

sports

For UNL softball 'mom,' sleep last consideration

By Ron Powell

For most UNL athletes, participating in a sport, going to college full-time and holding a part-time job would be enough to occupy almost all of their time.

But Nebraska softball pitcher Connie Gonyea does all three of those things and still has time for something else that probably has the highest priority—being a housewife and mother of four children.

Gonyea admits things get a little hectic trying to balance her time between school, softball, home and her part-time job selling after-market products for car dealers, but she has no regrets about it.

"I just wish I had the time to concentrate on one thing and do it well," Gonyea said. "There are some things I have had to sacrifice to get everything done and one of them has been sleep. Sleep gets the least of my time."

Gonyea, a junior English major, recently turned 35. She was a housewife, a softball player in summer leagues and coach of junior high and high school teams in Waverly before enrolling at UNL in the fall of 1977.

"When I got out of high school (she was graduated in 1963 from Lincoln Pius X), I thought I wasn't good enough to go to college because my grades were just average," Gonyea said. "I wanted to go into coaching then, but there weren't any girls' sports in high school, just P.E. (Physical Education) classes. If you did those things, people thought you were a tom-boy."

Gonyea said she first thought of college five years ago, and it took a friend two years to talk her into it. She said she

originally came to UNL to learn more about coaching. She now has added the goal of becoming an English teacher to her coaching aspirations.

She said she didn't have any doubts about being able to play on the college level because she had played against many college players during the summer.

"At first, I thought it would be hard for them (teammates) to accept me, but they accepted me right away," Gonyea said, whose team nickname is Mom.

She said her husband, Wayne, and her four children, Angie, 13, Wayne, Jr., 12, Tammy, 9, and Joseph, 6, have adjusted well to her busy schedule.

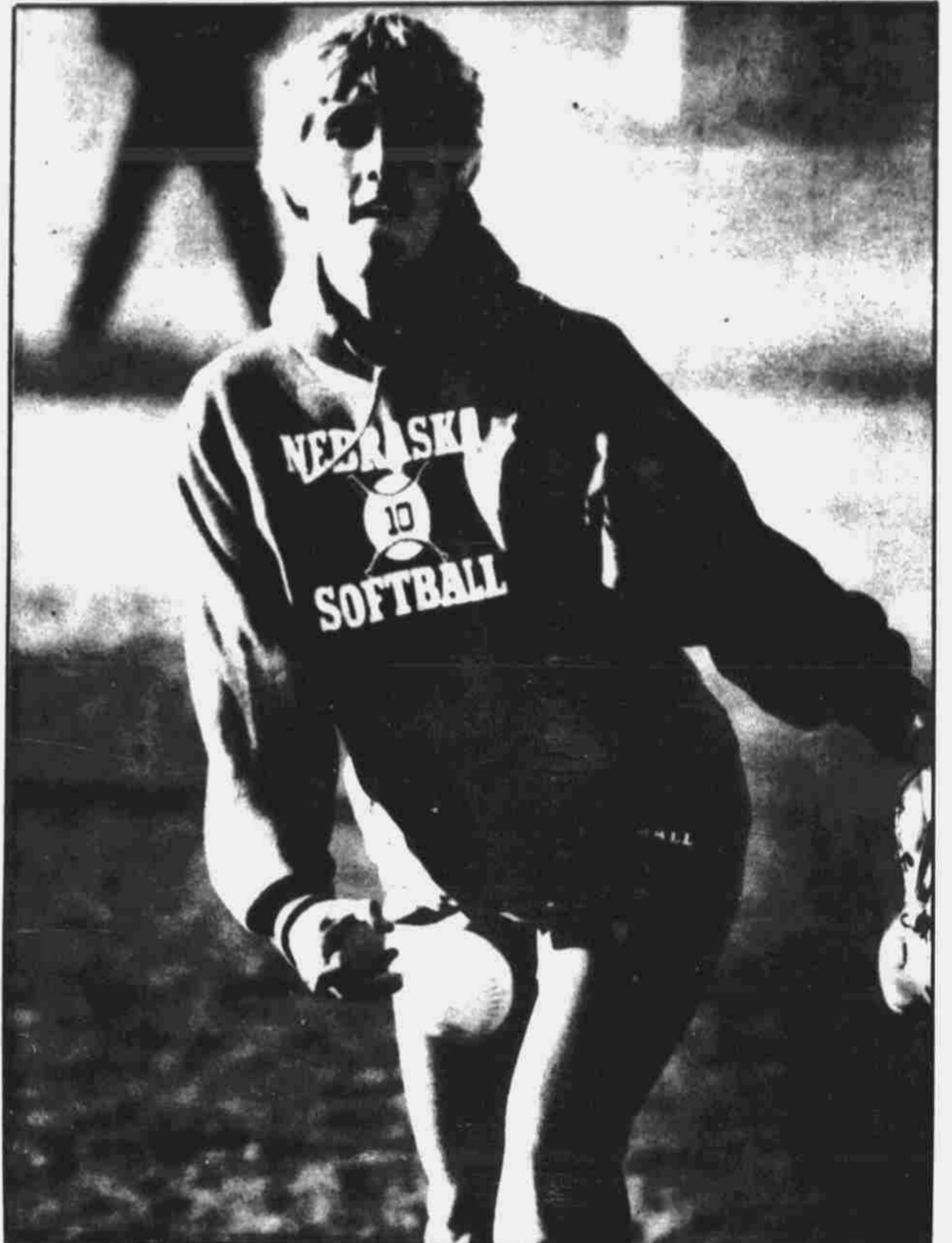
"It's made them rely on each other more," Gonyea said. "My oldest daughter has taken over for me, helping with the cooking, laundry and cleaning around the house."

Gonyea has been one of the Huskers' leading pitchers for two years. In 1979, she compiled a 9-4 record while setting a school record with 22 appearances. This season Gonyea is 7-5 despite bouts with pneumonia and flu as well as a pulled muscle in the abdomen.

Although her age has not affected her pitching, the designated hitter usually takes her spot in the batting order.

But in two games at the Big Eight tournament three weeks ago, Gonyea got four hits in six trips. She had not been at bat all season before the tournament.

"I guess I get DHed because of bad wheels; I just can't get around the bases fast enough," Gonyea said. "But at Big Eight, I showed them I still might have it at the plate."



UNL softball pitcher Connie Gonyea finds time to work out with the team. Gonyea also carries a full load of classes, works a part-time job and has four children. Photo by Mark Billingsley

