

Clarence Gaines

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Clarence Edward "Big House" Gaines, Sr. (May 21, 1923 – April 18, 2005) was an American college men's basketball coach with a 47-year coaching career at Winston-Salem State University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Among his numerous honors for his achievements, he is one of the few African Americans to be inducted as a coach into the Basketball Hall of Fame.

Before graduating and becoming a coach, he had an outstanding collegiate career as a football player for Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland.

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Early years

Gaines was born in Paducah, Kentucky to Lester and Olivia Bolen Gaines.^[1] Clarence helped his family by working in a garage while in high school.^[2] He attended local Lincoln High School where he excelled academically, played basketball, was an All-State football player, and played trumpet in the school band. He graduated as class salutatorian in 1941.^[1]

Jim Crow Era segregation laws and the suggestions of a family friend led him to attend Morgan State University (then Morgan State College), a historically black college in Baltimore, Maryland.^[1] He entered in the fall of 1941 on a football scholarship.^[3]

At Morgan State, Gaines was given his nickname of "Big House": a fellow student saw the 6 ft. 3in., 265 lb Gaines and declared: "You're as big as a house."^{[2][4]} Gaines played as a lineman for the Bears football team, was a member of the basketball team, and participated in track. Gaines was an All-CIAA selection as

Clarence Gaines

Sport(s) Football, basketball

Biographical details

Born May 21, 1923
Paducah, Kentucky

Died April 18, 2005 (aged 81)
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Playing career

1941–1945 Morgan State

Coaching career (HC unless noted)

1946–1993 Winston-Salem State

Head coaching record

Overall 828–447

Accomplishments and honors

Championships

NCAA Championship (1967)
CIAA Championship (1953, 1957, 1960, 1961, 1963, 1966, 1970, 1977)

Awards

NCAA Division II College Coach of the Year (1967)
CIAA Coach of the Year (1957, 1961, 1963, 1970, 1975, 1980)
Basketball Hall of Fame (1982)

College Basketball Hall of Fame Inducted in 2006

a lineman in football all four seasons and twice elected an All-American. When it came to basketball, he said he was "a very average basketball player."^[3] In 2004, he explained, "I was an All-America in football, but I was just on the basketball team to have something to do."^[2]

Gaines graduated from Morgan State in 1945 with a Bachelor's of Science in Chemistry. He intended to go on into dental school, however his college football coach, Edward P. Hurt, suggested that he temporarily go to what was then known as Winston-Salem Teachers College. At the time, the small southern college had one coach for all sports, Brutus Wilson, who was also a Morgan State graduate; Hurt suggested that Gaines would make a good assistant coach. Gaines agreed and went to Winston-Salem.^[1]

Winston-Salem State

In 1946, Wilson left for Shaw University, leaving Gaines as the head coach for football and basketball, athletic director, trainer, and ticket manager.^[3] He also taught.^[5] He served as football coach for three years (1946–49), and in 1948 was named Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) "Football Coach of the Year" after leading his team to an 8-1 season.^[1] He dropped coaching football to focus on basketball in 1949. He earned his Master of Arts in Education from Teachers College, Columbia University in 1950.^[3]

Gaines coached basketball at Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) from 1946 to 1993, compiling an 828-447 record. He led the Rams to 18 20-win seasons, eight CIAA titles, and in 1967 led WSSU to a Division II NCAA Championship, making the Rams the first basketball program from a historically black college or university to capture an NCAA national championship.^[3]

Toward the end of his coaching career, Gaines struggled to recruit student players. The end of the Jim Crow Era laws led to college basketball becoming fully integrated at all levels. This made it difficult to lure star talent to WSSU.^[4]

Among Gaines notable student players were Earl Monroe; Cleo Hill, the first African American from an historically Black college or university to be drafted #1 by the National Basketball Association (St. Louis Hawks, 1961); and Stephen A. Smith, who became a noted commentator and columnist.^{[1][6]}

