

Hustlin' Rebs to face UOP in three-game series

UNLV baseball has won seven of last eight

BY MICHAEL MELISSA
SPORTS EDITOR

The UNLV baseball team will continue its six-game road trip this weekend with a three-game series against the University of Pacific at Bill Hebert Stadium on the UOP campus in Stockton, Calif.

The Rebels (34-12) are third in the Big West Conference with an 8-4 record and have won seven of their last eight games. Their latest victims were No. 24 UC Santa Barbara, with the Rebels taking two of three games from the Gauchos.

The Rebels lost the finale 5-2, but took the first two in the set, 22-4 and 7-4.

The Rebels also slipped into the top 25 of Baseball America's polls this week, ranked 21st in the nation. Their rise in the polls could be attributed to UNLV's sweep of then-first-place Long Beach State and UC Santa Barbara.

Overall, the Rebels are 27-17 against UOP and took two of three games from them last season at Earl E. Wilson Stadium.

While the Rebels have been one of the hotter teams in the BWC, the Tigers have had trouble against teams in their own conference. They are 3-9 in the BWC this season, but

are currently riding a three-game winning streak into this weekend's battle. They swept a three-game series in San Jose, beating the Spartans 4-3, 15-8 and 9-4 over the weekend.

Besides a three-game sweep from the hands of top-ranked Cal State Fullerton, the Rebels have dominated in the conference. They swept SJSU and LBSU at home, and came away from UCSB with two more BWC wins.

In the conference UNLV is batting .361 with 105 runs, 16 home runs and 101 RBIs on the year. From the mound the Rebels have an ERA of 5.74 with 76 strikeouts and 48 walks, opponents are also batting .308 against the Rebel pitching staff.

Look for Tom LaRosa to start the first game for the Rebels. LaRosa leads the team in ERA with a 3.47 with 69 strikeouts to 38 walks. Tista Perri will likely follow on the second day, taking a 7-3 record into Pacific. The third starter, which has been somewhat of a platoon spot this season, may feature either Chad Barry or Nate Yeskie.

At the plate, the Rebels have been paced by freshman first baseman Kevin Eberwein, who leads the team in batting average (.405) and doubles (17). He also has nine homers on the year, along with 42 RBIs and 42 runs scored.

Also adding some punch to an already potent offense are Scott Vincent (.395, 12 HRs, 57 RBIs) and All-American Freshman First Teamer Ryan Hankins (.388, 10, 49).

The Rebels will be home April 26-28 to face UNR in the final home stand of the season.

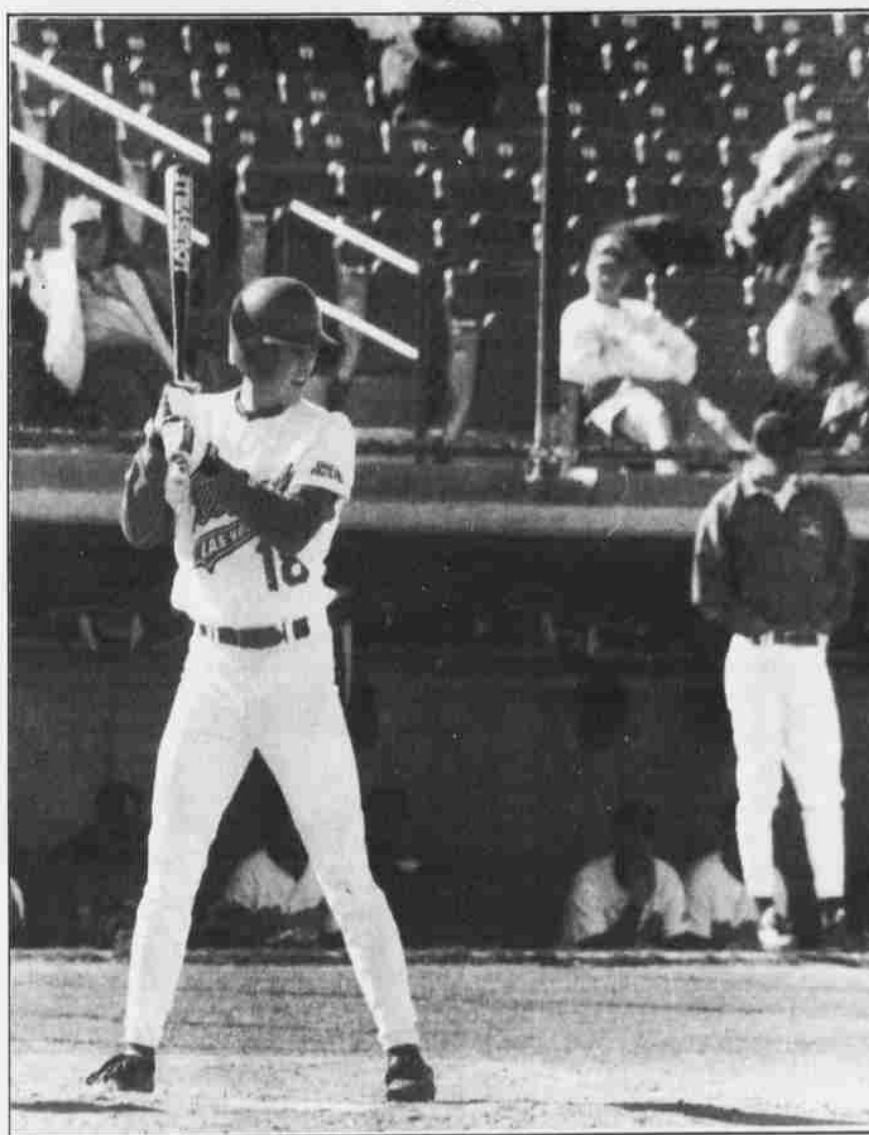


PHOTO BY MIKE LACY

Catcher Stacy Kleiner is among the team leaders in many offensive categories and is looking to improve them this weekend against UOP.

Homer

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er Tanya Edwards, giving Fullerton a quick 1-0 lead.

The Rebels' bats were silent for the first three innings.

Then in the top half of the fourth inning, things got wacky.

Edwards hit the lead off batter with a pitch. Then, after walking two other batters combined with three Heather Siegal pass balls and a Rondina error, the Rebels were down 4-0.

With the bases loaded, short-stop Rondina let a routine grounder go through her legs,

scoring two more Titans.

The next pitch went off of Siegal's mitt, and the fourth Titan run crossed the plate.

At the plate, UNLV was the victim of strong Titan defense and pitching. Every time they made contact it was either a hard-shot that was caught by an outfielder, or a lazy fly-out.

Finally, the hard-hit shots found a place to land in the Titan defensive placement.

Still behind by four with two batters already retired in the bottom of the fifth, the Rebels broke through.

Right-fielder Ronnie Salcido and Mallett had consecutive singles, followed by an Alves two-run double. Still down two, first baseman Julie

Crandall singled in Alves, which set up Rondina, who promptly responded.

Rondina hit her eighth home run of the year, to give UNLV their first lead of the game, 5-4.

The two-out rally saw the Rebels get five runs on five

hits, capped off by the UNLV career-leader in home runs, Rondina, hitting the game winning dinger.

Branch held off Fullerton in relief, striking out three to earn her second win of the afternoon.

This come-from-behind vic-

tory is just what the Rebels needed to propel them into the last part of the season.

The Rebels will take the diamond next on Saturday against New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, N.M., in a BWC doubleheader.

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