SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO.  560


WHEREAS, the Jackson Touchdown Club and Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame have unveiled the Class of 2001 of the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame with induction ceremonies to be held on Friday, March 23, 2001, in Jackson; and

WHEREAS, the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2001 features induction of the late Bernard Brown "Blackie" Blackwell, innovative and creative player, coach and sports administrator from Success, Mississippi, whose sports career is a matter of record: "Blackie" was born on a sheep farm in Success, Mississippi; Coach Blackwell was the son of Mr. and Mrs. L.B. Blackwell who are also deceased. Blackie's sports career spanned nearly half a century. After graduating from Saucier High School, Bernard attended Ole Miss and played left guard from 1944 through 1947; he is believed to be the first player to start every game for four years at Ole Miss and he played under three head coaches: Harry Mehre, Harold "Red" Drew and Johnny Vaught. Blackwell was a hard-nosed player who gave no quarter on the field. He is regarded as one of the toughest players to step on the gridiron for the Rebels and earned his reputation as a blocker. Blackie played in 1944 and 1945 under Harry Mehre and was then coached in 1946 by "Red" Drew. He was a senior on Johnny Vaught's first Ole Miss team in 1947 that won the school's first SEC title with a 9-2 record. The Rebels lost only to Vanderbilt in Nashville and Arkansas in Memphis during 1947. In the season opening 14-7 win over Kentucky in Oxford, Blackwell played one of his finest games and was named the SEC Lineman of the Week. Blackie was also one of the stars in the landmark Ole Miss 43-12 win over Tennessee in Memphis, the first time the Rebels had beaten the Vols. Blackwell's teammates included legendary Ole Miss names such as Charlie Conerly, Dixie Howell and Barney Poole. Blackie played in the 1948 Delta Bowl in Memphis as the Rebs capped off their championship season by defeating TCU by a 13-9 score. His play in 1947 earned Blackwell a spot on Mississippi State's All Opponent Team. Blackie was selected to the New Orleans Times Picayune All America Team and he was also chosen for several All SEC teams. In addition to football, Coach Blackwell also was a member of the Rebel track team from 1944 to 1946, and the Ole Miss basketball
team from 1944 to 1945. He served as vice president of the M Club
from 1945 to 1946 and was president of the Health and Physical
Education Club for two years. Invited to play in the 1947 Blue
Gray Game in Montgomery, Alabama, Bernard instead signed a
professional football contract with the New York Giants in early
1948. He shocked many friends and family when he opted to enter
the coaching profession. At the tender age of 21, Blackwell
became the youngest head football coach in the nation at the
junior college level when he was named as the football mentor at
Northwest Junior College in Senatobia. After two seasons at
Northwest, Coach Blackwell was hired as head football and track
coach at West Tallahatchie High School in Webb, Mississippi. From
1950 to 1956, he led West Tallahatchie to football and track
district championships. In 1952, he was selected as an assistant
All Star coach in the Mississippi High School All Star football
game, the first year high school coaches were allowed to coach
rather than college coaches. The year 1954 was a milestone year
for Coach Blackwell as he was named Coach of the Year by the Delta
Valley Conference. He also used his sports administration talents
to help form the Mississippi Association of Coaches (MAC), an
organization that he devoted his life to during and after his
careering. He was chosen as a member of the MAC’s Board of
Directors until 1963, when he was named as Executive Director. He
guided the MAC from 1963 until 1991, an amazing 28 years of
dedication to the group that is one of the leading coaching
associations in America. The year 1954 was also the season in
which Coach Blackwell made his West Tallahatchie team scrimmage at
half time when they played poorly in the first half during a
Thanksgiving Day game with Batesville High School. In 1956, Coach
Blackwell left West Tallahatchie to become assistant football
coach and head baseball coach at Greenville High School. The
Greenville athletic program was one of the best in the South in
the old Big Eight Conference. With Blackie on the sidelines,
Greenville won the 1957 and 1958 Big Eight football titles. His
baseball teams won two district, two North Mississippi and two
American Legion District crowns. Coach Blackwell departed the
Delta after the 1958 season as he was hired as head football coach
on the Coast at Pascagoula High. Just one season later, Blackie
arrived at Mississippi College in Clinton where he served as
assistant football coach and Associate Professor of Education.
