

# LADY LIONS WIN AMCC CHAMPIONSHIP

## Behrend women avenge 1998 disappointment with first ever AMCC title

by Jason Snyder  
sports editor

One year removed from an emotional loss to the Pitt-Bradford Panthers in the Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference championship game, the Behrend women's basketball team took over the reigns of the conference with a 61-56 thriller over the Panthers in the AMCC title game this past weekend.

The Lady Lions survived the grueling task of defeating two of their conference foes in less than a 20 hour span. Behrend defeated LaRoche College (#4 seed) in the 8:00 game on Saturday night. In the 6:00 game preceding the Lions' semifinal, Pitt-Bradford (#3 seed) upset the second ranked Frostburg State, 69-63. The wins set up an AMCC title game between the Behrend Lions and Pitt-Bradford for the second straight season.

Behrend, however, didn't get to the championship game without a respectable challenge from the LaRoche Redhawks. The Redhawks upset the Lions in their regular season finale one week previously and held Behrend to a seven-point halftime lead.

Behrend's 5'10" freshman Erin Phillips gave the Lady Lions an early lift dominating with her post play. Phillips scored 14 points in the first nine minutes to guide Behrend to a 23-11 lead with 10 minutes remaining in the half. Carrie Nestor and Tiffany Buck also supplied the Lions with strong guard play as Nestor scored nine first half points and pulled down four rebounds. Buck added to her career three-point record with two from long range in the first half. Jacqueline Jackson and Kate Costanzo were the only other Lions to score in the first half, combining for five points in limited action.

LaRoche, however, was able to hit key baskets as Behrend tried to pull away, including an 8-0 run to end the first half. LaRoche's Stephanie Pencak scored five of her eight points in the final 2:15 of the first half to pull the Redhawks within seven at 34-27, entering the intermission.

As a team, the Lady Lions outshot and outrebounded their opponents in the first half. Behrend shot 12-27 (45%), and a perfect 7-7 (100%) from the free-throw line. LaRoche only hit eight shots in the first half on 24 attempts (33%), but hit 8-9 from the foul line and 3-8 from long range. Behrend pulled down 20 rebounds (8 offensive) to rival LaRoche's 11.

At the half, Fornari and the Lions

made adjustments. Said Fornari, "They were playing a lot of zone and we had to make sure our ball rotation was a little quicker. We needed to take care of the ball a little better in the second half."

To open the second half, LaRoche's first team AMCC All-Conference guard Kristy Hiben led the Lady Redhawks to a quiet comeback, closing the Behrend lead to 41-37. However, the Lady Lions hammered the ball into Phillips and Jackson down low, which proved too much for their opponent. Complimenting the overpowering inside play of the Lions, was the key shooting of Buck and Lisa Sanders who all contributed to Behrend's 13-3 run that broke the game open. Jen O'Lare ensured the victory with four points down the stretch.

Phillips was the game's high scorer with 24 points on 7-11 shooting from the field and 10-12 from the free-throw line. Nestor finished with her nine first half points, but added six rebounds, five assists and five steals. Jackson came off the bench to score eight points and pull down ten boards. LaRoche's Hiben was held to 12 points as their first half hero, Pencak, was held scoreless in the second half.

Behrend dominated the boards, pulling down 43 rebounds opposed to 22 from LaRoche. That, along with the shooting advantage proved too much for the Lady Redhawks, who fell 63-48.

Fornari said of the effort, "LaRoche was the first game that we did put two halves together in a while."

In the championship game on Sunday, February 28, the Lady Lions were matched up against 7-3 Pitt-Bradford. In



Roz Fornari won #100 in the AMCC championship game

photo by Andrea Zaffino

the two regular season games featuring these teams, Behrend battled to two close wins of 69-64 at Pitt-Bradford and 61-58 in Erie Hall. "We already knew going into the game, it was going to be a close game. It really just came down to execution. They were really focused. They knew what it took to beat (Pitt-) Bradford."

