

Cooper

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and throwing out runners at first. "I'm not disappointed with the way I've played," Cooper said. "My statistics are right at, or a little above, last year's. But the main thing I've concentrated on is trying to lead the team. In the past, if I didn't bat over .300 I would be mad. But now, I'm concentrating more on getting everyone fired up and ready to play. I try to be an example and leader. "I think I'm playing a lot better the past few weeks. At the first of the season, I was pressing too hard trying to be the one the team could count on all the time." And Cooper said not having someone to depend on all the time is what has made this year's No. 4-ranked Aggies, 33-8, so tough. "I couldn't compare this team to any of the other three I've been on," Cooper said. "We really care about each other and get along really well. We all know that in order for it to

work, everyone has to do their part. Everybody is a line. If one link is broken, the chain won't be formed.

"On this team, there's no one person we can rely on. We can't wait for someone to crank the ball. Everyone has to give in order for us to win." Beginning at the age of nine, Cooper learned about winning. That's when she began playing softball.

At Sooner High School in Bartlesville, Okla., Cooper led her team to the state championship her junior year and finished her high school career on the state runner-up team.

But the winning didn't stop there. In '83, Cooper's freshman season, she was an integral part of the Aggies' national championship team.

But after last season, when the second-ranked Ags were upset by Louisiana Tech in regional play, the senior desperately wants to end her career with another national title.

"I really wondered at the first of

the season," she said. "Now, I really feel like we have what it takes to win the national championship. It all comes down to whether you want it badly enough. I think we have the right mental attitude. We're hungry after what happened last season.

"We don't have anything to lose this season. We're not defending the title or anything. If we can get 110 percent from every person, there won't be anyone that will beat us."

With only a few weeks left in her softball career, Cooper is already beginning to reflect back on the past four years. But she's hoping the last game will be the most memorable.


"Most people would immediately assume that winning the national championship would be the thing that stands out," she said. "But if I had to be totally honest, it would be now — this team. I've never had so much fun playing softball. Hopefully, we will win the national championship again this year to make it a storybook finish."

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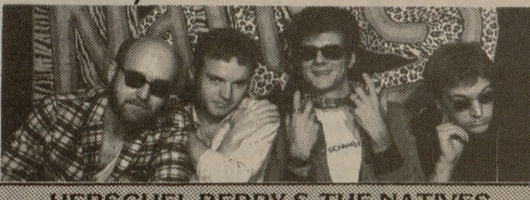


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