



Coach Ben Perkins

August 26, 1932 - October 24, 2012

The community of Bowdon moves forward this week with a heavy heart following the loss of a legend.

And for every bit of good Ben Perkins was as a football coach — and there's plenty of it — he is remembered by those that knew him best as an even better man.

“He made a lot of men out of young boys, I'll tell you that right now. You can look at all the kids that played for him, and there's a lot of good men that are here now that are the product he made them into,” said Steve Prater, who began his coaching career at Bowdon under Perkins in 1970.

Perkins, who passed away on Wednesday morning, will forever live in Red Devil football lore as the man who delivered the first state title to “The Friendly City” in 1971.

Perkins spent 12 years of his coaching career at Bowdon, from 1969-1981, following two successful stints in Alabama, where he had already won two state championships — one at Altoona in 1962 and another at Sardis High School in 1966.

Dennis Rollins of Bowdon played for Perkins from 1974-77 and remembers

him not only as a great coach, but someone who looked after every one of his players.

“I remember him singing ‘Delta Dawn’ at practice and in school. He had a way of getting in each kid’s head and heart. He was a father-figure to us all. He had our utmost respect. It was a blessed day when he came to Bowdon to teach and coach. Ben Perkins will truly be missed,” Rollins said.

Mt. Zion High School football coach Keith Holloway played at Bowdon toward the end of Perkins’ career in 1977-79. Holloway said his influence still rubs off on him after all these years.

“I catch myself almost every day using some term or some phrase that he gave us. Our prayers are out for his family. He was not just a great football coach, but a great man and a great leader of young men. He touched a lot of lives. He really did,” Holloway said.

On the sidelines, Perkins’ career speaks for itself.

“He was probably one of the best football coaches to ever coach the game in either Alabama or Georgia. I may be wrong, but I think he was the first coach to win a state championship in Alabama and Georgia. It’s been done since then, but I think he was the first to have won a state championship in Alabama and Georgia,” Prater said.

Perkins finished his Bowdon career with a record of 76-51-3 and was 122-71-7 with three state titles overall. One of the other achievements Perkins earned while at Bowdon was becoming the first Carroll County team in modern history to defeat Carrollton, winning a 14-7 decision in 1975. Perkins actually was quite successful against the Trojan football powerhouse. While Carrollton owns a 37-4 advantage in the all-time series, all four Bowdon victories came

during the Perkins era.

But more important than the victories on the field, Perkins produced winners off of it, as well.

“Coach Perkins taught us more about life than he did football. He was my economics teacher. I have been in business for 28 years, and when he was healthy, he would come by regularly and ask how business was going. One of his greatest moments as a coach was in 1975 at homecoming when we beat Carrollton for the first time ever, 14-7. His daughter, Marla, was crowned homecoming queen that night. The next year we won at Carrollton for his 100th career victory,” Rollins said.

In the 1971 Class B state championship season, the Red Devils won in thrilling fashion, as Craig Roop stopped Ray Davis’ two-point attempt with nine seconds remaining to claim the 20-19 victory over Southeast Bulloch, capping off a historic 11-1-1 campaign.

Current Red Devil coach Dwight Hochstetler, who led Bowdon to its only other state championship in 1992, said Perkins paved the way for the program’s rich tradition on the gridiron.

“He’s a big part of the reason we’ve been successful in years past. You know, when you think of a puzzle, most of your important parts are them large pieces. He probably put Bowdon on the map winning that state championship. He had some very successful teams and he’s the only Bowdon coach that ever beat Carrollton,” Hochstetler said. “He’s got a lot of respect in the community. Since I’ve been here, I’ve never heard anybody say a negative thing about coach Perkins. He’s always been a friend to me and the football program. He’s going to be missed.”

A graduate of Emma Sansom High School in Gadsden, Ala., Perkins played football and basketball during his prep days before enlisting in the Navy during the Korean War, where he served four years. Perkins also played football for one year with the Navy. Following his service, Perkins went on to graduate from the University of Jacksonville and earned his Master's Degree from Middle Tennessee State University.

In 2009, the Bowdon City Council renamed the street right next to Bowdon High School Ben Perkins Drive in the coach's honor.

Prater reflected on his former boss Wednesday by recalling some of the coach's favorite expressions, one being D.I.T.K. — 'Defense Is The Key.'

"Another one of his old favorite expressions — and I guess I took it on when I was the offensive coordinator — he said, 'A good offense is just like a good meal. You know, push it away from the table before you overeat,'" Prater said.

Perkins' keen attention to detail was another trait that made him a successful leader.

Prater notes how Harry Greene — a first-team all-state selection in 1976 — was the best running back to play under Perkins at Bowdon, which brought about another memorable moment in the young pupil's coaching career.

"One day I was standing behind Harry and when we ran a play, he had this little false step on his start, and he stepped on my foot. Man, that hurt like crazy. So the next day I got Harry off to the side and I'm teaching him a little bit of a different start from the tailback position and coach Perkins came over and said, 'What in the hell are you doing?' I said, 'We're working on this guy's start.' He said, 'You're fixing to mess up the best running back in the state of

Georgia,” Prater chuckled.

