



The LBW Saints' men's and women's basketball coach, Ricky Knight, retired at the end of the 2024-25 season.

Calling It a Knight

After 40 years, Ricky
Knight retires as
LBW basketball coach

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Forty years ago, LBW Community College rebooted its men's and women's basketball programs and over the 40 years since, Andalusia native Ricky Knight has led the teams as the head coach. That stint came to an end when he retired at the end of the 2024-25 season.

A graduate of Andalusia High School, Knight began his basketball as a young child, playing with other kids and as a Bulldog. The hard court provided him the opportunity to play at the collegiate level as well as professionally overseas for several years before committing to coaching. In 1985, the call to come home and coach the Saints' new basketball programs came, providing Knight an opportunity that would last the remainder of his career.

One of the earliest basketball influences for Knight was his middle school and varsity coach, Richard Robertson.

"I feel lucky, because Coach Robertson was my middle school coach and then when I moved to high school, he also moved to be the assistant varsity coach under Clayton Bryant. So, he was my coach all those years. He taught me a lot about basketball, but it wasn't just about that with him. He taught me about life; about working hard and dealing with people," Knight said.

It was Coach Robertson who first

planted the thought that Knight could turn playing basketball into a career.

"He was always pushing me handling the ball, dribbling, shooting correctly. He would tell me that if I work hard, I might get a scholarship. I was in the ninth grade and I started working hard at it, at school and at home," he said.

Learning from those who were a step ahead also provided Knight a way to improve his game.

"I learned a lot from Coach Bryant, but one of the best things he did for me was when I was on the B Team and he would let us practice against the varsity. That was a big help to us younger players. On the playground, I played against a lot of guys who were older than me and I learned a lot from them, too. I was lucky to get to play with some good varsity players like Leonard Robertson, Fallis Grace, and my brother, Kenneth Knight."

The realization that a basketball scholarship was a possibility came into focus during a state tournament game against Tuscaloosa County.

"I was a senior and I played against a guy who was being recruited by a lot of colleges. He and I played the same position and I had to guard him. I did pretty well and thought that I probably was college material and could play at the next level."

His senior year, 1976-77, he was named to All-State and played in the All-Star game at the University of Alabama where Coach Wimp Sanders was an assistant coach.

“Coach Sanders came down and talked to me after a practice, asking me what I planned to do. He said, ‘I haven’t seen you play, but looking at you practice it looks like you want to be a great basketball player,’ Knight remembers.

With varsity basketball over and having earned his diploma, Knight did secure a scholarship to play at the University of Alabama-Huntsville under coach K.O. Willis.

“Coach Willis would always tell me to that I had to push myself to get what I want. An assistant coach, Roby Phillips, was the one who worked with me individually to become a better player. He made me lift weights and spent time with me shooting in the gym. He helped me learn that to be successful I needed to face the basket, not play with my back to basket.”

The extra work was paying off for Knight. During his sophomore year at UAH, he set a school record with 40 points in a game against Troy State University, a school that had recruited Knight.

Knight completed his degree at UAH in 1981 and was asked by Coach Willis to be an assistant coach for him, which he did for one year until a unique opportunity presented itself.

“That year I was an assistant, our team took a trip to Australia to play for one week,” he said. “A guy involved in the international team there got to talking

LBW President Dr. Brock Kelley recognizes Knight in a ceremony prior to his final home game.



about me playing overseas. We exchanged information and when I got back to the States, he called and said they were allowed two Americans on the international team and he wanted me to be one of them.”

The next fall, Knight found himself in Australia and helped the team win the championship cup. He remained in the international league, playing a second season in Argentina and a third in Spain.

“It was a great experience overseas and getting to meet people of different nationalities. It helped me to move forward in what I wanted to do. We always had basketball camps for kids, which taught me a lot about working with young people,” he said.

After three years overseas, Coach Willis reached out to Knight asking about his plans and if he would return as an assistant for him at UAH.

“Coach Willis had some health problems and had to resign mid-season. They made me the

head coach that year. We ended up playing pretty well and made the tournament, but missed the nationals after losing to Birmingham Southern.”

UAH hired a new head coach the following year and Knight stayed on as an assistant for the following season. Then, in 1985, Knight got the call to be the head coach of the men’s and women’s basketball programs at LBW, after having dropped those programs for two years.

“It was a good thing for me. It was a unique opportunity, being a new program, for me to bring in the kids I wanted. It was tough, because by the time I was here it was already the middle of summer. There was a lot of driving involved to find 15 kids — 30 between both the men’s and women’s teams — who could be ready to play in the fall.”

With girls’ basketball just starting to grow, Knight was able to develop players and had success, going to the playoffs the first year and made the national tourna-

ment consecutive years in 1988 and 1989.

Over the next 40 years, Coach Knight and LBW basketball would hit many milestones and achievements. He led the women’s basketball team to two state championships and multiple national tournament appearances. The women’s team won four conference championships, while the men’s team captured three conference titles. Knight has also been honored with numerous Coach of the Year Awards over the years.

“Coach Knight is a true legend in the world of college athletics, and his influence on our basketball program has been immeasurable. His leadership, integrity, and unwavering commitment to our students have set a high standard that will be felt for many years to come,” said LBW President Dr. Brock Kelley.

On Feb. 17, prior to his final home game for the Saints, Coach Knight was honored during a ceremony that included special recognition by officials with LBW, the City of Andalusia, State Rep. Mathew Hammett, and the Alabama Community College Conference.

“The best thing about coaching at any level is seeing the kids you teach go on and be successful. For the players, you especially like to see them continue their education by getting the chance to play at the four-year college level. But, if not, you just hope they are successful in life. I have kids who played for me who are now teachers, lawyers, and things like that. Seeing them have that success makes everything worthwhile,” Knight said. ■



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