

Q & A: Who's Behind the Scenes?

Assistant swim coach Jennifer Slack knows what it takes to be the best

by Kate Levdansky Petrikis
assistant sports editor

as The Big East Scholar Athlete and The University's Bell Atlantic Scholar, do you think swimming is a challenging and competitive sport?

Slack: Most definitely! Swimming is a lot harder than most people might think. You use all [your] muscle all the time, on top of the cardiovascular aspect of the sport. While strength is part of it, technique is very crucial. You could be the biggest, strongest guy out there, but if you can not get [your] muscles to work together it will not matter.

Swimming is absolutely a competitive sport. Each year the swimming community grows, and while it grows, the fastest times keep dropping. In a sprint race, like the 50-meter freestyle, the top eight swimmers are separated by less than half a second, and that happens at all levels.

Beacon: Do you feel swimming is more of an individual or team sport?

Slack: Well, it is a little of both. Individually, what each swimmer puts into practice or a race is what they are going to get out of the sport. At the same time, however, their performance has a direct effect on the outcome of the team as whole. Therefore, when you

are individually successful your team has a better chance, but the reverse is also true. Just because a team may have one or two stand-out swimmers does not mean that the team will win. To be a successful team, each member must be willing to make sacrifices for the better of the team.

Beacon: What two characteristics do you need to make a good swimmer?

Slack: First and foremost, dedication! Swimming is a very exhausting sport, both mentally and physically. You spend hour after hour pushing yourself to the limit with only your thoughts to occupy your mind. You have to wait 'til the end of long season to see any true results of your training, knowing that each start, turn and finish could mean the difference between an awesome swim or one

[you'd] rather forget.

You also need desire. Like any sport, you have to want it. There is a quote that comes to mind. "If you don't invest very much, then defeat doesn't hurt very much, and winning is not very exciting!"

Beacon: What is your most memorable meet when racing?

Slack: High school district championships my senior year, and we won. It was one of those meets where we knew we had a chance, but everyone was going to have to not only swim well but step up. That day, two of our top swimmers were sick, one of whom was not even able to swim. As it ended up, we were able to pull it off anyway. After three years of being close, it was a great way to end a high school career.

Beacon: What was the most memorable meet while coaching?

Slack: The most memorable meet coaching was last year at the Grove City Invite. It was Behrend's first championship meet. While everyone swam really well, it seemed that every time it came to award time, we got sixth place and a pink medal. By the end of the meet, we had nicknamed ourselves team pink. It was good to see everyone come together and be a team.

Beacon: When coaching, have you ever wanted to be the one racing?

Slack: Almost all the time, especially during the events that I used to swim. I do not necessarily want to put myself [through] the intense training I know I would have to do to swim my fastest. But I love the anticipation and thrill of competition, which is what I miss most.

Beacon: Since you are also a lifeguard, have you ever rescued someone?

Slack: Yes, I was working as the lifeguard at a special needs school, and one young man had a seizure in the pool.

Beacon: What is the most important thing to pay attention to while lifeguarding?

Slack: There are a lot of things to pay attention to while lifeguarding, but if I had to pick one, I would say the number of people swimming in your area. Is everyone there who was swimming 30 seconds ago? If not, where did they go? Not only do you need to know where everyone is, but you should keep an eye on what they are doing.

Every week, the Beacon will engage in a little "ask and respond" with someone who doesn't make the headlines.



PHOTO BY MIKE BELLO / BEHREND BEACON
Assistant swim coach Jennifer Slack fondly remembers team pink. Read the story to find out more.

the class room and the pool or playing field, it takes a lot of commitment and drive on top of figuring out when and how you are going to fit everything you need to into a 24 hour day.

Beacon: Since you have the experience of winning awards such

as the Big East Scholar Athlete and The University's Bell Atlantic Scholar, do you think swimming is a challenging and competitive sport?

Slack: Most definitely! Swimming is a lot harder than most people might think. You use all [your] muscle all the time, on top of the cardiovascular aspect of the sport. While strength is part of it, technique is very crucial. You could be the biggest, strongest guy out there, but if you can not get [your] muscles to work together it will not matter.

Saturday, February 9

Vs. La Roche

@ 6:00 P.M. & 8:00 P.M.

Sponsored by: Behrend Athletic Department & Lion Ambassadors

PROMOTIONS: FREE Spirit Towels, Stress Balls, and Noise Makers will be given out at the entranceway to the first 100 Penn State Behrend Students

HALFTIME EVENT: 3-Point Shooting Contest
Prize: Spirit "Survivor" T-shirt

Saturday, February 16

Vs. Pitt-Greensburg

@ 6:00 P.M. & 8:00 P.M.

Sponsored by: McDonald's & Gateway Computers

PROMOTIONS: FREE McDonald's Shakes to all who answer the trivia question correctly

HALFTIME EVENT: 3-Point Shooting Contest
Prize: McDonald's Valu Meals & Gateway Prize Pack

This week's senior athletic profile

Katie Weigold: Basketball has given her great memories



PHOTO BY MIKE BELLO / BEHREND BEACON
Katie Weigold once despised current teammate Erin Phillips. Of course, it was when they were rivals at Villa Maria and McDowell, respectively.

by Kate Levdansky Petrikis
assistant sports editor

Senior basketball player Katie Weigold started playing in the first grade, when she would shoot hoops with her father in the driveway.