The Choctaws improved in one season from 0-8 in 1958 to 7-2 in
1959, partly due to Blackie’s no-nonsense style of coaching and
discipline. Mississippi College and Clinton would soon become his
adopted home as he spent the rest of his career on or around the
Choctaw campus. Blackwell soon settled into his two passions in
life—working at Mississippi College and serving as Executive
Director of the MAC. Blackie’s first increased membership in the
organization to effectively carry out new proposals and fresh
ideas. Membership in the MAC grew from 300 in 1963, when he took
over as Executive Director, to nearly 2,000 plus. The loyalty of
Blackwell to his coaching brethren was a key to the MAC’s
unprecedented growth. He also solicited and received corporate
sponsorship for MAC and related events, thus broadening the
financial base of the group. His hands-on innovative style
surfaced while molding the future of the MAC. Under his
leadership, the MAC created programs that had not been seen in
other coaching associations in the nation. The MAC adopted and
funded a Memorial Athletic Benefit and Permanent Disability Plan
which has paid off temporary and permanent disability plus death claims. The MAC established the first athletic training workshop for high school and college students in the United States. The association also supported the adoption of a program to determine state championships in high school football and established a permanent job and coaching career file for coaches. Coach Blackwell and the MAC established a Coaches Hall of Fame, which held its first class induction in 1973, and is an annual MAC event. He served as Chairman of the MAC Hall of Fame Selection Committee. In addition to the Hall of Fame, an entire award program was created for high school and junior college coaches for all sports. The MAC under Blackwell expanded football and basketball clinics and added baseball, softball, soccer, track, cross-country, tennis and athletic administration. The group sponsored and supported educational programs in sports medicine, nutrition, drug abuse and athletic training and also established the first college credit program for clinic attendance on a statewide level. Cross-country running was adopted by the Mississippi High School Activities Association at the urging of Blackwell and his legion of coaches. The MAC, under Coach Blackwell, assumed sponsorship of the All Star Football, Basketball, Softball and Soccer games. The association lobbied the Mississippi Legislature for an indoor track facility for the Mississippi Coliseum and for funding of the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. Coach Blackwell and the MAC supported efforts to have Mississippi adopt the "no pass--no play" rule for academic and athletic eligibility. With the support of the MAC, he also chaired a committee to establish "National Coaches Day." Coach Blackwell's influence spread nationally as he was a charter member in 1965 of the National High School Athletic Coaches Association and served on that group's Board of Directors from 1980 to 1986. He served as Chairman on the State Coaches Association of Executive Secretaries for a five-year term and helped establish the first college credit program for clinic attendance on a national level, similar to what he had accomplished for Mississippi. In the late 1980's, Coach Blackwell continued to promote and highlight athletic events as he was the Mississippi Chairman to create the Mississippi/Alabama Shrine All-Star Football Game which is annually played in Mobile, Alabama, to benefit the Shriners Burned and Crippled Children Program. The game recently celebrated its 13th anniversary. He negotiated the contract for the Mississippi/Alabama All-Star Basketball Game to be played on a home and home basis. The Mississippi/Alabama hoops contest recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. Without a doubt, Coach Bernard Blackwell has made a permanent mark on the history of Mississippi athletics. In 1994, the Mississippi High School All-Star Game, once operated by the Jackson Touchdown Club and now sponsored solely by the MAC, was named after Coach Blackwell posthumously. Behind the scenes, Blackie made major changes in athletics administration and forged strong bonds between coaches, players, fans and families of all athletic phases. In 1972, when his coaching and teaching days came to an end at Mississippi College, the school named him assistant to the President. In 1976, he was chosen as National Director of Alumni Affairs for Mississippi College, a position he held until his death in 1993. During his 12-year tenure as Director of the MC Annual Fund, the number of contributors more than doubled and donations increased from $150 Thousand Dollars to

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more than $1 Million Dollars annually. Coach Blackwell was the coordinator of the committee to build Moody Adams Field House and Robinson-Hale Stadium, facilities still in active use today.

