

Wake Forest lady coach
fooled plenty of old pals

By LIB RUMFELT

FEW PEOPLE ever really attain professional goals initiated in pre-college or early college days of planning. Even fewer see those dreams realized at the earliest opportunity in their lives.

Sharron Perkins is a rare person who has remained true to those freshman dreams and achieved her goal at a remarkably early age.

Sharron, physical education instructor and coach of the women's basketball and volleyball teams at Wake Forest University, says that since a freshman in college, coaching is "all I have ever wanted to do." At age 24, she is one of the youngest collegiate coaches in the state and even more amazing, she is into her second year of coaching at Wake Forest.

Sharron considers herself fortunate that she has achieved her goal so young. "God's been awful good to me," she said. She said the challenge involved in sports, and her job particularly, is "tremendous and awesome."

Sharron's basketball and volleyball teams were each ranked third in the state last season. Speaking for this season, she said, "we have the potential of being the best basketball and volleyball teams in the state".

ALTHOUGH SPORTS has been her main interest in life, it took a back seat during Sharron's high school days. A native of Clinton, Tenn., Sharron didn't play basketball in high school because her mother felt piano lessons were more important to the daughter she hoped would be a music major in college. But mid-way through her freshman year at Emory and Henry College, she declared physical education as her major, to which her mother soon adjusted.

At Emory and Henry, Sharron was a starter on the basketball team four years and a starter on the volleyball team two years. She credits her father for her "competitive spirit." "He is my best fan," she said.

Sharron sees the increase in the allotment of money as the most notable change in women's collegiate sports in the past five years. Scholarship programs for women athletes have been started in some colleges, marking another change in women's collegiate sports.

Sharron has definite opinions concerning these scholarships. She said, "A scholarship is good in one respect if it helps a girl get money for school . . . but a scholarship that completely pays for everything is the next best thing to professionalism . . . and we want to stay away from that."

WHEN ASKED if women and men's sports should be merged for sake of equal rights, Sharron gave a qualified "no." She sees the "obvious physical differences" in men and women as the reason why any sport "that involves physical contact, such as basketball or football" cannot be played together on a highly competitive level. Volleyball, however, lends itself well to women and men playing together.

Softball is another sport in which men and

women can play together successfully, as Sharron proved this summer. She was a member of an all-men's softball team at Trinity United Methodist Church. She said she received no resentment for being the only woman player, but "I did get some cute comments every once in a while. I did show that I had some ability and more often than not they were impressed." Sharron did not play on the team to "prove" anything, however. "The main reason I played was that I wanted to get to know more people in the church. Everybody in the church knows me now!" she said jokingly.

SHARRON, VALEDICTORIAN of her high school senior class, says that the most reactions to being a coach come from her old high school buddies. "It blows their minds when they hear that I majored in physical education," she said. "They thought I would go into research science or something like that."

But "physical education is also very, very academic," Sharron said. "For so long, physical education has been sort of the stepchild in the education system . . . so many people don't realize that it is much more than physical movement."

Sharron feels that public views toward physical education and women athletes are improving. Public images of "women coaches as well as women athletes have been stereotyped as being unfeminine," she stated, "but with the humanistic movement (letting people be themselves), the stereotypes of women athletes as well as any other group will fade away."

SHARRON'S PHILOSOPHY of coaching is wholly concerned with her players. She is using basketball and volleyball as "tools in which to coach the girls as young women." "The most important thing I want them (the players) to experience from being on my team is a very deep sense of loyalty, sacrifice and giving that it takes to be a part of a team, while at the same time knowing the meaning of individuality and that they are their own person while being an integral part of the whole."

Sharron feels that her players' lives are enhanced by playing on her teams and learning the responsibilities of working together. The players themselves enhance her life in return as she stated that "being a coach is what I enjoy doing most . . . the girls are very much a part of my life".

SHARRON PERKINS is a woman who has immense enthusiasm, a great deal of fulfillment and quite a bit of accomplishment in her career of coaching.

Perhaps Sharron's own words best summarize the tremendous effect satisfaction in a career can have on an individual: "When some kid drops me a line after a season is over and says that it was one of the greatest learning experiences she's ever had, well, that puts me on a high and I don't come down for quite a while."



SHARRON PERKINS
...awesome challenge...