



Coach Adell Harris
Associate Head Women's Basketball Coach/Recruiting Coordinator
University of North Carolina Asheville
2003 "So" Participant

My name is Adell Harris and I am a proud member of the inaugural "So You Want To Be A Coach" workshop, held at the 2003 WBCA convention in Atlanta, Georgia. As I reflect on that experience, I am grateful that I was chosen to be a "So" participant. Every year at the WBCA convention, I take notice of the programs continued growth and influence on the lives of young coaches in our game.

For me, the "So" program wasn't about searching for a career path. I went to Atlanta that weekend knowing that I was going to be a coach but the "So" workshop fueled my passion and gave me direction. The most impactful moment of the weekend was hearing one of our sports legends give her thoughts of the coaching profession. Coach C. Vivian Stringer was one of our speakers; she talked about "paying the price"!! I recall her words as though it was yesterday, she challenged the group to be willing to do anything. She looked at us and said most of us didn't have what it takes to do the job. Coach Stringer shared her personal story of beginning at Cheyney State University where she spent eleven seasons, "paying the price". I remember thinking, I have what it takes and I'm ready to earn my way in this profession just like Coach Stringer did. The older and smarter I get, I realize there are a lot of differences between myself and Coach Stringer!!

The 2003 convention was the first time that I had been in a professional development workshop. I learned about punctuality, professional dress, being loyal and how important the words character and integrity are. After listening to all the different speakers, I left Atlanta with an immense respect for how far the women's game has come and the obligation I had to continue that growth. The "So You Want To Be A Coach" seminar was informative, inspiring and energizing. I would highly recommend this to anyone that thinks they want to be a coach.

Today, I am the Associate Head Coach at the University of North Carolina Asheville where I have worked for the past six seasons. In my time on the staff our program has been named the NCAA's 2003-2004 most improved team, won more games than any team in Div.I history with 21 in 2006-2007 season, won the schools first ever Women's Basketball Big South Championship and captured the first ever NCAA tournament appearance in 2007. I am grateful for my experiences at the WBCA convention in 2003. My goals are different then they were six years ago but a lot of the foundation will remain the same. I will always earn my way, contribute to the lives of others with a servant attitude, and work with a passion.



Assistant Coach Dee Dee Merriweather
Georgia State University
2005 “So” participant

Merriweather’s Road into Coaching

At an early age, my mother was against me playing sports. She would always tell me that “sports were for boys.” Instead she would put me in a cheerleading skit with pom poms in my hands and make me cheer on the sideline. I wanted nothing more than to be on the court roughing it up with the boys. Finally when I was six years old the director of Ben Hill Recreation Center in Atlanta, Georgia, the recreation center where my brother and I went after school, convinced my mom to sign me up. At that time the only activity they had for girls to participate was cheerleading, so there were not any girls’ leagues, much less a team, I could play on. But they knew how much I wanted to play so they let my mom sign me up to play with the boys. I was the first female athlete to ever participate in any sport, besides cheerleading at the recreation center. They put all the first year players on the same team (the blue team) and expected us to learn as we played, but were not expecting us to win a lot of games. They expected the red team, the team with players kids that had played organized basketball before or kids they thought had more talent, compete for the city championship. To everyone’s surprise, except my teams’ of course, my team won the city championship. This had never been done before from a first year team, much less a team with a girl as their best player.

From then on, basketball has been my passion! I loved to play at night and day, 365 days of the year. Basketball became a part of everything in my life. If I had a project to do for school it was about basketball. One year we had to research an event in history for a history assignment. My project was on the history of basketball. In Language Arts, or English as it is known today, my composition book was composed of essays, stories or poems about basketball or me playing basketball. Basketball had to be a part of everything I did. When I was in the sixth grade I was talented enough to play on both the seventh, and eight grade teams. When I got to high school I was fortunate to start on the Varsity team all four years; that was rare in those days. During that time I helped lead the team to a 95-17 overall record, including 55-3 the last two (30-1 as a senior with an undefeated regular season and 25-2 as a junior). The daughter of my step father’s best friend was a basketball coach and she followed me all the way through high school. When I was being actively recruited she was a part of Lea Henry’s coaching staff at Georgia State University. I was honored to accept a scholarship to attend a great University and to be a part of a program with a winning tradition. During my playing career I was a part of two championship teams that earned NCAA bids.

At the conclusion of my playing career, there was an opening on Lea's staff, but that position was not on her coaching staff. The opening was for Administrative Assistant. I was just happy to continue to be a part of the program and to "get my foot in the door". At that point the only thing about my future, I was sure of what that I would have the opportunity to learn "the coaching side of the game" from someone that has been successful. As Administrative Assistant I was able to see first hand all the aspect of coaching, from on-court instruction to scouting to recruiting. After three years, there was another opening on Lea's staff. This time the open position was for an Assistant Coach position. I feel that my experiences helped me transition more easily into coaching.

Near the end of my senior season our Director of Basketball Operations came to all of our seniors as asked us if we would be interested in attending the 2005 "So You Want To Be A Coach" Clinic. At that time we had no idea what the clinic was about, but knew that we would get a chance to attend the Final Four. Seniors before us had attended the clinic, but all we remembered them talking about was how much fun they had at the games. When I arrived in Indianapolis, I was excited about the clinic because even though I did not know what it was all about, I did know that one day I wanted to coach and I hoped this clinic giving me the necessary guidance I needed to become a coach.

For me the clinic was a great learning experience. I was amazed at everything I learned during the two and half days of the clinic that would help me obtain a career in coaching. Four things that stood that I remember most about the clinic were: the different avenues to get into coaching, the different types of jobs available in coaching, how to sell yourself, how important it is to network.

If there was any advice I would give to those going through the program, it would be (*insert advice here*). The second piece of advice I would offer is that, no matter what job/task you are asked to complete, do it better than anyone has ever done it before!