And while the stories will continue to be told through the years about the man who molded many other great men, his football philosophy ultimately patterned a fulfilled life off the field.

“His teams were never nothing fancy. ... He was just from the old-school of playing fundamentally sound, basic football,” Prater said. “There was never anything flashy about him. It was attention to detail. One of those kind of guys. He’ll truly be missed here.”

Perkins is survived by his wife, Nelle, and children — Mark, Marla, Matt and Mitzi — all graduates of Bowdon High School, along with several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Visitation will be held on Saturday from 4-8 p.m. at Rainwater Funeral Home in Bowdon. The funeral service is set for Sunday at 2 p.m. at the Bowdon Baptist Church.

-Taken from the Times-Georgian

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **27**. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Rainwater Funeral Home
317 North Carroll Street
Bowdon, GA 30108
(770) 258-7239
info@rainwaterfuneralhome.com
<https://www.rainwaterfuneralhome.com>

Service

OCT **28**. 2:00 PM (ET)

Bowdon Baptist Church
205 Mill Street
Bowdon, GA 30108

Tribute Wall

PW

“ I would like to offer my condolences to the Perkins family and also share a comforting scriptural promise that very soon death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.....Revelation 21:4

P. Watts - November 05, 2012 at 01:04 PM

MC

“ Matt I am so sorry to hear about your Dad's passing. You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers during this very difficult time. Please let me know if you need anything or if there is anything I can do.

Michelle Sanders (Tanner Wound Center) - October 30, 2012 at 10:10 AM

BC

“ Bobby Camp lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins



Bobby Camp - October 28, 2012 at 10:06 AM

DR

“ Dennis Franklin Rollins lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins



Dennis Franklin Rollins - October 28, 2012 at 08:32 AM

DR

“ I learned alot more than football from Coach Perkins. He was a great man. Made a lasting impact on my life as well as others. May God comfort Mrs Nell, Mark, Marla, Matt, and Mitzi. #52 Dennis Rollins Class of 77.

Dennis Franklin Rollins - October 28, 2012 at 08:29 AM



“ Coach had a big personality that embraced most people around him and it made you fill at ease. I am a female, so no, I did not play football, but I did have him for economics and psychology and I too remember comments he told us to explain the meanings of the subjects.I could tell many things myself as I'm sure many more could do the same of the memories we have, He will be miss but not forgotten.



jean spruill - October 28, 2012 at 05:14 AM

BS

“ Coach was more than just a teacher to lots of us, He was one of the good ones that makes an impression that goes on with you for life. Many of his students have become better people for having known him. I for one will miss that "hey how you doing" and smile that was his normal greeting. Coach may have left this world but he will not be forgotten by



Brenda Jean (Farmer) Spruill - October 28, 2012 at 04:00 AM

JT

“ Janet Hollloway Truett lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins



Janet Hollloway Truett - October 26, 2012 at 10:16 PM

DC

“ Dottie Grizzard Cavender lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins



Dottie Grizzard Cavender - October 26, 2012 at 08:58 PM



“ Ann Wheeler lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins



Ann Wheeler - October 25, 2012 at 05:16 PM

KR

“ Kri228 lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins



kri228 - October 25, 2012 at 05:14 PM



“ *Theresa Camp lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins*



Theresa Camp - October 25, 2012 at 04:56 PM



“ *Matt Steed lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins*



Matt Steed - October 25, 2012 at 04:46 PM



“ *Beverly Hammond lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins*



Beverly Hammond - October 25, 2012 at 03:49 PM



“ *Karon Fletcher Rooks lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins*



Karon Fletcher Rooks - October 25, 2012 at 01:42 PM

VT

“ *Velinda Herren Tilton lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins*



Velinda Herren Tilton - October 25, 2012 at 01:23 PM

DL

“ *Debbie Brook Lashley lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins*



Debbie Brook Lashley - October 25, 2012 at 01:15 PM

SH

“ *Stanley Holloway lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins*



Stanley Holloway - October 25, 2012 at 11:40 AM

SO

“ *Sheila Inman Oliver lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins*



Sheila Inman Oliver - October 25, 2012 at 11:06 AM

TC

“ *Tanner Hospice Care staff would like to offer our condolences to you during this difficult time and to say thank you for trusting your loved one in our care*

Tanner Hospice Care - October 25, 2012 at 10:45 AM

GB

“ *Grant Barrow lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins*



Grant Barrow - October 25, 2012 at 08:21 AM

LA

“ *Len Ayers lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins*



Len Ayers - October 25, 2012 at 08:09 AM

VC

“ *Vicki Foster Cowart lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins*



Vicki Foster Cowart - October 25, 2012 at 06:42 AM

LL

“ *Landon Jack Ledbetter lit a candle in memory of Coach Ben Perkins*



landon jack ledbetter - October 24, 2012 at 03:54 PM