

# Paul Hewitt hews path from birds to bees

*'85 Fisher graduate a true success for the Georgia Tech Yellowjackets*



SPORTS EDITOR  
**MIKE SPIER**

Paul Hewitt is one of the most recognized faces to come through the St. John Fisher College men's basketball program.

And he doesn't even hold a single Fisher record.

"Let's just put it this way, when I was at Fisher, I couldn't score 20 points if I was in the gym by myself," Hewitt said. "I was what they called a 'team' player."

Obviously being a good player has nothing to do with being a great coach.

In only four seasons as a Division I men's basketball head coach at Georgia Tech, Hewitt led the Yellowjackets to the 2004 NCAA Championship game, losing to UConn, 83-72.

Although he doesn't give himself much credit, he was a four-time letterwinner at Fisher, from 1981 to 1985, and served as the Cardinals' captain as a senior.

"Paul doesn't give himself enough credit," said Bobby Wanzer, who served as Cardinals' head coach from 1963 to 1987. "He was a smart kid that was always in the right spot at the right time on the court."

While he never reached the peak of his prowess on the court, he got quite a few lessons for his career on the sidelines.

Wanzer, who played for the 1951



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NBA Champion Rochester Royals and was inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame in 1987, left Hewitt with philosophies that have stuck with him throughout his career.

"I thought that Coach Wanzer had a great way with dealing with players," Hewitt said. "He was demanding but at the same time he didn't degrade you or try to steal your confidence from you."

After coaching junior varsity at his alma mater, Westbury High School from 1985 to 1988, Hewitt decided that he wanted to get a Master's degree at C.W. Post to become a high school guidance counselor. He was the assistant coach to help pay for the degree.

In the spring of 1989, after helping out with basketball camps at places such as Syracuse and Providence, Hewitt attended a conference in Dallas, Texas, where he got the job offer to become a graduate assistant at the University of Southern California under George Raveling.

"I decided to try the job at USC just to see what Division I basketball was like, always thinking I'd get back on track and become a high school guidance counselor," Hewitt said. "I've been off track ever since. I tell everyone that one day I'm going to finish up that degree and become a counselor."

After spending a year at USC, Hewitt made his way back to the east coast to become an assistant coach at Fordham University from 1990 to 1992. Right after that, Hewitt went to Philadelphia to assist head coach Steve Lappas for five seasons at Villanova.

Hewitt finally got a chance to lead

a team when he went to Siena to become head coach in 1997. In the 1999-2000 season, his final at Siena, Hewitt was named the MAAC Coach of the Year after leading the Saints to a 24-9 record.

"After coaching at Siena, I got a pretty good feel for what it took to be a head Division I basketball coach," Hewitt said.

Georgia Tech thought so too.

On April 6, 2000, Hewitt was named Georgia Tech's 12th head basketball coach after posting a 66-27 mark as the head coach at Siena.

"I was more nervous than excited," he said. "The first thing I had to do was a press conference. While they're great for the media and fans, it's just like a wedding. Everyone likes going to the wedding and having the honeymoon but after that you have to be married. That's when the real work started."

In Hewitt's fourth season, Georgia Tech made a deep run through the bracket. With the likes of Jarrett Jack, B.J. Elder and Will Bynum, they went all the way to

the National Championship game.

"Watching the entire Georgia Tech community rally behind that team was the best part of what happened that year," Hewitt said. "To this day we all remain very close to each other."

This previous season, the Yellowjackets were plagued with injuries and lost Thaddeus Young and Javaris Crittendon to the NBA draft. Georgia Tech finished with a 15-17 overall record and 7-9 in the Atlantic Coast Conference

"We had a good year but I probably overscheduled because we had the second hardest schedule in the country," Hewitt said.

Hewitt is pretty confident for what is on deck for his Georgia Tech program.

"I really feel confident that in the next three to five years we're going to make another run to get back to where we were in 2004."

Despite being at so many colleges and having been away from Rochester for so long, it is still evident that St. John Fisher red is still running through Hewitt's veins.

"I think about St. John Fisher all the time and I have an awful lot of gratitude for it because it prepared me well for my life after college."

And to prove he still has allegiance: "Make sure to go and beat Nazareth next year."

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**Paul Hewitt,  
Georgia Tech coach**