

Softball looking forward to SW Tennessee

By **BRIAN ESTES**
Editor

The Vol State Lady Pioneers softball team will be taking on the Southwest Tennessee Lady Salukis in its final regular season game of the year.

The game will be April 29 at 1 p.m.

The Salukis stand at third place in the their division, and Vol State is in second as of April 16.

Defense looks to be a big asset for the Lady Pioneers, but players say they will also need to put together a strong offensive game.

"Our defense is doing very well right now, so we just have to be aggressive offensively," said Lady Pioneers pitcher Abby Mabry. "When the defense is performing, it helps us play better in all aspects."

Johnny Lynn, head softball coach, said Southwest Tennessee is fielding a better team than they typically have in the past.

He stated they have traditionally ranked "around fourth or fifth" in the league standings, but have claimed some impressive victories so far.

Lynn mentioned some areas in which the Lady Pioneers should have an advantage.

He said Southwest Tennessee's "defense breaks down at times, and their outfield is suspect." However, Lynn also stated that Southwest

Tennessee is doing a better job offensively than they had in the past.

Lady Salukis Head Coach Keith Gentry that this year's Southwest Tennessee team was one of the best defensive teams there had been before a rash of injuries knocked out some top players.



Chris Crankshaw / Staff Photo
Tasha Witcher slides in safely to third against Columbia State April 18.

Now, the team is struggling with depth.

He said the team's two top hitters, centerfielder Brooke Hively and 3B Elise Brewer, will be out with injuries.

"They had a huge impact, not only offensively. We've had to move people into positions they aren't used to playing," Gentry said.

He said that some standout players for the Lady Salukis will be shortstop Gina High and 2B Jessica Hefflinger. "They're two of our top hitters, as well as good defensive players," Gentry said.

As for Vol State Lady Pioneers, Lynn said he feels the offensive capabilities should be very troublesome for the Lady Salukis.

He also said he thinks that the Lady Pioneers' team speed should serve as a strong asset.

"It puts a lot of people in panic mode. It's something you can't practice against," Lynn said. "Hopefully, we can put them in some situations they aren't used to."

Lynn said one area Vol State must focus on correcting is their focus at the plate. If a pitch is outside, the batters need to work on trying to hit it to the right side, Lynn said.

"They're a hard nosed team. They play hard and give you everything they got every pitch," said Jimmy Buckner, assistant softball coach for the Lady Pioneers.

SPORTS EDITORIAL

Step up to the plate with the 2007 Spires awards

By **ROB SPIRES**
Sports Editor

With our last paper coming out this week, I am privileged to carry on the tradition of Settler sports writers before me.

The Spires awards reflect on the semester that was in sports. Without further adieu, here are the good, bad and ugly from the past four months.

The **Don't Mess With Me** award goes to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

Goodell benched the Titans' Pacman Jones for the full 2007 season and Cincinnati Bengal Chris Henry for half of it. Both Jones and Henry have had multiple run-ins with the law, and that doesn't work with Goodell's attempt to clean up the public image of NFL players.

See ya next year, Pac.

The **Most Likely to be Glue** award goes to fallen race horse Barbaro. Barbaro, the winner last year's Kentucky Derby injured his foot in his next race, the Preakness Stakes. Despite spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on multiple surgeries, Barbaro had to be put down in January.

Never fear Barbaro fans, a full brother was born last week. Maybe he will keep the "family name" alive and winning.

The **Team Least Likely to Repeat** award goes to the Florida Gators men's basketball team.

Despite winning the National Championship less than a month ago, juniors Corey Brewer, Taurean Green, Al Horford, and Joakim Noah have all declared that they will forego their final year of college and enter the NBA draft.

Florida will be lucky just to reach

the NCAA tournament next season.

The **Monkey Off My Back** award goes to Peyton Manning who brilliantly led the Indianapolis Colts to victory in Super Bowl XLI.

Previous to that game, there had been a "curse" on the Manning family that kept them from ever winning the championship, no matter how well their team was. Not only did Manning collect his first championship, he won the Super Bowl MVP award.

The **Thanks But No Thanks** award goes to Oklahoma City for their acceptance of the displaced New Orleans Hornets.

Now that the New Orleans Arena is rebuilt, the Hornets will be moving back home. This leaves Oklahoma City (which turned out in droves to see the Hornets play) once again without a pro sports team.

Commissioner David Stern said the league will consider returning to Oklahoma City, though it won't be anytime soon.

The **Choke Of The Year** award goes to our very own Nashville predators. Despite being the best team in the NHL for much of the season, the Predators started a late season slump that carried right into the playoffs.

Now Head Coach Barry Trotz is at risk of losing his job, and the team risks losing several marquee players such as Paul Kariya, Peter Forsberg, Kimmo Timonen and Scott Hartnell.

Add this with the poor attendance during the season, and the Preds may be in trouble next year.

Well, there you have it, the most prestigious awards in sports. Congrats to all of this year's winners, and good luck to everybody next year.