Accomplishments and recognition

As of April 2010, Gaines stands ninth on the NCAA men's basketball coaches win list. When Gaines retired from Winston-Salem State University in 1993, only Rupp had amassed more wins.^[7] He was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1982.^[3] He is the only African-American inducted in the Basketball Hall of Fame as a coach.^[8] After winning the national title in 1967, he was named the NCAA Division II College Coach of the Year. Gaines was named the CIAA coach of the year a record six times (1957, 61, 63, 70, 75, 80); received the CIAA Basketball Tournament Outstanding Coach Award eight times (1953, 57, 60, 61, 63, 66, 70, 77); was inducted into the CIAA Hall of Fame (1975), NAIA Helms Hall of Fame (1968) and N.C. Sports Hall of Fame (1978) and received the Silver Buffalo Award from the Boy Scouts of America.^[1] In 2006 he was named part of the founding class of the College Basketball Hall of Fame.^[9]

The C. E. Gaines Center (built 1976), an athletic complex on the WSSU campus and home of the basketball team, is named after him.^[7] WSSU's C.E. "Big House" Gaines Athletic Hall of Fame is also named after him.^[3]

Gaines was a member in numerous organizations, including the Sigma Pi Phi ("the Boule") and Omega Psi Phi fraternities, Boy Scouts of America, Forsyth County Heart Association, and United States Olympic Committee. He was a basketball consultant for the United States Air Force (Germany, England, Mexico). He served as President of CIAA Basketball Coaches Association from 1972–76; NAIA District Chairman, 1966–72; President of the National Association of Basketball Coaches in 1989; and was a member of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame Board of Trustees.^[1]

In January 2005, Gaines was honored during a half-time ceremony at Rupp Arena, home of the University of Kentucky, during a game between the Kentucky and the University of Kansas. Before a capacity crowd of 24,000, he received the designation of "Kentucky Colonel" from Governor Ernie Fletcher, the highest honor a native son of the State of Kentucky can receive.^[10]

The Big House Gaines Scholarship was established in 2006 by the Reynolda Rotary Club in recognition of the fact that Gaines was a charter member of that club.

In 2011, Collegeinsider.com named the Clarence Gaines Award in his honor. It is for the best Division II college basketball coach of each year.^[11]

Personal

In 1950, Gaines married the former Clara Berry, a teacher of Latin in the local county public school system. They had two children, Lisa Gaines McDonald, a private business consultant and Clarence Edward Gaines, Jr., a scout for the National Basketball Association's New York Knicks.^[1] He and his wife retired to East Winston-Salem.^[5]

Gaines died on April 18, 2005 due to complications from a stroke.^[3] A large memorial was held at WSSU on April 22, 2005; all conflicting classes were canceled.^[10]

See also

- List of college men's basketball coaches with 600 wins

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Clarence Gaines

Title: Basketball Head Coach/Athletic Director

Alma Mater: Morgan State, 1945

Experience: 47 Years

Bio



Clarence E. "Big House" Gaines, Sr. was born in Paducah, Kentucky, May 21, 1923, to Lester and Olivia Bolen Gaines. He attended the public schools of Paducah and graduated in 1941, as class salutatorian, from Paducah's Lincoln High School. He excelled academically, played basketball, was an All State football player, and played trumpet in the school band.

Although he qualified academically to attend numerous colleges and universities "Jim Crow" segregation and a suggestion by the family physician (a schoolmate of legendary Morgan State University football coach, Eddie Hurt) caused young Gaines to enroll at Morgan State University in 1941.

It was upon his arrival at the Baltimore, Maryland campus that Gaines received the nickname he is widely known by -- "Big House." According to oral accounts the school's business manager took one look at the 6 ft. 3in.,

265lb Gaines and declared: "Boy, I never seen anything bigger than you but a house."

While at Morgan State Gaines received recognition as an All-American football player and participated on the basketball and track teams. Gaines graduated from Morgan State in 1945 with a B.S. degree in Chemistry intent on furthering his education and attending dental school. His college coach, Eddie Hurt, recommended

he temporarily go to Winston-Salem Teachers College in Winston-Salem, NC, to become the assistant coach to Brutus Wilson (a Morgan State graduate) who coached all sports at the small southern college.

Upon Wilson's departure to Shaw University in 1946, Gaines became the head football and basketball coach, athletic director, trainer, and ticket manager. Gaines coached football from 1946-1949. In 1948 Gaines was named CIAA (Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association) "Football Coach of the Year" after leading the RAMS to an 8-1 season. Beginning in 1949 Gaines only coached basketball, and served as athletic director. In 1950 Gaines received his masters degree in education from Columbia University.

