



PHOTO BY PAUL GUTIERREZ

J.R. Rider is preparing for the June 28 NBA draft.

Rider ready to put the past behind him

BY PAUL GUTIERREZ

Commentary

The squeaking of sneakers turning on the hardwood is unmistakable. The sound of the ball bouncing on the court in perfect rhythm is only interrupted by the sudden swoosh of a rim being yanked down by a thunderous dunk and the accompanying yell.

Players are running up and down the court in an effort to put the ball through the metal cylinder more times than their opponent. It is the North Gym on campus, site of some of the most

outrageous hoops in the land. A game less disciplined than the one seen in the collegiate ranks, yet more tame than those seen on the playground.

Suddenly, a familiar figure emerges from the entrance to the gym. He's wearing baggy shorts and an equally baggy T-shirt to go along with his thick rope-chain. But something is pleasantly different about J.R. Rider. Gone is the scowl that accompanied him throughout the last month of the season as are the heavy lids and moist eyes he carried with him in his press conference two days after being declared ineligible by university officials.

The basketball court is his sanctuary, a place where he can do one of his favorite things in the world and no one will question him. A place where he can excel and have no one to blame, or praise, but himself. He is at home in the gym, playing keep-away from a child as he brings a smile to himself and to the kid. Although he does not participate in the competitive phase of the pick-up games, he does shoot the rock from a distance that equals NBA three-point

range and makes most of them.

Yes, the last month of the season took its toll on Rider, a month which saw his very soul on display for all to see. But as far as he's concerned, it's all in the past.

"I really don't want to talk about that stuff," he said when asked about his

feelings on the turmoil that accompanied his final year at UNLV and a possible lawsuit.

"That's all over and done with."

J.R. Rider

And so are, apparently, his school days at the university as he works out in preparation for the NBA draft in June.

Despite all the bitterness and contempt he feels inside, a point he made painfully clear in his conference, Rider is indeed looking to the future.

"I really haven't heard from any teams yet," he said about the upcoming draft. "But I should within the next two weeks."

His winning of the collegiate slam-dunk contest two weekends ago only solidified his chances at being a lottery pick, he said.

"It was a good opportunity to showcase," is how he put it.

Rider has indeed been in the showcase for all to see, yet he has weathered the storm, deserved or not. The young man whose name has become synonymous with academic fraud in college athletics was then ready. Ready to go back into his own little world, the safety of his sanctuary, and shoot jumpers.

— Paul Gutierrez is sports editor of The Rebel Yell.

Lady Rebs sweep doubleheader

Sophomore Cyndi Parus sets new RBI record with seven in 14-2 win.

BY NICK HALEY
STAFF WRITER

Just when the rigors of travel were beginning to set in, the seventh-ranked UNLV softball team has finally come home.

The Lady Rebels rebounded from a four-game series at Utah State, in which they lost three, by sweeping Pacific on Tuesday 14-2 and 4-3.

"Utah State did a good job, they hit the ball well off us," head softball coach Shan McDonald said. "You can't think you can walk in there and sweep them."

Pacific can now say the same of UNLV. Last year's Big West cellar-dwellers lost the first game after a 12-run mercy rule ended the game in five innings.

Of UNLV's 14 runs, half were batted in by sophomore first baseman Cyndi Parus. Batting 3-for-4 in the opener, Parus broke the previous RBI record of five. On defense, she contributed 14 put-outs.

Ace pitcher Kim Smith (14-2) won the opener. Though she allowed only four hits, one was a home run by Tiger first baseman Anne Bishop in the first inning, only the third ever seen at Rebel Diamond. Though Smith allowed two earned runs, she compensated her team by batting 2 of 3 with two RBIs.

"We've always known Kim had the potential to be a great hitter," McDonald said. "And now lately, she's had the confidence behind her."

Fortunately for the Lady Rebels, Smith's confidence lingered into the early evening.

Sophomore pitcher Amie Stewart, who threw a near-flawless game going into the fourth with a 2-0 lead, was suddenly barraged by a string of Tiger hits. She finished the inning, but not before giving up three runs, two of them earned, and the lead in the ball game.

Smith was called in to rescue the ballgame and succeeded. A clutch RBI from freshman outfielder Sara Mallett in the sixth



PHOTO BY PAUL GUTIERREZ

Kim Smith picked up both wins on the hill Tuesday against Pacific.

Neon-colored ball improves offense

Probably the most obvious change in college softball this year has been the introduction of a new neon-yellow ball. While the ball is the same as before in other aspects, UNLV softball coach Shan McDonald said it has changed noticeably in the stat boxes.

"They (NCAA) want to get more hitting in the game," McDonald said. "This (the new ball) is supposed to make ERA's go up...and it has."

While it's hard to determine just how much it improves offense, McDonald has noticed a sharp increase in scoring from last year.

"It's as hard as a rock and it's very lively" she said.

— Nick Haley

sent the game into extra innings. Pitching ten innings on the day, Smith only got better as the game wore on. Throwing a pair of strikeouts in the extra frames,

Smith set up the Lady Rebels' sweep from the plate as well.

McDonald said: "Kim has been

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Phorget the rest, Phillies are best

BY JAY SAPOVITS

The Phillies are not the hottest team in the National League—they're the best.

After eight games the Phillies have the leader in 7 of 11 offensive categories. Those are RBI, home runs, doubles, runs scored, stolen bases, total bases and slugging percentage.

Also, the pitching staff has leaders in 5 of 8 categories. Those include ERA, victories, saves, complete games and shutouts.

To say it's early is true, but do you remember the last team to phalter early and win the division?

Remember when the Reds won 13 straight in 1990 and never looked back?

Street and Smith magazine picked the Phillies to finish in last place this season, behind the Florida Marlins.

Bill Mazerowski's *Baseball Preview* graded the batting order and pitching staff a 5 of 10.

Why are these people

Commentary

pharical?

They phailed to accept the phact the Phillies are a complete team.

Instead, like others, said, "oh, they're always hurt."

Phorget about phelicitously intended reasons and listen to the phacts—I know them.

They have the best batting order in the National League. Think about standing on the mound against John Kruk a .300 hitter last year, knowing Dave Hollins, last year's leader in runs scored, is on deck. Now imagine that Darren Daulton, last year's RBI leader with 109, is up after that. Then Milt Thompson, a lifetime .300 hitter, waits to bat after him.

Don't phorget about Lenny Dykstra. He is the embodiment of the Phillies attitude. As the phirst batter of the game the opposing pitchers generally show their best pitches. If they don't, Dykstra gets on base. If

they do then the Gashouse Gorillas waiting in the dugout can gear up for their at-bat. It creates a tremendous advantage as a team having a great phirst hitter.

Terry Mulholland is as good a left-hander as there is. Curt Schilling is showing the same as a right-hander. These are not unproven pitchers.

Last season Mulholland and Schilling won over 10 games.

Two years ago Tommy Greene won 13 games. Last season he had shoulder surgery. Phacing the Cincinnati Reds earlier this week Greene threw seven innings allowing one run on two hits. He phanned eight batters while only surrendering one phree pass. Recovered?

A middle reliever is a pitcher who isn't good enough to start and not good enough to phinish. Jose (Ponce) DeLeon, an off-season aquisition, is already 2-0. How's that phor

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