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Office of University Communications, "GWU Honors Career of Former Coach Eddie Holbrook" (2015). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 1244.
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GWU Honors Career of Former Coach Eddie Holbrook

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Office of University
Communications

February 27, 2015

University Names Basketball Court for Runnin' Bulldogs Legend

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Former Gardner-Webb coach Eddie Holbrook helped put the University on the intercollegiate athletics map by building an elite basketball program in the 1960s and 1970s. Now Gardner-Webb has put Holbrook's name on the University's basketball court in Paul Porter Arena to honor his accomplishments as a coach and mentor.

The University honored the former coach and celebrated the naming of Eddie Holbrook Court, with a reception and a halftime program on Feb. 26 during the Runnin' Bulldogs' home game versus Charleston Southern. Many of Holbrook's former players and his friends gathered to show their appreciation for his work.

"The court naming is a tribute to all the players and the team of administration and community that got Gardner-Webb's basketball and athletic programs going," Holbrook shared. "For the University, it's a tribute to what can be achieved when you work as a team to improve. It's a personal honor with my name, yes, but I'm proud and tickled to death because it means I was part of the team."

Holbrook became the school's basketball coach in 1964. He went on to win more than 300 games, coach five future National Basketball Association (NBA) players, lead four appearances in the NAIA national tournament, transition GWU from junior college to senior college status and begin a streak of 82 straight wins in Bost Gym.

"I was a student here during Coach Holbrook's heyday and can tell you it was a lot of fun to be in Bost Gym and watch those teams play," offered current GWU Vice President for Athletics Chuck Burch. "The community fell in love with those teams and their style of play. It was a special time."

Even more important than his on-court achievements, however, were Holbrook's accomplishments as a teacher and mentor to young men, his players and colleagues shared. His former players helped initiate a campaign to name the Paul Porter Arena court after their coach.

“After four years at Gardner-Webb, I learned what it would take to be successful in life,” said 1975 alumnus Bill Ellis. “Coach Holbrook modeled those points to me. Number one was have God in your daily life. Number two was family. He loved his family and the Runnin’ Bulldogs. Number three was hard work. You could not outwork Coach Holbrook.”



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/VbgVIdPcTXc>

In addition to his basketball duties, Holbrook served as athletic director throughout most of the 1970s, and he returned as vice president for athletics in the 1990s. Following his successful career at Gardner-Webb, he has served as a Cleveland County (N.C.) commissioner, as senior dean of development and governmental relations at Cleveland Community College in Shelby, N.C., and as co-chairman for the American Legion Baseball World Series, based in Shelby.

Holbrook said his time at Gardner-Webb taught him lessons in discipline, mental toughness and teamwork. “It taught me to believe that working together you can achieve what no one person can achieve alone,” he offered. “It’s gratifying to see this campus now, as it has grown from what it looked like in 1965. When I came here and Gardner-Webb was a junior college, players who lettered in a sport got \$50 and there were no scholarships. All the years in between have been building blocks for the University to reach this level. It took a team to make it happen. It’s satisfying to be part of that team.”

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University’s purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and

leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).