

= 1997 ? 98 Tennessee Lady Volunteers basketball team =

The 1997 ? 98 Tennessee Lady Volunteers basketball team , coached by Pat Summitt , is considered to be one of the greatest teams in the history of U.S. women 's college basketball , going 39 ? 0 , and winning their third consecutive national championship , while playing one of the toughest schedules in the nation . The Lady Vols started off the season ranked number one in the nation , a ranking that would not change . ESPN called it one of the top ten moments in women 's sports of the 20th century . After the season , Summitt authored a book about the season , entitled " Raise the Roof " .

= = Preseason = =

The Lady Vols had just come off of a somewhat bittersweet season . While they had won the national championship , they had lost ten games , including two to rival Louisiana Tech . That team was the first Lady Vols team since 1991 that did not win either the SEC regular season or tournament championship .

However , the team did return several players , including All @-@ American Chamique Holdsclaw , and had a freshman class that was being called the greatest ever , which included Tamika Catchings , Semeka Randall , Teresa Geter , and Kristen Clement . Tamika Catchings won Miss Basketball titles in two states : Illinois , her sophomore year , and Texas , her senior year . Additionally , she led her high school to a state championship and a 40 ? 0 season her senior year . She also performed a quintuple @-@ double in one of her games . Semeka Randall was also accomplished , named Parade 's Player of the Year her senior year , a two @-@ time Miss Basketball , as well as a two @-@ time state tournament MVP . Kristen " Ace " Clement came out of Pennsylvania , where she had broken Wilt Chamberlain 's scoring record in Philadelphia of 2 @,@ 205 with 2 @,@ 256 points . The record had stood for 40 years . The fourth freshman , Teresa Geter , was not as well @-@ known , but was considered to be the best player in South Carolina , and had been named Miss Basketball , just like the others . Chamique , Tamika , and Semeka would become known as " The Meeks " as the season progressed .

= = Regular season = =

= = = Mississippi = = =

After an exhibition rout of US Armed Forces , the Lady Vols opened up the season unusually , with a conference game against Mississippi . Semeka Randall did not start the game . However , four minutes into the game , the Lady Vols were only up 4 ? 2 . At this point , Randall was put into the game , and Tennessee scored fifteen straight , on a run fueled by her . Randall scored 24 , and star Chamique Holdsclaw added 23 . This season opener has caused a lot of anticipation , as it was expected that this would be the game where all four of Tennessee 's freshman played together . However , during a November practice , Clement had injured her foot , resulting in a stress fracture . After a discussion with the team doctor , Clement agreed to sit out the Mississippi game in order to be able to play the next game , against Louisiana Tech .

= = = Louisiana Tech = = =

The Louisiana Tech Lady Techsters were ranked second in the country and was expected to challenge Tennessee for the national title . Tech returned all five of its starters from a team that had beaten the Vols twice the previous year . Tech came out on a 9 ? 2 run , but led at the half by only a point . The teams played evenly for the beginning of the second half , before Louisiana Tech raised the lead to five with just over twelve minutes remaining . Summitt put her four freshman into the line @-@ up , which went on a 12 ? 0 run , giving Tennessee a lead they would never relinquish .

Holdsclaw finished with a double @-@ double (24 points , 11 rebounds) , and Catchings contributed 17 points . Teresa Geter was a big contributor , as well , with five blocked shots . Clement was able to play the game , but it set her rehab back , and she would not play again for over a month .

== = Tennessee @-@ Martin , Stanford , Portland , Texas , and the Big Apple Classic == =

The next game was against Summitt 's alma mater , Tennessee @-@ Martin . Martin was naming their court after Summitt , and the game was just an excuse to attract a large number of people . Their meeting was not much of a game , as Tennessee won 73 ? 32 . Summitt 's team followed this game with a 40 @-@ point rout of Vermont . The team next went on a road trip to the West Coast for their annual game against rival Stanford . Stanford lit up the court in the first half , sinking 57 percent of their shots , but it was not enough to keep the Lady Vols away . Down by one at the half , the Lady Vols played great defense in the second , allowing just five field goals and winning by 18 . Holdsclaw had 25 points , and Catchings had 20 . The Lady Vols next traveled to Portland , as part of Summitt 's yearly effort to play at least one game near the hometown of each player . This game was meant more as a homecoming for Laurie Milligan , instead of an actual challenge , and they cruised to a 74 ? 51 victory . December opened up with a game against rival Texas , who shot out to a 47 ? 32 lead at halftime , and went on to win by 34 , behind Catchings ' 26 points . Next up was the Big Apple Classic , a home trip for Holdsclaw . The Ladies rolled over both opponents , beating George Mason and Manhattan by 30 and 50 respectively .

