Arnett William [“Ace”] Mumford born in Buckhannon, West Virginia. Graduated from Wilberforce University in Zenia, Ohio with a Bachelor of Arts degree and later received his Masters from the University of Southern California.

His coaching career stretched across thirty-one years and four institutions. His coaching duties began in 1925 at Jarvis Christian College, Jarvis, Texas, where he remained for three years. From Jarvis he went to Bishop College, Marshall, Texas, for three years; from Bishop to Texas College, Tyler, Texas, for five years before coming to Southern University in 1936 with a former Texas College guard named Emory Hines.

Mumford got the name “Ace” after the birth of his son and two daughters. One reason was to distinguish between he and his son and the other reason was because his friends and family considered him to be an Ace in the hole. He was married to the former Vernelle Hendricks of Taylor, Texas. Mrs. Mumford is a graduate of Southern University and was a teacher in the public school system of East Baton Rouge Parish. To their union were three children: Mrs. Gwendolyn M. Stewart, a graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles, Irene, a graduate of Southern University and Arnett Jr.

His career at Southern can be compared to the deliberate and methodical flow of the Mississippi River, which “bathes” the East Baton Rouge Campus. His 1936 team went a sorry 2-5-2 record and the next year in 1937 he struggled to break even with a record of 4-4-1. After that, he was in command.

Mumford compiled an outstanding record at Southern. He directed the Southern University Jaguar Cats to second place Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) Standing in 1951, 1952 and 1953; SWAC Co-Championship, 1938 and 1940; SWAC Conference Championship, 1946, 1947 and 1955; National Championship, 1948, 1949, 1950 and shared National Championship with three other teams in 1954. He has produced many of the outstanding coaches in Louisiana and other Southern States. During his tenure at Southern, he has produced over thirty “All-Americans.”

In life, Mumford was dynamic. He believed in preparing his kids well for football and for life. He wanted them to be fit for making a contribution to life and consequently, he wanted them to be educated.

Mumford and his players didn’t get the press they deserved because black schools weren’t journalistically covered in the manner white schools were. When black schools finally crowded the pros in the early 1960s, black schools seemed to emerge from the back-of-the-bus era in coverage.
Lack of press coverage didn’t hamper Mumford. When he couldn’t officially learn more football at national coaches meetings because of his race, he would visit the hotels where the major coaches were staying for the All-Star Game. There he would pick some of the finest minds in the country.

Glen “Pop” Warner shared a lot of football secrets with Mumford. “I’m telling you all this,” Warner said, “because I know I’ll never be playing you.”

Mumford was also head of the Physical Education Department at Southern. From 1936 to 1961 Mumford coached 25 seasons. Southern didn’t have a team in 1943. For a number of years, he coached basketball, baseball and Track and Field. Southern’s National Cagers of the early forties were tutored by Mumford. His dribblers of 1943, the last hardwood team he directed, breezed through the entire conference with ease to win the circuit’s title. However, in 1941, he coached Southern University to the first National Basketball Championship given to Negroes in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Mumford’s lifetime football record in 36 years was 235 wins, 82 losses, 25 ties, 11 Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) titles, and 4 Black National Championships. From 1947 to 1950, his men had four successive undefeated seasons and went 42-0-3 in 45 games over that span. In 1948 the Jaguars were a perfect 12-0-0, including an 18-0 conquest over Grambling.

In addition to coaching duties, Mumford was active in many organizations, among which were:

- American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation
- American Football Coaches Association
- Coaches Association of The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
- Louisiana Interscholastic Athletic and Literary Association (LIALA), Athletic Director
- National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), Executive Committee
- Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) Track and Field and Tennis Championship Director
- Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC), [President, three years]
- The American Tennis Association, Gulf Coast Field Secretary
- The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)
- The National Basketball Tournament Committee

Southern University honors Mumford

The Southern University football stadium was renovated in 1981. It is built beside the entrance to Southern’s campus. The seating capacity is 24,000 and cost $9,209,000. Constructed from concrete, the Mumford stadium was under construction for five years and during those five years the Southern University football team played at Memorial Stadium in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Southern’s football facility, previously called University Stadium, was renamed A. W. Mumford Stadium on September 25, 1982.
In September, 2009, Southern completed work on its $17.5 million Field House. The facility, attached to the north end zone of A.W. Mumford Stadium, which houses football operations — along with amenities for several other sports. The filed house includes a Hall of Champions, updated locker facilities, players’ lounge, state-of-the-art video conferencing room, individual coaching offices, and media spaces. The upgrade makes the stadium sparkle with a modernity that’s hard to find throughout the majority of Southern’s campus. The new addition adds approximately 2,500 additional seats to the stadium. The Field House is named after the famed A.W. Mumford.

Coach Mumford died in the spring of 1962 at the age of 64. He had compiled a record of 169 wins, 57 losses and 14 ties at Southern and had served as football, basketball and track coach. Since 1936 Southern’s football team won 4 national titles, shared one national co-championship; captured 7 SWAC titles, and 3 conference co-championship. In 1948, Mumford was inducted into the Louisiana Sports Hall of fame and in 1988 enshrined into the Southern University Sports Hall of Fame (SUSHOF).

Arnett William Mumford, [collection]. Archives and Manuscripts Department, John B. Cade Library, Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.


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