

Bench

from pg. 8

won three tournaments during the season, and came in second two other times. In each of those wins, the Rebels had to battle back to win the tournaments. And in the case of the IGT Rebel Classic, it was a 14-stroke deficit they had to overcome.

Last season, the UNLV softball team finished third at the College World Series. They ran away with the BWC crown and dominated in just about every facet of the game.

This season is not too much different, except for the fact they are third place in the BWC, but are ranked 11th in the country. Perhaps their difficulties this season could be a result of playing eight ranked teams and losing some key players from last year's squad.

So once those players graduated, coach Shan McDonald had to go on a quest for replacements. Those new fixtures out there have helped the Rebels keep atop most of the competition.

The freshmen have been the biggest surprise for McDonald this season, with all four starting in the field and helping out the squad in one area or another.

Baseball has been on a steady rise up from the doldrums they experienced two and three years ago, where both years the Hustlin' Rebs were a game under .500 and did not make the playoffs. This season, however, the Boys of Spring have reached the 30-win plateau (for those of you scoring at home, that's 19 times the Rebs have made that mark), and now have their collective eye staring at that 40-win mountain (something they haven't reached since 1989).

You remember back when the Yankees had a lineup that featured some guy name Babe Ruth, some other schmoe named Lou Gehrig, this other knucklehead they called Tony Lazzerra and another schmuck named Bob Meusel (all of which are in Hall of Fame)? They called them murderer's row.

Kind of catchy, huh?

If they were in Las Vegas, the murderer's row would look

a little different. You would have a kid named Ryan Hankins, another named Stacy Kleiner, this other kid they call Brian Anthony and mix in this freshman from Green Valley High School (hey, that's right down the road from here, ain't it?) we'll call Kevin Eberwein for now.

That's been the key to the Rebs success this season. Offense, offense, offense, and once in awhile some good pitching.

A 32-game home stand may have also helped the Rebels this season, but that's only an incidental fact.

Now we've got tennis, probably the most underrated sport at this fine higher learning facility we all lovingly call UNLV. Tennis isn't exactly the lifeblood sport of UNLV, but

they do turn out some quality players and have stayed competitive in the Tennis-rich BWC.

Although they struggled last season, the men's team was still able to capture the BWC title by upsetting UC Irvine last season (kind of a re-enactment of the season before where they took UCI for their first-ever BWC championship).

The Nettin' Rebs currently have the No. 8 player in the country (Roger Pettersson) as well as Mr. No. 34 (Luke Smith).

The women's tennis squad has experienced a bit of a set back this season. They've dropped five straight matches, yet they are still ranked, albeit 49th out of 50. But although they may struggle,

their top player, Marianne Vallin, keeps plugging away and racks up the wins. The 15th-ranked player in the country has bested some higher ranked players this season, including her crown gem of the year, the top-ranked player in the nation.

Who knows, though? Maybe

next season the Bench will be yapping about all those Fall teams being ranked.

It could happen. It probably won't, but it could happen.

Michael Melissa is the Sports Editor at *The Rebel Yell*.

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