In 1950 Gaines married the former Clara Berry, a Latin language teacher in the (Winston-Salem) Forsyth county public school system. They are the parents of two children, Lisa Gaines McDonald, a private business consultant and Clarence Edward Gaines, Jr., a scout for the National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls.

Due to his proficiency as an athletic coach, teacher and humanitarian, Gaines has received numerous awards: CIAA Basketball Tournament Outstanding Coach Award; 1953, 57, 60, 61, 63, 66, 70, 77; CIAA Hall of Fame Inductee, 1975; NAIA Helms Hall of Fame Inductee, 1968; N.C. Sports Hall of Fame, 1978; CIAA Basketball Coach of the Year, 1957, 61, 63, 70, 75, 80; NAIA District 26 Outstanding Coach Award, 1975-78; Paul Robeson Award, 1980; Winston-Salem Urban League Family of the Year Award, 1973; Order of the Long Leaf Pine (N.C.); and the Silver Buffalo Award (Boy Scouts of America) etc.

During Coach Gaines' 47-year tenure as coach and athletic director at Winston-Salem State University he coached former WSSU and professional basketball greats Cleo Hill (first African-American from an historically Black college and university to be drafted #1 by the National Basketball Association -- St. Louis Hawks, 1961) and Earl "The Pearl" Monroe Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame inductee and all star performer) of the National Basketball Association's New York Knicks.

In 1967, as a result of his guidance and the all around play of future National Basketball Association All-Star Vernon Earl "The Pearl" Monroe, the Winston-Salem State College, men's basketball team won the 1967 National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) Division II Basketball Championship - the first historically Black college to win a national championship. Subsequently, Gaines was named the NCAA Division II (1967) College Coach of the Year. In 1982 Gaines was recognized for his contribution to basketball by being inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame (named in honor of the inventor of basketball James Naismith) as a coach.



Involved in numerous professional and civic activities, in addition to his duties as athletic director, coach and instructor, Gaines was President of CIAA Basketball Coaches Association, 1972-76; NAIA District Chairman, 1966-72; President of the National Association of Basketball Coaches, 1989; Co-founder of the Winston-Salem Youth Baseball League, Inc., 1960; Patterson Avenue YMCA Board of Management, 1969-1971;

Experiment in Self Reliance Board of Directors, 1987; Winston-Salem Automobile Club (AAA) Board of Directors, 1986; founder and former administrator of the Winston-Salem State University National Youth Sports Program and the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame Board of Trustees and President of the National Association of Basketball Coaches, 1989. Other activities include membership in Sigma Pi Phi Boule and Omega Psi Phi fraternities, Boy Scouts of America, Forsyth County Heart Association, United States Olympic Committee, Model Cities Recreation Committee, Rotary Club of Winston-Salem and basketball consultant for the United States Air Force (Germany, England, Mexico).

Upon his retirement as basketball coach at Winston-Salem State University in 1993, Gaines had amassed a win/loss record of 828-446, making him the winningest active basketball coach in NCAA history, and the second winningest collegiate basketball coach behind the University of Kentucky's late Adolph Rupp. However, following University of North Carolina basketball coach Dean Smith's 877th career win in March 1997, coach Gaines became the third winningest basketball coach in NCAA history behind only Adolph Rupp (2nd), and Dean Smith (1st).

Gaines was eventually surpassed by longtime friend Jim Phelan of Mt. St. Mary's University (formerly Mt. St. Mary's College the name change took place on June 8th, 2004), placing him fourth all-time in wins in NCAA Basketball history before Bobby Knight and Mike Krzyzewski passed both Phelan and Gaines in 2005, moving "Big House" to sixth-place all-time.

Clarence Gaines passed away on April 18th, 2005 due to complications from a stroke. He is survived by his lovely wife Clara and two children, Lisa and Clarence, Jr. Gaines' legacy at Winston-Salem State University and in the college basketball world are surely to never be forgotten.

