

'75 state champs put it all together

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is part of a series of articles which will spotlight outstanding Parkland sports teams from the past.

By Dave Thomas
East Penn Press writer

The year of 1975 was one of recovery and thoughts of the upcoming celebration the nation would soon see. President Gerald Ford was in his first full year of office following Richard Nixon's resignation and the country was preparing for the Bicentennial festivities of 1976.

1975 also witnessed the talents of a group of girls who would make Orefield very proud. The Parkland softball team rode through that spring with a superb 15-1 record on the way to its first ever state championship.

The season began with a convincing 13-3 thumping of Saucon Valley in early April and ended the last day of May with a 4-3 win over Coatesville in the PIAA final in Topton.

Head coach Marcia Thomas' squad got the season off to a bang as the Trojans strung together five straight victories before the first setback of the season. The Southern Lehigh Spartans scored a 7-6 victory in game six of the season to spoil what otherwise would have been a perfect season. Parkland rebounded with a 6-1 win over Emmaus and gathered three more wins in the regular season including an 18-4 crushing of crosstown rival Whitehall and a 9-4 decision over Southern Lehigh in the regular season finale, avenging

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I think we probably had some doubts going up against such a talented team, but we all pulled together and got the job done. That was the farthest a Parkland softball team had ever gone and it was a highlight of our school days for all involved."

Senior rightfielder Denise

the earlier setback.

"It was a total team effort every game," team member Jane Mann said. Mann, a senior who pitched every other game along with spending time at third base during the season, said that from the freshmen on up to the six seniors, everyone knew their role. "Probably the most pressure put on us was by ourselves," Mann said. "We had a fair team the year before but no one expected us to go all the way in '75," she added. Mann, who now works as an associate director for the Rodale Press in the system support area, said that winning the title was by far her greatest thrill during her high school softball days. "We still get together and go down memory lane from time to time," she said.

Parkland entered the post-season by beating Easton 6-2. The Trojans then defeated North Schuylkill 9-1 and proceeded to crush Southern Lehigh 11-2 to win the district title. "Beating Southern Lehigh was great," Mann said. "They were the only team to beat us during the season, so it was like sweet revenge knocking them off."

The Trojans entered state competition by hammering St. Mary's 15-0 and then proceeded to knock off Central Dauphin 12-7 in Belfonte before moving on to Topton for the matchup with Coatesville. The game, originally scheduled for Belfonte, was moved to Topton following a rainout.

Vicky (Smoyer) Whipple, a senior, played third base for

(Scherr) Reifinger said that she was nervous going into the championship game with Coatesville but that the team played together and didn't give up even when down. "The thrill of being in that final game was something," she said. As the season went along things just seemed to fall into place. The team got a free day at Dorney Park as a result of their championship. Reifinger added,

Parkland when Mann pitched. She remembers the season being a lot of fun. Whipple, who runs a manufacturing business with her husband and plays full time mom, added, "It was a great bunch of people to be around and it seems like the game against Coatesville was just yesterday."

Things did not begin well for Parkland in the championship game before some 1,000 spectators as Coatesville jumped out to a 3-1 lead. The Trojans entered the bottom of the seventh inning needing runs and their prayers were answered. Senior Mary Beth Schmoyer doubled in junior LaRue Mose to knot the game at 3-3. Senior Joanne (Knerr) Wehr singled and junior Donna Spence brought in the winning run to send the Trojans to the victory. All the Parkland players, coaches and fans could agree that this was the toughest game of the season. Despite rain postponing the final game, some injuries and the loss of several seniors, the squad still pulled together and captured the gold.

Wehr, who played leftfield, was one of six seniors who brought experience to the team. "The game against Coatesville was by far our biggest game," she said. Wehr, who spends her time these days raising two boys, said the squad had mixed feelings entering the final game. "We were both thrilled and nervous going into that final game and

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"Winning the championship was a good way to leave high school."

Whipple added that she still looks forward to getting together with the group and that the '75 squad was a group of unique individuals that played together. "We all believed we could do it, and we did," she said.