

# Baseball season off to a solid start

By Sara Kamber  
co-sports editor

The baseball team returned from spring training in Port St. Lucie, Fl. with a 5-3 record. The blue and white saw strong performances from several players who are earning their first real opportunity to play on a daily basis. After seven seniors graduated last season, there are some big shoes to be filled.

"We are pleased with our team effort in Florida," said Head Coach Paul Benim. "Our performance was solid during an extremely demanding week where we played eight varsity and three junior varsity games in six days. Spring training is honestly about survival and we did that and a little more."

Junior pitcher Ray DeVaul helped start things out the right way by earning this season's first AMCC Pitcher of the Week honors. DeVaul was 2-0 in his first two starts of the season, picking up a pair of shutout wins over Susquehanna and Eastern. Over 12 1/3 innings, he allowed no earned runs, struck out 8 and walked only 3.

Senior Jason Shaffer and junior Chris



Senior captains Jason Shaffer (#11), Vince Canzano (#1) and Matt Szymanski (#22) will be depended on to lead a team consisting of a large number of underclassmen this season.

McCartney were each 1-1 on the mound. McCartney fanned 5 over 10 innings of work while Shaffer struck out 9 in 13 innings.

"The pitching staff really excelled," said Benim. "In several instances they were dominant and controlled the game from start to finish. We ask that they give us a chance to play defense and hit a little bit. They gave us a chance to succeed each and every game."

Last season's AMCC Newcomer of the Year, Brian Hart was back at work during the trip. Hart was 12 for 26 at the plate scoring 3 runs and 7 RBIs. He leads the team in batting average at .461 for the week.

Coming in behind Hart in batting average is senior captain Vince Canzano. Canzano averaged .423 with 11 hits in 26 at bats. He brought in 3 RBIs and had 5 runs. Canzano shares cap-

tain duties with fellow seniors Shaffer and Matt Szymanski. Canzano holds down short stop for the blue and white while Shaffer and Szymanski are both pitchers.

"Canzano, Shaffer and Szymanski all did quite well, but I think they will be even better down the road at crunch time," said Benim. "We always look for upperclassmen to step up and perform. Players should improve every year and develop different aspects of their game and as seniors, be at their best and have their best year."

Although spring training was very successful, there were a few sets backs, including a nasty loss to Bethany College, 3-10. Over the eight game road trip, the Lions recorded 22 turnovers.

"Florida is an early preview of the season, almost a mini-season," said Benim. "But one good or bad game doesn't make a year or a career. Our guys did good things and we strive to get better daily."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

## Softball team experiences setback during spring training

By Crystal Chisholm  
staff writer

During spring break, the softball team, consisting of 12 members, headed down to Kissimmee, Fl., for spring training. In preparation for the games, the team began practicing in February, and put in two more practices before heading to Florida.

While at spring training, the team played eight of the ten scheduled games, competing in two games daily. This year the team had what seems as though a streak of bad luck on the field, leaving spring training with a record of 0-8.

The team's misfortunes continued when they were rained out of two of their scheduled games in Florida, better known as the Sunshine State. Though the team suffered a terrible loss, they managed to hold their weight against top ranking teams.

"My ladies held off a top ranked team scoreless for four straight innings, said Head Coach Stacy Pondo, "They played a good game."

Though they were not very successful in dominating their competitors, the women's softball team stayed strong throughout the week. "They

played tough teams during training, very good athletic teams, while holding down a very busy schedule," said Pondo.

While in Florida, the team was able to get a clear view of some of their weak points as well as their strong points, which will aid them in the upcoming season. "The team overall just needs to brush up on the basics. The Fundamentals, and their hitting," said Pondo.

Even without the wins they had hoped for, their losses shined light on the fact that through everything, they are still a very close-knit team, which Pondo considers to be one of the teams best assets. By playing competitive teams, they learned a lot about themselves and the team as a whole.

With the opening game of the season fast approaching, "They know that they must strive to become a tougher more competitive team overall, both mentally and physically," said Pondo.

Even with the losses suffered during spring training, the team remains positive going into the conference games.

"Despite our record, Florida was a great starting block for our season," said Team Captain Shelle Roberts. "We played some really tough teams, and

although we didn't win, we are much better prepared for our conference games. Now that we have Florida behind us, we need to stay positive and play softball the way we know how."

The team now knows what is needed in order to get the job done, and dominate out on the field.

