



Posted on Mon, Jul. 21, 2008

## Former NCAA official Cawood dies

By Art Jester

[ajester@herald-leader.com](mailto:ajester@herald-leader.com)

Dave Cawood, a Harlan County native and former high-ranking NCAA executive who played a crucial role in developing the NCAA men's basketball Final Four into a national sports extravaganza, died Sunday in Louisville. He was 64.

Mr. Cawood had been out for a morning jog or walk when he returned home and collapsed. An emergency unit rushed him to Baptist East Hospital. It is not known whether he was pronounced dead on arrival or died at the hospital.

Mr. Cawood was a first cousin of the late Cawood Ledford, the legendary radio voice of the Kentucky Wildcats. Funeral arrangements are incomplete, but it has already been announced that Mr. Cawood will be buried in the Cawood family cemetery in Harlan County, near Cawood Ledford's burial plot, said Sam Dunn, a former executive colleague of Mr. Cawood at Host Communications.

Although Mr. Cawood did not become the Kentucky icon that his cousin Cawood Ledford did, he nevertheless forged an estimable career in big-time college athletics in his own right, with friends and associates from coast to coast.

"Dave was one of those people that other people across the country would call for advice," Dunn said.

Mr. Cawood was a top NCAA official in charge of media relations for about a quarter-century.

In that role, Mr. Cawood and another NCAA executive, Tom Jernstedt, worked in the early 1970s to build the men's Final Four into the gripping nationwide basketball spectacle that it quickly became.

Mr. Cawood and his wife, Sheila, an elementary teacher in Bullitt County, returned to Kentucky, settling in Lexington.

He became executive vice president in charge of collegiate sports at Host Communications, the company founded and run for many years by sports marketing entrepreneur Jim Host until it was sold in 1999.

At Host, Mr. Cawood, had oversight of almost every corporate administrative division and was executive vice president of NCAA Football, which represented the American Football Coaches Association, the Collegiate Commissioners Association, the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics and the NCAA.

He oversaw negotiations with CBS for a \$1.725 billion agreement -- the first \$1 billion dollar rights fees for a sports event -- that included corporate sponsorships, licensing, and television and media provisions.

Host said that patience was Mr. Cawood's "best asset." His low-key, neighborly demeanor allowed him to keep a cool head during tough negotiations and to maintain friendships with people on all levels, because he was content to work behind the scenes and let others stand out front and take much of the credit.

"He treated people fairly, and yet he was tough when he needed to be," Host said. "He never had any airs about him."

The Cawoods moved to Louisville earlier this year, where Mr. Cawood had become president of FSA, an association management firm in 2007.

Mr. Cawood was inducted into the Halls of Fame for the College Sports information Directors of America and the United States Basketball Writers Association.

Mr. Cawood was a graduate of Harlan High School. He earned his bachelor's degree at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He was sports information director at Eastern Kentucky and Morehead State universities, Baylor, Southern Methodist University and at the University of Arkansas before he joined the NCAA staff.

Mr. Cawood and his wife had a son, Jeff Cawood, a television producer for Fox Sports in Los Angeles.

Services for Mr. Cawood will be at 2 p.m. Wednesday at Harlan Baptist Church, 305 Mound Street, Harlan.

Visitation will be at the church from 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesday and 1 to 2 p.m. Wednesday.

For the NCAA's obituary of Mr. Cawood, go to [www.ncaa.org/wps/portal](http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal).

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Reach Art Jester at (859) 231-3489 or 1-800-950-6397, ext. 3489.

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