

ROD BARNES

Former National Coach of the Year Rod Barnes takes over the Georgia State basketball program, giving the Panthers hope in the heart of his new city. • By Jack Wilkinson

“I was in coaching for 42 years, and I never coached a better person in all my time ... He wasn't fast enough, strong enough, didn't jump high enough. But if you're gonna have a basketball game, you need to get him because his team always wins.”

**— ED MURPHY,
ROD BARNES'
COACH AT OLE MISS**

It happens periodically. Particularly when Rod Barnes, an avid early-riser for years, back to his Mississippi childhood, leaves home at dawn to beat the morning rush-hour traffic. He drives east on I-20. And suddenly, there it is. And here he is.

“There's an area when I'm driving in, Riverside Parkway, right by Six Flags,” Barnes said. “Until then, it seems like you don't see anything.

“But then the road rises and, if there's no smog or fog, everything pops open and...BAM!” Barnes exclaimed, clapping his hands. There it is: the Atlanta skyline, glistening in the distance.

“Man!” Barnes said, sitting in his office in the heart of downtown. “Sometimes I think, ‘Can you believe you're in this city?’”

Sometimes, Mary McElroy can't quite believe it, either. “Who'd have thought a year ago that Rod Barnes would be coaching at Georgia State University?” said McElroy, the Georgia State athletic director. “I didn't. I dreamed I'd find a coach like him.”

A coach who led his alma mater, Ole Miss, to three NCAA Tournaments and the only three NCAA tournament victories in school history.

A coach whose 2001 team won a school-record 27 games and reached the NCAA Sweet 16.

A coach who was chosen the 2001 Naismith National Coach of the Year.

A coach who is widely respected around the country and admired within his profession.

“When Mary told me that's the person she wanted, I said, ‘Wow! You can't get a better person,’” said Georgia Tech coach Paul Hewitt, with whom McElroy worked at Tech as an associate athletic director before taking the Georgia State job. “For Rod to do what he did at Ole Miss, in the SEC, going to the Sweet 16, is incredible.”

“I was in coaching for 42 years, and I never coached a better person in all my time,” said Ed Murphy, now the athletic director at the University of West Georgia but Barnes' coach at Ole Miss for his junior and senior seasons.

“Rod's the best hire they could make, by far. They need a guy who knows how to make-do, and prioritize, and work very hard to put the thing together. And he's done it.”

And, Mike Davis insists, will do it again at Georgia State. “It shouldn't take him long,” said Davis, Barnes' good friend and soon-to-be rival who led Indiana to an unlikely Final Four appearance in 2002 and is now the head coach at Alabama-Birmingham.

“Rod is a class guy,” said Davis, who met Barnes a dozen years ago at a coaches' conference. They hit it off immediately, and have been friends ever since. Last summer, Davis had his son attend Barnes' basketball camp. One of Barnes' sons went to Davis' camp, too. Both families will be watching Nov. 10, when UAB opens the season at Georgia State in Barnes' debut.

“His teams always play hard,” said Davis, who once drove from Bloomington, Ind., to Evansville to not only see his buddy but watch Ole Miss play — particularly at one end of the court. “He does a great job defensively. I love the offensive end. I'm more emotional than him, a heart-on-the-sleeve kind of guy.

“I wish I could be like him, and I try to be like him,” Davis said. “He's a good, religious guy. There's not many men like him. He's strong in his beliefs, and he sticks with it.

“I just think he's one of those great guys — in basketball, in sports, period. I was really happy to see Georgia State step up and recognize his ability.”

WELCOME

2001 NAISMITH NATIONAL COACH OF THE YEAR

**“A coach who is widely respected
around the country and admired
within his profession.”**





Initially, however, there was only name recognition. "I didn't know one thing about Rod Barnes before last March 15th," McElroy said. "Just his name."