Remembering A Legend

Cleo Hill

Former WSSU and NBA Basketball Star

"He was a like a father to so many, and if you had a problem you could go to him, and he helped you out," Hill said. "And he even helped you out after you were done playing there. He helped all of us as student athletes - athletically, academically and socially."

Earl "The Pearl" Monroe

Former WSSU and NBA Star

He was Winston-Salem as far as all of us are concerned," Monroe said from New York, where he starred for the Knicks in the 1970s. "He was somebody who never left Winston, and his heart was in Winston and with that university. Coach's legacy will be more about how he helped create men and women while they were at Winston-Salem State. Coach knew that we all needed to get our diplomas so we could have careers outside of basketball. What I will remember most is that we were so close and played so well together - it's something that I've never had on a team before or since,"

Mary Garber

Legendary Winston-Salem, NC Sports Writer

Big House was like my brother we worked together for 50 years. Our families were part of each other. The many championships he won seem unimportant compared to the influence he had on the lives of young men and women. He was respected by people of all races and creeds. We'll never see someone like him again."

Billy Packer

CBS Basketball Analyst, and Wake Forest graduate

"Big House was an all-timer," Packer, CBS' college basketball analyst, said. "He was just a great friend, and a guy I learned a lot from. Probably when you think of Winston-Salem, nobody ever did more in that community than he did. His basketball record is probably just a paragraph compared to all the other things he accomplished as a Boy Scout leader, and as the guy who was such a pillar of strength in the early days of race relations in Winston-Salem. "He was a great teacher, a great family man, and just a wonderful person. He was just a great inspiration. He was a great coach, believe me, his coaching record speaks for itself. He took a back seat to no one in terms of understanding the game, dealing with players. Some people say, 'If he was so good, why didn't he coach in the ACC?' Well, people don't have any understanding that he was never given the opportunity. I always remember something John Thompson said when he won the national championship (at Georgetown in 1984). People asked what does it feel like to be the first black person to coach a team to a national championship? And his comment was, 'It's only because those that were far better than I were never given the opportunity.' And obviously the people he was talking about were Big House and John McLendon and many others like him."

Coach Gaines Record

Year	W	L	Pct.	Title
1947	15	7	.782	
1948	17	20	.630	
1949	10	7	.588	
1950	11	10	.524	
1951	15	10	.600	
1952	12	11	.522	
1953	23	5	.821	CIAA Title
1954	25	8	.758	
1955	21	6	.778	
1956	23	7	.767	
1957	24	6	.800	CIAA Title

1958	13	12	.520	
1959	17	14	.548	
1960	19	5	.792	CIAA Title
1961	26	5	.839	CIAA Title
1962	24	5	.828	
1963	23	7	.767	CIAA Title
1964	22	4	.846	
1965	25	8	.758	
1966	21	5	.808	
1967	31	1	.969	CIAA/NCAA Title
1968	10	14	.417	
1969	14	14	.500	CIAA Title
1970	20	8	.714	
1971	14	11	.560	
1972	18	9	.667	
1973	22	7	.759	
1974	14	12	.538	
1975	23	7	.767	
1976	24	6	.800	
1977	17	11	.607	CIAA Title
1978	28	4	.875	
1979	19	9	.679	
1980	19	7	.731	
1981	10	15	.400	
1982	15	11	.577	
1983	15	12	.556	

1984	20	10	.667
1985	16	12	.571
1986	15	12	.556
1987	19	9	.679
1988	16	12	.571
1989	6	18	.250
1990	9	8	.529
1991	10	14	.417
1992	6	20	.231
1993	6	17	.286
Totals	828	447	.652



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SPORTS

Gaines' legacy lives on 10 years after his death

John Dell/Winston-Salem Journal | Posted: Wednesday, April 15, 2015 12:00 am

The beauty and elegance of the Big House Gaines-Clara Gaines relationship is still there.

Clara doesn't mind talking about how it's been nearly 10 years since her husband, Clarence "Big House" Gaines, the legendary coach and athletics director at Winston-Salem State, died at the age of 81. That day — April 18, 2005 — was tough for the Gaines family, his legions of former players and the vast network of friends he had accumulated through a life well lived.

"He was a people person," Clara said earlier this month from her living room of her spiffy retirement apartment she's lived in since Big House's death. "And he turned me into a people person because he always talked to everybody. He didn't care if it was a stranger."

