

APRIL 16, 1996

## Commentary

New look  
working for  
Rebel softball

What a difference a year makes.

Last season the Rebel softball team went 49-14, 27-5 in the Big West and ran away with the conference.

They went to the regional finals and three of four to advance to the College World Series. They finished third at the series,

defeating Princeton and Southwestern Louisiana before falling to the eventual champions, University of Arizona, 8-0.

During the season, the squad broke or tied 32 UNLV records along with 11 career records. They had a 15-game winning streak, which led to tying the best season record UNLV softball has ever had, with 49 wins.

Five players were named to the All-America team, including Cyn-di Parus and Kim Rondina who earn first-team recognition.

The Rebels used the eight-run mercy rule mercilessly, winning by eight or more 11 times and taking advantage of times when they could move up in the ranks by beating teams like Utah, Michigan, Cal State Fullerton and Southwestern Louisiana, all of which were top 10 teams when the Rebels got a hold of them.

They had 18 shutouts over the course of 63 games, had 15 wins away from Rebel Diamond and were 21-5 when playing at home.

Currently they are mired in fourth place, but just 2 1/2 games back of Long Beach State who took three of four games from the Rebels last week. Coming up, the Rebels will be facing just one team who is above .500 against BWC opponents, that being Cal State Fullerton.

As a team, the Rebels have been hitting at about the .265 mark for most of the season, but that has dipped down to .259 this week. Opponents, on the other hand, have been hitting .286 against the Rebels pitching staff.

The pitching staff looked to be the one huge question mark after Amie Stewart graduated last season. Stewart, a junkball specialist, fin-

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Off the  
Bench

MICHAEL  
MELISSA

## Pitching keeps softball in games

BY RAY BREWER  
SPORTS STAFF WRITER

Last season the Rebel softball team won the Big West Conference title with an impressive 27-5 conference record. This season has been a totally different story.

The Rebels have started to slide down the Big West standings, not meeting up to pre-season expectations.

Their conference record became worse this weekend, as they dropped a double-header to the University of Pacific on Sunday, giving them a 13-9 BWC record.

These consecutive defeats mark the second time in the last three home series that UNLV has been swept. It was not until last Wednesday that the Rebels dropped a double-header at home since the 1991 campaign.

"Despite losing some recent games, they (UNLV) are one of the three or four dominating teams in the conference," San Jose State head coach Debbie Nelson said after her team was swept by the Rebels on Saturday.

Going into the San Jose



PHOTO BY MIKE LACY

Kim Rondina runs down an SJSU grounder in the first inning of Saturday's game.

State series, the Rebels had dropped six of their last eight contests on the road. It seemed as if the squad's current slump was over when they pounded San Jose State 5-0 and 14-6.

In the 5-0 victory, Teresa Branch threw a complete game shut-out, improving her record to 18-8 for the season. She struck out the last two Spartan batters to close out the win.

"Pitching is the most impor-

tant thing to our team," catcher Heather Siegal said. "Pitching keeps us in the game."

Siegal, the back-up catcher, has been platooning with regular catcher Julie Crandall behind the plate. The starting line-up has been altered since freshman first baseman Audrey Munoz injured her leg on the last road trip.

"I'm in the game no matter what," an enthusiastic Crandall said.

And in the game she was, leading a Rebel second inning rally that saw the team bat around the order in the second contest.

After a two-run double by Crandall, shortstop Kim Rondina walked, and Siegal had an RBI single.

Then Heather Markowitz came up with the bases packed and ripped a double into the

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## Rebel tennis splits weekend match-ups

Lady Rebels  
continue five-game  
losing streak

BY JEREMY MARTIN  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The 20th-ranked UNLV men's tennis team split a pair of weekend matches but No. 8-ranked Roger Pettersson continued his tear, winning his 16th consecutive match at the No. 1 singles spot.

The Rebels took on unranked University of Oregon at the Fertitta Tennis Com-

plex on Friday and claimed a 7-0 shutout that was highlighted by Pettersson's 15th straight win.

