



# SUN DEVIL HISTORY

The 1997-98 season marks the 23rd season Arizona State University has sponsored women's basketball as an intercollegiate sport. ASU also begins its 11th campaign as one of the charter members of the prestigious Pacific-10 Conference.

Over the years the Sun Devils have produced three consensus All-Americans, 20 All-Conference performers, 11 All-Pac-10 academic honorees and three academic All-Americans.

The first student-athlete to make headlines on the Sun Devil hardwood was **Joanie Smith**, who played from 1976-78. Smith averaged 23.5 points and became the first ASU female athlete to sign a professional contract when she was drafted to play for the Milwaukee Does in 1978.

One of the most celebrated players to help bring national attention to the Sun Devil program is two-time consensus All-America and four-time All-Conference member **Kym Hampton** (1981-84), a member of the WNBA's New York Liberty.

In Hampton's final game as a Sun Devil, she exploded for a school-record 44 points against Arizona, closing the books on one of the finest careers in collegiate basketball history. When she stepped off the court that night, she found herself the holder of 49 school records. Hampton's name is still etched in the ASU annals a total of 25 times.

Hampton remains the only basketball player in Arizona State history (male or female) to score more than 2,000 points (2,361) and grab more than 1,000 rebounds (1,145) in a career. During her illustrious career, she averaged 28 points and 15 rebounds a game. Appropriately she was inducted into ASU's Hall of Fame in 1989.

During the "Hampton Era," ASU had a record of 86-37 (.705) and went to three consecutive post-season tournaments — the 1981 Women's National Invitation Tournament, and the NCAA Tournament in 1982 and 1983. In 1983, the Sun Devils finished 11th in the final national rankings.

**Olivia Jones** is another name that comes to mind when reviewing the list of Sun Devil standouts. Jones was named to the Kodak All-district women's basketball team and was a 1983 All-Conference selection. In 1982-83, she was ASU's leading scorer with 19 points per game.

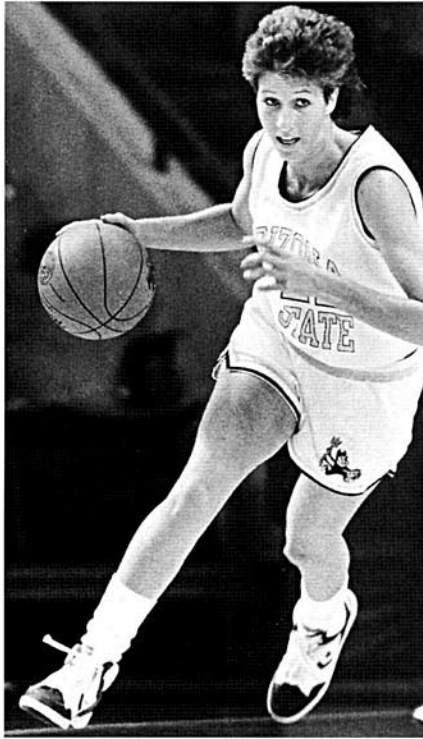
The squad, which included Hampton and Jones, also possessed 1980 and 1982 All-Conference member **Cassandra Lander**. Known to be a quick playmaker, Lander's career-highs were 35 points and 12 rebounds.

Former ASU forward **Sherry Poole** proved successful on and off the hardwood. Poole, the Sun Devils' No. 4 all-time leading scorer (1,370) and fifth-leading rebounder (585), shot .803 from the free throw line during her career.

Poole was also named the Pac-10 Conference Medalist in 1987 — the highest award the Pac-10 can bestow on a student-athlete. She was a third-team GTE academic All-America selection as a senior in 1987.

**Jodi Rathbun** also left her mark on ASU as a point guard when she graduated in 1986. Rathbun set marks for most assists in a game (14) and most assists in a single season (143) during the 1983-84 campaign. Although both marks have since been broken, Rathbun still stands atop the list for assists in a career.

Rathbun was impressive on the softball field as well and holds a career batting average of .361. Rathbun played first base on the 1987



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softball team, which was ranked seventh in the nation.

**Robin Connolly's** name is mentioned among the top-10 on several Sun Devil career lists, including scoring (fifth) and rebounds (seventh). She averaged 14.3 points a game and became the first player in ASU women's basketball history to record a triple-double.

All-Pac-10 selection **Fran Ciak** became only the ninth player in Sun Devil history to reach the 1,000-point plateau. In addition, Ciak was twice named a GTE-CoSIDA Academic All-American.

A 5-7 point guard from New York would also make her name known before exiting ASU. Although injured much of her career, **Karen O'Connor** finished fifth (and now ranks sixth) in career scoring (1,224) and second (and now third) in steals (198).

A return to the NCAA Tournament in 1991-92 was made possible (in part) under the direction of honorable mention All-American **Ryneldi Becenti**. In just two seasons at ASU (1992-93), the two-time All-Pac-10 selection vaulted to No. 2 on the all-time assists chart with 396. Becenti left ASU as the most prolific three-point shooter in Sun Devil history (90) and now ranks third on that list. The sharp-shooting point guard was named Pac-10 Player of the Week a school-record four times.

The 1996-97 season brought a close to the career of All-Pac-10 forward Molly Tuter, the Sun Devil's third-leading career scorer (1,374). An import from Soldotna, Alas., Tuter averaged 13.9 points over four seasons and ended her career second on the all-time treys chart

(116). She also swatted down a school fifth-best 59 shots.

Through the years, the Sun Devils have been led by a number of outstanding mentors. **Mary Littlewood** coached ASU's first squad in 1975, and was inducted into the Hall of Distinction in 1990. Littlewood began her association with the university in 1965 and coached volleyball from 1965-74. After her one-year stint as ASU's women's basketball coach, Littlewood began her 20-year reign as the Sun Devil softball coach. She retired in 1989.

Holding one of the best performance records is former head coach **Julene Simpson**, who guided ASU for seven seasons (1981-87), compiling a record of 134-92. During Simpson's tenure, ASU went to three consecutive post-season appearances. In 1981, the Sun Devils placed second to Georgia in the National Women's Invitation Tournament and then advanced to the NCAA Round of 16 in 1982 and 1983, falling to eventual champions Louisiana Tech and USC, respectively.

**Maura McHugh** coached the Sun Devil's for six years, emphasizing an exciting style of basketball. ASU forced the tempo and played an aggressive in-your-face type defense that caused many turnovers. This style was effective and paid off. Under the direction of McHugh, the Sun Devils returned to the NCAA tournament in 1992, after an absence of nine years. McHugh also produced ASU's first All-American since Hampton in Becenti.

After three years under former Dartmouth head coach **Jacqueline Hullah**, ASU hired **Charli Turner Thorne** as its seventh head coach. Turner Thorne came to Tempe from Northern Arizona University, where she led the Lumberjacks to consecutive winning seasons for the first time in school history. Turner Thorne inherited a Sun Devil squad with six seniors, including Tuter, guiding it to the most victories by an ASU team in four seasons.