

Willie Jeffries

Willie Jeffries was appointed by Governor Nikki Haley to serve on the South Carolina Ports Authority Board in 2010. He is a native of Union, South Carolina, earned his bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a master's degree in guidance and counseling from South Carolina State University. Additionally, he studied at Indiana University.

Jeffries completed a 19-year career as head football coach at South Carolina State University (SCSU). He retired following the 2001 campaign, a season in which his team won its last five contests to finish 6-5 and remained at SCSU as Director of Athletic Fund Raising. He recently relinquished the position of Athletics Director at Grambling State University, in Grambling, Louisiana to return home to the Palmetto State of South Carolina. He was currently appointed Executive Director of the Palmetto Capitol City Classic Football Game and Color Analyst for Educational Television Football.

He began his first tenure at SCSU in 1973, completing an impressive 50-13-4 record in six seasons. Following a hiatus from SCSU, 1978-1989, Jeffries returned to begin his second tenure which spanned 13 years.

Jeffries very first coaching position was as an assistant coach at Lancaster's Barr Street High School in 1960. A head coaching position followed in 1961 at Granard High in Gaffney, where he compiled a six-year 65-7-2 mark, and won three (1964-1966) consecutive state AAA championships. As a result of the contributions made early in his coaching career, an athletic facility was named in honor of Coach Jeffries at Granard Middle School.

During his remarkable 29-year collegiate head-coaching career, which included five-year stints each at Wichita State and Howard University, Jeffries compiled a 179-132-6 record. This enviable record included six Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) championships, two national titles, several post-season appearances, and numerous coaching awards. Jeffries also produced a number of players who have distinguished themselves in professional football and other professions and made history in 1979 when he became the first African American head football coach in Division I football.

Jeffries won almost 60 percent of the college games he coached, which made him the "winningest" coach in the 107-year history of SCSU and owner of more MEAC victories than any other coach.

His early success as Bulldog head coach earned him national notoriety, and subsequently, a number of coaching offers. He passed up several opportunities to serve as an assistant in the National Football League.

After returning to his alma mater, Jeffries went on to produce seven winning teams, including a string of five straight, from 1991-1995. In 1994, he tied the school record for the number of wins during a 10-2 season, and captured the MEAC championship, the Bulldog's first conference title in 11 seasons. Jeffries also earned a national title and made three Heritage Bowl appearances after returning to Orangeburg in 1989. He also served as Athletic Director in 1990 and 1991. The Department finished in the black both years. The Bulldog mentor is enshrined in four athletic halls. In May 2010, he was enshrined into the National Football College Hall of

Fame. He is also in the SCSU Athletic Hall of Fame, the South Carolina Athletic Hall of Fame, the MEAC Hall of Fame, the Wichita, Kansas Hall of Fame, the Kansas Hall of Fame and the Black College Sports Hall of Fame.

Jeffries has received numerous honors, including the Order of the Silver Crescent, the Palmetto State's highest award for outstanding community service. He also received the Order of the Palmetto, the state's highest civilian award and the Patriot's Award, the highest award given by the Lieutenant Governor's Office. Moreover, a scholarship fund and endowment have been established in his name at SCSU. During the 2002 school year, he was honored by the Black Coaches' Association (BCA) with a lifetime achievement award and inducted into the Palmetto State's Black Hall of Fame. In 2007, he was named Vice President of the South Carolina Athletic Hall of fame and he received the Pioneer Award from the University of South Carolina's Department of Entertainment and Sports Management. In 2009, he was inducted into the National HBCU Alumni Hall of Fame. Most recently, in January 2011, Jeffries was named The Times and Democrat's Person of the Year. In March 2010, South Carolina State University's Administration and Board of Trustees appointed Jeffries as Coach Emeritus and in November, 2010 named the football field at Olive C. Dawson Stadium in his honor. He was also appointed by Governor Nikki Haley to serve on the South Carolina Ports Authority Board.

He is a member of several coaching, professional and civic organizations, including the American Football Coaches Association, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, and Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. He has also served on the NCAA Football Rules Committee.

Jeffries is an outstanding ambassador for SCSU, the Orangeburg community, the Palmetto State and the nation.