"Even on Tuesday, their first practice since coming back up North, I can see they have stepped up their play another notch and they realized what they're capable of doing," said Pondo.

Now that spring training is over, the women's softball team is ready to step up their skills and forge ahead to make sure this season is not a repeat episode of what happened in Florida.

"With our first game coming up on March 29, I want to let it be known that our record doesn't portray what they did down in Florida," said Pondo. "They're a strong willed team with a desire to play hard and will compete well once they are back up North, during the season. It is essential that we keep positive. The team needs to keep their heads up, and continue to work hard and do the best they can."

## Track team makes strong showing at ECAC's, 13 receive All-ECAC Honors

By Sam Cibula  
co-sports editor

On March 4 and 5, the 14 members of the men's and women's indoor track team traveled to St. Lawrence University for a Division III indoor track meet. The meet represented top athletes from 47 different division three schools. The blue and white were represented by 14 members of the varsity indoor track team; a record number for the meet. Last year Behrend only had six members qualify for the meet. From the blue and white squad, 13 of the 14 athletes earned All ECAC Honors at the meet.

Leading the men was senior indoor and outdoor track standout Isiah Meek. Meek has been veteran to the ECAC meet but this was the first time he placed. His 2nd place finish in the 55-meter hurdles was the best finish for the Lion's ever. The hurdler clocked in at 7.74 setting a new Behrend record and making the NCAA provisional time qualifications.

"Isiah has worked very hard all four years at Behrend to get to nationals," said Head Coach Dave Cooper. "He has provisionally qualified each year in the outdoor season, but this was the first time indoors. Hurdles Coach Bill Hoffman changed Isiah's start completely this year and it is making a tremendous difference. Isiah has been outstanding going over the hurdles, but until now has been slow coming out of the blocks. His improvement at the start bodes well for the outdoor season where he will have 10 hurdles instead of 5 and his start will only get better as he becomes more comfortable with it."

Other top finishes for the men came from senior Donnie Hackworth and sophomore Jon McKinney. They both captured 8th places finishes. Hackworth placed 8th in pole vaulting,

clearing 4.24 meters and McKinney took 8th in the triple jump, with a jump of 13.10 meters.

The men's 4x800 relay team of sophomore Brad Ruffo, freshman Eric Diluzio, senior Mike Bartlett and freshman Joe Wilcher took home a 6th place finish along with a new Behrend record with the time of 8:05.07.

Junior Staci Banaszek, who has qualified for the meet every season, set the pace for the Lady Lions. Banaszek captured a 6th place finish in the triple jump with 10.71 meters.

"Staci qualified in all three jumps but due to tight hamstrings, she wasn't at her best," said Cooper. "Staci still managed to place in the triple jump."

Freshman Leisl Soergel and Becky Gonzalez took 8th place finishes in their respective events. Soergel placed in the 500-meter run, and Gonzalez in the hurdles.

"Becky qualified for finals and was in fourth place before clipping a hurdle and slipping into 8th place," said Cooper.

The women's 4x800 relay matched the men's with another 6th place finish. The team of sophomore Leslie Gentile, junior Nicole Minewasser, senior Claire Manelick and Soergel ran a time of 10:01.62. The time was also good enough for another Behrend record.

"Coach of the middle-distances, Greg Cooper, did a great job of peaking the relay teams for the ECAC meet and preparing them mentally for the competition," said Cooper. "The relay teams had to place well in their heats to end up with the 6th place finishes."

The indoor track teams will next gear up for the outdoor season. The outdoor track teams will kickoff their season at the Clarion Invitational March 26.

## HOUSING AND FOOD SERVICES

### Athlete of the Week ...



DeVaul is 2-0 in his first two starts of the season and over 12 1/3 innings, he gave up no earned runs. In his first game, he limited Susquehanna to two hits, walked two and striking out three over 5 1/3 innings. The second time around against Eastern, DeVaul pitched a complete game, allowing 7 hits. He struck out five and gave up one run in the 5-0 win.

DeVaul was named AMCC Pitcher of the Week in his first two starts.

The Behrend team is kicking up spring training in Port St. Lucie, Fl. with a 5-3 record. The blue and white will be heading home on Saturday against Bethany College.

Ray DeVaul  
Baseball  
Junior Pitcher  
Saegertown/Saegertown

Housing and Food Service Athlete of the Week is selected by the Sports Information Staff.

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