John Wooden

"Be more concerned with your character than your reputation. Character is what you really are, reputation is what people say you are."

John Wooden (1910-2010) is considered to be one of the greatest coaches in sports history. Born on an Indiana farm with no electricity, he worked hard for an education and became an All-American basketball player at Purdue University. He was a high school teacher until, after serving in the US Navy during World War II, he started coaching college basketball. In 1947, his team qualified for a prestigious postseason tournament, but he rejected the invitation because the competition banned black players. The next year, Coach Wooden took over a weak UCLA basketball program and began the process of turning it into the greatest sports dynasty ever. Emphasizing discipline and character over basketball talent, his teams were both fierce competitors and great sportsmen. The results speak for themselves. From 1964 to 1973, UCLA won 9 NCAA championships in the span of a decade, including a win streak of 88 consecutive games. Some of the greatest basketball players ever such as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar name him as the most important influence on their lives. Aside from these incredible achievements, Coach Wooden's reach went well beyond sports. His "Pyramid of Success" became a staple of leadership training for its effectiveness in identifying the values critical for success in any endeavor. Beloved by his players and everyone who had the privilege to know him, Coach Wooden's Christian faith was at the center of everything he did. After retiring in 1975, he continued to be a mentor and role model for many. In 2003, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honor. He passed away in 2010, a few months short of his 100th birthday.

John Wooden is remembered for more than just victories on the court. His intensity, kindness, and faith created a lasting legacy that is still felt to this day, and we honor the incredible positive impact he has had on others.