

## NC Wesleyan Athletics Announces 2017 Hall of Fame Inductees

Rocky Mount, N.C. - The purpose of the North Carolina Wesleyan Athletics Hall of Fame is to recognize and honor those individuals, who through their superior athletic achievements or by their outstanding service, have made long-lasting, exemplary contributions to the college. Beginning with its inaugural class in 1999, Wesleyan has bestowed this honor upon 67 former athletes, administrators, and coaches who created a higher standard for our Bishops. This year's inductees meet those same standards and will comprise the 19th class of honorees. The Department of Athletics is pleased to announce that long-time head coach and administrator John Thompson, as well as two of his former players, Bradley Blue and Keith Sudler, are the latest additions to the N.C. Wesleyan Athletics Hall of Fame.

Entering his 23rd season as head men's basketball coach and 20th as Director of Athletics, John Thompson is honored to headline the 2017 class. The all-time winningest coach in men's basketball history, he has compiled over 300 victories and six USA South Championships during his tenure, while his resume as Director of Athletics is equally as impressive.

"I am honored, but more so humbled to have been elected to the North Carolina Wesleyan Hall of Fame," said Thompson. "I have witnessed every induction since our inaugural 1999 class, and to be mentioned with all of Wesleyan's outstanding players, coaches, administrators, and contributors is quite incredible!"

Thompson joined N.C. Wesleyan as head basketball coach in 1995-1996, and it did not take him long to establish the Bishops as a yearly contender in the USA South (formerly Dixie). His first conference title came during the 1999-2000 season when he led the Bishops to the league's regular season crown, earning him the first of four Coach of the Year awards. Thompson went on to capture his first USA South Tournament Championship and NCAA Tournament berth in 2002, and the Durham, N.C. native later captured back-to-back regular season titles in 2010 and 2011 to secure his second and third Coach of the Year honors. The 2010-2011 season also saw the Bishops earn the program's fourth tournament crown to once again secure an NCAA bid. Most recently, the 2015-2016 season saw the veteran coach garner his fourth Coach of the Year honor after guiding Wesleyan to the league title with a 20-7 record.

One of Thompson's most noteworthy coaching achievements came in the summer of 2012 when he was selected to be a court coach for USA Basketball's Junior National Team. Thompson joined an elite group of collegiate coaches at the U18 training camp, which was held at the U.S. Olympic Training Center (USOTC) in Colorado Springs. Thompson continues to work with USA Basketball via various camps and clinics.

Additionally, Thompson also serves as Vice President and Director of Athletics. His leadership has seen him guide Wesleyan's athletics staff to two USA South Men's Presidents Cups, over 50 USA South regular season and/or tournament titles, 26 NCAA tournament berths, and numerous All-American, All-Region, and All-Conference accolades. In this time, Wesleyan's baseball team captured the 1999 National Championship, while other team accomplishments include an Elite-8 appearance for men's tennis in 2010 and a pair of Sweet-16 showings for men's soccer. Other highlights of Thompson's tutelage include the official namings of Scalf and Edge Fields, presiding over the expansion of Everett Gym to include the Taylor Center, and overseeing the addition of football and women's lacrosse, which prompted the opening of the Vernon T. Bradley, Jr. Fieldhouse.

Thompson wears many other hats at Wesleyan and in the community. He held the position of President of the USA South from 2001-2005 and presently serves as chairman of the USA South Basketball Coaches Committee, a position he has held since 1999. Currently a member of the NABC Congress, Coach Thompson also served a four-year appointment to the NCAA Men's Basketball Rules Committee from 2007 to 2011.

On campus, Thompson has assisted a variety of committees over the past 22 years and was instrumental in coordinating the First Annual Shelton Leadership Challenge on campus, a highly-competitive event named for General Hugh Shelton, former Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff. Coach Thompson also created and implemented WAAL (Wesleyan Academy of Athletic Leadership), a program designed to aid

Bishop student-athletes in the development of leadership skills. For the past seven years, he has been given oversight of all campus leadership programming.

Joining their coach as 2017 Hall of Fame inductees are former men's basketball standouts Bradley Blue and Keith Sudler. The talented duo competed for Thompson from 2000 to 2004 and wrapped up their careers as two of Wesleyan's top-5 all-time leading scorers, leading their Bishops to four straight winning seasons and the 2002 DIAC Tournament Championship and NCAA Tournament.

Individually, Blue gained notoriety as a junior in 2003 when he became just the fifth Bishop in program history to garner All-American honors. That same season saw him earn his second straight First Team All-Conference award, as well as a second consecutive All-Region honor after averaging over 17 points per game. Additionally, Blue was named the 2002 and 2003 Dixie All-Tournament teams, earning both tournament and team Most Valuable Player accolades for the 2002 champion Bishops.

In 103 career games, Blue racked up 1,608 career points and dished out 263 assists. Both totals remain in Wesleyan's all-time top-10, as does his career high for steals in a season with 61 in 2003.

Like Blue, Sudler also enjoyed a tremendous career for the Battling Bishops, beginning with a 2000-2001 freshman season that saw him named the league's Rookie of the Year. A four-time All-Conference selection, he joined Blue on the 2003 All-South Region squad and later earned a second straight All-Region accolade during his 2004 MVP senior season.

In 107 games played, Sudler netted 1,664 points and grabbed 558 rebounds. He also knocked down 73 career three-pointers and connected on 82.6% of his attempts at the free throw line. All four statistics remain in Wesleyan's all-time top-10. For his efforts, Sudler was able to continue his hoops career professionally in both Argentina and England. He is a 2004 Wesleyan graduate with a degree in Sociology.

Said Thompson, "I am thrilled for Bradley and Keith. They are both incredibly deserving of this recognition. Not only are they Hall of Fame players, they are also Hall of Fame people. They represented our program and our institution in the best possible way."

The Department of Athletics extends sincere congratulations to each of the 2017 inductees, whose contributions to the overall mission of the college have been exhibited in their accomplishments. To these inductees, the Battling Bishops offer thanks and admiration by bestowing this honor upon them! A formal induction ceremony will be held in conjunction with the college's Homecoming festivities slated for September 30th, 2017.