

Magnificent Seven, part 3 of 7

Swanson steps up to greater role

Motivation
is her game

by Nick Haley

For the Lady Rebel infielder Erika Swanson, deciding on UNLV had little to do with the reputation of the softball team. Before coming to UNLV, she had never met the coach and knew little about the program.

She joined the team as a walk-on in 1989 but quickly became the starting second baseman. Since then, she has seen action as the designated player and in her senior year has become the starting third baseman.

Being the softball team's motivator, Swanson is concerned with keeping confidence levels high. She would like to see herself improve at bunting and cut down on strikeouts. She believes the incoming freshman have added life to the team and help to break up the complac-

ency. The Lady Rebels' greatest challenge, she said, is not preparing for the big games, but taking care of the easier games.

"The important thing for us is not worrying about the big teams, but getting by the easier teams," Swanson said.

Like her teammates, Swanson is hopeful about this year's team. She said the team knows it has the talent, but doesn't always live up to it. Their success, she believes, comes down to improving their consistency.

"If we accomplish our goals, then I think we'll be at that final game," she said.

Unlike many members of the team, however, she is not entirely confident that the Lady Rebels will be there. Swanson said any team, can beat any other team in the NCAA playoffs.

Last year, she was second on the team with a .324 slugging percentage, hitting four doubles in only 71 appearances at the plate. She is currently list-

ed as the team's utility player. Her most important function on the team, however, is "to keep the intensity level high."

Swanson first took up softball at the age of six, when she lived in Florida. Her family was a strong influence on her, her sister playing softball as well and her dad being an ex-baseball player.

She picked up fast-pitch softball in the ninth grade, when she played catcher and infield for Shaker Heights High School in Ohio. Other than softball, she lettered in basketball and volleyball.

Swanson, a business major, is scheduled to graduate on time in May. She hopes to find work in the airlines and travel abroad. After school, she believes she will move back to the East Coast, either to Virginia or Florida.

Though she would like to retire the glove at the end of the season for a few years, she says she will keep playing the sport for life—on a recreational level.

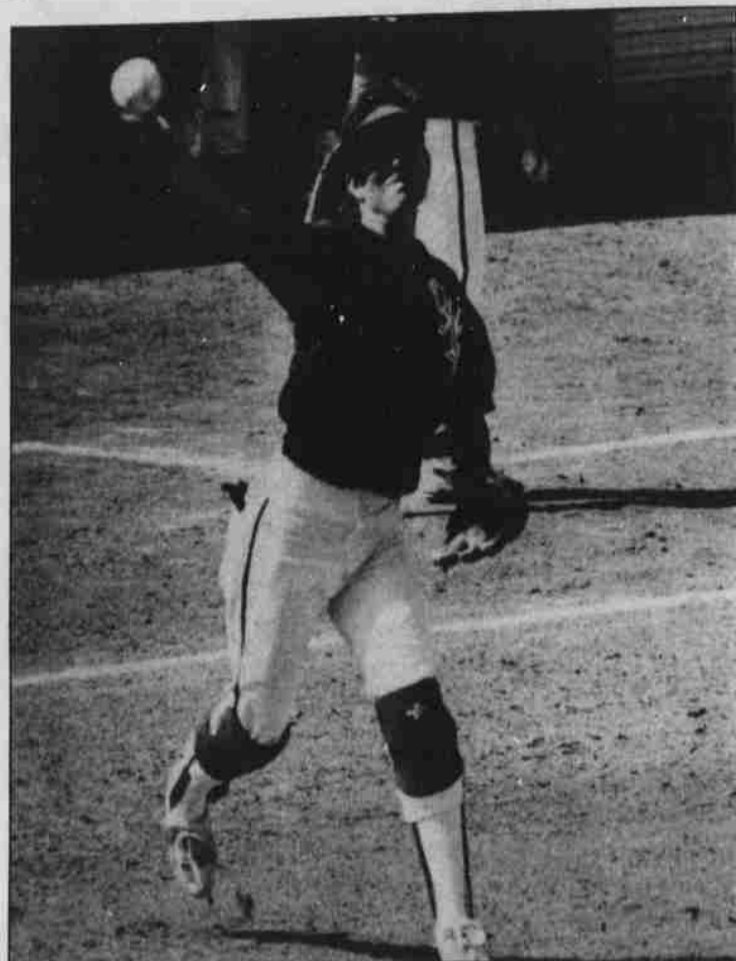


photo by Wray Halterman

Senior third baseman Erika Swanson is the Lady Rebels' motivator.

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score came in the fourth, when Jill Brent of Missouri led off the inning with a hit. Brent promptly stole next two bases, giving the Tigers a runner at third with no outs. But UNLV catcher Felicia Benjamins caught Brent as she ran home on a hit by Missouri's Kellie

Leach.

The only run of the game came in the extra inning. Left fielder Kenda Leffler reached first off a Tiger infielder's error, then stole second. With two outs in the bottom of the eighth, second baseman Tricia Reimche drove deep, allowing Leffler to

round third and score the winning run.

UNLV is now 17-8 overall. The Lady Rebels begin action today at the Cal State Fullerton Pony Tournament. Their next home game is scheduled for April 2 at 1 p.m. against Cal Poly Pomona.

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