

Baseball team prepares for upcoming league play

by Kate Levdansky Petriks
staff writer

The Penn State Behrend Lions baseball team went to Fort Pierce, Florida, from March 3-11 to compete in the Florida Coast Tournament. "Our team was presented with a challenge of 10 varsity games during spring training," said head coach Paul Benim. Behrend started the tournament on March 4, beating Wilkes, 5-3. However, they lost their second game of the day to Elizabethtown, 8-11. The next day they won against Anna Maria 7-4 and against Norwich 7-2. On March 6, Behrend won, 13-12, in a close game against Anna Maria. However, they lost later in the day to Franklin and Marshall, 6-11, and again the following day 1-10. On March 8, the Lions beat Eastern 7-3, but fell to Wilmington 3-6. Behrend wrapped up the tournament March 9 against Elizabethtown, losing the game 2-3. Benim said, "we didn't perform as well as we expected or wanted, but we will keep moving in a positive direction."

Senior Matt Slavonic hit .405 (15-37) in spring training with 6 RBI's, and was named "AMCC's Best of the Rest" for his efforts. Slavonic said, "I think Behrend has the potential and the experience to go far, and I believe we are all ready to accept that challenge and make it become reality. Spring training was a great experience, and we

learned that there is room for improvement and there are some adjustments that need to be made, but that there is also plenty of time to make this season great."

Throughout spring training, the strengths of the team seem to be the drive that the Lions have toward winning, along with the talented pitching staff and the powerful hitting. Slavonic said, "our team has to stay confident and believe that we can go out there and win every game."

The baseball team is practicing 6 days a week in order to prepare for the season ahead of them. Next up on the schedule for the Behrend Lions are contests on March 17 at Oberlin and on March 20 at Grove City. Following those two challenges, the Lions will be participating in the Ohio Wesleyan tournament on March 22-25. Last season Ohio Wesleyan University entered the Division III tournament, number one in the country. Matt Slavonic looks forward to the challenge by saying, "we have a tough weekend next week when we play 8 games in 4 days, and after that I believe that the road to the AMCC championship will come through Behrend. We will win it." Coach Benim agreed by stating, "we are eager to get tested again, and there is no better way than to participate in such a high quality tournament as Ohio Wesleyan University."



PHOTO BY NEIL MAKADIA

The baseball team is practicing hard to take on teams in the Florida Coast Tournament held in Fort Pierce, Florida.

Florida trip gives softball team playing experience

by Mike Bello
staff writer

Just like thousands of other college students around the country, the Behrend softball team was enjoying the warm weather in Florida over spring break. Unlike those other students though, the team was busy participating in the Cocoa Beach Tournament, a warm-up to the regular season schedule. Playing eight games over a period of five days, the Lions began their season with three wins and five losses against a variety of different teams.

Head coach Cindy Jacobelli stated, "we learned a lot from the games we played. We played several Division II teams as well as NAIA teams, so the caliber of the teams was tough. We moved people around a lot, just to see how they responded in different positions and spots in the batting order. The team is starting to get used to each other on the field. It is hard to do that in the gym when you are unable to set up a full infield, let alone outfield. We still have some kinks to work out, but that comes with time."

Unfortunately, any kinks in the Lions' game will have to be worked out in practice. Behrend's home games on Wednesday, March 14, against Baldwin Wallace and Monday, March 19, versus Thiel had to be cancelled due to poor field conditions. Meanwhile, Friday's game on March 16, at Washington & Jefferson was still up in the air by press time as to if the two teams would be able to compete. If the weather permits and the Behrend field is ready by next week, then the Lions would play host to John Carroll on Thursday, March 22. John Carroll posted a 24-16 record last year and will be looking to build upon that success this year with a crop of talented freshmen as well as some solid all-around pitching.

Behrend began their spring training on Monday, March 5, with games against both Dominican and Rochester. In the first game, Behrend's offense showed no signs of weakness, batting .441 as a team in posting a 15-7 win over Dominican. Mandy Bodnor, last year's AMCC co-MVP, hit 2 home runs in the game, including one off the left-field scoreboard, and had eight RBIs as well. Rose Boni drove in two runs and scored two runs, as every position player scored at least one run. The win in their very first game was dampened, however, by the news that junior center fielder Kelly Woods, one of last year's offensive leaders, broke her hand sliding into second base. Woods is out indefinitely and quite possibly for the entire season.

