, the youth now is looking for that quick fix, and they don’t want to finish college. They want to do a year of college and go straight to the pros and those type of things.”

He mentioned the youth misses out on important life lessons by not sticking to the hard obstacles.

“If you get to college or anywhere, you short yourself two or three years, those are years that you don’t get an opportunity to grow not only as an athlete but as a human being,” Clark said. “Being an athlete absolutely challenges you to change, because you can absolutely equate hard work with success. If you have a bad week of practice, you will get your butt kicked, especially in football and basketball.”

A personal example Clark gave was a time when he and his team played Norfolk State in Norfolk, Virginia.

"It just so happened Norfolk was having their freshman party downstairs in one of the ballrooms," he said. "Going into their game Saturday, we threw touchdowns better than these guys. At halftime, the scores were tied up. At the end of the third quarter, they're up by one. It took us that long to get our legs back; you know what I'm saying? Instead of us being focused we were somewhere partying."

Clark said people need to start talking about what they put into what they do, and start taking it seriously.

"And that's what I love about athletics, if you don't put anything in, you're not going to get anything out of it," he said. "My advice for the youth would be to work hard, hone your skills, do you academics, cause without academics you're not going to get to play."

Clark said he is a retired school teacher and coaches football at Vance High School of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System.

Another nominee was Lossie Hunter who played basketball for four years at Enfield High School.

"Being here brings back memories, it really does," Hunter said as she chuckled. "I think I was nominated because — well, I played better basketball than anybody else."

She said her brothers showed her how to play basketball and she attributes her style and skills to them.



"Right now I work at Enfield Middle, and I coach the girl's team," Hunter said. "This will set an example for them knowing that I could do that, and it will make more of them play more ball. Right now, we don't have that many at my school that likes to play ball, because they want to be cheerleaders."

Larry McDaniel was another nominee for the event who played football, basketball and baseball from '73 to '76.

"When I came up, my parents didn't know nothing about sports," McDaniel said. "You know, you had to get it from your older brother and sisters to lead, guide you and encourage you. That's what I say for most kids, if they are struggling, they need to get with their older brother or sister and talk with them and try to work things out."

He said he witnessed a basketball game at one time and figured he would give it a shot.

"When I started with basketball, my momma and daddy didn't have much," McDaniel said. "I didn't didn't have no pair of sneakers, so I played barefoot."

He said during the tryout, the coaches saw his potential and ended up buying him a pair of sneakers.

“My advice for youngsters would be to stay in school and get an education,” McDaniel said. “When it comes to sports, you have to have an education.”

During the ceremony, Cunningham gave a speech to guests.

“As we continue to strive to be that lighthouse district, we are also guided by our new logo and embed it in our hearts,” he said. “Our daily activities, our community, our schools, our students, our teachers, and our administrators, our school board, and now by all of our hall of fame members. We are a team working together to achieve success.”

The list of nominees:

- Robert Knight

- Carol Ward Moody



- Robert Sykes



- Thelma Hockaday

- Emond Dixon

- Wayne Brown

- Ricky Hux

- Greg Patrick

- Walter Purnell

- Ricky Pierce

- Lossie Hunter

- Victor Marrow

- Kenneth Turnage

- Donald Shields

- Clarence Johnson

- Richard Hewlin

- Linette Hewlin



- Joseph Cooper Jr.



- Jerome McDaniel

- Jessie Hilton

- James Hunter Jr.

- Rickie Clark

- Wanda Lyons-Boone

- Orlin Joseph Boone Jr.

- Carl Battle

- Larry McDaniel

- Richard Spann

- Robert Bo Wright (Deceased)

- Paula Nicholson

- Delaney Rudd

- Bernard "Greg" Vaughan

- Gene Wright

- Wanda Jeffers

- Stella Jeffers

- Zerome Simmons

- Charlie Hill Jr.

- McCarroll Williams

- Clarence Vines (Deceased)

- Vernon Hockaday



- Donald Whitaker

- Constance Hunter

- Angela Hunter

- Steve Hunter

- Michael Jones

- Gloria Boyd

Hall of fame coach nominees:

- Coach Claude Cooper



- Coach Charles Chambliss



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