

Change of seasons for boys of spring

by Nick Zulovich
Sports Editor

Spring is in the air, or at least it was for awhile here in the Erie area. But nevertheless, Paul Benim and the Penn State Behrend Baseball team are definitely thinking about spring, and their season that is fast approaching.

Next week, while many of us are relaxing and taking it easy during spring break, Benim and the Lions will be hard at work in Florida for spring training.

Benim is in his first season with the baseball program after three successful seasons with the Behrend softball team.

The team will be attending the Florida Coast spring training camp. This facility gives schools an opportunity to get a few games under their belt before heading into the bigger part of their schedules.

The team will arrive in Florida on Sunday evening and play their first game of the season next Tuesday.

"The main purpose of going to Florida is to prepare for your northern schedule. But at the same time, we will find out who can do what, and learn some

things about ourselves," Benim said.

Benim has the luxury of veterans in a few key positions to shape this season's squad into a possible powerhouse.

Junior Quinn McGuire, who anchored the outfield in the center last season, could be moved to left this season. He is expected upon to provide some lightening on the base-paths. McGuire has 27 career steals after batting leadoff most of last season. But McGuire said he will do anything that is asked of him, both offensively and defensively.

"No matter what position I'm in [in the lineup], I'm just going to expect myself to step up and do what I have to do, whether that [is to] drive home runners or get myself on base," stated McGuire.

McGuire also assumes much leadership on the team, being the co-captain. He explained his responsibility is to "show the freshman what to expect, that this is a lot different from high school baseball, and to show them what to do to make this program better."

Benim also has the best average hitter returning. Junior Bill Vitron led the Lions last

season with a .397 average and drove in 14 runs. Vitron could end up being the Lions everyday first baseman.

Sophomores Marc Burchanowski and John Matson will handle most of the chores at two of the more difficult defensive positions, catcher and third base respectively.

Burchanowski will have the job of helping mature a young pitching staff. While Matson will be expected to help in the Lions' run production as well as some duty on the mound.

That pitching staff contains the lone senior on the club. Robert Vadala will be expected to be one of the teams top pitchers. Last season Vadala posted a 1-3 record with a 3.54 ERA in 30 innings pitched.

Vadala said he does not feel the pressure of being expected to be one of the top pitchers for the Lions.

"The way I look at it is I don't think of it as pressure. I look at it as a challenge," Vadala said.

The Lions have scheduled 44 games this season, so contributions from the entire pitching staff will be necessary.

Vadala explained that "with our schedule, whether we play most

of those games or not, there will be three of four pitchers who will be pitching a lot this season."

Benim explained that many of his position players also pitch. He feels it will take some time for his players to make many adjustments. Benim hopes the time spent in Florida will help him and his staff sort out the pitching situation.

"It's kind of tough to go out and pitch a game one day and then go out and play shortstop the next. It will be interesting to see what happens. [The Florida trip] should give us a good assessment of who will start and who is middle relief and that sort of thing," explained Benim.

Benim feels his team could end up being an offensive oriented group because of the amount of speed on the club.

"Speed is our strongest and biggest asset. There are about four guys on our squad who can run like the wind. We're going

to try to use that to our best advantage and put pressure on the opposition by making things happen on the base-paths."

McGuire agrees with his coach. "Throughout our lineup, there are going to be players who are able to steal bases consistently."

The freshman class this season should have quite an impact on this season's team.

Freshmen Phil Carper and Ben Hager are two outfielders to watch this season. Carper can add even more speed to the lineup while Hager has ability to drive the ball from both sides of the plate.

Pitchers Bart Gaskey, Matt Holian, John Ronan and Jim Weaver will also be looked upon in their first season of college baseball to put up some good innings for the Lions.

Benim summed up his club's possibilities with a simple but sensible thought.

"If we all focus our energies and make some sacrifices, we're going to be successful."

IM Champs

by Julie E. Stocker
Assistant Sports Editor

Schick: It's not just razors anymore.

Last weekend in Eastern Kentucky, Penn State-Behrend sent two three-on-three basketball teams to compete in the Schick's Super Hoops regional championship.

One of the teams came home a winner.

For the first time in women's intramural history, Behrend won the Schick's Super Hoops regional title. This was the second title for Behrend; a men's team won it in 1992 at Ohio State.

The winning team from Behrend was the RUPPSTERS, which consisted of Angie Georg, Heather Norder, Mary Anne Rupp, and Amy Stranahan.

Georg is a setter for the volleyball team, while Norder is a pitcher on the softball team.

Rupp is a midfielder on the soccer team, and Stranahan is looking for her third consecutive Intramural Female Athlete of the Year Award this year.

The weekend started off slow, as Behrend was defeated by Dayton in the first game.

"We went in with a positive attitude, but after the first game, we were a little down," said Rupp. "The second game, we all decided to start shooting the ball and everything went in. It was a lot of fun for us to play together."

Norder echoed Rupp's words by saying, "We didn't come out strong, but we got better each game. By the end, we were on fire."

Behrend certainly got on track, as the RUPPSTERS won their last five games to finish at 5-1.

"It was a long day, but the excitement of winning [regionals] was great," commented Georg.

"This was the third Schick's Super Hoops IM tournament that I have been in, and the team this year was the best," said Stranahan.

Intramural Director Rob Wittman was very happy to have a victorious Behrend team, and knows the feeling.

"I was on a team that won [the regionals] in 1988," started Wittman, as his team won at University Park, his alma mater.

Wittman's team then moved on to the University of Pennsylvania to win the Schick Super Hoops regionals and achieved the right to play during halftime of a Philadelphia 76ers game.

"But things are a little bit different now, because in '88 as well as in '92, both championship teams played during halftime of an NBA game. Now, the winning teams receive tickets to an NBA game."

"That's why I brought Schick's Super Hoops here [to Behrend in 1991] because I knew about it from University Park, and realized what a great opportunity it was," said Wittman.

The battle for the 1996 Schick Super Hoops title was played in 13 different regions, for both men's and women's teams. There was an estimated 500 schools and 150,000 participants ready for action.

Along with the NBA tickets, champions also received an NBA/Schick Super Hoops Jacket. All players were given Schick razors.

"Schick does a really good job helping schools cover the costs of travel and lodging. The best part is that [Schick] sends all the stuff, like the razors and t-shirts," commented Wittman.

Spring Break at Last!

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