The 8th-ranked Rebel swinger improved his season record to 23-4 by defeating UO's Dougal Williams in straight sets, 6-1, 6-1.

At the No. 2 singles spot, 34th-ranked Luke Smith also won in straight sets. He knocked off Hans Forsberg, 6-3, 6-1.

Tim Blenkiron, Asaf Tishler, Rob Howarth and Dominic Boulet all won at their respective singles spots. UO's only win of the day came in doubles play where the team of Carlos Navarro and Miguel Arriaga defeated Howarth and Bou-

let, 8-6.

The Rebels were not so lucky on Sunday. The 44th-ranked Texas Tech Red Raiders came into the FTC and came away with an upset win. UNLV won two singles matches and swept doubles but fell to the Red Raiders, 4-3.

Pettersson claimed his 16th straight at No. 1 when he defeated Dieter Schwendinger in another impressive showing, 6-0, 6-1.

Blenkiron was the other winner at No. 4 singles. He beat Ryan Hines in three sets, 4-6, 7-5, 7-5.

No. 34 Smith was upset by Tech's Petar Danolic, also in three sets, 6-7, 6-4, 6-2.

The Rebels will be back in

action April 26 at the opening round of the Big West Conference Championships in Ojai, Calif.

The 49th-ranked Lady Rebels continued their plunge into the depths of the unranked with their fifth loss in as many matches on Wednesday. Arizona State, ranked 29th nationally, handed the Lady Rebels a 5-1 loss on their home court.

UNLV's lone point came when 15th-ranked Marianne Vallin rallied from a first-set loss to defeat No. 36 Reka Cseresnyes at No. 1 singles.

The Lady Rebels fell to 8-12 on the season and finish out the season on April 20 at home against San Diego State.

## Where are they now?

## Located: Robert Smith, Rebel basketball 1974-77

BY RAY BREWER  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The "hard-way eight" was the nickname given to the group of 1977 Rebel basketball players that had a record of 29-3 and earned the school's first trip to the NCAA Final Four.

They established NCAA records for most points in one season (3,426), most 100-point games (23), and most consecutive 100-point games with 12. And this was before the NCAA adopted the three-point field goal.

One of the leaders of this record setting team was guard Robert Smith, who is the UNLV career leader in field-percentage with .878.

"Being a member of that particular team was a very exciting experience," Smith said. "We were like a family, and had good chemistry to-



Robert Smith

gether. It gives me chills when I think of time we had together."

Smith lettered in basketball from 1974-

77, and in 1977, he led the nation in free-throw shooting.

"Everybody had a role on the team, and mine was foul shooting," Smith said. "I worked hard in practice, shooting 50 to 100 shoots a day."

Almost 20 years after his memorable run with the Runnin' Rebs, Smith's memories of his playing days are as clear as ever. Smith recalls the UNLV defeat of the University of San Francisco in the first round of the NCAA tournament in 1977 as his fondest

moment as a Rebel.

"USF was ranked number one at the time, it was the best game we played as Rebels," Smith remembers.

After completing his tenure with UNLV, Smith was one of eight players from his Final Four team to be drafted into the NBA.

The Rebel star was drafted by the Denver Nuggets in the third round and played in the mile high city for two years.

He was then traded around the NBA for another three years, before resurfacing in the CBA.

"It felt good to make it the NBA because a lot of people were saying I would not make it because of my size," the 5-foot-9 Smith explained.

After five years of professional basketball in the States, Smith took his game to France where he played for seven years.

The most notable of these years was 1990, when his team won the French championship. He was the point guard and second leading scorer on that team.

When his playing days were over, Smith landed another job in basketball, this time not as a player, but as a coach at Bishop Gorman High School.

Smith relates his basketball experience to the players on the team.

"I tell them to work hard everyday and it will payoff in the end," Smith said.

As for the current Rebels, Smith believes that they are on the right track to return to college basketball prosperity.

As he continues to improve the game of basketball, Smith can always glance back to the days when he thrilled local fans as a member of the Runnin' Rebels.