



Biographies

MAVIS ALBIN, Team Captain

Mavis is 70 years old and a native of Livingston, Louisiana. She was born into a family of five boys and learned to play ball at an early age. She began playing basketball in seventh grade and was on the high school team in eighth grade. At that time, basketball rules were quite different. Players could only dribble the ball one time, could not cross the center line and only the forwards could shoot the ball. There were three players on each end, three guards and three forwards. The guards could only play defense and rebound the ball and pass it to a forward who was stationed at the opposite end of the court. Before graduating in 1954, Mavis made all district and all parish as a high school athlete.

During a time when women worked and sent their husbands to college, Mavis did that very thing. She worked at a lumber company while her husband Joe attended college to become a teacher. During those four years, they had three sons. A few years later, Mavis and Joe purchased the lumber company and built a comfortable business for the next 32 years. They both retired in 1992.

Mavis stopped playing ball for decades because of marriage, career and children. She read about the Senior Games and decided to get involved in basketball again. She played on the team that won the gold medal in 1993 - thanks to her 3-point shot at the buzzer that made the team the winners by one point! Mavis currently has four United States national gold medals, and 68 state and regional tournament gold medals.

MARY BENDSEN

Mary is recognized for her high scoring ability. To her credit, since joining the Tigerettes, the team has not lost of game. Mary began playing basketball at the age of 12 and won the provincial championship that same year. She continued through high school playing in tandem with the open women's team. Mary was a member of the National Junior Women's champions with University of Victoria followed by six Senior A Championships. She was named the outstanding athlete at the University of Victoria and the top female athlete.

Mary played on the Canadian National Select team from 1966- 1973 winning a bronze medal in 1967 Pan American Games. She competed in the World Championships in Brazil where she was chosen as Miss Simpatico by the referees, and the Pan American Games in 1971 in Columbia.

Mary represented Canada in Czechoslovakia in 1979 as MVP of the tournament. Beginning at the age of 30, she played Master's basketball and won the gold medal in the Toronto World Masters Games. Mary competed in the Portland World Masters Games where she first met current teammate Mavis Albin.

On top of all of her other accomplishments, Mary is in the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame as a member of the Bronze Medal Pan American Games team and was inducted into the Victoria Sports Hall of Fame as an individual for basketball. She coached high school girls basketball for the majority of her 22 year teaching career.

WANDA BLAIBLOCK

At the age of 63, Wanda feels so blessed to be able to play basketball again with her sister Nikki Leader, a fellow member of the Tigerettes. Wanda played basketball in high school and was considered a first-rate contributor to the team. After graduation, Wanda attended Louisiana State University where she represented the university in an all-collegiate talent contest held at Texas A&M. Although her athletic ability is certainly commendable, she is an accomplished musician. She has conducted several children's musicals with dramatizations through the years. Wanda was also part of a singing trio that won the title of "Most Talented" in Louisiana in 1962 and was given the opportunity to sing on the Ted Mac Amateur Hour. Until recently retiring, she served as her church organist for the past 28 years. She still enjoys singing with her pal and teammate Mavis Albin.

As the mother of two children and four grandchildren, she juggles her schedule so she can play in the basketball tournaments with her sister Nikki. Wanda is also an avid golfer, she has won a number of local championship tournaments.

LORETTA HILL

Loretta played basketball in her high school years and agrees that the rules are quite different today. She began playing basketball competitively in the seventh grade. By her eighth grade year, she was asked to play on the Bayou Chicot High School varsity team as a substitute. For the remainder of her high school years, Loretta was the team's starting forward. A star athlete, she also played on the school's softball team.

After graduation, Loretta married Robert, her husband of 35 years. They have two children and four grandchildren. Before retiring, she worked for a valve and fitting company as an inside supervisor of sales and training. Because she enjoys being active, after her children graduated from high school, she joined a local softball team, then added tennis and biking.

Loretta is a young 67 years old. She joined the Tigerettes a dozen years ago at the age of 55 and has been a major contributor to their long-standing winning record. Aside from the team's medal winnings, Loretta has personally won many gold medals at the local and state levels in basketball, softball and tennis. She exercises, eats sensibly, shoots hoops and plays tennis two days a week. Like her teammates, Loretta is looking forward to the 2007 Nationals and is a great supporter of the Tigerettes.

NIKKI LEADER

Nikki is the baby of the Tigerettes at age 60. She is a native of Denham Springs, LA. She was a sophomore member of the 1962 Denham Springs High School state championship basketball champion runners-up. Nikki was an all-district selection that year and also received that honor during her junior and senior years. She was an all-state selection her senior year.

The women's basketball program at Denham Springs was discontinued after Nikki graduated, but she restarted the program and coached the junior high team. She then became the Denham Springs High School coach a few years later.

She received her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Southeastern Louisiana University. Nikki retired in 2005 from her teaching/coaching responsibilities after 34 years. She also felt she would be better able to pursue her senior basketball activities after retiring. Nikki has two national gold medals and numerous state and regional gold medals for basketball. She is very focused and very competitive, Nikki loves to win.

KITTY SPARACELLO

Growing up in a rural town in southern Louisiana, basketball was the only sport in which Kitty's school competed. Kitty played for the junior high team in the seventh grade; and was quickly moved up to the Senior High team in the eighth grade, where she started all four years beginning as a freshman student. As a senior, she not only played but was asked to help coach the Jr. High School team.

Enjoying her playing and coaching experiences, after graduation, Kitty majored in physical education at McNeese State College, where she continued to play basketball. While a student, she also coached basketball and softball at a local Jr. High School and spent her summers directing a recreational playground. Kitty graduated in three years and spent the next three years teaching physical education at South Terrebonne High School. Her next teaching post was at Centenary Methodist College in Shreveport, LA, where she was an instructor of life time sports. Kitty later attended Louisiana State University to earn her master's degree in physical education and become a certified health educator. She also went on to earn a master's degree in guidance counseling.

Kitty feels that she has touched and influenced many students as a sports and physical educator. Not only has she attempted to teach her students the love of sports but also her children. Both her son and daughter were competitive athletics and share her passion for athletics. It was Kitty's daughter who encouraged her to continue playing basketball after seeing a newspaper article highlighting the Senior Olympic Games. In wasn't long after that Kitty joined the Tigerettes and has been playing ever since.