



# SOFTBALL HISTORY

Softball and Arizona State University. In a state where softball is a passion with fans and participants alike, it should come as no surprise that Arizona State softball has a tradition and history that is the envy of collegiate programs across the country. The marriage of sport and school is a happy union, with the honeymoon now stretching into its 33rd year.

The first Sun Devil softball squad took the field in 1967. Right from the start, winning became a habit. By 1971 the team compiled a 12-2 mark and advanced to the College World Series where it placed fourth. By 1972, head coach Mary Littlewood's project of building a softball powerhouse had reached completion with a 13-1 record and the first of two consecutive national championships. The 1973 Sun Devils took excellence a step further with a perfect 13-0 mark. In between titles, Littlewood's Sun Devils defeated a squad from Japan, four games to one for a mythical world championship.

1975 marked ASU's debut in the Intermountain Conference, and the first of two successive conference championships. 1976 also marked a return to the College World Series, where the Devils posted a fourth-place finish, repeating that feat in 1977.

1978 and 1979 saw the Devils take successive ninth-place finishes at the CWS. The following year (1980) produced another conference championship.

ASU returned to the Series in 1982. A 39-win season led to a fourth-place showing. Since 1982 the Sun Devils have made 10 appearances in NCAA post-season play.

In 20 seasons, Littlewood posted 502 wins against 228 losses, two national championships, nine College World Series appearances and 13 trips to post-season play. In addition, she produced six All-Americans. Her accomplishments have earned Littlewood a spot in the prestigious Arizona State University Sports Hall of Distinction.

Now in the fourth decade of Sun Devil softball, ASU's fortunes are guided by tenth-year head coach Linda Wells, who came to Tempe following a 15-year coaching career at the University of Minnesota. In nine seasons, Wells has a record of 302-243 with five NCAA Regional appearances.

The top name in ASU pitching annals is Lucy Casarez. Seventeen years after her career ended, Casarez continues to hold the Sun Devil career record for wins (81) and strikeouts (806). Her career earned-run average of 0.63 is the fourth lowest in school history. Her career total of innings pitched (837.3) is also a Sun Devil record.

Other names which dot the career pitching record include Kim Bickford, who allowed just 21 earned runs in 270 innings, for a career record 0.55 ERA. Donna Stewart posted 48 wins and 312 strikeouts during a four-year career. Melannie Kyler recorded 246 strikeouts in a single-season (1978), an ASU record. In 1992, Sun Devil pitcher Terri Carnicelli finished her career

second on the all-time win list (57) and fifth in strikeouts (255).

1998 marked the end of two more ASU pitchers who made marks for themselves in ASU annals. Roxanne Tsosie ended her senior year with 24 wins, marking the first time since Stewart accomplished the feat in 1987. Tsosie finished her four-year career (1995-98) second all-time in wins (62) and strikeouts (431). Carrie Breedlove completed her career (1995-98) and especially her senior season in a big way. Breedlove fired two no-hitters, one of which was a perfect game, struckout a career-high 166 and earned *USA Today* Pitcher of the Week honors. Breedlove finished fourth all-time in wins (50) and strikeouts (365).

ASU's hitting records are also impressive. Lisa Dacquisto (1994-97) holds the highest all-time career batting average (.378), followed by Leanne Easley (1972-75) at .377 and Rachel Brown (1991-92) at .362. In just two seasons, Brown, a two-time All-American, managed to work her way onto the all-time list for RBIs (8th/68) and doubles (5th/20). Perhaps the most prolific all-around hitter in Sun Devil history is All-American Ann Pedersen (formally Ann Rowan) who stands ninth in career batting average (.312), second in hits (245), fourth in doubles (24), third in triples (11) and fourth in stolen bases (37).

Brown, Pedersen and Christy Serritella were teammates again in 1993, making up one-fifth of the 15-member U.S. National team which captured the gold medal at the World Championships in Holland. Brown was the team's second-leading hitter, batting .364 (8-22) during the tournament, helping the USA to a 8-0 record.

Another name which dots the career list in a number of categories is Suzie Gaw (1979-82), who holds the all-time home run mark of 16. Gaw also figures fifth in RBI (86), seventh in hits (173), eighth in doubles (17) and second in triples (14). She and Karen Fifield formed one of the top shortstop-second base combinations in collegiate softball during their ASU careers.

Kathy Escarcega (1984-87) was among the most impressive and consistent of all Sun Devil hitters. A first-team All-American choice, Escarcega established top career records in doubles (39), triples (20), and is second in RBI (95) and fourth in hits (187).

Shortstop-outfielder Tami Brown contributed in a variety of ways to Sun Devil success. As a player, she collected 154 career hits, with 57 runs batted in. Following her playing career, Brown served as an assistant coach for several seasons, prior to her appointment as head coach at the University of Oregon.

Alyssa Johnson (1993-96) is an amazing story of courage and self determination who has inspired many people inside, as well as outside the ASU program. Johnson was a four-year starter at third base (237 games) where she consistently led the team in defensive putouts. However, tragedy struck at the end of

her sophomore season when she was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Several tests were performed to evaluate the situation, but the tumor was later found to be benign and surgery was needed and performed successfully. To everyone's amazement, Johnson returned back to classes and the softball team in the Spring of '95 where she went on to become the team's MVP and winner of the Honda Inspiration Award. Through all of this, Johnson's name is scattered throughout the ASU record books. She finished her career ranked first all-time in RBI (108), third in hits (224) and second in doubles (37). Johnson was also a two-time Pac-10 all-conference first-team selection, as well as earning Pacific-Region second-team honors twice.

One of the most competitive and successful players to pass through Sun Devil lore was Lisa Dacquisto. During her four year tenure (1994-97), Dacquisto set three career marks and two single-season records. Dacquisto is the all-time leader in batting average (.378), hits (296) and stolen bases (102). She currently holds the single-season marks in stolen bases (31) and is second in RBIs (37). Among her numerous accolades, Dacquisto was a two-time first-team All-American selection, a three-time first-team All-Pacific-Region pick and a three-time All-Pacific-10 selection.

Throughout its glistening history, ASU has also been known by the company it keeps. First in the Intermountain Conference, then the West Coast Athletic Association, the Pacific-West Conference to its 1986 move to the Pacific-10 Conference, the Sun Devils have maintained a reputation of playing one of the nation's most demanding schedules, year in and year out.

With success comes recognition. Former Sun Devil pitcher Marilyn Rau, a catcher who played on the 1971 and '72 national championship teams, and played on the 1979 American Softball Association National Fast Pitch Championship squad is a member of the ASU Sports Hall of Fame. She joins three-time first-team All-American Paula Miller Noel (1971-73) and Littlewood in sharing that distinction.

Not only has there been recognition, but reward as well. Through its prominence as a collegiate power, the Sun Devil softball program now competes in one of the finest facilities for collegiate softball in the nation. Sun Devil Club Stadium, named for the ASU support group which provided the funding, not only offers outstanding conditions for student-athletes, but for fans as well. With a seating capacity of 600, fans are offered a number of outstanding venues to watch the Sun Devils play. Opposing coaches and players agree that the playing field, lighting, sound system and general conditions at Sun Devil Club Stadium are among the best to be found.

Rich tradition. A history of success. Unparalleled facilities. The bright glow of Arizona State's future is matched only by the shining brilliance of its past.