== = SEC / Big @-@ 10 Challenge == =

The Vols then returned home for the SEC / Big @-@ 10 challenge . Florida lost by 10 to Purdue , and the Vols ' game was against the Illinois . The game featured an interesting match @-@ up as Catchings ' sister , Tauja , was a sophomore at Illinois at the time . Tennessee had a horrific start as they fell behind 41 ? 19 . By halftime , the lead had been cut to 41 ? 24 , despite only shooting 23 % . In the second half , Tennessee cut the lead slowly , through turnovers and defense , finally taking the lead with 9 : 25 remaining . The Vols ended the game with a ten @-@ point win .

== = Northern Lights Invitational == =

The next trip was up to Anchorage , for the Northern Lights Invitational , a three @-@ day , eight @-@ team tournament . The first game was an easy win against Akron , in which Summitt played her bench frequently . The semi @-@ final game , against Texas A & M , was not much more difficult . The Ladies won handily , 105 ? 81 , leading by as much as 25 . Texas A & M 's 81 points would end up being the most a team would score on Tennessee that season . The championship game was against Wisconsin , a team ranked in the top 10 , but this ranking did not mean much , as the team ended 1997 with an 87 ? 66 victory . The Meeks were named to the All @-@ Tournament team .

== = Arkansas and UConn == =

A rare New Year 's Day game was played against SEC foe Arkansas , who was ranked just inside the top 25 . Tennessee forced 26 turnovers , including 14 steals , en route to an 88 ? 58 victory . This game was followed up with a home match with main rival UConn , who was ranked third in the nation . UConn led the series 4 ? 3 , but the Lady Vols had won the last matchup , and the undefeated Huskies wanted revenge . Thompson @-@ Boling Arena seated nearly 25 @,@ 000 fans , an NCAA women 's record , and , as an experiment , the game was played in four quarters instead of two halves . The Lady Vols started off on a 10 ? 0 run , but the lead was cut to 23 ? 17 by the end of the first quarter . The second quarter saw Tennessee expand the lead , ending the quarter with a fourteen @-@ point lead . However , UConn did not want to go away , and went on a

tear in the third quarter , as a 20 ? 7 run cut the Lady Vols lead to one point , before the team responded , ending the quarter with seven unanswered points . The final quarter was all Tennessee , and the game ended in an 84 ? 69 win .

= = = South Carolina and Florida = = =

The team started their SEC schedule back up with a trip to South Carolina . The Gamecocks were not much of an opponent , as the ladies more than doubled their points at the half (53 ? 26) , and finished the game 94 ? 52 . This game was followed up with another highly ranked opponent , the twelfth @-@ ranked Gators . Once again , the Vols ran a talented team into the ground , as they only allowed 18 first half points , ultimately winning by a score of 99 ? 60 .

= = = Georgia , Kentucky , and DePaul = = =

Tennessee had a three @-@ game road trip up next , starting with the Bulldogs in Athens . Tennessee started the game strong , grabbing the lead , and finished the half on a 13 ? 0 run . However , Georgia came back , cutting the lead down to nine with seven minutes remaining in the game . It was at this point that Semeka Randall scored thirteen points , sealing a 96 ? 71 victory . This is the largest margin of victory in the Lady Bulldogs @-@ Lady Vols series . Tennessee had 19 steals in the game , while shooting over 50 % , and Holdsclaw and Catchings both scored over 20 . The next game , against Kentucky , also had Tennessee making a late first half run , giving them a 19 @-@ point lead at the break . This lead was never given up , as the Lady Vols won by twenty @-@ eight . The final game of the road trip was against DePaul , a good team who was , however , missing their two best players . Without these players , it was not much of a game , as Summitt 's team started the game with twenty @-@ one straight points and ended the game with a 125 ? 46 victory , giving the team a 20 ? 0 record . The team 's 125 points were the second most in the history of the program .

