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Eight more immortals;

N.C. Sports Hall of Fame inducts new class including Butters, Neal, Williams

RALEIGH -- Tom Butters has a message for his former employer, Duke University, which is currently searching for a new athletics director.

"I think it's the singular most important hire for Duke because this position requires somebody with deep integrity, someone who wants the responsibilities more than the title -- someone who isn't looking to inherit the job," Butters said Thursday at the North Carolina Museum of History.

One of eight inductees into the 2008

class of the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame, Butters retired in 1998 after 21 years as Duke's AD. He was largely responsible for the Blue Devils' development into one of the nation's most-respected and successful programs. Once listed in *The Top 50 Most Powerful People in Sports* by College Sports, Butters' most-successful hire was luring Mike Krzyzewski from West Point to replace Bill Foster as Duke's basketball coach following the 1980 season.

"Mike has an unusual gift, and I wouldn't want to replace him," Butters said.

Asked if Duke, which hasn't had a winning football season since 1994, could again be successful in the sport, Butters answered with a quick, "Yes. I don't know David Cutcliffe, but from what I hear and what I've read, I like him. And I think he can coach a quarterback, or two."

A graduate of **Ohio Wesleyan**

and a former pitcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates, Butters said, "This is a great honor. I've been fortunate to have had the finest job in America at the best university in America."

This is the 45th

class of the N.C. Sports Hall of Fame, which began in 1963 and now has a member count of 260.

One of the inductees, Fred "Curley" Neal of the Harlem Globetrotters, was late in arriving at a media conference. But once he did show up, dressed in a warmup suit, he dribbled a red, white and blue basketball on the stage, twirled the ball off his right index finger, then abruptly turned and passed the ball to another inductee, North Carolina basketball coach Roy Williams.

"I've been in 97 countries, but there's no place like the USA," Neal said. "What was important to me, to play with the Globetrotters, was the chance to help and to entertain children."

Neal's jersey, No. 22, matches the number of years he played with the Globetrotters, from 1963-1985. He attended Dudley High in Greensboro and Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, where he averaged over 23 points per game and led his team to the CIAA title his senior season.

"Being a Globetrotter is number one with me," Neal said. "I wouldn't do anything else."

Neal said he was especially looking forward to the dinner, honoring the inductees, Thursday night at the North Raleigh Hilton, "Because I hear Dean Smith is going to be there."

Williams, a Buncombe County native, was inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame last September, but said, "This is my state, my home and I had a wonderful 15 years coaching at Kansas but there was nothing like coming back home."

Williams, whose UNC team won the 2005 NCAA championship, owns an .801 winning percentage, No. 1 among active coaches. He is the only coach in the nation to win at least one NCAA Tournament game in each of the last 19 seasons.

Leo Hart, a former Duke quarterback, said, "Living in the little town of Kinston, not far from here, my

dream was always to do something special."

Here's what Hart did: He was a three-time first-team All-ACC quarterback at Duke (1968-'70), passed for 6,116 yards and still ranks fourth in ACC history in attempts, completions and total offense.

Auto racing was recognized with the class with the induction of Richard Childress, whose successful NASCAR team won six Winston Cup championships with Dale Earnhardt behind the wheel, 11 total titles, the Busch Grand National championship in 2001 and the Truck Series title in 1995. Childress drove his own car from 1969-1981 and had six Top 5 and 76 Top 10 finishes.

"This is a dream for a kid who once sold peanuts and popcorn," Childress said. "But our sport is all about teamwork, and I've got to thank Dale Earnhardt because I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him."

A co-founder of the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame, Bill Hensley, was inducted for the work he did as a public relations executive for 30 years, coordinating media and promotions for 20 major golf tournaments, including five United States Opens. He founded the North Carolina Golf Panel that rates golf courses throughout the state and also served as sports information director at Wake Forest and N.C. State.

"For a non-athlete to get inducted, I guess I had to do something good," Hensley said. "Writing about sports, and promoting athletes, has been a big part of my life," Hensley said.

Hensley's first feature story was on Arnold Palmer in 1948 when Palmer came to Wake Forest and began winning golf tournaments.

"Yeah, he was pretty good," Hensley said.

Former UNC offensive guard Ken Huff made it clear what the induction means to him.

"I've spent time in Kansas, southern California but I call North Carolina home," Huff said.

The No. 3 pick in the first round of the 1975 NFL Draft by the Baltimore Colts, Huff was eventually dealt to the Redskins in 1983 and became a member of the famed "Hogs" line, with Mark May, Russ Grimm, Joe Jacoby, Jeff Bostic and George Stark.

Huff played 145 games in the NFL.

Guilford College's Jack Jensen walked up to the third floor of the North Carolina Museum of History before the press conference to tour the NC Sports Hall of Fame.

"What I really liked was seeing Bones McKinney's coach's jersey," Jensen said.

Jensen played for McKinney's 1960-61 Wake Forest team which won the ACC championship. But what's unique about Jensen is he has coached four of Guilford's five national titles -- three of his golf teams won national crowns (1989, 2002 and 2005) and his 1973 basketball team won the NAIA title.

"I'm a Wake Forest guy and this is a humbling experience," Jensen said.