A name that kept popping up as McElroy talked to several people during the coaching search. Nine men were brought in for interviews, she said. "Rod clearly rose to the top from the beginning."

But then, that's something Rod Barnes has been doing all his life.

* * * * *

The farm? Some days, it just seems like it was forever, so long in the past," Barnes said. "Other days, it seems like it was a little while ago.

"Now, I don't do a lot of what I did on the farm," he said, smiling. "But during the week, things happen and I'm reminded of the lessons I learned on that farm."

The farm was in Yazoo County, Miss. It was called Dixie Farms, and it was where Barnes' late father, Charles, worked. "You name it, he did it," Barnes said. "Heavy machinery. A backhoe. Tractors.

"We all worked on the farm," Barnes said. That included his brother, Anthony, and their mother, Gladys, who now lives with Rod and his family. "I chopped cotton, drove tractors." And learned his lessons well.

"I learned that hard work pays off," Barnes said. "And also, the process of what a harvest is all about. You plant a seed, you don't see anything today. But if you plant it and nurture it and wait for it to come up..." He smiled. "It's like today, if I work and build really good relationships and nurture them, maybe I'll reap the benefits.

"Now, on a farm, if you put a seed in the ground and you sit out there the next day to see the plant, man! You've lost your mind," Barnes said, laughing.

Things can happen. A flood. A drought. Crops can fail. You have to persevere, have patience and occasionally, as in basketball, rebound.

"You have to get back up and know that you know what you're doing," Barnes said. "It's the same thing as me losing my job."

After four consecutive 20-win seasons from 1999-2002 (the most successful four-year period in Ole Miss history), Barnes' last four teams finished just below .500. He was let go following the 2006 season, after spurning the advice of several basketball people to apply for other SEC jobs during that celebrated four-year run. Sustainable basketball success is almost impossible at Ole Miss.

There were big-time, big-money openings at Tennessee and South Carolina, a Big Ten vacancy at Michigan. Barnes stayed put. Oxford was home, where he'd played and coached, where he and his wife Bridgett started their family. Where he once said, after getting the head coaching job at age 32, "My dream is to win a national championship."

Fast forward eight years. "I lost my job and people said, 'What are you going to do?'" Barnes recalled. "I'm 40 years old. I've been a [head] coach for eight years. I've been to the NAAs three times. I say, 'I just lost my crop.' Do I give up? Do I change my job? No. You start to prepare for the next season, the next crop. You say, 'We may have a drought this year, or a flood, but in two years we may have the best crop we've ever had.'"

So Barnes took a job as an assistant to Jeff Capel at Oklahoma. He stayed in the game, as he always has. Even coming out of high school, when he left his little hometown of Satartia to play ball at Ole Miss. He was a spindly-legged kid with glasses and an awkward-looking jump shot. Ed Murphy, then the head coach at Delta State, didn't think Barnes was good enough to play for him, much less in the SEC.

"He wasn't fast enough, strong enough, didn't jump high enough," Murphy said. "But if you're gonna have a basketball game, you need to get him because his team always wins. When Eddie Sutton was at Kentucky, he came over after one game at Oxford and asked me, 'Where's Barnes? I want to talk to him.' All the SEC coaches liked him as a player and as a kid."

After two years under Murphy, at the end of his playing career, Barnes was a first-team All-SEC selection. "I thought he was the best point guard in the SEC," Murphy said.

That tenacity, basketball acumen and love of the game led Barnes to the Naismith Award in 2001, later to Norman, Okla., and eventually to Georgia State.

* * * * *

Rod's been phenomenal," said McElroy, who played basketball at the U.S. Naval Academy. "His work ethic is unmatched. He said he was going to work every day, non-stop, for two years. And then he and his staff will assess things. Sometimes, I say, 'Coach. I insist. Take a day off.' I don't want him to push too hard, too fast. The last thing we want is to burn out the star that we have here.

