

Behind the game: Class travels to experience the history of women's sports

Kristin Simonetti
Reporter

Few Elon students can claim that they stood on the hallowed ground of the basketball court at Thompson-Boling Arena. In fact, even less probably know actually what Thompson-Boling Arena is, where it is located and why it is in any way significant to the average American. Ten Elon students could tell you.

As part of "The History of Women in Sport," the Winter Term class created and led by Elon head volleyball coach Sue Leonard, traveled to Knoxville, Tenn., during the beginning days of semester to learn about the history of women's basketball and its modern-day heroes.

This is the third year Leonard has taught this course. In past years, the class taken a five-day trip to the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, the Basketball Hall of Fame and the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.

Forced to plan a shorter trip, Leonard chose Knoxville as the destination for this year's class.

"Women's basketball really had so much more relevance to this class," Leonard said. "And it's close."

Arriving early in the afternoon Jan. 8, students had the opportunity to tour the three-year-old Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in downtown Knoxville. From the pseudo-locker room, where guests can watch the greatest women's basketball coaches give halftime speeches, to the ring of fame, featuring over 50 enshrined jerseys.

The museum lived up to its billing as one of the most interactive in the nation. But the student's fa-

vorite area of the museum had to be the downstairs playground, where they shot hoops on a real "basket," a modern basket and practiced drills.

"It's a museum completely devoted to women's basketball," class member Sarah Farley said. "It's special because of that."

That evening the students ar-

Michelle Snow and Kara Lawson, as well as the team's legendary coach Pat Head Summitt. Following the game, students had the opportunity to go on the court and meet a few of the players. Leonard's students thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

"It was impressive how many people were there, considering it was a women's game," Erin Flynn said. "It's starting to be considered seriously. You can see how women's sports are advancing."

The following morning, they had an opportunity few can claim to have: the privilege of a tour of the Lady Volunteers' locker room. "The coolest thing was the tradition pole," Flynn said, referring to a large padded cylinder adorned with the UT Lady Vols logo and signed by all the graduated members of the Lady Vols.

Underclassmen are not permitted to touch the pole until graduation, and they face consequences at the hands of Coach Summitt upon infringement. From the oak lockers, spacious showers and fully-stocked Coca-Cola fridge to the pool table, leather couch, big-screen TV and glimmering trophy cases, the Lady Volunteers enjoy all the spoils of their victories.

Students explored the court and athletic center, meeting and talking with Lawson in the process. The trip proved an enjoyable and educational experience for the students, who returned to Elon with stories and pictures to share that afternoon.

The trip to Knoxville will be unforgettable to many students in the class, and made many realize the strength of character women in sports possess. "It was the highlight [of the class]," Flynn said.



Photo courtesy of Kelli Sharpe

The class travelled to the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, Tenn. Pictured above are Sarah Farley, Katie Newby, M.K. Spear, Ashley Simms, Erin Flynn, Jennifer Hildebrand, Kristin Simonetti, Gillian Stagg, Ashley Staff and Kelli Sharpe.

arrived at Thompson-Boling Arena, home to the six-time national champion University of Tennessee Lady Volunteers. Leonard said it was important for the students to visit this national symbol of women's basketball triumph. "To see a top, premier basketball team and see what they do is very relevant to this class," she said. "It's so impressive."

The Lady Volunteers soundly defeated the Old Dominion Lady Monarchs with the aid of team stars



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