

Lady Vols arrive home with 1st NCAA trophy

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tennessee's Lady Volunteers paraded into the airport Monday holding one NCAA women's national championship trophy and at least a dozen ears of corn.

The trophy was for their 67-44 basketball victory over Louisiana Tech on Sunday, which broke a string of seven Tennessee appearances in the women's Final Four without a championship.

The corn, supplied by a local farmer as they arrived from Austin, was a joke stemming from a post-game comment by Cindy Brown of Long Beach State, the Lady Vols' semifinal victim.

Referring to the Lady Vols' physical style of play, Brown complained about some "cheap shots out there. But what do you expect from big, corn-fed chicks like that?"

Kathy Spinks, Tennessee's 6-foot-2, 175-pound forward, was first into the airport lobby and, with corn held high, said, "If that's what it takes to get a championship, I'll eat it all year."

The Lady Vols feasted on their postseason opponents after weathering a 2-3 stretch in late January and early February and being bumped from the Southeastern Conference Tourney by Auburn.

The championship was the first for Coach Pat Head Summitt in eight trips to the women's Final Four and ranks up there with the Olympic

gold medal team she coached in 1984.

"They've experienced a great, growing opportunity, emotionally and mentally," said Summitt, who loses one starter and one reserve but has recruited two of the top prep players in the country for her 1988 squad.

"Physically, I knew we were one of the best teams in the country all year. But what they did the last three weeks showed me how they've matured, how poised they've become," Summitt said.

She credited the team's defense for clinching the Lady Vols' 28th victory in 34 games.

"We stayed up until 3 o'clock looking for ways to stop Louisiana Tech. We thought we found one, but it was something else making the plan work."

Tennessee sopped the inside pass to Louisiana Tech, which held a nine-game winning streak over the Lady Vols, and held the frustrated Lady Techsters to their second-worst defeat ever.

Tonya Edwards, a freshman from Flint, Mich., who was voted the tournament's most valuable player, said the team's sense of togetherness helped her from becoming a midseason casualty to homesickness.

"They helped me hang in there when Pat would yell," said Edwards, who had 13 points in the championship game.

Lanier to go with 4-man rotation

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston Manager Hal Lanier is beginning what he calls his toughest week as a manager by announcing a four-man pitching rotation and sending relief pitcher Rob Mallicoat to the minor leagues.

"This is the toughest week I have in baseball," Lanier said. "Some of the guys have worked hard during the offseason and played in winter leagues trying to get ready."

Lanier must cut 12 players to reach the 24-man roster limit prior to Monday's season opener in the Astrodome against the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Lanier termed finding a left-handed relief pitcher his No. 1 priority in spring training.

Mallicoat was among the favorites to earn the spot. After starting the spring with six prospects, Lanier now will choose between Jeff Calhoun and rookie Dave Meads.

"Right now Meads has the edge, but Calhoun has thrown well," Lanier said. "It still could change this week."

Mallicoat compiled a 1-2 record and a 6.94 earned-run average in eight games. He allowed 10 hits and 10 runs in 11 1/3 innings.

"I'm not sure where he'll go,

but wherever it is, we want him to be a starter," Lanier said.

Cy Young Award winner Mike Scott will be the Astros' opening day starter against the Dodgers' Orel Hershiser.

Bob Knepper, Nolan Ryan and Jim Deshaies will follow in the rotation, with Danny Darwin working in the bullpen to start the season.

Lanier had considered a five-man rotation because of uncertainty over Ryan's right elbow, injured in spring training a year ago.

Rangers take 6-1 victory from Pirates

PORT CHARLOTTE, Fla. — Mike Mason became the Texas pitcher to go eight innings, and the Rangers took advantage of shoddy Pittsburgh pitching for a 6-1 victory against the Pirates.

Mason gave up seven hits and walks, allowing the Pirates to score in the third. R.J. Reynolds led the inning with a single, stole a base and scored on a two-out sacrifice.

The Rangers, however, had scored four unearned runs. Bob Patterson in the second inning led off with a single. Incaviglia led off with a single, took third on a double by Larry Rish. With one out, Don Slaught grounded ball was booted by baseman Jim Morrison, allowing Incaviglia to score.

Steve Buechele then grounded out that Morrison, but two errors on, one for bobbie ball, allowing Parrish to score. "I'm not saying it hurt, but it sure didn't help," he said of the distraction.

Sluman made par and they went to the 18th tee to continue the play-off.

"One more hole than I wanted to go," Sluman said. It was there, on the third extra hole, that Lyle scored the 18th victory of his globe-trotting career with a one-putt par.

Lyle's victory interrupted by fan's splash

PONTE VEDRA, Fla. (AP) — Sandy Lyle seems to attract the big titles and the goofy spectators.

"It was very much like the British Open," Lyle said after his victory Sunday in the Tournament Players Championship.

"I was just trying to make a lot of pars and maybe now and then get the odd birdie."

He did that. And just like the British Open he got the odd spectator, too.

A naked male romped across the green during the final round of the 1985 British Open that Lyle won at Royal St. George's.

On Sunday, an unidentified man leaped into a lake and splashed

around during Lyle's playoff victory over Jeff Sluman.

