

Men's and Women's Basketball Preview

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by Matt Buser
staff writer

The 1999-2000 Behrend men's basketball team is looking to continue a recent trend that has seen the team's victory total rise in the last three seasons from 15 to 18 to last year's school record of 21 wins. The season culminated with an Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference regular season title, and Behrend's first ever Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) Division III South Region Championship.

"We had a group of guys that really worked hard for four years and had a good amount of success, and we had been in the ECAC tournament the previous two years, but didn't play real well," Head Coach Dave Niland said of last year's team. "And then we were invited to it when those guys were seniors, and to win it was a real nice thing for our program. I'm really happy for our players that have helped rebuild this program."

The team lost five players to graduation, but optimism is running high for the returning players and the newcomers. This year's team has three seniors, one junior, and six sophomores returning from last season. The team also features three incoming freshmen and a junior transfer student.

"I think there is excitement, because there are some new guys who are ready to prove they can play at this level, and help continue what we've tried to do here," Niland stated. "There's an excitement about that, and I know as a coach, it has been interesting for me to be able to get a different group of guys to play together, and that's always the challenge of coaching."

"We have a tremendous core group of seniors with [forward] John Park, [forward] Andy Lawrence, and [center] Chris Hughes," Coach Niland said. "You can't ask for three better seniors. They're great workers, and they understand what it takes to win. They're great students, they're everything you want in a student-athlete."

Park can play both forward spots, and is a defensive specialist. Lawrence was a first team all-conference selection, averaging 9.4 points and 3.7 rebounds per game. Hughes was conference "Co-Newcomer of the Year" and a second team all-con-

ference selection. He averaged 13.2 points and 5.1 rebounds per contest.

Along with the seniors, junior guard Ashley Orris returns after averaging 4.5 points and 2 rebounds mostly as a key reserve. He will be counted on more heavily this year. Coach Niland spoke highly of Orris. "He's been a terrific player, one of the most versatile we've ever had in this program. He's a big part of what we do."

"Those four guys are really key to us helping the younger guys come along," Niland continued, "but also for them themselves to have good years."

Sophomores returning include 6'7" center Andy Stritzinger, forwards Andy Berchtold and Greg Dunn, and guards Lamar Jefferson, Matt Keith, and Bill McKinney. All will be asked to make a large contribution to this team's success.

"It may not happen right away, there's going to be an adjustment period for our younger guys to where they're really in there at crunch time making plays and doing the little things that are the difference between winning and losing that usually your juniors and seniors will do, because they've been there before," Niland said. "Now these guys are going to go through that, and I think they understand that."

Incoming freshmen are guards Kevin DUBYAK (Duquesne), Matt HENDERSON (Meadville Area), and Steve MERRILL (Union City). Coach Niland said, "The three freshmen are all very good athletes, and they work very hard. But they're freshmen, so there's going to be an adjustment period."

Kris Lynn also joins the team, a 6'7" transfer student from Mercyhurst. "He gives us another offensive threat inside, and he's worked real hard on his conditioning and things like that," Niland commented. "But anytime you come into a new system, I don't think it happens right away. It'll take a little bit of time, but we're expecting him to be a nice addition."

The Lions have a surplus of size, with six players listed at 6'3" or taller, including three at 6'7". Coach Niland said that

this year's team will operate with a different style than those in recent memory.

"I think we'll be a little more up-tempo, just because I think we'll try to make a better effort at that. But I think on the offensive end, because of our size, I think we'll be able to get the ball inside a little more and not rely so much on the three. We really relied on the three the last two or three years, it was really a big part of our offense. We still have guys that can shoot it now, but I think we have more of a presence inside, sizewise."

Behrend's recent success has garnered them national attention. The Lions were a mainstay on the regional and national Division III coaches polls. But the team still has goals to reach, and they will be gunning for bigger things again this year.

"I think our success has helped from the standpoint of getting looked at for post-season play," Niland commented. "We still haven't accomplished our final goal, the NCAA tournament, and I think our players understand that."

Come cheer on your Behrend Lions men's basketball team as they open the season at home in Erie Hall. The first game of the season is this Saturday,

November 20, at 8:00 PM, against visiting Hilbert College. BE THERE!!!



PHOTO BY JEFF MILLER

The Behrend men prepare for another run at the AMCC Championship.

Seniors



Andy Lawrence



John Park



Chris Hughes

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by Jason Snyder
editor-in-chief

The Behrend women's basketball team enters the 1999-2000 basketball season coming off a very successful season last year, where they captured both the Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference regular season title and the conference championship, held in Erie Hall. The Lions, once again, are contenders for the championship, having lost only one player from last year's team.

Carrie Nestor and Tiffany Buck enter the season as the team's only seniors. Head coach Rosalyn Fornari sees the seniors as playing "a very large role on and off the floor."

Nestor averaged 8.5 points, 5.5 assists and 5 rebounds last season and often sparked the team with her hustle. "She is the nucleus of everything we do," said Fornari. "That's what a point guard should be, but at the same time, it's Carrie's personality to be there for people and to be the leader offensively and be the leader defensively. Whatever we need her to do, she seems to be able to do it at the right time." Nestor needs only four assists to break the school's record for assists in a career.

Buck brings strong shooting to the line-up after breaking the school record for career three-pointers in her junior season. She averaged 6.4 points and 3 rebounds per game in '98-'99. "Tiffany has very much improved on her court presence," Fornari said. "She shot a lot of shots during the summer. She worked very hard in the offseason, which has been very helpful."