If the rivalry between these two teams wasn't evident leading up to the tip-off, the first few plays of the game gave a pretty good idea of the importance of the AMCC trophy to both teams. The first half consisted of a classic seesaw battle between two teams with an undying

desire to win. In the first 15 and a half minutes of the contest, the lead changed hands eleven times and was tied on seven different occasions. The biggest lead held by either team in that period was three points by Pitt-Bradford at 12-9 and 24-21.

Not until Behrend reeled off eight straight points from 6:09 to 3:27, did the nervous Lions' fans have a chance to breathe. The run gave the Lady Lions a 29-24 lead, marking their biggest advantage of the first half. Perhaps the most surprising event, was the fact that the Behrend starters were given a chance to rest as the bench led the team to the five point lead and kept that lead for the concluding minutes of the half.

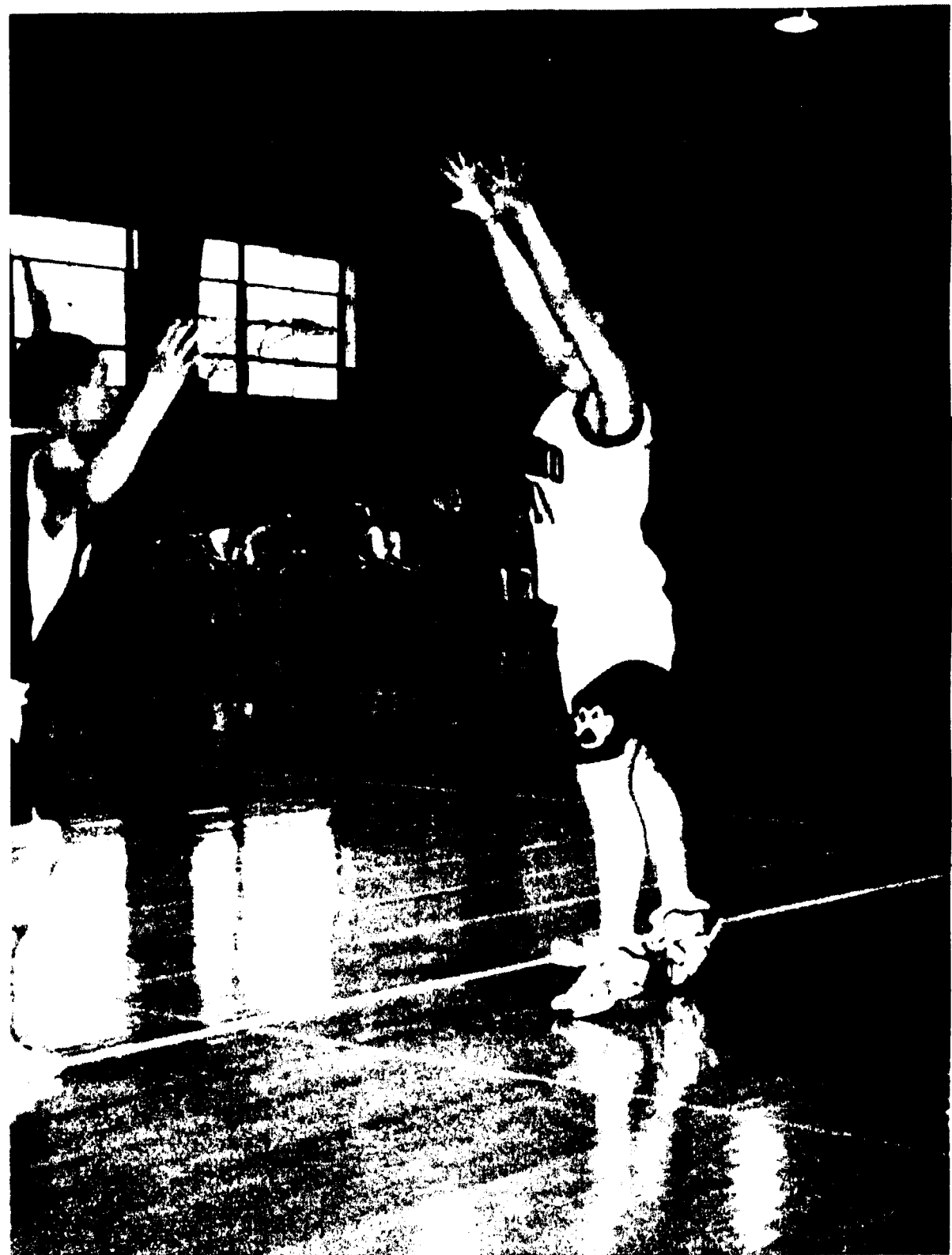
Fornari kept rotating the line-up, keeping two Behrend starters in to play with the less experienced players. The Lions' 5'4" guard Jessica McDivitt teamed with starting guard Nestor in the front-court to give the Lions a well controlled offense. Freshman forward Christine Charnock played a swarming defense to force the Panthers into bad shots. Charnock also responded on the offensive end with two free throws to keep the Lions ahead. "Charnock comes up big. She's always doing the little things right. There's just no let downs with her in the game." Katie Weigold hit a long two-pointer from the corner with five seconds remaining in the half to give the Lady Lions a 35-30 halftime lead.

