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ECSU ATHLETICS

LOSS OF A LEGEND

Former Elizabeth City State University men's basketball coach Robert "Bobby" Vaughan dies at 93

From staff reports
May 5, 2021



Robert "Bobby" Vaughan served as the men's basketball coach and athletic director at ECSU for decades. This photo was taken in May 2015.
File photo/BS2 Photography

Robert "Bobby" L. Vaughan, the former longtime men's basketball coach at Elizabeth City State University, died.

ECSU confirmed Vaughan's death Wednesday afternoon.

A cause of death for Vaughan, 93, was not made public.

Vaughan got his break in coaching when he took over the Elizabeth City State men's basketball program in 1949 as head coach.

Vaughan would lead the men's basketball program through the 1985-86 campaign.

During his tenure as head coach, Vaughan tallied a 502-301 overall record.

The golden era of basketball under Vaughan was in the late 1960s to the early 1970s.

During the 1968-69 season, Vaughan led the Vikings to a 29-4 overall record, a Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) championship, an NAIA District 29 championship and a berth to the NAIA men's basketball national tournament.

The Vikings finished fourth overall at the national tournament.

Leonard Carmichael played under Vaughan for four seasons from 1968-72.

The former ECSU men's basketball player acknowledged Vaughan meant everything to him.

"He's the reason why I have all the things I have in life," Carmichael told The Daily Advance on Wednesday.

Carmichael, a 2013 inductee to the CIAA John B. McLendon Hall of Fame, noted he met his wife while at ECSU.

"He gave a kid from New Jersey a chance," Carmichael said. "I had four great years playing for that man. He will be missed."

Carmichael, who is also inducted in the ECSU Sports Hall of Fame, noted Vaughan wasn't the type of coach that would yell and scream at his players, but Carmichael noted you would know when Vaughan wasn't happy.

"He was a great coach," Carmichael said. "He was a great man."

Away from the court, Carmichael recalled Vaughan stressing to his players the importance of maintaining their grades.

Some of Vaughan's other notable players were Marvin Trotman and Mike Gale.

Trotman, from Princeton, New Jersey, played under Vaughan from the 1958-59 season to 1961-62 season.

Trotman, a 1962 Elizabeth City State graduate, told The Daily Advance on Wednesday that Vaughan was a mentor, a friend and a coach.

He credits Vaughan for saving his life.

Initially, Trotman came to Elizabeth City to play football.

After sustaining injuries playing football, Trotman tried out for the men's basketball team.

"It was a blessing I got hurt," Trotman said. Trotman had success during his freshman season on the hardwood.

In his senior season, Trotman was named the CIAA Player of the Year in men's basketball.

Trotman, a 1980 ECSU Sports Hall of Fame and a 1994 CIAA Hall of Fame inductee, credits Vaughan for letting him play his style of basketball.

While at ECSU, Trotman noted he set the program's single game scoring record and was the program's all-time leading scorer.

Trotman was drafted in the ninth round of the 1962 National Basketball Association draft by the St. Louis Hawks.

The Hawks are now located in Atlanta.

After playing at ECSU from 1967-68 to 1970-71, Gale, a member of the ECSU Sports Hall of Fame and the CIAA Hall of Fame, played professional basketball in the now defunct American Basketball Association and the NBA from the early 1970s through the early 1980s.

Most of Gale's pro career was with the San Antonio Spurs.

Gale died last July.

Under Vaughan, the men's program won CIAA championships in 1969 and 1981 and NAIA District 29 championships in 1969, 1970 and 1971.

In 1971, Elizabeth City State placed third overall in the NAIA national tournament.

Vaughan was inducted into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame in 1992.

"We are certainly saddened to hear about the passing of Coach Vaughan," N.C. Sports Hall of Fame Executive Director Bobby Guthrie said in an emailed statement Wednesday. "He was not only a valued member of the NCSHOF but was also very supportive of the Hall."

Shawn Walker, the current ECSU men's basketball coach noted Vaughan's impact.

"He was nothing short of a giant in the world of college basketball, HBCU, and ECSU," Walker posted on the social media platform Twitter on Wednesday.

Vaughan was one of the pillars of the CIAA.

"We lost our coach, leader, historian, father, mentor and most importantly, our best friend," CIAA commissioner Jacqie McWilliams said in a statement on Twitter on Wednesday.

"Coach Vaughan was an example of manhood and the hidden gem of this conference. He made us all better and held us accountable for what we could and should do."

"Although his physical presence, periodic check-ins and words of encouragement will be missed, his heart, soul and spiritual presence will live with us for life," McWilliams continued.

"We love the Vaughan family and appreciate them for allowing us to be part of their family for over 70 years."

Before Vaughan began his coaching career, he attended and graduated from Virginia State University.

Vaughan's contributions to basketball were recognized by VSU as he was inducted into the VSU Athletic Hall of Fame in 1989.

Vaughan's contributions to Elizabeth City State go beyond basketball.

He served as the university's athletic director from 1957 to 1986 and was inducted into the inaugural ECSU Sports Hall of Fame class in 1980.

ECSU noted Vaughan served as the first chairman of the university's Department of Physical Education from 1957 to 1978.

In 2010, The Daily Advance featured Vaughan and his book "The Elizabeth City State University, Sports Legacy with Coach "Bobby" Vaughan 1949-1986".

The book chronicles the history of Elizabeth City State athletics during Vaughan's time with the university's athletic department.

According to the book, Vaughan was born January 19, 1928 in Petersburg, Virginia.

Vaughan graduated from VSU at 19-years-old.

He then entered the master's degree program at Columbia University of New York.

In his early 20s, Vaughan was named the men's basketball coach at the then Elizabeth City State Teachers College.

During the majority of his coaching career at ECSU, the men's basketball program played home games inside Williams Hall on campus.

According to the Virginian-Pilot, Vaughan retired as a professor at ECSU in May 1995.

At the time of his retirement, Vaughan was the longest serving professor at the university, which spanned over 45 years.

"Coach Vaughan was the ultimate Viking, a legend, and this is a devastating loss," ECSU Athletic Director George Bright said in a news release by the university. "I have relied hugely on his advice, counsel and insights cherishing in his terrific stories about his family, his players, and his life. He will be remembered forever."

"For all of his accomplishments as a long-time Viking coach and administrator, his rich personality and clearly defined him," Bright continued. "He often times spoke of his best titles being father, grandfather and husband, and mentoring decades of coaches and players with a boundless love for Viking nation. I will miss him dearly."

His name is on a building on campus, the Robert L. Vaughan Center, where the ECSU men's and women's basketball and volleyball teams play.

"Coach Vaughan's legacy exemplifies exceptional dedication to his students and to ECSU," said ECSU Chancellor Karrie G. Dixon in a news release by the university. "He has made a significant impact on this university and community, and he will be missed by so many."

According to the Vaughan family, services for coach Vaughan will be announced at a later date.

Memorials, however, can be made to the R.L. Vaughan Scholarship Fund c/o the ECSU Foundation, P.O. Box 1467, Elizabeth City, North Carolina 27906.



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Jan 22, 2016

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Coach Vaughan, Thank You. Our thoughts and prayers go out to our @ECSUVikings Family.