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## NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Stanly County Sports Hall Of Fame To Induct Three

The Stanly County Chamber of Commerce will host its 20th Annual Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony to be held on Thursday May 8, 2008 at 6:00 p.m., at the Stanly Regional Medical Family and Education Center. Those inducted have made contributions to sports in the Stanly County area, past and or present, and have reflected outstanding credit upon themselves as individuals, upon the sport with which they are identified, and upon this community.

Featured guest speaker will be Appalachian State University Head Football Coach, Jerry Moore. Over the past two decades, Jerry Moore has become the face of Appalachian football. But over the past two seasons, Moore has also become the model for coaching success on a national level, as the head coach of the Mountaineers, earned his second-straight American Football Coaches Association National Coach of the Year award in 2006. Appalachian State University shocked the nation September 1, 2007 with a 34-32 victory over the University of Michigan Wolverines.

This year, for the first time ever, the Stanly County Sports Hall of Fame will induct three new members at one time. The inductees who will be recognized at the May 8 ceremony are Bob Gantt and brothers Curtis Watkins and the late Johnny Watkins.

### Bob "Goo Goo" Gantt

Bob Gantt was a star athlete at Albemarle High School and the University of North Carolina, and had a long and successful coaching career in Albemarle and at East Carolina University. Gantt played wingback, fullback and linebacker for Albemarle High's football team from 1945-1947 and in his senior season, he made All-State and was selected to play in the Shrine Bowl Game.

During his playing days in Albemarle, Gantt was given the nickname “Goo Goo” and carried that nickname with him as he went on to star on the gridiron for the University of North Carolina Tarheels from 1948-1951. These were glorious years for Tarheel football team as Gantt joined with UNC All-American Charlie “Choo Choo” Justice to lead the football team to consistent Top Ten rankings and several bowl games. One of the favorite cheers of Keenan Stadium fans in those days was “Go Choo Goo!!!”. Gantt played wing back and linebacker for those UNC teams and was the only player on the squad to play both offense and defense. He set the team and conference record for the longest return of an intercepted pass for a touchdown (100 yards).

Gantt served as an assistant football coach under Toby Webb at Albemarle High School for three years. During that time he also coached wrestling and track, and starts golf and tennis programs at AHS. When Webb retired from coaching in 1959, Gantt took over as head football coach at Albemarle and coached the Bulldogs for three years. He also served as athletic director. In his very first season as head football coach, he led the Bulldogs to the South Piedmont Conference Championship.

In 1962, Gantt went to East Carolina University where he served as assistant football coach under Clarence Stasavitch for eight years. At ECU, he coached defensive backs and served as both defensive and offensive coordinator at various times. During these years, East Carolina football achieved very successful seasons, winning several conference championships and numerous bowl games. Gantt also coached wrestling for four years at ECU.

Gant earned his MBA and Masters degrees at UNC-Chapel Hill and his PhD at Louisiana State University. He now lives in Charlotte with his wife, Christine. He has three children and five grandchildren.

### Curtis and Johnny Watkins

The Stanly County Sports Hall of Fame has previously inducted a couple of brothers, Don and Monty Montgomery. However, the Montgomery brothers were inducted in different years. Selecting the brotherly tandem of Curtis and Johnny Watkins at the same time marks another first for the local Sports Hall of Fame. These two will forever be linked together because of their joint participation on the West Badin championship teams of the early 1960s.

Curtis Watkins starred for Coach J.B. Davis’ powerhouse West Badin teams from 1959-1962. In his past three seasons, 1960, 61 ,and 62, Curtis helped lead his high school team to three straight state championships. The 1962 team finished the season undefeated at 27-0.

During the summer months in those days, Coach Davis would arrange for his players to get summer jobs in places like Washington, Baltimore, and New York, so they could play in tough summer basketball leagues. While playing in one of those leagues in West Chester County, New York in 1961, Curtis had the opportunity to play against college All-American and future NBA star, Calvin Murphy.

With such a sound high school background, Curtis Watkins was destined for stardom in college. He attended North Carolina Central University in Durham and initially did not receive a scholarship. However, as a walk-on player in his first year, he proved his skills and eventually earned a scholarship and a starting position. Known for his tremendous leaping ability, Curtis went on to become one of the great players in NCCU history and in 1994, he was inducted into the NCCU Athletic Hall of Fame. Curtis now resides in the Old Whitney area of Badin.

Johnny Watkins was two years younger than Curtis, but was also a star player on those West Badin championship teams of 1961-62. Johnny finished out his high school career in 1964 and earned a scholarship to play for legendary basketball coach Clarence “Big House” Gaines at Winston Salem State University.

As a junior at WSSU, Johnny teamed with future NBA star Earl “the Pearl” Monroe to lead Winston Salem State to the 1967 national championship in basketball. That same year, Johnny played golf for the CIAA Champion golf team at WSSU. Johnny finished his basketball career at WSSU as one of their all-time leaders in field goal percentage.

Johnny Watkins passed away in 1991, but in 1992, he was inducted posthumously into the Winston Salem State Sports Hall of Fame as a member of the 1967 Championship basketball team.

Costs of the tickets are \$30 per person which includes a heavy hors d’oeuvres reception immediately following the ceremony. Limited seating available. For more information please call the Chamber at 704-982-8116 or email to [cgarrett@stanlychamber.org](mailto:cgarrett@stanlychamber.org).