Fornari commented on the bench, "That was probably the key to our game. I have a ton of confidence in my younger group." She added, "Everyone contributed and that's what we wanted."

In the highly competitive first half, Phillips stepped up big for the Lions. She continually took the ball up strong, getting fouled often or converting with strong post moves. She finished with ten first half points in limited action due to foul trouble. Nestor, too, seemed to score at will, driving hard to the basket for her points. She added 12 points despite the physical defense of the Panthers' guards. Jen O'Lare added seven despite also fighting foul trouble.

Pitt-Bradford was led by AMCC All-Conference players Mandy Lindsay and Lora Figley, who scored eight and five respectively. Megan Miller also gave the Panthers a lift with seven points.

Behrend and Pitt-Bradford shot nearly identical as the Lions went 12-23 from the field compared to the Panthers' 11-23. What the Lions lacked in long-range shooting, they made up for from the foul line with 11-14.



Carrie Nestor dishes the ball down low. The Nestor to Phillips connection was the key to the Lady Lions' AMCC title

photo by Jason Blake

To open the second half, Pitt-Bradford's Miller hit a three-pointer and Figley knocked down two free-throws to knot the game at 35. But on the next Lions' possession, Lisa Sanders drilled a three to give Behrend a 38-35 lead, a lead they would not relinquish. Jacqueline Jackson then entered the contest, scoring two and pulling down two of her four offensive rebounds. The spark from Nestor and Phillips led the Lions on an 8-2 run to give the Behrend women the game's biggest lead of 10, 50-40, with 10:56 remaining in the game.

Pitt-Bradford's starting point guard Shawn Blake responded with five points in the Panthers' 7-0 run to get

them back in the contest. The run took only 90 seconds, giving the Lions an idea of the quick striking ability of their rivals. But Behrend answered the call with a 7-0 run of their own, including baskets from O'Lare, Nestor and a stunning pass from Tiffany Buck to Phillips to build the lead back to 10.

Phillips then picked up her fourth foul, allowing Pitt-Bradford to inch closer with free-throws. Again, the Panthers cut the lead to three points with only 3:49 remaining at 57-54 and again the Lady Lions would clutch up behind two free-throws from Nestor and one from Phillips. The score would stay at 60-54 for the next two and a half minutes. Buck forced a

jumpball with 47 seconds remaining to give the Lions possession. On Pitt-Bradford's next possession, O'Lare took a charge, keeping Behrend's lead at six with only 34 ticks left.

The Panthers' Blake cut the lead to four at :19. Behrend's Phillips was then fouled and hit one free throw, then hustled back on defense to steal the ball with just ten seconds left to seal the deal and the AMCC championship for the Behrend Lady Lions.

AMCC Champs continued on page 12

## Behrend men qualify for ECAC Tournament

by Matt Buser  
staff writer

For the fifth time in school history and third consecutive year, the Behrend men's basketball team qualified for the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) Division III Southern Men's Basketball Championship. The men earned a #3 seed in the tournament and faced Grove City last night in Erie Hall. Details will be in the next Beacon.

The Behrend men's basketball team suffered a disheartening 70-68 overtime loss to LaRoche College in the semifinals of the Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference (AMCC) tournament this past weekend.

