

# BELHAVEN'S ROAD TO THE FINAL FOUR

Louisiana State University Men's Basketball enjoyed arguably the program's best season this past year. Led by Coach John Brady, the Tigers clawed their way through a grueling schedule, won the Southeastern Conference Regular Season and West Division crowns, earned a #4 seed in the NCAA National Tournament, defeated top-seeded and #1-ranked Duke University in the Tournament, pulled out a thrilling overtime victory against the University of Texas to advance to the NCAA Final Four, and completed the season as the third-ranked team in the nation. All in a year's work, right? For Coach Brady, the work began more than three decades ago and he will be the first to say, "There is more work to be done."

As a freshman at Belhaven in 1973, John Brady likely never imagined what kind of basketball career he was going to have. The three-year starter for Belhaven went on to have a stellar career, amassing more than 1,000 points scored and 330 assists under legendary and hall of fame coach Charles Rugg. Brady was a two-time member of the All-Southern States Conference Team as a guard, and currently sits in the top five of numerous statistical categories at Belhaven. As successful as he was as a player, there was no doubt John Brady would be successful in his career of choice. He was determined, focused, driven, and talented, not only on the court, but in the classroom as well.

"John was as fierce and scrappy a competitor as I have ever seen," said Coach Rugg. "He soaked everything in, both in class and on the court. There was no doubt he had some physical talent, but what separated him was the way he used his mind to achieve success academically and in athletics."

It took very little time for Coach Rugg and his teammates at Belhaven to know exactly how strong a will Brady possessed. Following a one-point loss at the beginning of Brady's freshman season, Coach Rugg, who had a policy of not playing freshmen, was extremely frustrated with his guard play.

"I was talking to my coaches out by the pool at the hotel and said, in a loud enough voice for the team to hear, how much I needed some guards," Rugg remembered. "All of a sudden a voice pipes up, 'You have at least one guard, coach.' I was not too surprised to hear those words come from John."

While his comment did not garner him playing time, it was clear how confident John was in his ability to get the job done. Over the course of the next three seasons, Brady hit most every clutch shot for Belhaven.

"He wanted the ball at the end of a game," said Mark Windham, former assistant coach and Belhaven hall of fame member. "You could see it in his eyes that he knew he would make the shot if given the chance. He is arguably one of the best clutch shooters the school has ever had."

JOHN BRADY,  
JOHN TRELOAR,  
CHARLIE RUGG,  
BELHAVEN COLLEGE,  
AND LSU'S JOURNEY  
TO THE BIG DANCE



**FROM CLUTCH TO COACH**

Using his God-given skills and abilities, Brady found his course for life mapped out in coaching the game of basketball.

After graduating from Belhaven in 1976, he went on to Mississippi State, where he was a Graduate Assistant Coach for the 1976-'77 season. After serving as an assistant coach for the Bulldogs from 1982-1990, Brady received his first NCAA Head Coaching position at Samford University in 1991. In the six years he spent at Samford, Brady became the most successful coach in the school's history, and led the program to back-to-back Trans Atlantic Athletic Conference (TAAC) West Division championships in 1996 and 1997.

With the successes at Samford, it came as no surprise when, on March 25, 1997, Brady was named the eighteenth Head Men's Basketball Coach at LSU. Soon enough, Brady's teams were not just putting a scare into opponents, they were beginning to win the big games. Brady's coaching philosophies of discipline and responsibility began

giving LSU the tools they needed to excel in one of the toughest leagues in the nation.

Although his first few years at LSU were tough, having to rebuild a program hit with NCAA violations, it did not take long for the wins to come. In the 1999-2000 season, two years after inheriting a program that was at its lowest point in years, Brady led the Tigers to a 28-6 record, 12-4 in the SEC West. The Tigers were the top-ranked team in the conference, and not only went to the NCAA National Tournament, but won two games before dropping a Sweet Sixteen match-up with the University of Wisconsin. That same year, Brady was named the SEC's Coach of the Year and was the runner-up for National Coach of the Year. The Tigers would march back to post-season action three of the next five years.

The 2005-2006 edition of LSU basketball began a few years earlier, before the team had even been assembled. Coach Brady knew that in order to be the best, you must play the best, and so he created a schedule where there was no backing down from the nation's best programs. The schedule included road games at West Virginia, at Connecticut, and at Ohio State, not to mention the grueling conference schedule that the Tigers were to engage in. Nevertheless, Coach Brady believed in his team. The Tigers would drop closely contested games against Connecticut and Ohio State, but went on to pull out a victory against the nationally ranked Mountaineers of West Virginia.

"We had some of those

early games in hand," said Brady. "But, Ohio State and UConn are extremely tough to beat on the road. Even in losing with a young squad, our team gained some confidence out of that. I remember thinking in the locker room after the Connecticut game, we were a Top 25 team... people just didn't know it yet.

**"You knew to bring your very best every time out or you just simply would not make it with Charlie Rugg. That's something we are intent to carry on here at LSU."**

LSU finished the 2005-'06 regular season with a 22-7 record, 14-2 in conference play. Advancing through the NCAA Tournament was no easy task, but the young squad built momentum with each outing. The first round win over Iona University was followed by a dramatic one point victory against Texas A&M University, in which senior guard Darrell Mitchell hit a huge three-pointer with less than four seconds remaining. At that point, the Tigers knew something special was in the mix for them.

In the Sweet Sixteen, LSU would face the top-seeded Duke Blue Devils in a game that few gave the Tigers a chance of winning. When the buzzer sounded, a stunned Blue Devil team, as well as most of the nation, watched the Tigers celebrate their improbable 62-54 victory.

