

Collins completing 25 years as women's athletic coach

By TOM APPENZELLER
Assistant Director of Athletics

At a time when John F. Kennedy was president, the Beatles were just arriving on the shores of America, and Andy Griffith was a sheriff, not a lawyer, Janet Collins started coaching at Chowan College.

A little more than 25 years ago, the University of Richmond graduate was the sum total of women's athletics and activities at the Murfreesboro school.

"I started the women's athletics program when I came to Chowan and we operated under the name of women's recreation association, the WRA," said Collins recently. "We offered volleyball, basketball and softball as varsity sports, an intramural program and three pep squads, cheerleaders, bravettes and majorettes.

Coached All Sports

"We did not recruit any students, but made the program available to everybody. In fact, the varsity athletes ran the intramural program and one or two athletes

would play on each team. We only had about 15 good athletes and they used to play all three varsity sports."

Collins arrived at Chowan long before men's and women's sports were viewed as subjects which should receive equal support.

Volleyball, as today, was played in the fall. But that's about the only thing alike between then and now. Women's basketball was of the six-on-six version and didn't begin until after the holidays. Major changes have taken place since Collins' arrival.

Previous Experience

Collins came to Chowan after teaching science and physical education at South Granville High School in Creedmore, N.C.

The Richmond native, who played basketball and field hockey for Thomas Jefferson High School, saw the women's athletic program begin to change in 1975, the year Chowan joined the NCAIAW as a Division III program.

"We did not give scholarships, but we were able to compete in the state tournaments," said Collins.

Collins, still coaching three sports, saw her volleyball team finish second once and third twice in the state tournament. In 1978, Chowan joined the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA), and the Lady Braves became eligible for national tournament.

"When we joined the NJCAA, we split up the coaching duties and I began to concentrate on volleyball," said Collins. "I did not have any experience playing volleyball in high school or college, but became interested in the strategy involved in power volleyball. We had always played a recreational type of volleyball with the object being just hit the ball over the net any way possible."

Since 1978, Collins is 234-141 in NJCAA competition, with trips to the national tournament two of the last three years.

Recruiting Players

"Twenty-five years ago, the students that were here wanted to participate," said Collins, who was the Region 10 and District 9 Coach of the Year in 1985 and 1986. "Now, you have to be a salesman and convince the students to come to Chowan. If you can recruit the athletes, they are more skilled today because many just play one sport."

Collins does have a hand up in understanding the money involved with going to college and the monetary stresses some students face because her husband, Cliff, is the Director of Financial Planning.

Recognized last February by the North Carolina Amateur Sports Association for her contributions to women's athletics, Collins has not considered retiring from coaching.

Sets Goals for the Future

"My husband and I both enjoy our jobs and we like the community and people we work with," she said. "I would like to go back to the nationals again and finish better than 13th, which we did in 1986.

"But winning is not the bottom line. Having a team reach its capabilities is more important."



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Fall play scheduled by Players

Professor Sandra Boyce, director of the Chowan Players, has announced that the campus drama group will present "Dirty Work at the Crossroads" Nov. 10-12 in Turner Auditorium of McDowell Columns. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$2 for students, and Chowan students are admitted free to the performances which begin at 8 p. m. each evening.

The Chowan Players presented the popular Broadway musical "Damn Yankees" during the past spring semester. The play received numerous accolades from faculty, staff members and students. One staff member summed up the prevailing opinion when he stated the play was "greatly enjoyed" and called it "fine entertainment".

Although the play was first presented on Broadway on May 5, 1955, and ran for 1,019 performances, the Chowan Players' revival of "Damn Yankees" put them in the forefront of the current wave of drama interest in baseball. Since the Chowan Players presented the play in March, Hollywood has introduced several baseball movies including "Bull Durham" and "Eight Men Out."

The November play, "Dirty Work at the Crossroads," is a melodrama that is a lot of fun, both to present and watch, according to one drama observer.



Coach Collins' team in action, demonstrating the fast-paced "power" volleyball style of play.