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ATHLETICS

Gardner-Webb Athletics Honors Coach and Football Standouts at Homecoming Game

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON OCTOBER 20, 2021



▲ From left, Richard Grissom, Chip Stuart, Darrel Middleton and Coach Norman Harris

New Monuments Recognize Coach Norman Harris and Players, Richard Grissom, Chip Stuart and Darrell Middleton

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—As part of Homecoming festivities on Oct. 23, Gardner-Webb University Athletics is honoring the achievements of three football players and a legendary coach. The individuals—Richard Grissom, Chip Stuart and Darrell Middleton—are the only three players who have had their jerseys retired in the 86-year history of football at Gardner-Webb. Coach Norman Harris not only led the football program for 17 years, but also coached basketball and baseball.

To recognize these men, GWU will unveil four monuments located beside the sidewalk leading to the home side in Ernest W. Spangler Stadium. “The player monuments are a special way that we can honor the football accomplishments of Richard Grissom, Chip Stuart, and Darrell Middleton,” noted Vice President for Athletics Chuck Burch. “The other monument recognizes the impact that Coach Norman Harris had on Gardner-Webb and his contributions to the football program. He was the head football coach from 1952 until 1969.”

Grissom, Stuart, and Middleton, as well as representatives of Harris, are expected to attend the pregame ceremony.

Harris was inducted into the GWU Athletics Hall of Fame in 1991. From 1949 to 1969, he coached football, basketball and baseball at Gardner-Webb. He laid the foundation for success in athletics at GWU, led teams to a combined 15 conference titles and is the founder of the Bulldog Club. He coached

the first game ever played in Spangler Stadium on Oct. 8, 1966, leading the Runnin' Bulldogs to a 21-2 win over Chowan. The field in Spangler Stadium was named the Coach Norman Harris Field in 2007.

Grissom played football for Gardner-Webb from 1970 to 1973. He was inducted into the GWU Athletics Hall of Fame in 1996. He was Gardner-Webb's first football senior college All-America selection. He led the team to the 1973 NAIA Poultry Bowl, and he earned Kodak Little All-America Honors in 1973.

Stuart was a member of the GWU football team from 1979 to 1982. He was inducted into the GWU Athletics Hall of Fame in 1991. He passed for 7,455 yards and 58 touchdowns in four seasons. He was a first-team NAIA All-America choice in 1982. As a senior, he passed for 2,389 yards and 23 touchdowns.

Middleton played football at Gardner-Webb from 1986 to 1989. He was the program's all-time leading rusher with 4,032 career yards. He ran for 1,401 yards in 1989, earning NAIA All-America honors. He led the team to an 11-2 record and NAIA playoffs in 1987. He was inducted into the GWU Athletics Hall of Fame in 1999.

"We really do have a rich football heritage at Gardner-Webb, and all four of these men have earned prominent and permanent recognition in our home stadium," praised GWU President William Downs. "No Runnin' Bulldog football player will again wear the number 4, 25, or 70 on their jersey, because the names Stuart, Middleton, and Grissom will forever be linked to their individual feats of greatness. Along with Coach Harris, these gridiron heroes will continue to inspire current and future student-athletes at our University. These new monuments should be a source of pride for Bulldog fans everywhere."

Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina's recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to six professional schools, 14 academic departments, more than 80 undergraduate and graduate majors, and a world-class faculty. Located on a beautiful 225-acre campus in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb prepares graduates to impact their chosen professions, equips them with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspires them to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.