In the second game, Behrend's offense continued their hot streak, this time batting

.468 as a team in a 14-10 win over Rochester. Bodnor was 2-3 at the plate with 4 runs scored and 4 RBI's, including another home run. Nichole Spindler drove in 4 runs in the game, while Amy Hunter and Becky Rishel each scored 3 runs and had 3 hits.

The next day Behrend went up against Georgian Court and then Urbana. This time the Lions did not have as much luck at the plate, getting shutout by Georgian 3-0 and then losing to Urbana 14-8. In both games, Behrend could only manage 7 hits, including two doubles by Cheryl Peterson against Georgian, but were at least able to capitalize somewhat against Urbana. Jennifer Pinkhouse had two hits and three RBIs in game two, but the Lions could not overcome Urbana's strong offensive output.

Two days later, on March 8, Behrend had a rematch with Urbana. The Lions were still unable to contain Urbana's offense, and although the Lions kept the game close, they were still defeated by an 11-8 score. Bodnor once again sent one over the fences, her fourth of the season, and had 3 hits and 3 RBIs to lead the attack. The Lions, who up to this point had been fielding at a .967 clip, committed 7 errors in the game as well.

On Friday, March 9, Behrend completed their Florida trip with their last 3 games. In the first game, the Lions had all 3 aspects of their game working for them: hitting, pitching, and fielding. The Lions scored 11 runs, and were flawless in the fielding in posting an 11-1 victory over Philadelphia Bible College. Becky Corbin and Bodnor each had two hits, including two doubles for Bodnor, and along with Hunter and Brandy Polinick, all scored two runs each. In the Lions' second game of the day, against Brandeis, they were unable to capitalize on 10 hits and 6 walks, losing by a score of 4-3. Spindler drove in two runs for Behrend, but that was about all the Lions could push across the plate. In the last game against Case Western Reserve, Behrend's offense once again struggled as they lost 15-3. The Lions could only come up with two hits, including a three-run home run by Bodnor, in running their record to 3-5 for the year.

Bodnor, out of Shaler High School in Pittsburgh, was rewarded for her outstanding play by being the first person this season named as AMCC softball player of the week. Bodnor was 12-26 (.461) at the plate, scoring 12 runs, driving in 19, and smashing 5 home runs, patting the record books as Behrend's career leading in home runs and RBIs. If Mother Nature does not cooperate, then the Lions will be stuck once again practicing indoors. No matter what happens though, the entire team will be looking for a chance to improve on their spring debut with their conference opponents right around the corner.

Slavonic is swinging into spring baseball with a forceful drive

by Jeanine Noce
assistant sports editor

Matt Slavonic is swinging into the spring baseball season with the Behrend baseball players. Slavonic plays the position of second base and is definitely helping the team with his experience of sixteen years. He and the other twenty-four members of the Behrend baseball team have been conditioning and practicing since January 16. The men are playing towards the ECAC (Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference) title this spring and with the help of Slavonic, the team has a good chance.

Slavonic came to Behrend from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and is majoring in MIS (Management Information Systems) and minoring in Management. He has played on Behrend's baseball team during all four years of his college experience.

He attended Baldwin High School where he played baseball during all four years. He started as a member of the freshman baseball team; then during his sophomore, junior, and senior years he was a member of the varsity baseball team. Slavonic has been playing baseball since the age of six and hopes to help Behrend's team with his experience and skills. Slavonic also played for Behrend during the fall baseball season. Training for the fall season began during the second week of September. Behrend played eight games and their record was 5-3.

The men's baseball team has been practicing in the gym, working around the basketball teams' hectic schedules. The players have also been swimming in the new ARC (Athletic Recreation Center) since after the winter break. As soon as the weather becomes permissible to practice outside, the

players will practice daily from 4:00 PM until 6:00 PM. The practices will be held on the newly restructured Behrend Fields.

Slavonic believes that initially it is difficult to balance both baseball and school and stated, "once a player gets used to balancing baseball and academics the two do not seem very difficult." While he is a member of the baseball team, Slavonic is also a member of

the SAAC (Student Athletic Advisory Council).

Being a member of the baseball team is enjoyable to Slavonic. He believes that coach Paul Benim is extremely helpful. He stated that "Coach Benim can really relate to the players. Any member can talk to him about sports, academics or other concerns." The assistant coaches, Marc Burchanowski and Corey Walters, have both been a great deal of help to him as well.