= = = Vanderbilt and Georgia = = =

The Lady Vols returned home and resumed their SEC schedule against in @-@ state foe Vanderbilt , who was ranked in the top 10 . Throughout the first half , the game was about even , until the Lady Vols got a slight lead with under seven minutes left , which they took to the locker room , 37 ? 31 . The second half , however , started out much differently , beginning with a 20 ? 0 Lady Vols run . Tennessee led by as many as 35 points in the game , and ended the game with an 86 ? 54 win . Catchings was named the SEC Player of the Week for her role in the DePaul and Vanderbilt games , scoring 35 and 22 points respectively . The final game of the month was the rematch with Georgia . It ended up being a blowout . Tennessee shot better than 60 % , and Holdsclaw scored more points in the first half than the entire Georgia team . Tennessee broke the 20 @-@ steal mark , as well as the 100 @-@ point mark , winning 102 ? 43 .

= = = Alabama , Old Dominion , and Mississippi State = = =

February began with another SEC match @-@ up , this time against unranked Alabama . Starter Kyra Elzy tore her ACL during the game ending her season , during this game , while going up for a rebound . Meanwhile , Alabama was keeping close to the Lady Vols , by slowing the game down . At half time , Tennessee only had a 13 @-@ point lead . The team never did shake off the Crimson Tide , but did manage to pull out the win , 73 ? 66 . A trip to Ole Miss was next , and the team started off much better , score the first ten points of the game and having a 54 ? 17 lead at halftime . Summitt let the bench play the rest of the game , ultimately winning 91 ? 45 . This game was followed up by a non @-@ conference match against longtime rival Old Dominion , whom Tennessee had beaten in the previous year 's national championship . The game was even for fifteen minutes , but in the last five minutes of the half , Tennessee was able to build a twelve @-@

point lead . Holdsclaw took over the second half for the Lady Vols , scoring 24 points for an 85 ? 61 victory , ODU 's biggest loss in four years . This match was followed up with another conference game , this time against the Mississippi State Bulldogs . UT started out sloppily , and ended the half with only a nine @-@ point lead . However , once again the team came out strong to open the second half , raising their lead and eventually had double State 's points , with ten minutes remaining . The Bulldogs cut the lead to eleven , but then Summitt put Holdsclaw back in , scoring eight in a row , giving Tennessee another victory , 74 ? 52 .

= = = Memphis , Auburn , Vanderbilt , and LSU = = =

After a two @-@ day rest , the Lady Vols resumed their season with three games in five days , starting with their final non @-@ conference opponent , Memphis , on the road . UT started strong , taking a 16 ? 6 lead to open up the game , only to give it back up . Memphis delighted its home crowd by taking a 38 ? 31 lead with two minutes to go in the half , but Tennessee rallied and took a two @-@ point lead to the locker room . Once again , Tennessee pulled away in the second half , 91 ? 65 , behind three players who scored over twenty : Holdsclaw (31) , Randall (21) , and Catchings (20) . The next game was against Auburn , a program that is traditionally competitive within the conference . Once again , Summitt 's team started the game strong , leading 32 ? 16 before Auburn woke up , cutting the lead to five by the half . However , the Tigers would not get any closer than this , as Holdsclaw 's 39 points helped Tennessee to yet another win , 79 ? 63 . The final game of this stretch was the rematch with Vanderbilt , played on President 's Day in front of a sellout crowd at the Commodores ' quirky Memorial Gymnasium and a national television audience on ESPN . The Commodores started off strong , taking a 16 ? 7 lead in front of their home crowd . However Tennessee responded with seventeen straight points to take the lead , and led by nine at the halftime . As in previous games , the Lady Vols made a big run to open up the second half to put the game out of reach . UT won 91 ? 60 , with UT shooting over fifty percent yet again . The final game of the regular season came against LSU , a respectable SEC team which beat the Lady Vols the previous season in Baton Rouge , but still a few seasons away from becoming a national power . Tennessee played well on Senior Night , starting with a 32 ? 8 lead that would never be given up . Tennessee completed the season with a 90 ? 58 win , giving them a perfect 30 ? 0 regular season .

