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For twins Nichole and Michelle Beall, the last four years have been a rollercoaster ride to say the least. Through injuries and Big South championships, through disappointments and triumphs, the 21-year-old sisters have spent the last four years under the guidance of Radford University Softball Head Coach Mickey Dean. Now seniors, the twins find themselves in a position of leadership amongst a group of young women intent on a single goal: winning it all.

After winning consecutive Big South championships in their freshmen and sophomore years in 2009 and 2010, 2011 was the first year that the Highlanders did not make an appearance in the NCAA tournament since 2008. In fact, in the three full seasons the twins have been on the Highlanders' roster, RU has won three consecutive regular season titles.

According to Michelle Beall, who plays catcher for the Highlanders, Mickey Dean was a big reason the twins decided to choose RU Softball over several other programs. Dean, of course, is one of the most decorated coaches to ever coach an RU team as he's coached at the collegiate, national, and even Olympic levels.

"We knew who he was, and we knew what kind of man he was, so we were really excited to come here and play," Michelle said. "He's been here the whole way, really pushing me. He's been a great father figure. He would do whatever he could for us."

Nichole, who has played shortstop, third base, and second base in her time at RU, holds a .372 batting average and has the distinction of being the leadoff hitter in Dean's lineup.

"I always tell people I started playing when I was eight, but I never really have a sure answer. I also played pitcher in high school, but I injured my shoulder so I had to stop," Nichole said. "Coming back to shortstop this year felt like I was learning the position again, but it's like riding a

bike. You never forget.”

Even though the two have become standout softball players at RU, it wasn't the only sport they played competitively. Both of the twins played basketball through high school in their hometown of Culpeper, Virginia. The twins made a conscious decision to quit basketball in their senior year so they wouldn't risk a serious injury before coming to RU to play softball.

“To playing professional softball, part of me says yes and part of me says no, for a few reasons. It's pretty much all I've known since I was eight-years-old,” said Nichole. “But it really does wear you out. Part of me just says I want to end on a good note, and going into professional softball might not do that for me.”

Currently, the Highs are 18-9 on the season and are 5-1 in the Big South Conference. Winners of 10 out of their past 11 games, it seems the Highlanders have turned the corner on the 2012 season after starting 8-8. The Beall twins have been remarkably consistent throughout the year, as neither sister has missed a game the entire year.

“I want to say that the big competition is yet to come, and I'm looking forward to it,” Michelle said. “We don't like to compare the teams we've played with the ones we're about to play. We just take it one game at a time.

The Highlanders, and the Beall twins, will look to continue their impressive season turnaround in the second half of their season. With several important Big South Conference matches coming up, the Highlanders will look to clinch their fourth consecutive regular season title, and their third Big South Conference title in four years. The Highs' next match will take place on April 6, when the Highs host Coastal Carolina in a double header.