

Former professional jockey pursues higher education

By **NEIL SIDERS**
Sports Editor

Every person has a story. People never know how interesting the story of the person next to them is until they take the time to ask.

Vol State has found itself home to a retired professional jockey. Shawnah Shelton's path in life took her through many famous thoroughbred horse racing tracks to the class rooms of Vol State.

Shelton is currently pursuing an associates degree from Vol State.

Shelton found her inspiration to become a professional jockey from her grandfather who was involved with horse racing before she was born.

The pictures and memorabilia of her grandfather's involvement with the sport helped plant the seed for her to become drawn into the sport of competitive horse racing.

From there, she took her fate in her own hands, leaving home to pursue her dream straight out of high school.

Shelton found her first job in the business with Joe Riggs, who took

her into his home. Her obligations included hot walking the horse, or giving them a cool down walk, and breaking in young horses.

Shelton would work in the industry four years before she found her way to the track.

Once she discovered the track, she found herself riding horses in some of the most famous horse tracks around the United States, ranging from Belmont Park in New York to Churchill Downs, home of the world famous Kentucky Derby.

Along the way, Shelton would manage to meet celebrities such as former president George Bush and Dallas Cowboy's owner, Jerry Jones.

Shelton expounded on living her dream, saying that the high moment of her career was winning her first race at Hialeah Park in Florida.

Next, her course would take her to accept a job offer in New York City during 2001.

Shelton was staying in New York during the terrorist attacks of Sep. 11. She described the experience saying that it was a "defining moment in my

life."

Around the same time, Shelton suffered an injury to her shoulder that sidelined her from racing.

She explained that the combination of her emotional proximity to the tragedy of the World Trade Centers, the injury to her shoulder, and the effect of having to stay under a 106 pound weight limit, led her to take a leave for her career as a jockey.

She then moved to Missouri and back to her family, and finally moved with her sister and family to Tennessee.

Shelton also expounded upon the darker side of professional horse racing, mentioning the dangers of the methods used by jockeys to stay under the weight limit.

She advised that, if a person is interested in a career as a jockey, they should be a person who is naturally within the weight limit.

The process of staying under the weight limit is especially tough for women, expressed Shelton. She went on to explain that the methods ranged from bulimia to deprivation of water.

On the subject of water deprivation, Shelton offered some insight into the ability of jockeys to not only deprive themselves of water, but food also, saying, "when you are that thirsty, you don't think about food."

All and all, Shelton said she would not trade her experience for anything, and that her love for the sport has never wavered.

Shelton now plans to proceed from Vol State to the University of Kentucky where she plans to acquire a degree in the field of equine sciences.

She is currently working on a farm that breeds racing thoroughbreds located in Lebanon, Tenn.

Shelton plans to move onto the farm where she works.

Shelton offered some advice that she has learned from her experiences, saying, "know who you are and don't compromise your values."

She also commented on whether she would return to the track explaining, "time will tell."

"I don't know if that's my main priority," she said. "I still love it, that's the part that can't be taken away."

Pioneers run to sweet victory at home opener

By **BRIAN ESTES**
Staff Reporter

The Vol State baseball team had experienced a bit of difficulty in their season-opening road trip as they dropped five of their first six contests.

If the Pioneers were in any kind of a slump, however, they showed no indication of that in their home opener Friday afternoon as they raced past the Southwest Tennessee Salukis 7-1.

"Conference games are always big for us," said Vol State interim head coach, Mike Crossland. "This win puts us in good shape, but it means nothing if we don't come out and play well tomorrow."

Dustin Crabtree took to the mound for the Pioneers (2-5, 2-1 TJCCAA) and gave up two hits and an earned run with 10 strikeouts in seven innings.

He was opposed by Jason Adams of Southwest Tennessee (8-3, 1-2 TJCCAA).

The Pioneers struck early with four runs in the bottom of the first inning and were never seriously threatened from there on out.