“ I wish I could be like him, and I try to be like him. There’s not many men like him. He’s strong in his beliefs, and he sticks with it. I just think he’s one of those great guys — in basketball, in sports, period.”

**— MIKE DAVIS,
UAB HEAD COACH**

"He clearly has a vision, knows what he wants," McElroy said. "He's shown in the past he knows how to build a program. Sometimes, I feel badly [that] he has to prove himself anymore. But it's been neat to see him work here."

Not just on the court, or with his young team. Part of Barnes' job description — indeed, mission— is not just to help Georgia State win; the Panthers have had just one winning season since Lefty Driesell, who led Georgia State to the 2001 NCAA Tournament and a first-round upset of Wisconsin — retired in 2003. Barnes also has to stir up interest and sell tickets.

"We were looking for someone who would commit to that. We had the reputation, and you still hear it, that we can't fill our arena," McElroy said. "We wanted a coach that understands that part of his job is to sell the product. And we wanted to improve on the court. And we got the man to do both."

On Barnes' first day on the job, McElroy and her husband were walking on campus with Barnes and his wife. "It started then, this thing he does," McElroy said. "He sees a student and starts to talk to him about Georgia State basketball, and to get them excited. When you see a guy who's that enthused about it, you think, 'Wow! He's for real.'"

"He's so engaging that people want to help him," she said. "I don't know how we're *not* going to get people to come see him coach. He's a genuine guy. People *like* him."

And Barnes likes his new job, new surroundings, new school and new conference: the Colonial Athletic Association, one of the top mid-major conferences in the country, sending two teams to the NCAA Tournament in each of the last two seasons. In 2006, George Mason, an at-large selection from the CAA, reached the Final Four.

And Barnes also loves Atlanta. "It's an unbelievable city," he said. "There's opportunity here, diversity here, culture here, sports here. And for what you need to prepare yourself professionally, you can get all that here as long as you get your degree."

So pick a degree. Any Georgia State degree. "When I got here, I got to looking at our degree programs," Barnes said. "There are 250. I thought, 'Whatever you want to be, you can be here, get it here. If you want to be a kite engineer,'" he said, laughing, "you can be that."

Just be in class, on time, if you're a basketball player. "Rod's already making a difference," said McElroy, who said 13 basketball players had a collective 3.06 grade-point average for the summer semester, Barnes first full semester with the program.

"I think that's the first time in Georgia State's history that men's basketball has broken the 3.0 barrier — and he hasn't even coached a game yet," she said. "If he can get them that inspired and committed to academics, I can't wait to see them on the court."

"When I hear people say, 'You can't do it,' that actually re-energizes me," Barnes said. "I

hear people say, 'Can you get people to come to games at Georgia State?' And I say, 'I've heard that before.' I came here with the belief that we can do it here, do something special. It's the drive, the passion, the hunger I have that says, 'I want to get people to believe that this could happen here at Georgia State.'

"I probably wouldn't have believed it could happen unless I hadn't seen it happen before," he said. "We had 2,000 people come to games in Oxford. Then I saw us sell out, 8,500 people, and people outside scalping tickets. We can do it here. I've never been in a place where they don't crave success."

They do here, too. "He wants us to win in everything we do—on the court, practice, class, study hall, our social life," said senior forward Justin Billingslea, who's suffered through three losing seasons. "I was just ready to win. I'd heard about his Sweet 16 team. He's pushing us farther than we think we can go. I can respect that. I might not want to get up at six o'clock sometimes, but I do."

"He's down to earth and straight to the point. You can talk to him," said Joe Dukes of Cuthbert, Ga., a guard and transfer from Wake Forest who must sit out this season. "He wants us to go hard, in everything we do."

"Off the court, he's cool. He tries to make you laugh, but his jokes are kind of corny. But you've got to laugh, because he's the coach!" Dukes said, laughing. "Don't put that down!"