= = SEC tournament = =

After their first round bye , Tennessee faced Mississippi State again . Instead of Tennessee starting quickly , however , the Bulldogs did , taking a 9 ? 2 lead . At this point though , the Vols went on one of their runs , this time a 15 ? 2 one . State did not recover from this , and Tennessee advanced to the semi @-@ finals , 88 ? 60 . Catchings had a double @-@ double by halftime . In the semi @-@ finals , UT met Vanderbilt for the third time , with an even better performance than the previous two . Catchings again had a double @-@ double by halftime and the team shot 6 of 7 from beyond the three point line , as they advanced to the championship 106 ? 45 . The SEC Championship was against Alabama , who had played within seven points of the Lady Vols in their previous match @-@ up . Alabama used the same , slow style they had previously employed , and at the break were only down by three . Tennessee was able to slowly up the lead to ten during the first ten minutes of the second period , eventually reaching a fourteen @-@ point lead , before Alabama started a comeback , cutting the lead to five with just over forty seconds remaining . Alabama was able to score the five points , but Tennessee made their foul shots , and won the title , 67 ? 63 . After the game , Holdsclaw was named the tournament 's most outstanding player . UT was now 33 ? 0 , with the NCAA tournament coming up next .

= = NCAA tournament = =

= = = Opening Games = = =

The Lady Vols were awarded the No. 1 seed in the Mideast Regional where their opponent was , oddly enough , also undefeated . The 28 ? 0 Lady Flames of Liberty were the champions of the Big South conference , giving them a berth in the tournament as a No. 16 seed . The usual # 1- # 16 blowout occurred , with Tennessee winning 102 ? 58 , although in another region this blowout did not occur : No. 16 seed Harvard upset injury @-@ depleted No. 1 seed Stanford 71 ? 67 in the West regional . This is the only time that a 16 @-@ seed has beaten a 1 @-@ seed in the NCAA tournament ? men 's or women 's . Holdsclaw led Tennessee with 22 points , although Liberty 's Sharon Wilkerson led all scorers with 26 . Four other Lady Vols reached double figures , and both Holdsclaw and Catchings had double @-@ doubles .

UT 's second round opponent was 8 @-@ seeded Western Kentucky , who had lost only by one to Louisiana Tech in the Sun Belt Tournament , and had defeated Stephen F. Austin in the first round , 88 ? 76 . Tennessee started slowly and Randall picked up two early fouls , resulting in Ace Clement taking her place in the lineup where she scored five quick points and helped the team to a twelve @-@ point halftime lead . Western Kentucky pulled to within six early on in the second half , only to follow their run up by going 0 for 6 on their next shots . However , the Hilltoppers pulled back within six a second time . Once again , their run was short lived , as it was followed up with a spree of turnovers . The Lady Vols took advantage of this drought , and went on to win 82 ? 62 . Holdsclaw led all scorers with 34 and Catchings contributed 20 , while Le Johnson was Western Kentucky 's highest scorer , with 17 .

The Regional Finals were not all that far away from Knoxville ? the Lady Vols only had to travel a couple of hours , to Nashville , where they faced 5th @-@ seeded Rutgers , 22 ? 9 . Rutgers had survived two close games to reach this point , defeating 12th @-@ seeded Oregon , 79 ? 76 , in the first round , and then upsetting 4th @-@ seeded Iowa State , 62 ? 61 in the second . Their third round game was not quite so close . Although Rutgers only trailed by two towards the end of the first period , UT was able to outscore Rutgers by six to close it out , and opened the second half up by building the lead to sixteen . The Scarlet Knights never recovered , losing 92 ? 60 . Holdsclaw and Catchings were again the leading scorers , with 25 and 23 . The Lady Vols shot 52 @. @ 2 % from the field and forced Rutgers to 27 turnovers . This game gave Tennessee their 36th win , breaking Connecticut 's record of 35 , as the Lady Vols advanced to the Regional Finals .

The Regional Championship matched Tennessee with the 2nd @-@ seeded Tar Heels , who were coming off of a 6 @-@ point victory over 3rd @-@ seeded Illinois . Summitt 's team started off with a 17 ? 11 lead , only to falter and allow Carolina to tie it up at 21 . Tennessee responded with a 12 ? 6 run to end the first , but Carolina answered by opening the second half with the first seven points , giving them a one @-@ point lead , 34 ? 33 , and the first time an opponent had held a lead over Tennessee in over three months . Carolina slowly extended the lead as the game continued , until they were eventually leading 61 ? 49 , at which point Summitt sent several players , including Holdsclaw (who was on the bench due to a poor shooting performance) back onto the floor . A minute later , Tennessee had cut the deficit to five , and by the five @-@ minute mark the game was tied again , at 62 . The teams traded baskets , tying the game at 64 and 66 , before Tennessee reached a 70 ? 67 lead , with less than ninety seconds remaining . Carolina was soon forced to start fouling the Lady Vols , who made their free throws and advanced to the Final Four , 76 ? 70 . Holdsclaw once again led all scorers , this time with 29 , and Semeka Randall had 20 . North Carolina was led by Wright and Reid , who had 21 and 20 .

