

# Nevada's

## record setting season

**By Lisa Knight**

RENO, NV – Nevada softball hasn't exactly been the most talked about in years passed. In fact, for 14 years until 2003, Nevada softball wasn't talked about at all. After a leave of absence, the Wolf Pack has slowly been making a comeback on the field, and this season has been one of the best to follow in a long time.

Wolf Pack catcher, Ashley Nichleman said, "This was the most successful season we've had since the program was reinstated." Perhaps due to the new playing field or the help from a professional baseball player, the Nevada Wolf Pack has been surprising coaches, fans and the university alike. Head Coach Michelle Gardner is in her sixth year with the Wolf Pack. Though her record as of 2007 isn't strong (143-158), she has stuck with the team since its resurrection to get it where it sits today. The Pack finished 44-18 and ranked 20 on the USA Today poll. Not only did they win more games than can be remembered, but they actually made the Polls on more than one occasion this spring. (If anything, the Pack received few votes during past seasons). Among the team's list of firsts, catcher Noelle Micka was named to the NFCA All-American team. Nevada has never had a player named to the All-American team.

At the end of the 2007 season, the Nevada Wolf Pack finished 28-21 and fourth in the Western Athletic Conference. That was marginal, and expected. This year, Softball West Magazine is kicking itself for not considering more to have included the Pack in its own top-10 collegiate poll. Though Nevada hasn't been the best of teams in the past, Nichleman said at the beginning of every season the team gets together and sets goals - and of course always hope to win the Women's College World Series. This year she said, "We definitely expected to win the conference." And a lot of their attitude and success Nichleman credits to their volunteer hitting coach.

The brand new Christina M. Hixson Softball Park has been heaven for the team as they play on exceptional facilities. And joining Coach Gardner and assistants Melanie Meuchel and Annie Stevens is volunteer hitting coach, Andy Dominique. Dominique was a starter for the Nevada Baseball team before he played for the Boston Red Sox in 2004. "Andy contributed a lot. He gave us a different perspective and attitude towards the game," Nichleman said. With the help of a professional and an awesome park, this may have been the key for Nevada's more than successful season.

Nichleman also would add that Nevada's win against the University of Arizona helped contribute to their successful season as well. "It was really exciting to win that game. It gave us the confidence we needed for the rest of the season." So, next year, SWM will pay more attention to the placement of Nevada in its collegiate poll.

**Softball West Magazine • June 2008**



Above: Katie Holverson finished the season with a 22-6 record and a 2.26 ERA. Left: Head Coach Michelle Gardner led the team to an amazing 44-18 season record. Below: Tyler Schafer lays down a bunt for Nevada in a game against UNLV.