Not to worry, Joe. Your coach isn't a comedian. He's a coach, and committed to a successful harvest here, just as he reaped at Ole Miss. Barnes still fondly recalls the capacity crowds at the Downtown Grill on Oxford's famed square, Ole Miss fans packing the joint for his weekly coach's radio show. And how some of those fans were the original few who believed in Barnes when he was a young assistant-turned-head coach.

He plans to duplicate that passion, that success at Georgia State. A modest man, Barnes still realizes that one of his best selling points is himself. He's the cornerstone of his own Atlanta urban basketball renewal project.

"The first thing, to be honest with you, is me," Barnes said of the appeal to future recruits to build the Panthers program, but also his current playes. "I give them a guy who's coached against Tubby [Smith], Billy Donovan, Nolan Richardson, Mark Gottfried, John Chaney."

He gives Georgia State even more than that. Rod Barnes gives it honest-to-goodness hope in the heart of his new city.

“ He wants us to win in everything we do— on the court, practice, class, study hall. He's pushing us farther than we think we can go.”

— JUSTIN BILLINGSLEA, GEORGIA STATE SENIOR

Barnes led Ole Miss to unprecedented success and was named National and SEC Coach of the Year in 2001.



PANTHER *Tradition*

PANTHERS IN THE NBA

George Pendleton (1975-77)

Drafted by Indiana Pacers, 1977 (4th)

Joe Brown (1981-83)

Drafted by Cleveland Cavaliers, 1983 (9th)

Lanard Copeland (1985-89)

Philadelphia 76ers, 1989-90

Los Angeles Clippers, 1991-92

Nate Williams (2001-04)

New Orleans Hornets, 2005-06 (preseason)

Charlotte Bobcats, 2006 (summer league)

Lamont McIntosh (2000-04)

Atlanta Hawks, 2005 (summer league)

Brad Stricker (1998-99)

Denver Nuggets, 2007-08 (preseason)

BRAD STRICKER
DENVER NUGGETS,
2007-08

Many former Panthers are enjoying successful professional careers overseas, including (l-r) Thomas Terrell (Spain), Lanard Copeland (Australia) and Lamont McIntosh (Spain).

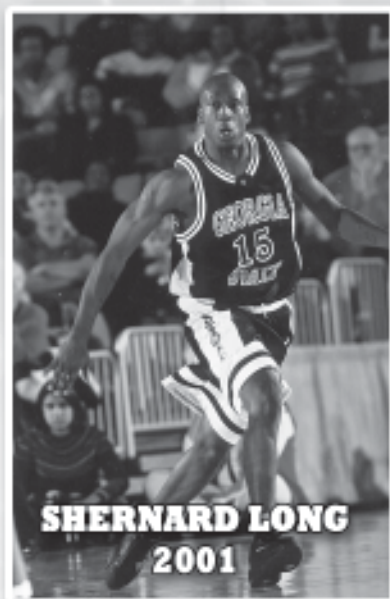


After playing in the NBA, Lanard Copeland (above) has become a legend in Australia.





GEORGIA STATE'S RETIRED JERSEYS



SHERNARD LONG
2001

BACK-TO-BACK ALL-AMERICANS



THOMAS TERRELL
Conference MVP

NATE WILLIAMS,
a two-time all-conference selection,
was one of the three straight
Panthers to lead the league in scoring
from 2001-03. He is enjoying
a successful pro career overseas.



THOMAS TERRELL
2002

LEONARD MENDEZ,
who led the CAA in
three-point shooting
last season, is a
preseason
all-conference
player for 2007-08.



GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS

PANTHER

Tradition



2001
TAAC CHAMPIONS
NCAA FINAL 32

NCAA



2002 NATIONAL
INVITATION
TOURNAMENT

MEN'S
BASKETBALL

FINAL
32
29-5

2000-2001

MEN'S
BASKETBALL

NCAA

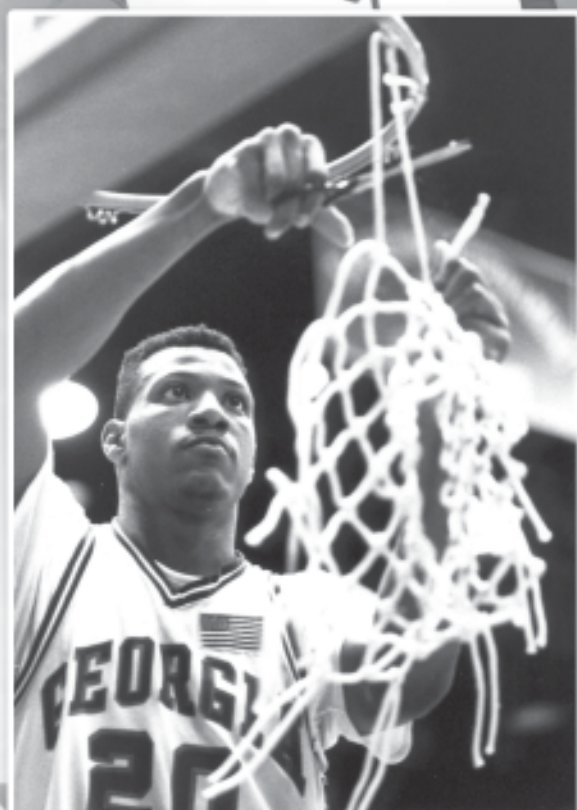
1990-91, 2000-01

MEN'S
BASKETBALL

NIT

2001-2002

NCAA



1991
TAAC CHAMPIONS
NCAA TOURNAMENT

GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS



PANTHER

Tradition

CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIPS

- 1990-91 *TAAAC Tournament*
- 1999-00 *TAAAC Regular Season
(Co-Champions)*
- 2000-01 *TAAAC Regular Season*
- 2000-01 *TAAAC Tournament*
- 2001-02 *A-Sun Regular Season*

Hello Cinderella

Hampton, Georgia State win shockers

**NCAA Tournament
win over Wisconsin**

**School-Record
29 Wins in 2001**

**Back-to-Back Postseason
Berths with 2001 NCAA
Tournament and 2002 NIT**

**Won or Shared First-Place
in Conference Three
Straight Years (2000-01-02)**

**Three 20-Win Seasons
Since 2001**

**25-Game Homecourt
Winning Streak (2000-02)**





**786
WINS**

Lefty's **LEGACY**

The head coach of the Georgia State Panthers from 1977-2003, Lefty Driesell is one of the winningest coaches in college basketball history.

**Ranks sixth all-time in
NCAA Division I victories**

**The only coach in NCAA history to win
100 games at four different schools**

Record of 786-394 from 1960-2003

**Led four schools (Davidson, Maryland,
James Madison & Georgia State)
to the NCAA Tournament**

Recorded 22 20-win seasons

Won 21 conference titles

Earned 21 postseason bids

Charles "Lefty" Driesell Court



NATIONAL COLLEGIATE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

**Charles "Lefty" Driesell
will be inducted into the
National Collegiate Basketball
Hall of Fame in November, 2007.
The former Georgia State head
coach will be a member of the
Hall of Fame's second class.**

LEFTY'S LEDGER

**Davidson, 1960-69
Record: 176-65 (9 yrs.)**

**Maryland, 1969-86
Record: 348-159 (17 yrs.)**

**James Madison, 1989-97
Record: 159-111 (8 yrs.)**

**GEORGIA STATE, 1997-2003
Record: 103-59 (6 yrs.)**

MOST NCAA DIVISION I VICTORIES

890	Bob Knight
879	Dean Smith
876	Adolph Rupp
830	Jim Phelan
798	Eddie Sutton
786	LEFTY DRISELL

GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS



COLONIAL

Athletic Association

“ Buoyed by winning records in nonleague games and one Cinderella-defining run to the Final Four, the CAA is quietly establishing itself as a multibid league . . .

