



Coach Bobby Bowden

November 8, 1929 - August 8, 2021

So much more than a football coach, Bobby Bowden combined historic success on the field with a passion for people and a love of life. His impact on the game is unquestioned but extended well beyond wins and championships. His influence on generations of young men, his leadership on and off the field and his lifetime of sportsmanship set examples that live on today in countless men and women, their children and grandchildren.

Bowden's love of football began while watching his neighborhood high school team practice over the fence of his backyard in Birmingham, Alabama. He grew into a star quarterback at Woodlawn High and fulfilled his dream to play at Alabama. He lasted one semester in Tuscaloosa before eloping with high school sweetheart Ann Estock and the two celebrated their 72nd wedding anniversary this year. He transferred to Howard College (now Samford) in his hometown where he earned Little All-America honors at quarterback

After his playing days, Bowden served as an assistant football coach and head track coach at his alma mater from 1954-55. He left Howard to serve as athletics director and head coach at South Georgia Junior College from 1956-58. He returned to Howard as head coach from 1959-62. Ironically, he then joined the Florida State staff under Bill Peterson as receivers coach from 1963-65. West Virginia hired him as offensive coordinator in 1966 and he took over as the Mountaineers head coach from 1970-75.

When the Seminoles were looking for a coach in 1976 after having won just four games over the previous three seasons, they turned to Bowden and over the next 34 years he, and FSU made history.

He lived his life with three priorities “faith, family and football” making sure everyone he spoke to over his career knew that keeping the priorities in that order is the key. He was as at home chatting up families on home visits, speaking to a packed audience and exchanging jabs with Presidents in the White House.

No program would become more closely associated with their iconic coach than are FSU and Bowden. So impressive are Bowden’s records that it is a challenge to find where to start. For many, his consensus 1993 and 1999 National Championship teams put the exclamation point on a career that saw him win more games than all but one other coach in the history of major college football. For football insiders, his unmatched run of finishing among the Associated Press Top 5 for 14 consecutive seasons (1987-1990), and winning 10 or more games each of those seasons, is even more impressive.

Bowden’s final game at FSU was a win over, ironically, West Virginia in the 2010 Gator Bowl, which was the Seminoles’ 28th-straight bowl game. At the time, he was first among active coaches for winning percentage in bowl games, second for all-time bowl wins and second for bowl appearances. He is the only coach to lead a school to 15 consecutive New Year’s Day bowl games (1991-2005).

He is the only coach in NCAA history to win 11 consecutive bowl games (1985-95) and the only one to have 14 consecutive bowl appearances (1982-95) without a loss. Overall, he guided Florida State to 31 bowl appearances in his 34 seasons.

Bowden was named National Coach of the Year six times (1979, 1980, 1991, 1992, 1996 and 1999), and he led Florida State to 12 ACC Championships including eight in a row from 1992-2000).

In a remarkable gesture, the College Football Hall of Fame's long-standing rule of requiring retirement before induction was waved for him and Joe Paterno allowing Bowden not only to be inducted in 2006 but to receive the National Football Foundation's highest distinction when he was awarded the Gold Medal joining the likes of Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy and H. Norman Schwarzkopf.

So overwhelming was Bowden's influence on college football that a national award recognizing character by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes was named in his honor. The Birmingham Touchdown Club renamed their national coach of the year award after Bowden, and FSU named the field at Doak Campbell Stadium in his honor.

Under Bowden's guidance, FSU not only produced great teams but exceptional players as well. Two Seminoles, Charlie Ward and Chris Weinke won the Heisman Trophy, 26 of his players were named consensus All-Americans and his players won multiple Thorpe, Butkus, Uinitas, O'Brien, Groza and Lombardi trophies.

His alumni also had remarkable success in the NFL with three, Deion Sanders, Walter Jones and Derrick Brooks, already enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Over 150 Seminoles were drafted into the NFL over his 34-year tenure.

Success off the field was always at the heart of Bowden's message. Three of

his greatest players, Warrick Dunn, Anquan Boldin and Derrick Brooks, became phenomenal pros and each was honored as the NFL Man of the Year for their character off the field. Bowden is the only college coach in history to coach three winners of the Walter Payton Award from one institution.

In April, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis presented Bowden with the state's first-ever Medal of Freedom in honor of his contributions to his adopted state. "Arguably the greatest coach in college football history, Coach Bowden's legacy stretches far beyond the field, and our state is a better place because of him," said DeSantis during the presentation.

He was preceded in death by his parents Bob Pearce and Sunset Bowden, and his sister Marion Bowden Gamble. He is survived by his beloved wife Ann, daughters Robyn Hines (Jack) and Ginger Madden Bowden, and sons Stephen, Terry, Tommy (Linda), and Jeff (Cindi), 19 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests charitable contributions be made to the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (<https://www.fca.org/donate>).

