

# Thompson, John (1941-) Encyclopedia Article

## Thompson, John (1941-)

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## Thompson, John (1941—)

Olympic and college basketball coach John Thompson, Jr. became the first African American to guide an NCAA championship basketball team in 1984. Thompson led the Georgetown University Hoyas team from 1972-1999. Thompson turned around Georgetown's abysmal record, making it a national powerhouse in the Big East Conference that he helped to charter in 1979. Under his leadership, the team compiled 24 consecutive victorious seasons (excluding his first year there), beating its opponents in more than 70 percent of its games. Thompson's college athletes were known for their aggressive playing styles as well as for their commitment to academic achievement at their elite Catholic institution. The coach supervised both his players' scholarly progress as well as their outside friendships, rescuing some stars from the bad influence of drug dealers. Thompson's shoulder-resting trademark towel that he used on court to wipe away his perspiration symbolized his hard-driven temperament. But he also kept a deflated basketball on his desk as a symbol to Georgetown players that there should be more to their lives than the game.

### Further Reading:

Porter, David L., editor. *African-American Sports Greats: A Biographical Dictionary*. Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1995.

———. *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports: Basketball and Other Indoor Sports*. Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1989.

Shapiro, Leonard. *Big Man on Campus: John Thompson and the Georgetown Hoyas*. New York, Henry Holt, 1991.