Chris Rankhorn, who went 2-4 with two doubles and a run scored, got

things going with a leadoff double. He was then followed by Kyle Hicks who hit a single that moved Rankhorn over to third base.

A wild pitch by Adams then allowed Rankhorn to score the game's first run.

After Matt Stanley drew a walk, Blake Bratcher laced a pitch into the outfield for a double that scored Hicks and gave Vol State a 2-0 lead.

But the Pioneers weren't done yet. Danny Pulley, Jr. drove in Stanley with a single to boost the lead to 3-0. Vol State capped off its scoring in the first inning when Craig Thompson's single allowed Bratcher to score.

All told, the Pioneers sent eight men to the plate in the bottom of the first and recorded four hits to take a 4-0 lead.

However, the Salukis answered in the top of the second when a Vol State error allowed a run to score and the deficit closed to 4-1.

"We set the tone with those four runs in the first inning. We got some great pitching from Crabtree and

played solid defense with a couple of miscues," Crossland said.

Defense took over from that point on and the game quickly turned into a pitcher's duel between Adams and Crabtree.

"I thought my curveball was pretty effective today. I was able to throw strikes and keep the batters off balance," Crabtree said.

The Salukis finally managed to mount a threat in the top of the sixth when Crabtree gave up a double with one out.

However, a base runner for Southwest Tennessee was caught stealing with two outs to end the inning.

Stanley hit a double in the bottom of the sixth and advanced to third on Pulley's sacrifice fly but Thompson grounded out to the shortstop to end the scoring opportunity.

There was little action in the seventh inning as each team managed only one hit apiece.

The Salukis were held hitless in the top of the eighth.

Hicks began the bottom of the eighth with a ground-out. Then, Stanley reached with a single, advanced to sec-

ond on a wild pitch, and stole third.

Bratcher came up to the plate with one out and drew a walk. Bratcher nearly returned the favor, but he managed to narrowly avoid being picked off at first base.

It proved to be in good fortune when Pulley hit a single to score Stanley and wide the lead to 5-1. This

prompted a pitching change for Southwest Tennessee.

However, this did not deter the Pioneers. Thompson hit a single to load the bases.

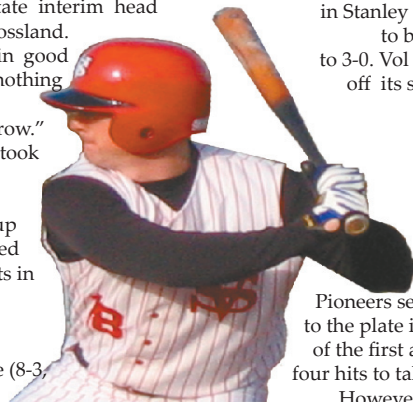
Heath Puryear struck out. It appeared the inning would end with Tim Perkins's groundball, but the

ball deflected off of Southwest Tennessee's third baseman and then bounced past another Saluki defender.

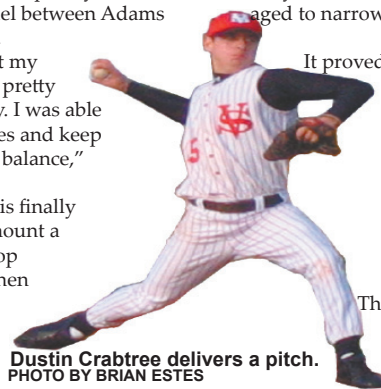
Pulley and Bratcher both came around to score and increase the lead to 7-1, but Thompson was thrown at third base for the final out of the inning.

The Salukis were retired in order in the ninth by Kevin Whitaker, sealing the win for Vol State.

"I think their pitcher had some decent stuff. He kept a lot of batters off balance but he made some mistakes," Rankhorn said.



Blake Bratcher digging in.
PHOTO BY BRIAN ESTES



Dustin Crabtree delivers a pitch.
PHOTO BY BRIAN ESTES