"He taught me the basics: shooting, dribbling, and passing," said Weigold.

She also learned from watching Michael Jordan.

"I was always in the driveway trying to get his moves down," said Weigold.

Weigold then played MYAA basketball until fifth grade when she played for her grade school. Weigold played many games against current teammate Erin Phillips during their high school days.

"Katie and I played against each other in high school, when she played for Villa Maria Academy and I played for McDowell," said Phillips. "We were huge rivals. We always say it's weird that we are such good friends now because we hated each other back then."

Phillips has one fond memory, at least from her perspective, from high school.

"The only thing that stands out from those games is when we were playing, and I set a screen on her and flattened her to the ground."

Weigold is co-captain along with the three other seniors at Behrend, where she plays the position of shooting guard, and sometimes, point guard.

Weigold said her coaches at Behrend have taught her a lot about the game both offensively and defensively, and about life too.

"This year especially, they taught me how to be a more offensive minded and confident person," she said. "But, I am still working on that."

On the other hand, Weigold said one of her strongest characteristics is her perseverance.

"I have had injuries every year that forced me to sit out most of my first three years at Behrend. But, I just could not give up the game,"

said Weigold.

She suffered a protruding disk in her back her freshman year, when she had to sit out much of the beginning of the year.

"I just went to pick up a loose ball, and could not stand back up," said Weigold. The injury nagged her the entire season.

During her sophomore year, Weigold tore the MCL in her knee. The tear happened in a game

against Bethany, when she went for a loose ball and a girl fell on her knee. Weigold finished the half, then went to the trainer and found out it was torn.

In her junior year, Weigold sprained her ankle in practice, which kept her out most of the beginning of the year.

"I was on a fast break, and went to pass it when somehow, my ankle got all messed up," said Weigold. "The injuries through the years have been a pain, but it makes being healthy and able to play my senior year that much sweeter."

Weigold said she has three major highlights in her basketball career. The first one would be a memory all four seniors share, which is cutting down the nets in Erie Hall after winning the conference championship.

"My whole life I had wanted to cut down the nets," she said. "It had always been a goal of mine. The feeling of climbing the ladder and cutting it down, is something I know I will never forget."

Phillips remembers the post-game celebrating.

"The rest of the team was celebrating and jumping up and down in this picture, but Katie and I are standing apart from the crowd," she said. "It is something we always joke about."

The second highlight for Weigold was the trip to the NCAA tournament last season.

"That had been a dream of mine as well, but that was definitely one that I thought would never come true," said Weigold.

Her last highlight is not one that many people would think of, but it was a highlight for her.

"I have met and have come to know so many great people through playing," said Weigold. "The friendships I have made are one of the things I know will be with me through my entire life."

Weigold said it is actually easier to manage her schedule during basketball season.

"I know I have limited time to get my work done, so I make myself do it any chance I get," she said. "When it is not basketball season, it seems

like I have all the time in the world to do things. So, I put everything off thinking I have time to do it."

When she is not studying or playing basketball, Weigold likes to watch television, movies, and hang out with her friends.

Weigold said she sees her mother as a great friend and a role model.

"She is the strongest person I know," Weigold said. "No matter what is going on in her life, she is always there for me, and would do anything for anyone. I hope I can be as good of a mother someday as she was for my sister and I."

Weigold has volunteered as a coach at AAU basketball for several years and enjoyed the experience mightily.

"I knew one of the coaches, and we started talking and she said she could use some help. So, I helped her out during the beginning of the spring," said Weigold. "However, my help was limited because of schedule conflicts. But, this summer I got to help out a team of 13 and 14-year-old girls. We had practice two-three times a week for about two hours. We also traveled to different tournaments throughout the summer."

After graduating with a degree in MIS, Weigold said she plans on staying in Erie and finding a job. She also intends to coach a high school basketball team.

"The most important thing that I would teach the team would be that you can be successful on the court, but have fun at the same time," said Weigold. "People can get so wrapped up in the sport, and forget that it is just a game. Plus, most people play better when they are having fun. I would also teach them that you can take many things you learn from the game and apply them to life, such as the hard work, dedication, and team work."

Before each game Weigold said she usually eats some macaroni and cheese and listens to some music to get her fired up. Then, she goes over what the other team does.

"We all know how important these last games are," said Weigold.

"Especially the seniors, because we know that these are the last games that we have in our basketball careers. The whole team is going to give it their all, so we can end on a good note. The seniors are the only ones on the team who have won it (AMCC) before, and I think everyone on the team deserves to have that feeling of winning the championship."

Phillips praised Weigold for her style of play.

"Katie is a good teammate because she is always encouraging us, and doing the little things that sometimes go unnoticed," said Phillips. "She always hustles, and sacrifices her body to make great plays. She works exceptionally hard at everything she does. She does not give up, and is just a really good person."

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