A one-time mid-major that has earned enough stripes to be considered among the big boys, the CAA is emerging from the pack.”

--ESPN.com



DELAWARE

DREXEL

GEORGE MASON

GEORGIA STATE

HOFSTRA

JAMES MADISON

NORTHEASTERN

OLD DOMINION

TOWSON

UNC WILMINGTON

VCU

WILLIAM & MARY

**The CAA placed two teams
in the NCAA Tournament
in 2006 and 2007.**

NCAA

**In the last three seasons,
12 CAA teams have earned
post-season berths.**

NCAA

**Four CAA teams were
ranked among the Top 75
nationally in the final NCAA
RPI for 2007.**

NCAA

**CAA teams have a 5-4 record
in the NCAA Tournament
the last two years.**

NCAA

**The CAA has a 10-8 record
in post-season play the
last two years.**



Your Source For Southeast Sports



Stretching from Atlanta to Boston, the CAA includes five of the nation's nine largest TV markets.

More than 100 CAA games were televised in 2006-07, including nearly 30 games on ESPN.

AÉROPOSTALE



CHAMPIONSHIP

**2008 | MARCH 7-10
RICHMOND, VA**

The CAA Championship is played before sellout crowds and a national TV audience on ESPN.

RASHAD CHASE

2006 CAA All-Rookie




GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS

GEORGIA STATE


Sports Arena



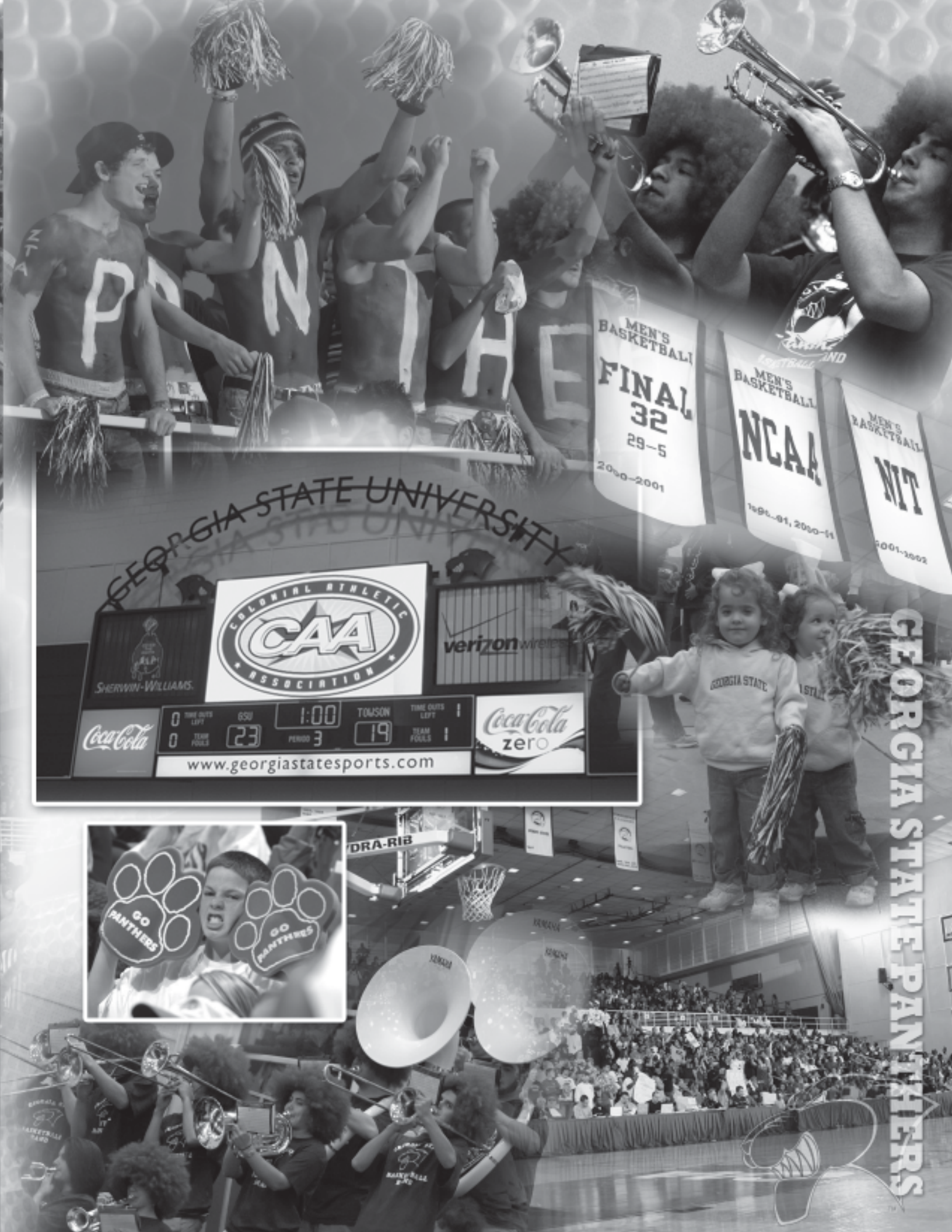
**The Sports Arena has
been the home of
Georgia State
basketball since
February, 1973.**



