

Lady Bombers

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in her first season with this team.

Denise Thompson has been playing six years or more, while sticking with the Lady Bombers a third season. Ava Ballard, joined her husband's team four years ago.

Bootsie Coleman is another six-year veteran of the softball wars at third base.

Pam Grinton and Sandra Williamson are both new members of the team, but both have played extensively. Grinton is an outfielder, while Williamson pitches and catches.

Cynthia West and Leslie Gilliam are both in their third season with the Lady Bombers. West plays right field and is the only left-handed hitter on the team.

Fine athletes are not unusual in the Gilliam family. Gilliam and younger sister Lynette were both Central Piedmont 4-A Conference standouts in basketball, volleyball, softball and track while at Parkland High School.

Another former Mustang, is Lita White. White is currently finishing her senior year at Johnson C. Smith University, but plans to join the team later this summer.

The Young Exception

LaTesa Peebles, a former three-sport standout at Carver High School, is the youngest member of the team at 16 years old.

Ballard says she has a complete game and belongs on the team.

"LaTesa is one of the best hitters we have," Ballard said. "She really can just flat out yank the ball out of the park sometimes. She has incredible strength at the plate and a great arm."

Peebles threw the shotput for Coach Alfred Poe's track team this season, and found time to knock a few homeruns for the Yellowjackets' state playoff softball team.

She is headed to North Carolina Central University this fall on an athletic scholarship.

Ballard says that Peebles is not the only homerun hitter that he has though.

"LaTesa can hit them out, but we have a lot of other ladies who can hit for power too," he said.

Don't Mess Around

The Lady Bombers practice as hard as they play. Ballard says they take the game pretty seriously.

"We joke and kid around, but we take what we do very seriously," he said.

"If you practice and play regularly at anything, then you're going to improve. And with the experience we have, our hearts are in the right place.

"It used to be a struggle to just get up the money to buy uniforms and play, but our sponsor has really helped take the heat off us so we can mostly concentrate on the game."

Rick Cooper, the owner of Silvers Lounge, picks up most of the tab for the Lady Bombers' uniforms, travel expenses, equipment and tournament fees.

"He (Cooper) has really supported us tremendously, and we're going to try to bring back a state or world championship trophy to put on the mantel."

Tourney Winners

Led by the defensive play of Nancy Bratton, the Lady Bombers defeated Grady's Bunch 8-5 last weekend to capture the championship of the Red Flyers Invitational at Civitan Field in Winston-Salem.

Bratton was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player in lieu of her excellent

game-saving plays.

Assistant Coach Chris Adams said it was a team effort as usual.

"Our defense shined this weekend," Adams said. "The whole team was hitting and Nancy really came up with some great plays for us when we really needed them."

"Several times our opponents had runners on first and third with no outs, but we didn't let them score. It was just a total team effort that we are accustomed to seeing."

Adams and Matt Spears join Ballard and Pat Green in coaching the Lady Bombers. But with a host of talented veteran players, there isn't really much coaching to be done.

Ballard's 12-year search to build a dream team is over.

Now he must think about building something else -- trophy shelves.



We Are Family

The Lady Bombers won the Red Flyers Invitational last weekend at Civitan Park. Back row from left to right: Lateesa Peebles, Leslie Gilliam, Gladys Turner, Cookie Thompson, Coach Scotty Ballard, Debra Edwards, Denise Thompson and Sandra Williams. Front row from left to right: Coach Chris Adams, Shirese Adams, Nancy Bratton, Pam Grinton, Ava Ballard and Coach Matt Spears (photo by James Parker).

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Sports Column

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authenticity of professional wrestling.

So, I quietly drifted up to the cheap seats (\$9.00), where I hoped to find some more reluctant fans.

"Why sure it's fake," said Ruby Goodson of Winston-Salem.

Knowing I had hit the jackpot, I said, "Then why are you here."

"Oh I work in one of the concession stands," she replied.

"I've seen it close up, though, and I know it's fake. If them guys really hit each other that hard, they'd all be dead.

"Look at the crowd," she offered. "Most of them are under 21. They just don't know no better."

Scouting the restless crowd, I didn't quite agree with Mrs. Goodson. Quite a number of adults sparsely dotted the Coliseum. Some, such as Mr. and Mrs. Ray Martin, were hardly teenagers.

"Is it real or fake," I asked the elderly gentlemen.

"What did you say," he asked.

"Is it real or fake," I said a little louder.

"Oh, it's real -- sometimes," said Martin, who appeared to be in his early 70's. "When them boys go to bleeding and all, I think that's real."

"My favorite, oh, Hulk Hogan and Ricky Steamboat I guess," he smiled, turning to his wife.

"You better say Ricky Steamboat," she laughed.

"If you could be at our house on Saturdays, you could really see who she likes," he chuckled. "She gets pretty excited over her wrestling."

"I just love wrestling," said Mrs. Martin.

"We watch it on Saturdays, and after we get back from service on Sunday. I like the good guys I guess."

"I think some of it is fake, but a lot of it's grudge. You know, when they just don't like each other. I like to watch them matches like that," she said with an excited voice.

From the Martins, I moved to the other end of the arena, where four young guys were making a spectacle of themselves by posing for the crowd.

"Hey man, what's up," one asked.

"Nothing much. Could I get your opinion on wrestling," I asked.

"No, man he don't know nothing about wrestling, ask me," his friend insisted.

"I can tell you their real names and who's behind the masks and everything," said Charles Hunt, who claimed to be the nephew of Baron Von Raschke.

"Yeah, he's my uncle," Hunt said of the NWA wrestler, who rose to fame as the master of the claw hold. "He ain't from East Germany though. His name is really Jay Martin and he's from Lexington."

Skeptical of his claim somewhat, I changed the subject.

"Wrestling, a sport? Well, baseball is definitely a sport, but this -- I wouldn't know what to call it."

"I know one thing, I wouldn't want to get hit by one of those guys."

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