

Bobcats Induct three Into Fred I. Dickerson Athletic Hall Of Fame

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The Lees-McRae College athletic department inducted three new members into the Fred I. Dickerson Athletic Hall of Fame on Friday night in McDonald Dining Hall. This year's induction class includes: Carla Swart '11h (cycling), Leonard Wheeler '89 (football), and Allison McDonald Norris '93 (women's soccer).

The evening was an extremely memorable one for inductees, staff, and guests alike, as Director of Athletics Craig McPhail and Lees-McRae President Barry M. Buxton each shared words of appreciation and gratitude for the athletic talent and service to both the College and community of each inductee. The inductees themselves warmed the heart and touched the soul of everyone in the room with their stories as well, while voicing their encouragement to all of the young athletes in attendance.

Carla Swart, '11 cycling (posthumously)

"Carla embodied the spirit of life, the character to which greatness is made, and the incredible humanity we all wish we could be," said McPhail as part of his induction speech for Swart. Swart almost single-handedly redefined the sport of collegiate cycling, quickly becoming the most decorated rider in the history of the sport before passing away in a tragic training accident this past January in her native South Africa. During her career with the Bobcats, Swart collected 19 individual and team national titles, while becoming the first cyclist in collegiate history to win a national title in each of the four disciplines, accomplishing the feat during the 2008 season. "Let's all live how Carla wanted us to live," said Swart's father, Deon Swart. "Tonight is not a night to mourn, it is a night of happiness, so please be happy in this life and enjoy."

Leonard Wheeler, '89 football

"One of the keys of success in sports is an intangible product called heart, the invisible quality that contains the soul, strength, and mind of a team," said Assistant Athletic Director Merritt Yackey. "It cannot be measured, but we cannot win without it. It is an elusive talent that is difficult to cultivate, but must be carried forward with a person everyday for every occasion." Wheeler played six seasons in the National Football League after a four-year college career that included stops at Mississippi, Troy, and Lees-McRae. A native of Toccoa, Ga., Wheeler was drafted by the Cincinnati Bengals in the third round of the 1992 NFL Draft, where he spent the first five years of his career. Wheeler went on to play one season with the Minnesota Vikings and one with the Carolina Panthers before retiring in 2001.

Wheeler is now the CEO and founder of Wheeler Enterprises, Inc., a company which specializes in personal and executive coaching to facilitate growth and development meant to improve their clients' quality of life. He is also an active member of the NFL Players Association, serving on the association's financial committee and has also served as a member of the Board of Directors for the NFLPA.

"I know that I was not prepared to go anywhere else but here," said Wheeler. "What this College did for me was amazing, because it really showed me what I was supposed to be as a young

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man, and as a student-athlete."

Allison McDonald Norris, '93 women's soccer

"When I spoke with Ried Estus, her coach of four years, he described her as the right fit for Lees-McRae," said Senior Woman Administrator Rita Smith. "She was a team player, with not only great physical skills, but also tremendous soccer knowledge. She had the ability to see the field like no one else. Allison played at a level above everybody else, and when she did that, she made everyone else around her better."

Norris starred for the women's soccer team as one of the first four-year athletes in the program's history, leading the Bobcats to a 63-17-1 record and a trio of conference championships during the school's transition to a four-year institution. A native of Hendersonville, Tenn., Norris garnered all-region and conference player of the year honors as a senior, while finishing her career ranked second in program history in total assists (36), third in match-winning goals (12), fourth in total points (108), and tied for seventh in total goals (36).

"Initially I was hesitant to venture outside my team for friendship, but as I took full advantage of the Lees-McRae College experience, I began to see that there was more to life than soccer," said Norris. "Playing soccer was what brought me joy, but playing soccer was also the vessel God used to open so many doors of opportunity."

Lees-McRae College, a four-year, co-educational liberal arts college affiliated with the Presbyterian Church, USA, is located in the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains of northwestern North Carolina. Being a year-round tourist destination, the area provides the best of a vibrant college community coupled with natural beauty and a rich history.