

History in the making

by Greg Kristen
Collegian Staff

With the experience of six seniors, the Penn State-Behrend Lady Lions can do what no other Behrend basketball team has done before; receive an NCAA Division III playoff berth and make Behrend basketball history.

With an impressive 20-5 record, the Lady Lions are looking forward to their first trip to the NCAA tournament.

Head Coach Roz Fornari said, "It'll mean just about everything."

The Lady Lions have fought through one of their toughest seasons. Their strength and determination all season has them vying for the pinnacle they want to attain.

From the six seniors and bench players to the coaching staff, the Lady Lions have been a portrait of consistency all year.

The Lady Lions for the second time in three years have a solid chance at making the NCAAs.

Fornari said, "No doubt. We deserve an NCAA bid."

In the last three years the Lady Lions have compiled a 61-17 record and have displayed their

dominance every year. They have proven to everyone what kind of team they are. Now they want the respect they deserve and the chance to prove their worthiness.

The bids for the NCAAs will be announced on Sunday, February 27 at 8:15 p.m. The team will be together for the announcement of the 40 teams selected to the tournament.

If the Lady Lions receive a bid they will play their first game on Wednesday, March 2. To be crowned champions of the tournament the Lady Lions must win five games.

The Lady Lions finished their season in style last week with two convincing victories against Grove City and Thiel.

Last Saturday the Lady Lions visited Grove City, and for the most part gave the Lady Wolverines a lesson in playoff basketball.

In the first half, the Lady Lions roared to a 33-21 halftime lead by playing in-your-face defense. They allowed the Lady Wolverines an anemic 33.3 shooting percentage from the field, while the lady cagers shot 46 percent from the field.

In the second half the Lady Lions cooled off a bit, shooting only 31 percent. But they did what they had to do to win the game.

With victory at hand, Fornari pulled them over and said, "This is your long road and it's finally over."

The Lady Lions won easily 71-49. Leading the way was Anne Bonner who netted 23, while Wendy Ebinger chipped in 17.

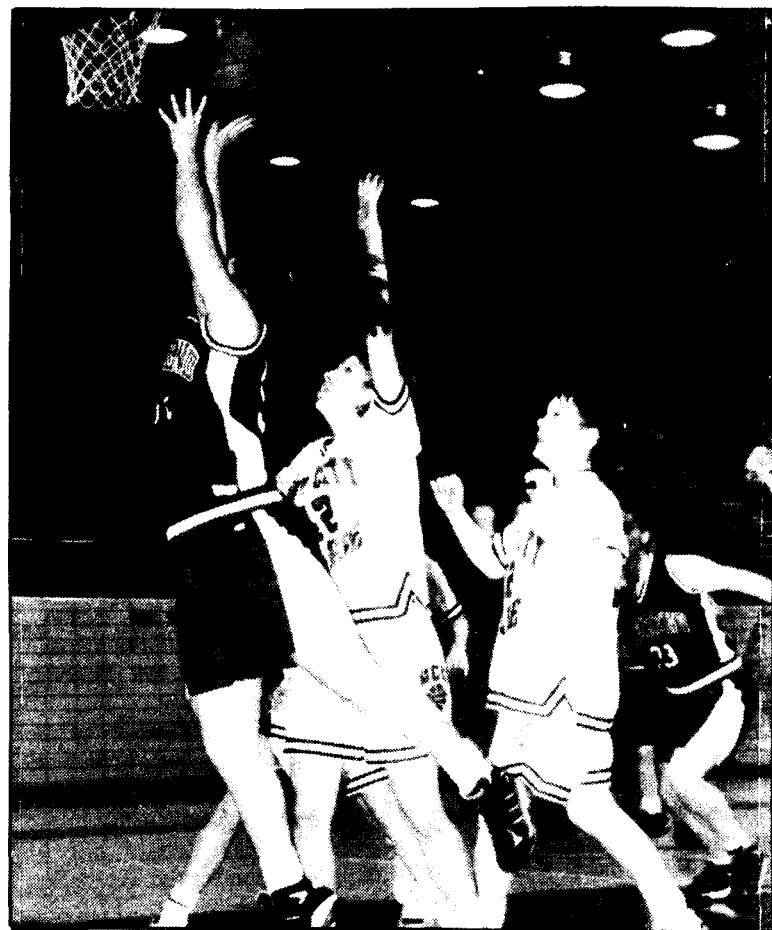
Last Thursday at Erie Hall the seniors played their last home game of the year and they didn't disappoint their fans.