Clara says time hasn't slowed down for her, and the 10 years since Gaines' death have gone quickly.

"I think about him a lot, and God helps me through every day," said Clara, a daughter of a United Methodist minister.

Throughout her apartment, there are pictures, paintings and photographs neatly displayed that give plenty of details about her life with Big House, who won 828 games and a national championship during his 47-year coaching career at WSSU.

Clara, a retired English and Latin teacher, met Big House in 1946 in Winston-Salem, and they ended up being married for 55 years.

"We both moved to Winston-Salem around the same time, and we ended up meeting," she said. "God brought us together."

Speaking of 'Big House' Gaines

Earl "The Pearl" Monroe, former WSSU and NBA star:

One of her most prized keepsakes is Big House's favorite leather hat that sits on his 1982 induction trophy for the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. It sits by the front door of her apartment so when visitors enter, that's the first thing they see.

"That was his favorite hat, and I kept that," Clara said. "It's nice to have a few things here and there that I can look at and remember. But to be honest — I don't need those things because I have those great memories in my mind."

Clara, who gave up driving three years ago and gave her car to one of her grandchildren, is still active at church and still goes to the Reynolda Rotary Club meetings. She has a lot of friends who look after her and keep her active. Her health is good, and while the 10 years have gone by quickly, she realizes what a great life she has had.

“We were so blessed when you think about it,” Clara said with a radiant smile.

Her daughter, Lisa Gaines McDonald, lives in Chicago and her son, Clarence Jr., works in New York with the Knicks but “Baby Clarence,” as Clara used to call him, and his family also have a home outside Los Angeles .

There are also the four grandchildren that she hears from all the time.

In February, Lisa came to Winston-Salem and took her mom to the CIAA Tournament in Charlotte . WSSU was in the championship game on Saturday night and when the public-address announcer introduced Clara on the big screen at the Time Warner Cable Arena the 8,000 or so in attendance gave her a standing ovation.

It was the best moment of the tournament.

“She loved that,” Lisa said by telephone earlier this month. “And seeing how all those fans remembered my dad was pretty special. The CIAA Tournament was a part of all our lives for so many years.”

Clara was surprised when she saw her and Lisa on the big screen.

“I’m glad folks remembered who Big House was,” she said. “That was a real nice gesture and Lisa and I had a good time. It was like a big reunion.”

Gaines coached so many players through the years Clara can’t possible remember all their names. She says many of Gaines’ former players stopped and talked to her at the tournament.

“I hear from Teddy Blunt and (Earl) the Pearl (Monroe) calls to check in so it’s nice to hear from them,” Clara said.

Clara also receives a steady stream of cards and letters from former students of Big House, who also taught classes at WSSU.

“That impact is all over,” Clara said about Big House, who has two thriving scholarships in his name at WSSU.

Those scholarships are just part of his legacy. One of them, established in 1982, has helped 13 student-athletes since 2008 with the total endowment at just over \$400,000.

Another scholarship, started by the Reynolda Rotary Club in 2010 to honor Big House, has grown to nearly \$125,000 and is currently helping fund two WSSU athletes, according to Aaron Singleton, the director of news and media relations at WSSU. Big House was an original member of the Reynolda Rotary Club, and to help fund the scholarship, the club has held a golf tournament.

“The beat goes on with those scholarships because those are in his name and students can benefit from it,” Clara said about Big House’s legacy.

There’s been plenty of support from former players and friends of Big House to possibly name the court at the Gaines Center after Clara. It’s something that Tim Grant, a former player and assistant coach under Gaines, hopes can happen next season.

Honoring Clara by naming the floor after her would mean a lot, Grant said.

“I think Coach Gaines’ legacy has continued, and the scholarships are probably the highlight because it gives back, and that’s what Coach always stressed to us,” said Grant, who was an assistant until Gaines’ retirement in 1993.

Grant also said that WSSU has done a good job of making sure Big House’s legacy continues.

“The university has done a good job of staying connected to Clara, and she’s invited to many things over there and she goes to football or basketball games from time to time,” Grant said.

Clara said that it hasn't been easy the last 10 years not having Big House around but through her faith, her family and her friends they have helped her cope.