Previous Events

Lie in Honor

AUG 13. 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM (ET)

Rotunda of Florida's Historic Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Lie in Repose

AUG 13. 2:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Moore Athletic Center at Doak Campbell Stadium
403 Stadium Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32304

Funeral Service

AUG 14. 11:00 AM (ET)

Donald L. Tucker Civic Center
505 W. Pensacola Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Tribute Wall

GH

“ Dear Ann and all the family of Bobby Bowden,
I am but one of countless thousands of people who have been impacted by the life of this wonderful man. Many years ago, "Changed Hearts" quartet was invited to sing for a "Wild Beast Feast." We had the privilege of sitting at the head table and meeting the speaker, Coach Bowden. I was already an admirer; it simply intensified my convictions about the man! As I sat in the Civic Center during the funeral service, I was moved to tears on several occasions. It was truly a blessing to think about someone who lived his faith so fully! In the foreseeable future, I hope to continue watching his great-grandkids grow up across the street from our home.
God bless you, Ann, and all your family as you mourn his passing. But we do not grieve as those who have no hope! Thank you, Bobby, for ALL you meant to ALL of us!

Gary W. Hansen, Tallahassee, FL

Gary W. Hansen - November 03, 2021 at 03:39 PM

DJ

“ The lives you touched on and off the field will never be fully measured. It was my pleasure to briefly meet you once or twice and I will always cherish that. Well done Coach, God has now called a really good man into His presence!!

Doug Jones
Glen Allen, VA

Doug Jones - August 16, 2021 at 07:12 PM

RW

“ Coach Bowden was very gracious and kind when approached out and about in Tallahassee for a picture, or to chat for a moment. You never felt that you were bothering him or Ann. He was a GREAT and Godly man and it showed in all that he did. All men should look to Coach Bowden as the perfect example of how they should live their lives. He lead by example putting the Lord first in his life, then his family and then his job and because of that he accomplished a lot of great things and God richly blessed him. You will be missed Coach but we are glad that we will see you again one day!!

Robin White - August 11, 2021 at 09:44 PM



“ Coach Bowden sat with me in church once at first Baptist church of Tallahassee sending condolences to the Bowden family rest in peace coach Bowden Joel barnett Tallahassee FL.

Joel Barnett - August 10, 2021 at 03:49 PM

MB

“ I have had the pleasure to meet Coach Bowden many times around Tallahassee. He was always kind and had words of encouragement for me. He loved our Lord and Miss Anne and will be sorely missed. My prayers go to the entire Bowden family for this time of mourning and celebration of such a great human being, husband, father to many and coach. We love you Bobby Dadgum it!!!

Mike Bolton - August 09, 2021 at 09:05 PM



Well Done Coach continue to watch over the Noles Nation! 🙏

Donna Ward - August 10, 2021 at 04:49 AM



“ *Heavenly Sentiments Spray was purchased for the family of Coach Bobby Bowden.*



August 09, 2021 at 03:30 PM



“ *Coach Bowden was the kind of coach we all dreamed of having. I never met him, but I felt like I have known him my entire life. His quick wit and sense of humor made him who he was. Rest in peace, Coach ---- you made a difference as you left the world better than you found it. Blessings to the family for sharing Bobby Bowden with us close and far.*

Jack Cagle - August 09, 2021 at 12:11 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Coach Bobby Bowden.*



August 09, 2021 at 11:22 AM

MC

“ Thank God for the faith of Bobby Bowden! He is present with The Lord and certainly earth's mighty loss is Heaven's great gain. I am praying for The God of Abraham, Coach's Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to supply each member of the family's needs during this difficult season of life.

*Mikel Clark
Carrabelle, Florida*

Mikel Clark - August 09, 2021 at 09:56 AM

EB

“ To the entire Bowden family, My sincere condolences on the passing of Coach Bowden. He was a fine man. May God Bless you all,



*Edna Butler
Sopchoppy, Florida*

Edna Mae Butler - August 09, 2021 at 12:39 AM

SA

My heart and prayers go out to all of the Bowden family' s. May God Bless each and every one of you 🙏🙏🙏. Shelba Anderson Live Oak, FL

Shelba Anderson - August 09, 2021 at 08:34 AM

DL

Thank you to the Bowden family for sharing Bobby with the rest of us for all of these years. I pray for the peace of the Lord to be with you during this time and always.

David Livingston - August 09, 2021 at 10:39 AM

JM

*Dearest Bowden Family,
Our thoughts & prayers are with you all.
Jerry & Susan Martin
Adairsville , GA*

jerry and susan martin - August 09, 2021 at 11:47 AM

LM

Tallahassee will never be the same without you. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Bowden family. Thank you Coach for making a difference in the lives of so many.

Lydia Tisdale Miller - August 11, 2021 at 07:54 PM

LK

The integrity of this saint of a man was the salvation of many of those who played on his team. A prime example of how we are to live our lives. We all saw the "Jesus" in this great man.

Lynda and Charles Killingsworth - August 13, 2021 at 10:38 AM

BT

Our sincere thoughts and prayers to the Bowden family. Coach Bowden was a true good man. Our son passed away 09/03/19 and he was a diehard Florida State fan. He loved everything about the Seminoles. Coach Bowden is now up in heaven with our son and we know they will find each other and talk about life and football. Horace and Beverly Thomas

Beverly Thomas - August 15, 2021 at 01:13 PM

JB

Coach Bowden was a great Coach and person who will be missed by all who knew him, I had the pleasure of meeting him when Coach Bryant passed away. James A Bevis

James Bevis - January 20, 2022 at 09:46 PM