The Lady Lions blasted off to an early lead against the Lady Cats of Thiel by shooting an impressive 57 percent from the field and gaining a commanding 41-23 halftime lead.

Fornari said, "They played well, they played hard, and they played to have fun."

In the second half the Lady Lions again played their brand of game, cruising to an easy 74-51 win.

The balanced attack was led by Anne Bonner and Marlesse Schlott who both knocked down 11, while Michelle Grover netted 10.



Holly Beary/Photo Coordinator
"Strait" to the hoop: Junior Karen Strait takes it to the hole against a Grove City player.

Eventful to say the least

by Joe Mottillo
Collegian Staff

"Eventful to say the least," said men's basketball coach Chris Gilmartin of the Lions' 104-84 win Tuesday night against LaRoche.

"It was a very special evening for our entire team. I can't think

of a better way to wrap up the season. It was a great way to go out for our two seniors, Don Plyler and Byron Thorne," said Gilmartin. "It was a final opportunity for them to shine, which they did."

The game started an hour late because of a mix-up with the officiating, but once the game

started, it became a shoot out.

The Lions had an early lead of 17-14 although freshman forward, Steve Spencer, went down with an ankle injury.

LaRoche battled back and went up 30-27 when Behrend called a time-out. Gilmartin must have said something right as Plyler hit a three-pointer right after the timeout. The game went back and forth and the score was tied 51-51 at the half.

LaRoche hit eight 3-pointers in the first half, yet was outrebounded 26-14 by the Lions. Ron Derian had 14 points in the first half to lead all scorers.

The second half started out just as close as neither team took a big advantage.

"Plyler's running one-hander is what made the difference. That was the turning point. I've been waiting for Donnie to broaden his game and become a penetrating guard. To see him do that makes it all worth while," said Gilmartin.

Behrend took a 76-67 lead after Derian hit two driving layups to force LaRoche to call a timeout with 10:22 left in the game. The Lions kept up their intensity after the time-out as Todd Sturgin had consecutive blocked shots.

Behrend continued to put on the pressure as they increased the lead to 84-67 with 8:00 left.

The teams went back and forth to the 3:28 mark as each team

added 10 points before LaRoche called a time-out.

The only things that were not determined at this point were if the Lions would hit the century mark and when the seniors would depart.

The first was answered at 2:19 when Rob Hunt made a put back to give the Lions 100 points for only the second time this season.

The next was answered at the 1:04 and :47 marks when Plyler and Thorne exited the game for their final time.

The final score ended up 104-84 as Behrend finished 10-15 on the season after a 2-9 start.

Derian led all scorers with 29 points on 10 of 15 shooting and added a game high 13 rebounds. Plyler added 25 points and 8 rebounds, while Thorne had 19

points, 10 rebounds, 8 assists and 5 steals. Sturgin had a season high ten blocks to go along with his ten points.

The Lions set season highs with most points in the first half (51), total points (104), most defensive rebounds (37), most total rebounds (57), and most blocked shots (10).

"Derian and Sturgin leave this season on tremendous highs and leave us a lot to look forward to," said Gilmartin.

"I'm optimistic about next year based on the players we have returning. I'm looking forward to seeing who assumes leadership of the team because they had great role models in Byron and Donnie."



Arnel Balcita/Assistant Photo Coordinator
Fast break: Byron Thorne looks to pass against LaRoche.



Arnel Balcita/Assistant Photo Coordinator
Pop talk: Head Coach Chris Gilmartin loosens the team up during a time-out.