"I'm a Christian, and I know God is in charge of me," Clara said. "I try to stay busy and by staying busy it gives me a purpose to keep going and keep living."

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COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Big House Gaines, 81, Basketball Coach, Dies

By VIV BERNSTEIN APRIL 20, 2005

Big House Gaines, whose 828 victories at Winston-Salem State University rank fifth on the career list among men's college basketball coaches, died Monday at a hospital in Winston-Salem, N.C. He was 81.

The cause was complications from a stroke, the Winston-Salem State's sports information office said.

Gaines had a record of 828-447, coaching from 1946 to 1993. Only four men's coaches in N.C.A.A. history -- Dean Smith, Adolph Rupp, Bob Knight and Jim Phelan -- have more victories. Gaines's team won the Division II national championship in 1967, led by guard Earl Monroe, who went on to star with the Knicks.

Gaines was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass., in 1982.

Clarence Gaines, a native of Paducah, Ky., attended Morgan State on a football scholarship. He gained his nickname while at Morgan State where, according to lore, a fellow student saw the 6-foot-4, 250-pound Gaines and declared he was "as big as a house."

After graduating from Morgan State, Gaines became football and

basketball coach at Winston-Salem State, a historically black college. He coached football for four years before concentrating on the basketball program.

Gaines won at least 20 games 18 times in his career and captured eight championships in the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association.

Gaines's best season was in 1966-67, when he guided Winston-Salem State to a 31-1 record and the Division II title. The Rams were the first basketball program from a historically black college to win a national championship.

"There was a time in the 50's and 60's, where a lot of African-American athletes did not have scholarship opportunities to go to other universities," Tim Grant, a former player and assistant coach under Gaines, said in a telephone interview. "Coach provided those opportunities and was able to recruit a lot of great African-American athletes."

In a 1990 interview with The Charlotte Observer, Gaines bemoaned the loss of those talented players when segregation ended and many were able to get full scholarships to the Atlantic Coast Conference and other Division I programs.

"The recruiting thing is a major problem," he told The Observer. "The type of kids I'd like, I can't get. It used to be, if I found a first-rate center, I could go out and get him. Even our graduates figure, as good as they were when they were here, now their kids are ready for the Big Ten."

Gaines was named Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association coach of the year five times. In addition to coaching, Gaines was the longtime athletic director at Winston-Salem State. He served as a C.I.A.A. president from 1970 to 1974. Gaines was a member of the United States Olympic Committee from 1973 to 1976.

Gaines helped put Winston-Salem State on the national map.

"Winston-Salem State had a strong history of training elementary school

teachers and principals," Clarence F. Thompson Jr., chancellor at Winston-Salem State from 1985 to 1995, said yesterday in a telephone interview. "That was their long suit prior to the Gaines era. The Gaines era brought about an exposure of the institution across the country in athletics by winning various championships at the Division II level. Of course, he put the name out in other states across the country where the school was not so well known."

Thompson said that Gaines also helped raise millions of dollars in corporate donations to the university.

The home arena for the Rams is named the C.E. Gaines Center, and the university's Hall of Fame is named after Gaines as well.

"Nothing anyone can say about Coach Gaines can really sum up the impact he had on Winston-Salem State University or the college basketball world," Winston-Salem State's current basketball coach, Philip Stitt, said yesterday on the college's Web site. "He knew more about basketball than anyone I have ever met, and I, and my coaching staff, tried to get our young men around him as much as possible."

Gaines is survived by his wife, Clara; a daughter, Lisa Gaines McDonald; and a son, Clarence Gaines Jr.

Bighouse

From its inception in 1954, SI prominently featured African-Americans in its pages and through the 1960s no mainstream weekly magazine gave a more nuanced and balanced portrait of Black people. Today with African-Americans a seemingly ubiquitous presence in the sports world, I take this opportunity during Black History month to share with you one of my favorite stories from the SI's first Black senior writer, Ralph Wiley, on Clarence "Bighouse" Gaines, the legendary men's basketball coach at the all-black Winston-Salem (N.C.) State University. Wiley, who died a year before Gaines in 2004, could write about anything, but he seemed to reach his greatest powers when he profiled Black sports figures. -Farrell Evans
The following excerpt was originally published in the November 19, 1990 issue.

