



In 2016 the CollegeInsider.com Postseason Tournament made history with the introduction of the Coach John McLendon Classic. Played in the first round of the CIT, the winner received a championship trophy and advanced to the second round of the CIT. The idea of playing for a trophy created some real excitement and it was the first time in NCAA Division I Basketball history that a “Classic” has been part of a postseason tournament.

The game pays tribute to Coach McLendon and the legacy of some of the great pioneers of the game, including Clarence “Big House” Gaines and Ben Jobe. It’s a showcase for Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference and the Southwestern Athletic Conference and a celebration of Historically Black College Basketball.



"When you bring up the name Coach John McLendon you are speaking about someone who learned the game of basketball from its founder, Dr. James Naismith. Coach McLendon was able to add a great deal to the game of basketball, including the up-tempo style of play, which was first credited to him. More importantly he was able to break down color barriers and continue to have a profound effect on those he reached. The John McLendon Classic will help to bring more attention to some of the pioneers of the game, like the great Coach McLendon."

- Antonio Gates
5-Time All-Pro Selection, Los Angeles Chargers
Member of the CIT Selection Committee

The tremendous success of the inaugural Coach John McLendon Classic prompted an overwhelming response for additional “Classics” and the 2017 CIT included the Hugh Durham Classic, the Lou Henson Classic and the Riley Wallace Classic.

Like the Coach John McLendon Classic, the three new first round games included the presentation of an MVP award and a Championship trophy, with the winners advancing to the second round of the CIT -- Get the Trophy and Advance.



Austin Peay defeated UL Monroe to capture the 3rd annual Coach John McLendon Classic. Terry Taylor posted a double-double with 11 points and 15 rebounds and Averyl Ugba finished with 27 points to pick up MVP honors. Grand Canyon won the inaugural event in 2016 and Liberty was the 2017 champion.

"I continue to be amazed by the forward thinking of CollegeInsider.com," said Liberty head coach Ritchie McKay. "Their commitment to honoring those who have added value to the lives we enjoy as well as celebrating diversity is unprecedented. This Classic will be a great testament to these men who contributed so much to the game as we know it today. This is a phenomenal addition to NCAA basketball."



Coach McLendon, a pioneer who revolutionized the game with his up-tempo full court style of play and fastbreak offense, became the first African-American coach to win an integrated national championship. He led Tennessee State to the NAIA Division I Men's Tournament championship in 1957, 1958 and 1959, becoming the first coach to win three consecutive titles.



In 1962, McLendon became the first African-American head coach in a major professional league (ABL), with the Cleveland Pipers. Four years later he became the first African-American coach of a predominantly white university, taking the helm at Cleveland State and leading the program to the best record in school history. In 1969, the Denver Rockets hired him as the first African-American coach in the American Basketball Association (ABA).



He finished his 25-year career with a record of 523-165.



Five players finished in double figures as San Diego won the 2nd annual Riley Wallace Classic. Cameron Neubauer was high-scorer with 16 points, while Isaiah Wright finished with 14 points and 11 assists and was named the game's MVP. The inaugural Wallace Classic was held in 2017 and won by Weber State.

“I have known Coach Wallace for many years so it was extra special to win a game named after him,” said Weber State head coach Randy Rahe. “It’s great anytime you can play for a trophy. We were obviously disappointed to not be playing in the NCAA Tournament, but our players were excited to have the opportunity to play in the Riley Wallace Classic.”



During his coaching career at Hawaii, Wallace welcomed many transfers into the program and became the winningest coach in Hawaii history. Wallace guided Hawaii to nine postseason appearances, including a school-record streak of four straight from 2001-04.

The Warriors appeared in the NCAA Tournament three times under Wallace and have been invited to the National Invitation Tournament (NIT) on six occasions. Prior to his arrival, the program had just one NCAA appearance and two trips to the NIT.

Coach Wallace has also been an instrumental part of the CIT since its inception, serving at the chairman of the Selection Committee from 2010-2014.





It took extra time, but Drake beat Abilene Christian in overtime to win the 2nd annual Lou Henson Classic. Ore Arogundade, who was named Most Valuable Player, posted a career-best and game-high 25 points. The 2017 Henson classic also went right down to wire as Fort Wayne defeated Ball State.



“This was awesome for our kids,” said Fort Wayne head coach Jon Coffman. “Both teams were really excited to play in the Lou Henson Classic and it showed. It was a great atmosphere and a terrific game. It felt like we were playing for a championship. I can’t thank CollegeInsider.com enough for allowing us to host the Lou Henson Classic.”



Lou Henson won 775 games in 41 seasons and is the winningest coach in Illinois basketball history with 423 victories. During his 21 seasons (1975-1996), Henson led the Fighting Illini to 16 postseason appearances, including 12 NCAA tournaments and a Final Four appearance in 1989.



Henson, who is also the all-time winningest coach in New Mexico State history with 289 victories, is one of only 11 coaches to take two different schools to the NCAA Final Four. His teams have made 19 NCAA appearances and four NIT appearances.

2019 HUGH DURHAM CLASSIC

Central Michigan knocked off Fort Wayne to capture the 2nd annual Hugh Durham Classic. David DiLeo finished with 22 points and was named the game's MVP. It was the second time in as many years that the road won the Classic. Saint Francis (PA) won the 2017 Classic at Jacksonville.

“Our team was excited to compete for a trophy,” said Saint Francis head coach Rob Krimmel. “It was a tremendous honor to be able to play in the Hugh Durham Classic and a great win for our program. The Hugh Durham Classic is an outstanding addition to the CollegeInsider.com Postseason Tournament.”

In eight seasons as the head coach at Jacksonville University, Durham became the Dolphins' all-time winningest Division I coach (106 wins), making him the only coach in NCAA history to be the winningest coach (pct. or wins) at three different Division I schools.

He built national programs at Florida State where he holds the record for best winning percentage with a 230-95 (.708) record in 12 years. And at Georgia where he is also the all-time winningest coach in the 99-year history of the Bulldog program, having won 297 games in 17 seasons.





After winning the inaugural Lou Henson Classic in 2017, Liberty won the inaugural Jim Phelan Classic in 2018. Caleb Homesley finished with 16 points, six rebounds and three assists to pick up MVP honors. The Phelan Classic was the latest addition to the CollegeInsider.com Postseason Tournament.

Known for his signature bow tie, Phelan had an impressive career at the Mount. He led the Mountaineers to the 1962 NCAA Men's Division II Basketball Championship. When he retired in 2003, after coaching for 49 years, he had amassed 830 wins (overall record of 830-524) in all divisions. In those 49 years, 19 of his teams amassed 20 or more wins in a season.

"I am so glad to see that College Insider has added the Jim Phelan Classic," said Hugh Durham, the former coach at Florida State, Georgia and Jacksonville. "Jim was a great competitor on the sidelines and had a tremendous career as a coach. He's a terrific individual."

Upon his retirement, College Insider established the Jim Phelan award, which is presented annually to the nation's top Division I coach. Past recipients of the award include Dana Altman (Oregon), Tony Bennett (Washington State), Mike Brey (Notre Dame), John Calipari (Memphis), Jamie Dixon (Pittsburgh) and Bob Huggins (West Virginia).

The recipient of the 2019 Jim Phelan Award will be announced on April 5 in Minneapolis, MN, site of the Men's NCAA Basketball Championship.

