

Water polo team closes the gap at tournament

by Bob Palivoda
staff writer

High spirits keep the women's water polo team from sinking as it still continues to battle for its first win. This past weekend the women faced a tough challenge. In a matter of only two days, they played a total of four games. They faced three different water polo teams as they competed in the Washington and Jefferson tournament with Grove City, W&J and Gannon.

After a tough loss to California Hayward on March 20, the Behrend women had an intense week of practice. Over the week, Coach Josh Heynes added in some new defensive plays for the women to try in the W&J tournament. However, Behrend departed the tournament without a win, Coach Heynes believed that the new plays worked well and said he will keep adding new plays to keep teams on their toes.

Playing Grove City for the first time, Behrend fell 13-3. However, in the second match against Grove City, Behrend came within five points losing by a score of only 11-6. Lindsay Spiegel led Behrend in scoring in the first game with two goals while Amanda Brown led the way in the second game with three goals.

PSU had a tougher time with W&J and Gannon, losing to them 17-5 and 16-3, respectively. Mary Good led the way with two goals against W&J. Lindsay Spiegel

led Behrend in goals against Gannon with two.

Overall, Heynes thought that the weekend went well. "Passes were better and the women seemed to pen their eyes up to the entire pool instead of having tunnel vision on the goal and making bad shots," said Heynes.

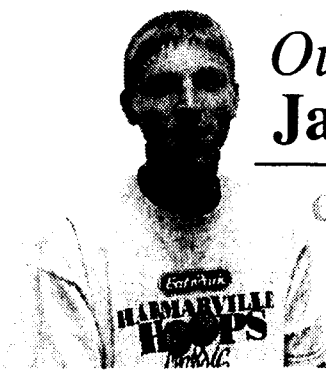
So far on the scoreboard, the season looks tough for the Behrend women. However, the women keep on building day to day and week to week. Cassie Harris, who is the water polo veteran, had off-season shoulder surgery to her rotator cuff. Though she missed numerous games at the beginning of the season, she currently leads the team in assists.

"Even though our record doesn't show it, we are improving and growing every game. Everyone is starting to understand the game better and because of that we are getting more aggressive and involved," said Harris.

Now Behrend looks forward to another challenging weekend, but it will be another learning experience for the rookie squad. The Lions will travel to Grove City for the first Grove City Invite where they will play Bucknell, St. Francis, SRU and Queens.

"This weekend is going to be tough but fun," said freshman Amanda Tuscan. Tuscan also believes the team has come a long way and believes that it is only a matter of time before it becomes very competitive in the league.

NASCAR grows as true American sport



Out of Bounds Jason Snyder

editor-in-chief

Two years ago, the thought of writing about NASCAR to college students in a sports column appeared to me to be the best way I could decrease readership by nearly 100%. Today, more than a month after NASCAR covered the front pages of newspapers worldwide, my courage to write about the sport has reached its climax as a sense of pride for being a true race fan is materializing with every word that hits this page.

It used to be a common misconception among racing critics that the sport was a way for Southern rednecks to spend a typical Sunday afternoon. NASCAR heard more "you might be a redneck" punchlines than a Jeff Foxworthy audience. Despite its popularity boom throughout the 1980s and 90s, NASCAR has never been a sport that communities in the northern United States could embrace and accept as headliners in their local sports section.

Until now. It could be argued that the reason the Winston Cup circuit of NASCAR has gained so much popularity throughout the country as of late is due to the tragic death of Dale Earnhardt last month. A grieving period that usually lasts a couple weeks for most sports' tragedies has extended well into this second month of the young season and doesn't seem to be slowing.

To make the argument that NASCAR's popularity is a result of

that tragedy, one would have to ignore the record-setting ratings that the Daytona

500 scored last month. More people watched "the Super Bowl of racing" than ever before. Word of the Intimidator's death didn't surface until the record-setting telecast was off the air.

So what is accounting for the growth of this sport? Is it the speed, the drivers' personalities, the creative paint schemes on the cars? It's probably a combination of all these things. It might even be a result of the decline of sports like the NBA, NHL and Major League Baseball. I think that NASCAR has moved past all these sports in America's interest. Would anyone have predicted that Richard Petty would pioneer a more popular sport than Wilt Chamberlain and Joe DiMaggio took part in.

To understand a race fan, you have to stand among the crowd. You have to witness the speed of the cars through your own eyes rather than a TV screen that doesn't do the sport justice. This is when one can truly begin to understand the show that these drivers put on for crowds exceeding 100,000 people every week.

A weekend at a Winston Cup event tells you more about the sport than any FOX telecast can. It's a world unlike anything you've ever seen before. Where else in the world would you witness people wearing clothes that advertise for products such as Dupont Paint Finishes or UPS Delivery Trucks? I can definitely tell you I haven't ever seen anyone wearing a shirt and hat promoting Viagra...until last

weekend.

It was last weekend when I went to Bristol, Tenn., to watch the Cheez-It 250 and the Food City 500 (there's some sponsors for you). It wasn't the first Winston Cup event that I've attended. I'd have to say the list is up around 12 or 13 spanning from Michigan to Virginia. But Bristol? It's like nothing you've ever seen before in sports competition.

It's a half-mile track with turns banked at 36 degrees and stands completely enclosing the racing world in an area equivalent to the size of Behrend's parking lots. Yeah, not big. More than 150,000 fans poured into the seats for the Winston Cup event after more than 100,000 turned out to watch the Busch Series race (racing's "minor league" series) the day before. That would be like 100,000 people showing up for an Erie Seawolves game. Needless to say, minor league interest isn't as successful in any other sport.

The dedication of racing fans could be considered unrivaled as well. I don't know of any sports team that could sell out a 150,000-seat stadium in Bristol, Tennessee. Bristol is a small town, which, from how it looked, has a larger population of cows than people. Which means the people in the stands that day came from all over the country.

The emotions that poured from the hearts of the fans and drivers after Dale Earnhardt's death had to give some sort of indication of the closeness of everyone associated with the sport. It's the only sport where your opponents are with you everyday. You spend nine months out of the year with the people that you compete against. About 99% of that time is off the racetrack. These drivers know each other's families and childhood stories.

It's a sport where fans are called to cheer for an individual. They aren't for something as abstract as cheering for the Yankees or the Bulls. In racing, you are cheering for one man. You see one man as your link to the sport. It's personal, something that eludes the relationship between fans and teams in team sports.

I could try to further explain the closeness and "family" aspect of the sport of racing, but this simple example should speak volumes for the fans, families and competitors in NASCAR racing.

I was walking through the trailers outside of the Bristol track looking for souvenirs of my favorite driver. I came upon the Dale Earnhardt trailer, still selling that black #3 memorabilia. His four trailers were the busiest ones out of the 50 trailers that were parked there that weekend.

And on those four large trailers were signatures. There were some people that had just signed their names. Others who wrote short messages. Some messages which specified that other drivers' fans were hurting. I only caught a glimpse of a couple of the signatures on the trailers. But I can tell you that those four trailers that I saw were covered from top to bottom, front to back with final farewells to a man who was both loved and despised in the sport of racing.

I can't think of any other sport where individual athletes mean so much to fans. Racing gives that to people. It's indescribable and unexplainable. It's just something that is the foundation for a sport that will continue to live despite tragedy. Because the close unity of the racing "family" will never let a legend be forgotten. Nor will they let the true sense of competition die.

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