Let the lower lights be burning!
Send a gleam across the wave!
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman
You may rescue, you may save.-METHODIST HYMN

So put the hymn book away already. Find something tangible. Do it the way he did it. Come down a winding road through the east side of the quiet in Winston-Salem, N.C. Turn left to enter the small campus of Winston-Salem State University -- founded, 1892; student population, some 2,500. Off to the right, below old Whitaker Gymnasium, is the entrance to the C.E. Gaines Center. On the downslope behind the modest facade are Gaines Gymnasium, the football practice fields, the offices of a few of the varsity coaches, and the warm, untidy rooms of the men's basketball coach, Clarence E. (Bighouse) Gaines. Gaines is in -- a miracle unto itself. He is a self-proclaimed gypsy, a rolling stone, a man who isn't quite comfortable without a place to go, a distant horn to obey, a buzzer to beat somewhere. Gaines says he is a man who knows life is temporary, and so then are youth, jobs to do, "must-win" games, and places called home.

But Gaines's shingle is still up. Self-proclaimed gypsies don't usually wait around for people to name buildings after them. Gaines has spent enough time along this tributary of Tobacco Road over the past 45 years to marry Clara Berry in 1950 and help raise two children of his own, Lisa and Clarence Jr. -- not to mention the 400 or so children who belong to somebody else. He has survived everything from Jim Crow to cyclones to integration to the Akron Zips. Only the players were constant. They didn't make many like Cleo Hill and Vernon Earl Monroe, though. Hill was called the best player never to have his due in the NBA; Monroe was called Magic, and Earl the Pearl, and Black Jesus. In the end they were just another couple of the players Gaines calls his "six-two guys," give or take a little. There are always more of those.

"Hard to win with those six-two guys," Gaines says calmly.

As a matter of fact, Gaines's Rams of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association were 15 up and 12 down last season. They have lost 395 games during his tenure. They have also won 806 games. Gaines has won more college basketball games than any coach in U.S. history who is not named Adolph Rupp. Only he and Rupp have won 800.

"Could've won a thousand, had he been all into winning," says equipment manager Fernandez Griffin. "He took the athlete who needed a second chance. He'd tell the players, 'Learn one thing here that will help you live well.' They'd say, 'Coach, what about winning?' He'd say, 'That too.' "

Gaines is settled in like a mountain behind foothills of paperwork on his desk, beneath a groaning shelf of books and files. He is wearing a warmup suit made of black satiny material. A lot of black satiny material. He looks as if he needs a nap, but the phones won't stop ringing and folks keep dropping by. The morning varsity practice started at 6 a.m. The evening practice will begin at 6 p.m. "Keeps the boys from drag-assing around," says Gaines. "Can't seem to get the spacing right, though. Don't know if it's me or them."

The football coach wants to talk. E.C. (Pete) Richardson is a native of Ohio and a former Buffalo Bills defensive back. His team went 8-2 last

season and at one time was ranked as high as No. 5 in the NCAA Division II poll and No. 1 in the Sheridan Poll, of colleges that are historically and predominantly black. The Rams lost two of their last three games, but still, it was a good season, one meriting the felicitations of the athletic director.

"Damn right it does," Gaines grunts. "The AD was six- and-18 in '89."

Nobody ever said Gaines was Clair Bee, though he did take in Bee's clinic back in '48, in Murray, Ky. He took in Rupp's clinic, too, back in '49, in Carbondale, Ill. "Nobody said much to me. I'm a man of color. I don't like that word black. People play with the connotations of that. But I was six-five, 265◆ 295 now. Big in any color," Gaines says. "Somebody at Rupp's clinic asked me if I was the janitor. It wasn't Rupp. They didn't ask twice. I learned something, too."

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The Legacy of Clarence Edward “Big House” Gaines, Sr.

When Clarence E. Gaines arrived at [Winston-Salem Teachers College](#) to serve as assistant basketball coach, he intended to stay just long enough to earn enough money to enroll in dental school. Instead, he served the Winston-Salem community for almost fifty years, becoming the second winningest college basketball coach in history with a lifetime record of 828 wins when he retired in 1993. But Coach Gaines was about more than basketball. According to equipment manager Fernandez Griffin, “He’d tell the players, ‘Learn one thing here that will help you live well.’” Gaines’ attitude fostered the success of young people who passed through his basketball program.