Behrend started fast, scoring the first seven points of the game. LaRoche didn't score until 4:30 into the game. An Ashley Orris three-pointer at 9:06 gave Behrend their largest lead of the first half, 26-11. Orris hit a pair of three's during the game and finished with

six points.

LaRoche chipped away at the lead and, as time expired in the first half, a runner in the lane made it 32-26 in favor of Behrend at the half.

LaRoche scored the first two baskets of the second half, and were down only three at 18:20, 32-29. An Andy Lawrence three started a 19-7 Behrend run, and Behrend led 51-36 with 10:14 to play. Lawrence finished the game with fifteen points and five rebounds.

Behrend would score only one field goal and five foul shots for the remainder of the game, and were outscored 20-5 for the rest of regulation. LaRoche forward Damian Hall, who finished with game-highs of twenty-six points and sixteen rebounds, hit two three-pointers in the last :30 to send the game into overtime.

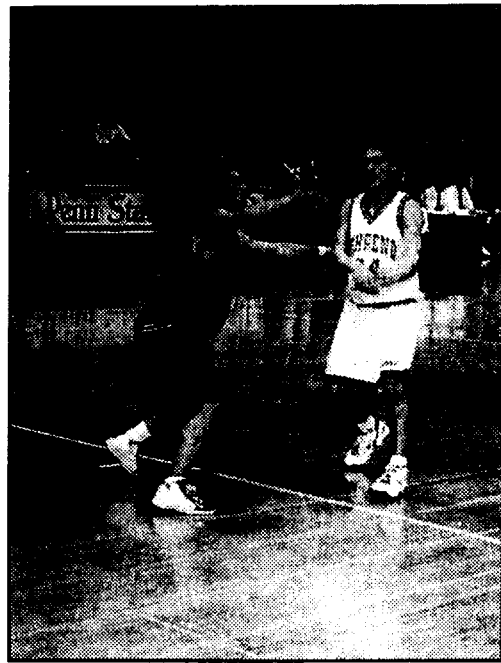
Behrend fell behind 64-57 in the extra period, but battled back to pull within two as Brock Bovaird made the first of two foul shots with :06 left. Bovaird missed the second and Lawrence grabbed the rebound. Orris' attempted three at the buzzer missed the mark.

Chris Hughes led the Lions with

sixteen points and grabbed seven rebounds. Bovaird scored twelve and handed out seven assists against only one turnover. Brian Emick scored ten, grabbed a team-high ten boards, and dished five assists.

At halftime, the 1999 AMCC All-Conference Awards were announced. The men finished the regular season at 18-7 overall, and 8-2 in conference. Many individuals on the team were recognized for their contributions to Behrend's outstanding season.

Chris Hughes was named Conference Co-Newcomer of the Year and was named to the All-Conference Second Team. Jason Paloskey was also named to the Second Team. Andy Lawrence was named to the All-Conference First Team. Brock Bovaird was named Conference Player of the Year in



Brock Bovaird was named the AMCC Player of the Year

photo by Jason Blake

addition to his First Team honors. Behrend Coach Dave Niland was named Conference Coach of the Year.

### 1999 AMCC All-Conference Awards

#### Men's Basketball

##### First Team

Brock Bovaird  
Chris Jacklich  
Jason Trout  
Andy Lawrence  
Damian Hall

##### Second Team

Jason Paloskey  
Matt Barnes  
Chris Horne  
Rod Gallagher  
Chris Hughes

##### Player of the Year

Brock Bovaird

Behrend

##### Co-Newcomer of the Year

Chris Jacklich

Chris Hughes

##### Coach of the Year

Dave Niland

Behrend

#### Women's Basketball

##### First team

Mandy Lindsay  
Kristy Hiben  
Lora Figley  
Amy Schmuck  
Shannon Rexrode

##### Second team

Carrie Nestor  
Brienne Krebs  
Jen O'Lare  
Natalie Nuzzo  
Erin Phillips

##### Player of the Year

Shannon Rexrode

##### Newcomer of the Year

Erin Phillips

Behrend

##### Coach of the Year

Roz Fornari

Behrend

Al Mielcarek

Lake Erie