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WOOLLUM RETIRES AS CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT BASKETBALL COACH – WILL REMAIN AS DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. – C.J. Woollum, head men's basketball coach at Christopher Newport University for the past 26 years, has announced his retirement from coaching. He will remain as the school's Director of Athletics.

"It's been an unbelievable run," says Woollum. "When you first take a job you never think of things like years, wins or championships. But then, at the end, you look back and feel good."

Woollum has a lot to feel good about. In his 26 seasons on the bench he accumulated 502 wins, 17 NCAA tournament appearances, and 13 conference championships, plus a host of other accomplishments.

He steps down on a high note. His team presented him with his 500th coaching victory in the first round of the USA South Athletic Conference championship tournament, and then went on to claim the aforementioned 13th conference title and 17th NCAA bid.

"We've built a program that I think is nationally respected and there's no reason that success can't continue," he notes. "We're going to hire a great coach and we have some talented players returning. There's no reason to skip a beat."

Woollum arrived at Christopher Newport in 1984 after a stint of nine years as an assistant at Marshall University. He had actually been an assistant coach at CNU for two years under Bev Vaughan, the father of Christopher Newport basketball, prior to that.

The winning didn't take long to start. In just his second season on the bench, he guided the Captains to their first conference title and first NCAA appearance during the 1985-86 season.

After missing the post-season the next year, his teams began a run of NCAA tournaments in 13 of the next 14 campaigns.

Among the highlights were four spots in the Sweet 16 and one in the Elite 8. His teams finished either first or second in the conference standings for 15 straight years and played in the conference championship game 15 times in 16 years.

Heading into this past season, he ranked 16th among active Division III coaches in total victories with 487, although all those ranked higher had coached in more than his 25 years at the time. He was also 22nd in winning percentage at .701. That figure was also 27th among Division III coaches all-time.

Several seasons, and eras, stick out among his 26 years. The 1997-98 team lost its opener on a controversial shot at the buzzer, and then ran off a school-record 26 straight wins, before falling in the Sweet 16. In 2000-01, the first year of CNU's beautiful, new Freeman Center, the Captains reached the Elite 8, barely missing a Final Four berth when a shot at the buzzer dropped off the rim.

Those two teams were a part of the winningest four year era of CNU basketball history. The teams from 1997-01 posted a combined record of 98-14 and won four consecutive conference championships.

Over the years, Woollum coached nine different players who won All-America honors a total of 13 times, as well as 11 who went on to play professionally literally all over the world. Among them was three-time All-America Lamont Strothers, who became just the seventh Division III player ever to be selected in the NBA draft. He was chosen in the second round, and played two seasons with the Portland Trailblazers and Dallas Mavericks.

Most of this was accomplished while also serving as CNU's Director of Athletics. He assumed that position in 1987 and has since overseen one of the top overall athletic programs in the nation. CNU annually ranks high in the Learfield Director's Cup standings, a ranking of overall success in NCAA events. Christopher Newport has also won the USA South President's Cup, emblematic of conference supremacy, each year for 13 consecutive years. In addition, the school has won the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame Achievement Award, for having the best program-wide won-lost record in Virginia among all Division II and III schools, seven times in the last 12 years.

During many of the basketball teams' most successful seasons Woollum also served as head golf coach. He held that position for 13 years and had either the entire team, or an individual golfer, make the NCAA tournament field 12 times. He even coached an individual national champion when Scott Scovil won the 1994 Division III title.

In between his coaching duties, he has also overseen the construction of some of the best athletic facilities in the nation. CNU moved into the multi-purpose Freeman Center, which includes 2,300 seats for basketball and volleyball, as well as a 200-meter track, in 2000 and has built, or renovated facilities for all other sports. In addition, Christopher Newport inaugurated football in 2001, another of the many highly-successful programs. It has played in the NCAA playoffs in six of its nine-year history. It plays in state-of-the-art POMOCO Stadium, a 4,200-seat on-campus facility.

Woollum is a native of Alexandria, Va., and a graduate of Kentucky Wesleyan.