ABAC Names New Members to Athletics Hall of Fame

TIFFON—Four individuals including a World War II hero and a national championship men’s tennis team have been selected for the 2013 class of the Athletics Hall of Fame at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College.

Athletics Director Alan Kramer said the class reaches deep into the ABAC history book as well as honoring a coach who won the last state basketball title at the college.

“Every year I continue to be amazed at the high quality athletes and coaches who are nominated for the Hall of Fame,” Kramer said. “ABAC has a rich heritage of athletics, and this is just one small way to honor some of these individuals and teams.”

This year’s class includes the 1999 national championship men’s tennis team, Henry Will Jones from the 1936-37 baseball, basketball, and football teams; women’s basketball coach Julie Conner, baseball player Z.B. Hamilton, and tennis player Derrick Racine.

Tickets are now available at a cost of $30 per person for the induction luncheon at 1 p.m. on March 2, which is a part of the Celebrate ABAC Alumni Weekend activities. Contact the
Office of College Advancement at (229) 391-4895 for tickets. Tickets will only be sold in advance.

On the last point of the last set in the career of legendary tennis coach Norman “Red” Hill before he retired, the 1999 Stallions captured the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) title. Hill was a member of the inaugural Hall of Fame class in 2008.

Members of the team were Richard Crabtree from England, Gildardo Lobo from Venezuela, Nathan Lundy from England, Eric Von Hellens from Australia, Glenn Allsop from Australia, Rajeev Rajapakse from Sri Lanka, and Most Valuable Player Richard Evans from England.

Jones, a Marine Captain, received the Silver Star posthumously for his bravery against the Japanese forces at Peleliu in the Palau Islands in the south Pacific in World War II. At ABAC, he played the guard position for the basketball team for Coach Orion Mitchell on the 1937 state junior college champions.

Jones also played on the 1936 football team, which was the last football team ABAC ever fielded after all the uniforms and equipment were destroyed in a fire after the season. He also played on the 1937 baseball team. He received the prestigious “B” for football and basketball.

Conner, a Tift County High School graduate, was charged with reviving the women’s basketball program at ABAC after a 15-year absence in 2000. In her second year, the Fillies won the 2002 state championship with a 76-72 win over Atlanta Metro.

Named as the Georgia Junior College Athletic Association Coach of the Year in 2003, Conner was also the Atlanta Tipoff Club’s Naismith Award winner in 2003. In 2005-06, the
Fillies rolled up a 24-9 record and lost in the state championship game to Georgia Perimeter. Conner resigned after the 2008 season to take the girls’ basketball head coaching position at TCHS.

Hamilton had a standout career at TCHS, going 11-3 on the hill for the 1985 Blue Devils while compiling a 2.18 earned run average. He pitched for ABAC in 1986-87, compiling an 18-7 record. He was on the mound in the 1986 state playoffs when Coach Tom Moody’s Stallions knocked off Middle Georgia when the Warriors were ranked number one in the nation.

His pitching heroics at ABAC earned Hamilton a scholarship to Jacksonville University where he was 8-2 with two saves for the 1989 Sunbelt Conference champions who earned an NCAA tournament bid for the Dolphins. Hamilton played professional baseball with the Princeton, W.Va., Pirates of the Appalachian League in 1989.

Racine was an All-America tennis player for the Stallions from 1984-86 and for the Valdosta State Blazers from 1986-88. But he has really made his mark as a tennis coach, winning the NAIA national championship with Mobile University men’s team in 1997 and the NCAA Division II national championship with the University of West Florida men’s team in 2004 and 2005.

Racine was selected as the NAIA national coach of the year in 1997 and the NCAA Division II Wilson/ITA Men’s Tennis National Coach of the Year in 2003, 2005, and 2012. He was also named the NCAA Division II Wilson/ITA Women’s Tennis National Coach of the Year in 2002. His men’s team at West Florida has captured six Gulf South Conference titles.

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