ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame Announces 2016 Inductees

TIFFON—Six individuals and one team will be inducted on April 1 into the Athletics Hall of Fame at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College.

ABAC Athletics Director Alan Kramer said the 2016 class includes Wayne Cooper, Paul Fitzgerald, Tom Moody, Jackie Moore, David Owens, Ty Wright, and the 1984 Golden Fillies’ state championship basketball team.

“It’s an impressive group,” Kramer said. “We’re talking about some legendary coaching figures as well as some outstanding athletes in basketball, baseball, tennis, and softball.”

Cooper is a graduate of Tifton High School where he played football, basketball, and baseball. He was selected All-State on two occasions and was named to the All-Region team three times. Cooper attended ABAC in 1962 and went on to receive B.S. and M. Ed. degrees from the University of Georgia.

Cooper joined the coaching staff at ABAC in 1969 and led the Stallions’ golf team to 21 state titles in 22 years. His 1986 team finished third in the national tournament. Cooper resigned his duties as the golf coach in 1991 to become Chair of the ABAC Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. He retired from ABAC in 1999.
A native of Cork, Ireland, Fitzgerald was the best two-year college men’s tennis player in the United States in October of 2006 when he won the junior college men’s singles title at the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) National Small College Championships.

Fitzgerald played at the number one singles’ spot for ABAC from 2006 through 2008. He was named to the All-America team in both 2007 and 2008. He was the ITA Regional Champion in 2006 and 2007. He continued his career at Armstrong Atlantic State University.

Moody played second base and shortstop for ABAC from 1956-58 before completing his college career at Georgia Southern where he led the Eagles with a .377 batting average during his senior season. The Dixie, Ga., native then served as the ABAC baseball coach for 24 years and the ABAC golf coach for four years.

Moody’s 1977 ABAC baseball team rolled up a record of 26-5 on the way to the regular season conference championship. The Stallions won the state championship tournament in 1986 and finished second in the Southeast Regional with a 31-16 record. Before his retirement in 1996,
Moody led the Stallions’ golf team to multiple state titles and was the coach for Boo Weekley, who is still a member of the Professional Golf Association Tour.

The winningest pitcher in the history of ABAC softball, Moore led the Fillies to consecutive state titles in 2001 and 2002. Thanks to Moore’s expertise on the mound, ABAC finished fifth in the 2001 national tournament and ninth in the 2002 national tournament. She had a 21-9 record in 2001 and rolled up a 20-12 mark in 2002.

Named to the all-conference team and all-tournament team in 2001, Moore had a remarkable 1.63 earned run average and struck out 142 batters. As a sophomore, the Columbus native was named the most valuable player in the state tournament and was selected for the all-conference team and the South Regional Team. She lowered her earned run average to 0.63 and recorded 219 strikeouts.

Owens was a standout basketball player for Pavo High School and Central High School in Thomasville before joining the Stallions of Coach Lamar DuBose in 1961. Besides his ability on the ABAC hardwood, Owens won the state junior college high hurdles title as a freshman.

During his sophomore season under new head coach Benny Dees, Owens catapulted the Stallions to greater heights when he led the team to a fourth place finish in the state
tournament. By averaging 17.3 points and 12.1 rebounds a game in the tournament, Owens gained Most Valuable Player honors. He received a scholarship to Georgia Southern where he started every game for the Eagles, propelling them to a number one national ranking during his senior year.

After he compiled a .407 batting average during his sophomore season with the ABAC baseball team in 2007, Wright was a first team All-America selection. The Montrose native, who played at West Laurens High School, had 83 hits, scored 49 runs, belted 19 doubles, and clouted eight home runs.

Wright was named Player of the Year in the Georgia Junior College Athletic Association and first team All-Region. He received a scholarship to Georgia Southern University where the talented outfielder helped to lead the Eagles to the College World Series. A knee injury ended his playing days after a stint in professional baseball.

Under the direction of Coach Keith Barr, ABAC claimed its first ever women’s state basketball championship in 1984 when the Fillies edged Emmanuel College 62-60 in Gressette Gym. Terri Lee scored 14 points and hit two free throws with 11 seconds to play to seal the win. Rose Wilcher also had 14 points, Jernese Thomas had 13, and Peggy McConnell had 10 in the title game. ABAC’s Cynthia Hargrove was named the Most Valuable Player for the state
In the double elimination national tournament in Senatobia, Miss., the Fillies wound up seventh in the nation after beating Lakeland 63-60, losing to Northwest Mississippi 60-51, falling to Moberly 88-80 and defeating Gadsden 62-55. The team compiled a 20-8 overall record.