*The Panthers
won 25 straight
games at the
Sports Arena
from 2000-02.*



**Georgia State hosted
Florida State at the
Sports Arena last year,
and this season
Georgia Tech visits
for a nationally-
televised game.**



GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY



0	TIME OUTS LEFT	650	1:00	TOMSON	TIME OUTS LEFT	1
0	TEAM FOULS	23	PERIOD 3	19	TEAM FOULS	1



www.georgiastatesports.com



GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS

GEORGIA STATE

Facilities



**SPORTS
MEDICINE**



**LEARNING
LAB**



**The Panthers also
play games in the
Georgia Dome and
at Philips Arena.**





GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS



ATLANTA

Sports Capital



*Atlanta has
hosted 20 NCAA
Tournaments,
including the
NCAA Final Four
in 1977, 2002
& 2007.*



ESPN

The 19th Annual
State Farm
COLLEGE
**SLAM DUNK & THREE POINT
CHAMPIONSHIPS**

*at the Georgia State
Sports Arena*

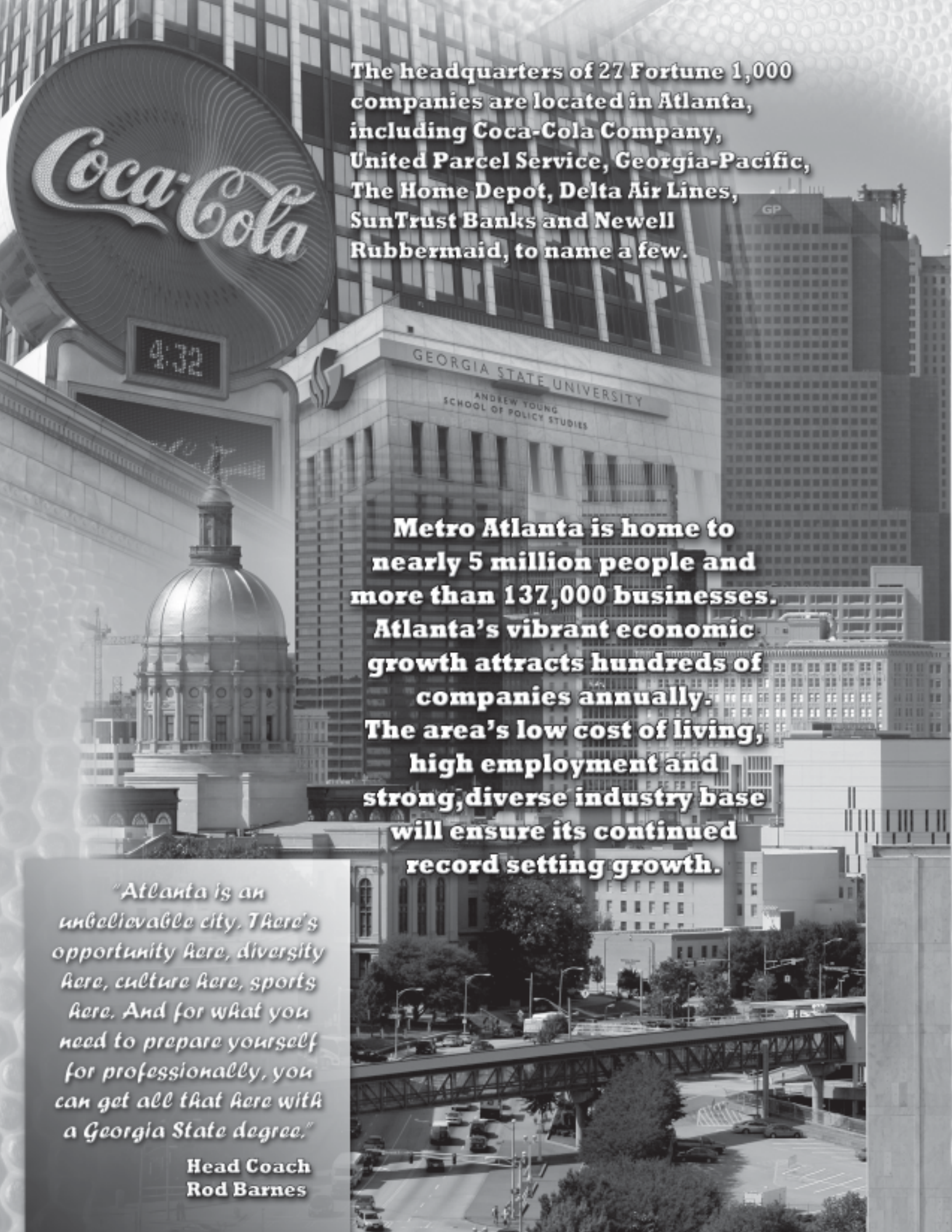
**The Atlanta
Hawks, Braves,
Falcons & Thrashers
play just minutes
from the
Georgia State
campus.**

**Atlanta hosts
many major sporting
events, including
the Super Bowl,
the NBA All-Star Game
and the
1996
Olympic
Games.**



**Georgia State hosted
ESPN's Slam Dunk &
Three-Point Shooting
Contest in both 2002 and
2007 at the Sports Arena.**

GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS



The headquarters of 27 Fortune 1,000 companies are located in Atlanta, including Coca-Cola Company, United Parcel Service, Georgia-Pacific, The Home Depot, Delta Air Lines, SunTrust Banks and Newell Rubbermaid, to name a few.

Metro Atlanta is home to nearly 5 million people and more than 137,000 businesses. Atlanta's vibrant economic growth attracts hundreds of companies annually. The area's low cost of living, high employment and strong, diverse industry base will ensure its continued record setting growth.

"Atlanta is an unbelievable city. There's opportunity here, diversity here, culture here, sports here. And for what you need to prepare yourself for professionally, you can get all that here with a Georgia State degree."

**Head Coach
Rod Barnes**

ATLANTA



**MARTIN LUTHER
KING, JR. BIRTHPLACE**

**CENTENNIAL
OLYMPIC PARK**



**Atlanta's
Hartsfield-Jackson
Airport is the world's
busiest, with more
than 80 percent of U.S.
markets reachable
within two hours.**

**GEORGIA
AQUARIUM**

GEORGIA STATE PATHERS