With only three juniors under them, the team's experience lies within Nestor and Buck. Fornari added, "there's a lot of little things that our seniors will lead us through. They're going to be significant. Carrie and Tiffany are putting a lot of

effort into this because this is it for them." Because the Lions didn't have any seniors on last season's team, Fornari realizes "we didn't have the pressure of 'let's do this for this person.'" This year, they do.

Under the two seniors, are junior forward Jen O'Lare, junior guard Lisa Sanders and a junior rookie in Adrienne Janiuk. O'Lare and Sanders are expected to start again this season after strong seasons last year. O'Lare scored 11.4 points and pulled down 6.3 rebounds per game last season while Sanders scored for 7.1 points and 2 rebounds.

Joining O'Lare in the post is Erin Phillips, who is also projected to start again for the Lions this season. Phillips had an outstanding freshman season last year, leading the team in points and rebounds per game with 14 and 6.7, respectively. Phillips proved to be key in the Lions' postseason bid for the conference championship last year, scoring clutch baskets throughout the tournament.

Fornari figures they will use the same starting lineup to start the season in Nestor, Buck, Sanders, O'Lare and Phillips, but realizes "the kids are battling each other well. They are fighting for positioning as far as starters go."

Among these players, is 6' forward Jacqueline Jackson who has improved in the offseason. The post play should be key once again for the Lions with Phillips, O'Lare and Jackson being "interchangeable," said Fornari. Christine Charnock also adds some depth to the Lions' post play. Fornari added, "we've been working out a lot more. We are mentally stronger in the post. I think, you'll see our posts lead us physically."

Backing up Nestor and Buck at the guard spots will be sophomore Katie Weigold, who improved her shooting in the offseason, and freshman Jessica Tanner. The Lions shot over 40% from the field last season and hope to continue that again.

Fornari expects the improved shooting will result from better decisions. Kate Costanzo will also add to the Lions' improved shooting.

The Lions will mix their quickness with their experiences of last year's championship run to have a balanced offense. "We are going to have a balanced attack. We are going to run the ball when we can. We are going to press and try to get our buckets off the press. And if we don't, we are going to be disciplined enough to set up in the half court," said Fornari. "Our style and our maturity and our quickness are going to add to our versatility club."

In addition to having a versatile club, the Lions will also pride themselves on their depth. Both the guard and post play have much depth. The Lions have brought in four rookies - three freshman, one junior - in addition to all the key returnees, that will add to the teams' depth. "Our depth is going to be our key throughout the season. If one person can't step up that day, I think you're going to see some other kids step up."

Coach Fornari is entering her sixth season as the head coach for the Behrend women, posting a record of 100-58, reaching the 100 win mark in the AMCC Championship game last season. She sees this season as one with much potential. She has seen many improvements in the team's talent and attitude from last season. She said, "last year, we had a little bit higher hopes, because we were shooting high. This year, we know we are pretty decent as a team. We need to go little by little, game-by-game, and set game goals right now."

Fornari sees that "they (players) are not just happy to be here. Last year, they were happy to be here. Their expectations are much different. They are putting a little bit more pressure on themselves."

She compared the mindset of last year's team with this year's, saying, "we didn't spend all last

year thinking AMCCs. We spent all of last year hoping that it was something that we could do. They were just young and they were just kind of dreaming. This year, they know better than to just dream it, because now everyone's shooting for you. People don't want the same team repeating, and for us, our biggest mistake would be to look past people and think we are the same as last year."

Fornari wants her team to take the season "day-by-day." "If they take care of what's going on that day, then we are going to do something."

The Lions first chance to "do something," will be this weekend as they will host the the Penn State Behrend Tournament in Erie Hall. The Lions will face Alfred on Friday night at 8:00 p.m. The coming and Wooster will play at 6:00 p.m. The championship game will be at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, preceded by the consolation game at 1:00 p.m.

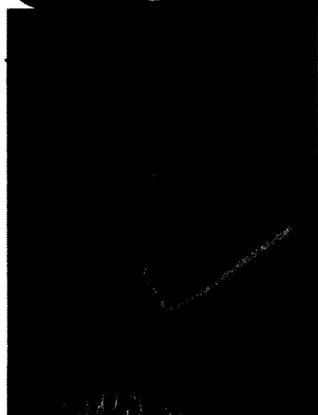
"All the people that we have invited are very strong. They compete in good conferences," said Fornari. "I would be very happy with us just playing well, and if we play well, I think we can beat any team that's in the tournament."



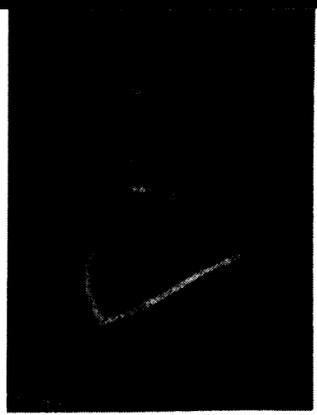
PHOTO BY JEFF MILLER

Jen O'Lare shoots over Jacqueline Jackson as the Lions prepare to defend their AMCC Championship.

Projected Starters



Carrie Nestor



Tiffany Buck



Lisa Sanders



Jen O'Lare



Erin Phillips