Similar to the MAC, Blackie established the Mississippi College Sports Hall of Fame along with an endowment fund and the Hillman College--MP&L Berry Endowed Scholarship. He served as secretary and advisor for the MC Booster Club and coordinated the first ever All-Star cheerleader clinics. The cheerleader clinics are now nationally known at MC and have an annual attendance well above 500. Coach Blackwell had a number of professional, civic and religious affiliations. He was a member of the Clinton United Methodist Church where he served as a lay leader of the Jackson District. He was a three-term Chairman of the church's administrative board, was President of Methodist Men and was the Superintendent of Sunday School. Blackie also belonged to the Morrison Heights Baptist Church where he worked for two years as Chairman of the church's building and grounds. He was President of the FTA at Clinton High School, a member of the Clinton Chamber of Commerce, and served a term, from 1962 to 1963, as President of the Clinton Youth Council. Coach Blackwell also assisted in establishing the first Magnolia State Games, now played in Meridian, through his relationship with the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, a group he helped organize. He was a member of the Central Mississippi Chapter of the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame and was Vice President of this group from 1984 through 1986. Coach Blackwell has received numerous Distinguished Service Awards from various groups such as the Clinton Chamber of Commerce (1965), the National High School Athletic Coaches Association (1969 and 1973) and the MAC (1976).

He was honored with the Contribution to Amateur Football Award by the Central Mississippi Chapter of the NFFHOF in 1973 and was the Clinton Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year in 1962. The Clinton Junior Chamber of Commerce bestowed upon him the Mississippi Sportsman of the Year Award in 1971. Mississippi College has presented Coach Blackwell with a number of distinctions including the National Alumni Association's Certificate of Appreciation in 1984, the National M Club's Certificate of Appreciation in 1985, and the prestigious 1991 Order of the Golden Arrow which is awarded to a non-alumnus for outstanding professional achievement, exceptional performance and leadership. In 1987, the National High School Athletic Coaches Association honored Blackie once again with the group's highest award they can present: the Dwight Keith Award. During his lifetime, Bernard received honors and accolades for distinguished service and sportsmanship on 14 different occasions from 11 separate organizations. With his MSHOF induction, this is the third Hall of Fame membership for Coach Blackwell. He was inducted into the MAC Coaches Hall of Fame in 1980 and the Mississippi College Athletic Hall of Fame in 1991, ironically, two of the Halls of Fame he helped to create.

Coach Blackwell was known as a showman, gentleman and communicator of the highest order. His public appearance at banquets and other formal events are memorable for his colorful sports jackets, particularly the familiar bright yellow gold Mississippi College Alumni Blazer. His spirit was always upbeat as he provided class dignity to any enterprise, game, banquet, event or any other activity in which he was involved. Coach Blackwell is survived by his wife, the former Mary Catherine Holston. He and Catherine have five sons: Bernard "Bernie" Blackwell, Jr., who lives in
Magee; Doug Blackwell, an assistant track coach to Joe Walker at Ole Miss; Jim Blackwell, who lives in Vermont; Hal Blackwell, who resides in Florence; and Sid Blackwell, who lives in Connecticut. They also have 17 grandchildren and one great grandchild; and

WHEREAS, it is with great pride that we recognize the memory of this outstanding athlete and coach who brought honor to the State of Mississippi:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby recognize the Posthumous Induction of Bernard "Blackie" Blackwell into the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2001, and send the Legislature's respect to his family on this occasion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be presented to the family of "Blackie" Blackwell at induction ceremonies and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.