Clarence Gaines, born in Paducah, Kentucky in 1923, excelled in academics through out his school career and participated in extra curricular activities including basketball, football, and trumpet playing. Graduating as salutatorian from Lincoln High School in 1941, he could have attended any of a number of colleges, but chose Morgan State College in Baltimore, Maryland. At 6'3" tall and 265 pounds, Clarence played tackle on the Morgan football team and earned the nickname "Big House". When he graduated in 1945 with a degree in chemistry, he intended to become a dentist. His college coach Eddie Hurt encouraged him to go for the job as assistant basketball coach at Winston-Salem Teachers College to earn money for dental school. "Big House" did just that, and the legacy began.

Coach Gaines was undaunted by the low enrollment of men (only 75 out of 575 students) at the Teachers College. He soon accepted additional responsibilities, and by 1947 he was a teacher, football coach, basketball coach, ticket manager, trainer, and athletic director. His starting salary was \$1,800, and it never topped \$65,000. Yet, at the small, underfunded college, Clarence Gaines recognized his calling: he was born to coach young men.

Gaines continued to work at Winston-Salem Teachers College while earning a master's degree in physical education from Columbia University. Although he was named CIAA "Football Coach of the Year" in 1948, Gaines soon left football to others. From 1949 until 1993, he served as basketball coach and athletic director at the school that he helped to grow into a University. Always encouraging his students to better themselves, he would scold, "I drove around my campusâ€¦I saw a lot of people outsideâ€¦doing all sorts of things. But I did not see one person sitting with a book and studying... We have to reverse thatâ€¦and we can't do it by crying and moaning. It takes hard work."

In 1950, Coach Gaines and Clara Berry, a Latin teacher in Forsyth County public schools married. Although Gaines received tempting offers to work for other universities, he and Clara turned them down, preferring to make Winston-Salem a permanent home for themselves and their two children.

Coach Gaines' basketball strategy was to build close relationships with his players. One winning season lead to another, and graduates of Winston-Salem sent promising prospective students back to their coach. One of these students, Cleo Hill, played for Gaines and led the team to a 26-5 record in 1961, his senior year. Cleo, who went on to a career with the St. Louis Hawks of the NBA, would later appreciate Gaines' insistence that he succeed in the classroom as well as on the court.

Between 1959 and 1964, Winston-Salem State's record was 114-26. Gaines became a local hero, and the school's basketball games became popular beyond the black community. Some credited Gaines and his successful program with helping to keep the level of desegregation-related violence low in Winston-Salem as compared with other North Carolina cities. One example of interracial collaboration directly related to Gaines' program was the scrimmages organized by Billy Packer, a Wake Forest guard, and Cleo Hill. In 1959, oblivious to Jim Crow laws that outlawed integrated athletics and without permission from their respective coaches, the two players held scrimmages between their two squads on Sundays at each other's gyms.

In 1967, Gaines' team became the first African-American college to win a national basketball championship. Thanks to Gaines' guidance, athlete Vernon [Earl "the Pearl" Monroe](#) led the Winston-Salem State College basketball team to the NCAA Division II Basketball Championship title. According to Monroe, Clarence Gaines was a father figure. Monroe said, "I went to school to play ball, but he turned that around in my first year. He let me know what I was there for, no matter how well I could play."

Gaines became the first African-American coach voted NCAA Division II Coach of the Year in 1967. He was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1982 and was a five-time winner of the CIAA Coach of

the Year Award. Twice during the 1970s Clarence Gaines served as a member of the United States Olympic Committee. He was involved in numerous professional and civic activities and organizations, serving as officer of many. Gaines was also awarded the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, North Carolina's highest civilian honor that is reserved for individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to their communities.

As Shirley McRae writes, "Clarence Gaines won many awards, but was much more than a coach. He was also a teacher who taught young men and women the fundamentals of living well in and out of sports. A sensitive, caring man whose heart was as big as his nickname, he brought students, the university and community together within his loving embrace."



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