= = = Final Four = = =

Tennessee 's first Final Four game was against SEC foe , Arkansas , the 9th @-@ seed out of the West Region . The Razorbacks had upset three different teams to reach the Final Four , Hawai'i , Kansas , and 2nd @-@ seeded Duke . Despite a poor first half shooting performance , the Vols led 39 ? 28 halfway through the game . The second half saw the Lady Vols make over half their shots , propelling the team to the national championship with an 86 ? 58 , the largest margin of victory in the Women 's National Semifinals history .

Louisiana Tech knocked off N.C. State in their semifinal match , 84 ? 65 , making the national championship a match @-@ up between the two teams that started the season ranked first and second . The game was not close . Seven and a half minutes through the first half , the Lady Vols were up by fifteen , and by halftime the score was 55 ? 32 . The 55 points was a record for most points in a half in a national championship game . Tech was not able to make a run until late in the second half , when they were able to cut the lead down to eighteen , only to see Kellie Jolly hit back @-@ to @-@ back three pointers . The final score was 93 to 75 . Three different Lady Vols scored twenty or more points : Holdsclaw (25) , Catchings (27) , and Jolly (20) . Holdsclaw , who was named the Final Four MVP , her second consecutive , also won her seventh straight title (3 NCAA , 4 State) . After the game , Louisiana Tech head coach Leon Balmore proclaimed this Lady Vols squad to be the " best ever " , something Old Dominion Hall of Famer Nancy Lieberman has stated back in February . However , not everyone was positive , as ESPN analyst Mimi Griffin stated that Tennessee 's dominance was becoming a detriment to the women 's game .

The Lady Vols did not win another national championship until 2007 , defeating Rutgers in the championship game in Cleveland . Tennessee lost three times to Connecticut in championship games (2000 , 2003 , 2004) , but also suffered a humiliating loss to Xavier in the 2001 Sweet 16 , marking only the second time since the NCAA first sanctioned women 's basketball championships in 1982 the Lady Vols did not reach at least the Elite Eight . Connecticut would later match the Lady Vols ' 39 ? 0 mark in 2002 , 2009 , and 2010 before Baylor eclipsed the record in 2012 and tied by UConn themselves in 2014 , as the only teams to win 40 straight games in a season .

= = Scores = =

= = Awards and honors = =

= = Records = =

= = = NCAA records = = =

Most games played in a season (individual) ? 39 (tied : Chamique Holdsclaw , Teresa Geter , Tamika Catchings , Kellie Jolly , LaShonda Stephens (All 1997 ? 98 Tennessee))

Most points in a season (team) ? 3 @ , @ 464

Most free throw attempts in a season (team) ? 1 @ , @ 110

Most victories in a season ? 39 (tied : UConn , 2001 ? 02)

Most games played in a season (team) ? 39 (tied : UConn , 2001 ? 02)

Most field goals in an NCAA tournament (player) ? 64 (Chamique Holdsclaw)

Most field goals attempted in an NCAA tournament (player) ? 131 (Chamique Holdsclaw)

= = = SEC records = = =

Most points in a season (team) ? 3 @ , @ 464

Most free throw attempts in a season (team) ? 1 @ , @ 110

Most free throws made in a season (team) ? 782

Most blocks in a season (team) ? 238

= = = School records = = =

Most free throws made in a season (player) ? 166 (Chamique Holdsclaw)

Most blocks in a season (player) ? 93 (Teresa Geter)

Most points in a season (team) ? 3 @ , @ 464

Most free throw attempts in a season (team) ? 1 @, @ 110

Most free throws made in a season (team) ? 782

Most blocks in a season (team) ? 238

Most wins in a season ? 39

= = Roster = =

= = Statistics = =

= = Team players drafted into the WNBA = =