Slavonic's favorite experience was during the 1999 baseball season when he was a sophomore. The baseball team made it to the ECAC championships for the first time ever. Unfortunately, they were defeated by Frostburg State during the first round. In this competition, Behrend's baseball team was one of four teams in the first round. He also enjoyed the recent trip that the team took. The entire baseball team traveled to Fort Pierce, Florida, from March 3 through March 10. Ten games were played against Wilkes, Elizabethtown, Anna Maria, Norwich, Franklin and Marshall, Eastern and Wilmington. The team won five games and lost five. The team also played two junior varsity games against Lansing and Mitchell. However, these two games did not count for the regular season total. The freshman and sophomore members played mostly to gain experience in the junior varsity games. Behrend was defeated by two respectable Junior College

teams in these two games; however, the players were able to experience playing at the college level.

The baseball team will be playing their first game at Oberlin College in Ohio, on Saturday, March 17, at 1:00 p.m. Slavonic and the other twenty-four baseball players are definitely going to be a team with an immense amount of experience and skill.

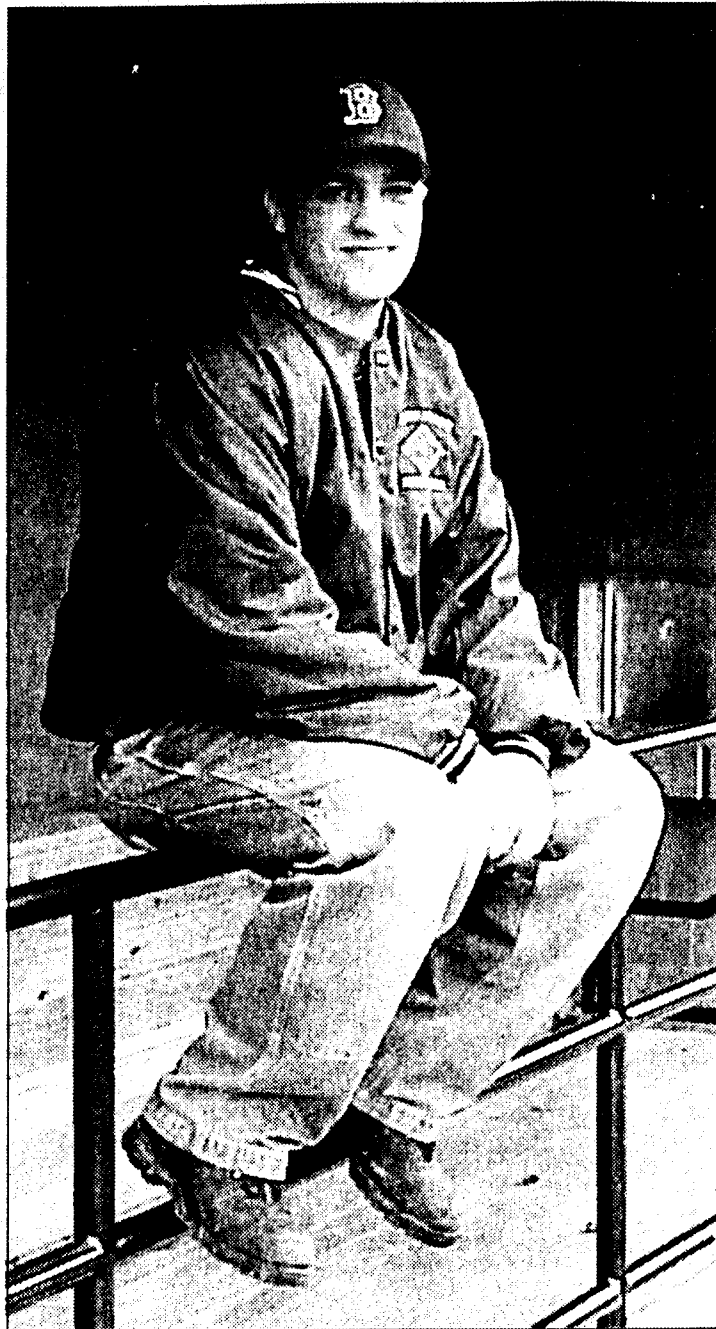


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