"What a tall order to beat such a storied program like Duke," acknowledged Rugg. "That was as a good a defensive effort a team can give against a stellar team like that. I almost had six heart attacks during the game, but I was very proud."

Of course, the only way to follow such an incredible win would be to defeat the University of Texas Longhorns in overtime in order to punch that coveted ticket to Indianapolis and a spot in the NCAA Final Four.

**A GESTURE OF GRATITUDE**

As the team prepared to do battle with UCLA for a shot at the national title, Coach Rugg was celebrating in his own unique way...fishing near the Gulf of Mexico.

"My friend and I were out on the boat enjoying the fishing when we noticed neither one of us had brought our cell phones, which is probably why it was so peaceful," joked Coach Rugg. "When we got back to the cabin there was a note taped on the window for me to call my wife at home immediately. Needless to say, I rushed to the phone."

Once he was assured there was nothing wrong, Coach Rugg's wife, Janie, informed him that John called and wanted them both to fly with the team to Indianapolis and be a part of the experience.

"It was an appreciation, a thank you," commented Brady. "It was a show of respect for Coach Rugg, for all I learned from him. I wanted him to be in the big time right next to us."

"Janie and I were deeply moved that John and his staff would consider us to be a part of this with them," said Rugg. "It was an experience I'll never forget and always be appreciative of."

On the plane, in meetings, at practices, and in the RCA Dome, Charles Rugg was with the LSU Tigers every step of the way. He and Janie were given their own team managers to

look after any needs and were treated like Tiger royalty the entire time.

"You would have thought we were the King and Queen of LSU Basketball," suggested Janie Rugg. "It was such a wonderful time for both of us, but I am especially thankful for John honoring Charlie like he did."

**THE BELHAVEN CONNECTION**

Surprisingly enough, John Brady is not the only LSU Basketball staffer to be connected with Belhaven College. One of his assistant coaches, John Treloar, who just completed his second season with the Tigers is also a Belhaven graduate. Treloar was a standout baseball player, but spent one year on the basketball team under Coach Rugg and alongside Brady.

"He was a couple of years behind me, but I remember going against him in practice," said Brady. "You talk about bothering somebody. I mean, he would just wear me out. John has always been extremely competitive."

Both went their separate ways after leaving Belhaven, and Treloar embarked on his own coaching journey that would lead him into the international basketball scene and Canadian Basketball Association (CBA) as both a head coach and general manager.

Coach Treloar arrived at LSU after a seven year stint on the Indiana University coaching staff. While at Indiana, he helped coach teams that went to six NCAA National Tournaments and worked under coaches Bob Knight and Mike Davis.

Treloar's arrival in Baton Rouge was somewhat of an accident. Then-Indiana coach Mike Davis called to inquire about the possibility of hiring away one of Brady's assistants. Instead, Brady used the opportunity to nab Coach Treloar.

"I simply told him that I wouldn't let my coach go, but that I did want to hire John Treloar," acknowledged Brady.

**BUILDING UPON THE FOUNDATION**

Brady has adopted a lot of the coaching philosophies he first came across while under Coach Rugg. Coach Rugg, who preached a philosophy riddled with discipline on and off the court, always demanded the most out of his players. His players were expected to give all they had, whether it was hitting the books, or executing to perfection on the basketball court.

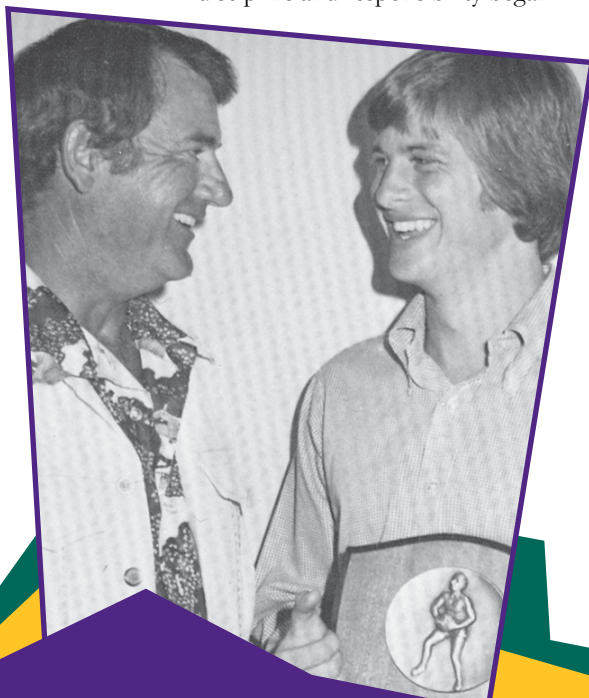
"Anyone who went through Coach Rugg learned solid, fundamental basketball," commented Coach Treloar. "You knew to bring your very best every time out or you just simply would not make it with Charlie Rugg. That's something we are intent to carry on here at LSU."

Rugg asked as much out of his players as possible, and when they ran out of gas, they were expected to continue on heart. There is no doubt how Brady learned to pour himself out as a player, as well as a coach. It is obvious when observing his team's play, especially in wins over Duke and Texas in this year's tournament, Brady's Bunch emulates the same heart and passion as their coach.

"I would sit and preach to my teams on several occasions," offered Coach Rugg. "John would hear me say that the most important thing was to keep your priorities in order. First, you maintain a relationship with God. Then, you take care of your family and stay close to them. Career could follow after that, but don't get consumed by your work."

Success has not come easy for John Brady, but he is taking the time to enjoy the successes, and he is making the time to honor those who have helped guide him along the way.

—MD  
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BEFORE THE BIG TIME: (right) John Brady accepts the 1976 MVP Award from (left) head coach Charlie Rugg.