The young man went into the water when Sluman was lining up a potential winning putt, about an 8-footer, on the island green of the 17th hole, the second playoff hole.

Sluman, who never before had finished higher than fifth in a regular PGA Tour event, backed away from the biggest putt of his life.

The man was taken from the water and escorted away by security personnel, who later said the fellow apparently had been drinking. However, the man somehow slipped away and disappeared into the crowd.

Sluman, meanwhile, tried to re-

group on the green. He again stepped up to the putt and missed the hole by a few inches.

"I may have been a little quick on the trigger," Sluman said. "If I'd hit it a little firmer, it (the playoff), might have had a different outcome."

"I'm not saying it hurt, but it sure didn't help," he said of the distraction.

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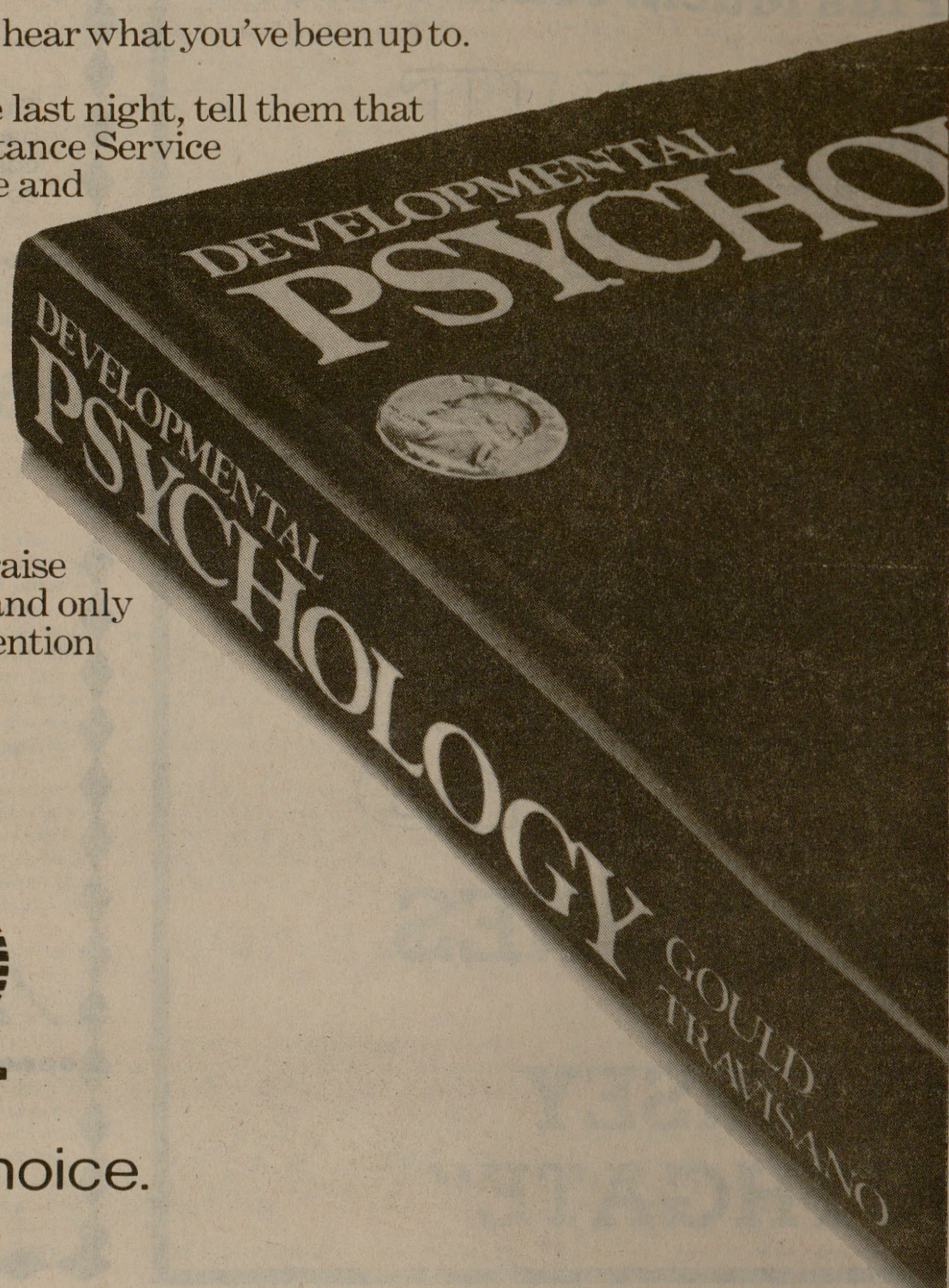
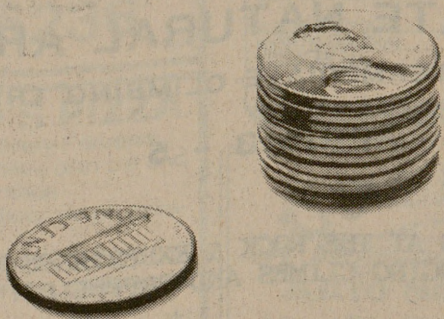
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