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Georgia Southern University Professor Willie Burden Inducted into N.C. Sports Hall of Fame

MAY 27, 2009



Willie Burden, an associate professor of sport management in Georgia Southern University's College of Health and Human Sciences, was recently inducted into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame.

Burden was honored at a banquet in Raleigh along with fellow 2009 inductees Sylvia Hatchell, Jerry Moore, Dave Odom, John Swofford and Roger Watson.

'I'm still riding the cloud from being up there and going through the ceremony,'" Burden said. 'I know it's a great honor, and as the years go by I'll appreciate it more and more.'

Burden was already highly decorated as an athlete, including induction into the Canadian Football Hall of Fame in 2001. He was the CFL's Most Outstanding Player in 1975 when he rushed for a league-record 1,896 yards, and his No. 10 jersey was retired by the Calgary Stampeders after he finished his eight-year career with 6,234 yards.

After starring as a running back at Enloe High School in Raleigh, Burden stayed close to home and signed with North Carolina State. Burden ran for 2,529 yards from 1971-73, good for seventh on the N.C. State career list, including 1,014 in 1973 when he was named the Atlantic Coast Conference Player of the Year.

'Since I was honored in my hometown, it was a homecoming,'" Burden said. 'So many high school and college classmates were there, it was a class reunion. So many family members were there, it was a family reunion. It was all those things together in one package.'

The induction ceremony attendees included Georgia Southern health and kinesiology professor Drew Zwald, who has known Burden since 1981 when they were in graduate school and coached football together at Ohio University. The two were reunited when Burden joined the Georgia Southern faculty in 1998, and they have often collaborated on research and presentations in the College of Health and Human Sciences.

'One thing about Willie is, you would never know about any of those accomplishments. He never talks about them,'" Zwald said. 'He has earned a lot of accolades, but the most important thing about Willie is he's a great person.'

Prior to coming to Georgia Southern, Burden was athletic director at North Carolina A&T. He also was assistant athletic director at Tennessee Tech while he worked on his doctorate in education, which was conferred in 1990.

'Anything Willie has been involved in, he has excelled,'" Zwald said. 'He always has a smile on his face. He's always positive.'