

Stressing His Point Through Practice



Daily News file photo

Former St. Johns River State College men's basketball coach Buster Harvey goes over positioning during a November 2010 practice.

A True Basketball Junkie

Longtime mentor Harvey, winner of over 500 games and who coached last at St. Johns River, passes at 64

BY MARK BLUMENTHAL
Palatka Daily News
mblumenthal@palatkadailynews.com

If ever there was a localized version of the term "basketball junkie," one would not have to go very far than coming up with Arthur "Buster" Harvey.

Harvey not only coached the final seven seasons in the existence of the St. Johns River Community (now State) College's basketball program, but had coached at Jacksonville-based Florida Community College-Jacksonville, Edward Waters College and Jacksonville University.

A fixture at St. Johns River State College

one week after celebrating his 64th birthday.

"Buster was one of the best coaching hires we made at the college," said Joe Asher, the St. Johns River athletic director from 1999-2006. "He was tough and demanding of his players on and off the court. He taught them more than just basketball. He taught many of them life skills it took to be successful after sports. They became part of his family. After I left the college, Buster and I maintained a very close friendship. In my opinion, he was a true leader, one of the finest basketball coaches. He will be missed by the entire Viking family."

In Harvey's first year as coach in 2005-06, the Vikings finished third in the Mid-Florida

the program had seen in decades. He continued to make the Vikings a competitive program. But the heartbreaking year for the program was the 2010-11 season.

Needing a victory to qualify for the state tournament for the first time since 1975, the Vikings held a 55-52 lead over Daytona State with 9.6 seconds to go at Tuten Gymnasium. But Marquise Glaze delivered a 3-point field goal with 1.4 seconds to go tie it for Daytona. Then St. Johns' Kenny Johnson tried to throw a downcourt pass only to have it hit the rafters hanging from the ceiling, giving the ball back to Daytona State. The Falcons inbounded under the SJR basket and Glaze drilled a

Harvey

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9A

3-pointer at the buzzer to give Daytona the stunning 58-55 win and send the Falcons to the state tournament, while the Vikings, who won 19 games three times and 18 times in another season under Harvey, stayed home.

The 2011-12 team struggled to a 10-19 record, but 1-11 in the conference. A month after the season ended came the vote that became one of the most unpopular in school history – the program was dropped by unanimous vote by St. Johns River State College trustees after just over 50 years of competition. The move was made then in an attempt to bring its athletic budget into compliance

with Title IX restrictions for gender equity. The move left the athletic program with baseball, softball and volleyball, two female sports and one male sport, all three still existing to this day.

For the last eight years, Harvey worked for current SJRSC athletic director and baseball coach Ross Jones as the athletic coordinator, a job created for Harvey. Harvey taught a couple of classes, oversaw the facilities, including usage of the gym, and served as site administrator at athletic events until his passing.

But before coming to St. Johns River, Harvey had already built his basketball resume as a college coach, including 11 seasons as FCC-J coach from 1983-1994 for which he took two different teams to state tournament championship games. He moved on to Jacksonville University,

where he was an assistant coach for two seasons before taking the team over on an interim basis in the 1996-97 season. From there, he went to Edward Waters as coach for seven seasons.

In 2005 and with the vacancy open, Asher took a chance on Harvey, whose work at FCC-J helped earn him a place in the Florida Junior College Sports Hall of Fame in 1996.

"I had heard about him, but I had never met Buster," Asher remembered. "When we were thinking about making changes, his name kept popping up. And we took a chance on him."

For his career at all four schools he coached, Harvey was 517-324.

"Buster was like a kid brother to me, a good friend of mine," said Neal Chancey, who was a teacher and head basketball coach of the SJR program from 1972-81. "We had a chance to

bring him in as a player (out of Jacksonville Forrest High, now Westside High) in 1974, but he decided to go to FCC-J and play there instead. We still became the best of friends and went out years later to Indianapolis for the state Final Four in high school basketball where there was over 55,000 people. There are a lot of good memories with him. I'm stunned by the news (of his passing)."

Harvey, who had health issues the last few years, according to Chancey, is survived by wife Jennifer, daughter Kimberly and a stepson.

"He got the best of the players he recruited," Asher said. "He did a lot more for those kids. He set up some housing for them as well as meals. He did some great things for kids. He treated them more than just players for the college – they were his family."