

Track team shows Division II who's boss

by Scott Soltis
staff writer

The Lions' track team traveled down I-79 to Slippery Rock University this past weekend and competed in a non-scored meet. The Slippery Rock Invitational was an excellent chance for the Lions to display their skills against primarily Division II opponents. The Lions broke the constraints of being titled Division III by performing very well against the Division II schools.

Coach Dave Cooper was very pleased with how the team fared against the competition.

"We held our own in nearly all of

the events we entered including three that we won."

Because the invitational was not a scored meet, it gave individuals a chance to shine while taking pride in wearing the Penn State uniform. There were many athletes who placed and several set new school records. At the pace the team is running this year, no record is safe from week to week.

Both the men's and women's 4 x 400-relay teams were strong, as usual. The men finished in dramatic fashion, a mere .01 of a second behind the Slippery Rock team to capture second place. Keith Cerroni, Billy McKinney, Mike Barlett and Dave

Ober ran a combined 3:34 to set a new school record.

The women also captured second in the relay, running an impressive 4:32.9. The team was comprised of Marlena McNutt, Amanda Van Tassel, Suzie Szafran, and Jen Smialek.

The teams also fared well in the 55 events. In the dash, Lindsay Schulte placed fourth with a time of 7.89. In the 55 hurdles, two new school records were set. Isiah Meek ran an 8.16 to take third. Heather Efav ran a 9.36 to set the women's record, but did not place due to some great competition.

The duo of 400 runners on the men's team continues to impress Cooper.

"Dave Ober remains undefeated in the 400, breaking his record again. Bill McKinney also broke the 400 record but finished behind Ober." Ober ran a 52.1 and McKinney finished in 52.6.

The men and women set records and placed in the 800. Jessica Knapp and Szafran finished fifth and sixth in the women's race. Knapp ran a 2:35.9 and Szafran finished eight-tenths of a second behind her. In the men's event, Barlett broke his own record by running a 2:02.8 to finish fourth.

In the 200, Schulte took her second place of the day. She finished in second with a new school record of 28.04. The women's 500 saw Brandi Napenas finish fifth with a time of 23:47.8 as she took her first medal place of the year.

In the endurance events, the teams performed well. In the mile, both Jessicas took places to set a new school record. Jessica Sarver ran a 5:29 to win the event and Knapp ran 5:43.4 to finish fourth. For the men,

Barlett set yet another record with his 4:47.8 mile and finished in sixth.

The longer events saw winners for both teams as well. In the 3,000, Dan Croft's 10:04 was good for a sixth place. In the 5,000 races, both the men and women set new school records. Kevin Ritzert ran a 16:33.3 to come in fifth. Andrea Sanko won the women's race with a time of 21:06.

The field aspect of the track and field team was also successful at Slippery Rock. Jay Davids came off his impressive showing at Fredonia with a high jump of 6-3 for second and Russell Phillips jumped 6-1 for third. Capturing a place in a third event of the day was Schulte who leaped 32-8 in the triple jump, good for second. Josh Carmichael finished in third with a triple jump of 41-1.

Cooper pointed out that there were also several great pole vaults.

"We had three pole vaulters (Chad Lindell, Steve Feder and Donnie Hackworth) clear 13 feet but no place earned," said Cooper.

The team does not have a meet this weekend, so it will continue to train for improvement. One thing has become crystal-clear about this young season. Whenever the team goes to a competition, no record is safe. The team continues to demolish its own bests and shows no signs of slowing down.

The women's athletes continue to place in multiple events despite the fatigue of running multiple races. On the men's side, the team is building on a core of outstanding older athletes and younger competitors who are posting fast times. With all of the great work ethics, competitive natures, and talent that already exists on both teams, Behrend track and field has a very promising future.

Mosh pit, cheerleading style?



PHOTO BY MIKE BELLO / BEHREND BEACON

If there's one thing Behrend students know how to do, it's cheer on their team - no matter how dangerous the situation may look. Kids, do not try this at home. These are professionals. Well, sorta.

Racquetees ready to rumble

by Mike Bello
sports editor

After losing only one starter from last year, the men's tennis team knows its chances are as good as ever for capturing an AMCC title. But with six seniors - half the roster - on the team this year, there's no better time than the present to bring home the trophy.

Senior co-captains Brent Carlson and Dave Cooper will lead the way for the Lions. Seniors Sundeeep Bhatia, Jacob Cornwell, Steve Broussard, and Atif Chaudry provide the depth and experience the team will rely upon early. Rounding out the roster are juniors Doug Smith and Sheel Galliar, and freshmen Drew Ciccarella, Jacob Hillman, Adam Lanier, and Michael Oey.

The younger players are expected to make an immediate impact for the Lions, but like every sport, adjusting to a new setting takes time. With plenty of experience from the senior class, the burden will not be placed on the younger athletes.

"I am quite happy with the play of the incoming freshmen," said Broussard. "They are all very strong competitors and will prove to be a great asset to the team. We have to work on their mental game a little, but that is what the senior experience is for."

The Lions begin their season Saturday against Allegheny and Mercyhurst at the Westwood Racquet Club in Erie. The team will play Baldwin-Wallace on Feb. 23 before preparing for a trip to sunny Hilton Head, S.C. over spring break.

The Lions will look to shake the winter rust from their game at Hilton Head. The AMCC season starts a week later.

"Hilton Head is going to be fun as well as a learning experience," said Broussard. "We are going down there to play a couple of teams that are bigger than us. If we play well

against those teams, it will raise our confidence for when we come back and play some of our difficult conference matches (Penn State Altoona and Frostburg)."

Behrend finished in third place last year behind Altoona and Frostburg, compiling a 5-8 overall record along the way. This year the Lions score the early advantage, as they play the first eight games after Hilton Head at home.

They then play their last five games and the AMCC tournament on the road, but with an abundance of games at home, Behrend can mature as a team under familiar surroundings.

The Lions host local rival Edinboro on April 3 and the Behrend Invitational on April 6 and Frostburg/Lake Erie the day after. The home matches will be important to the Lions for another reason. All five road matches are against teams the Lions will have played at home.

Assessing the team's strengths and weaknesses is not an easy task for the players.

"It is hard to define the strengths and weaknesses of this type of team, because each individual's strengths and weaknesses are not the same," said Carlson. "Most of the members on our team could use some strengthening of a second serve."

"We have more depth in the team than years past," said Broussard. "Sometimes we struggled last year to have enough people to play a match. This year we not only have enough people to play matches, [but] they are all strong players that will win their match if they come to play."

With an early season home schedule and an abundance of experience, the Lions know the competition is in for some surprises.

"We believe with the depth that we have in the team this year that we can go a long way into the postseason," said Broussard. "If we show up as a team this year and we bring our 'A' game with us, there is no doubt in my mind that we should win."

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Beacon: What is the funniest moment you have while being the mascot?

Vallor: About a month ago, it was mascot night at a basketball game, and there were seven other mascots plus myself. Unfortunately, three of the people were unable to fit the costumes for the night, and Pondo asked three of my teammates from the swim team to help. They were excited to be part of it, but at half time of one of the games, we had a 4-on-4 basketball game with the mascots. I was the only one to score, but it was the best moment because I was the only one [who] could see very well. Max's head (from Max and Erma's) fell off of one of my teammates, and the stands just laughed as he ran af-

ter his head. It was nice and very funny.

Beacon: Do you feel that this has been a good experience? Why or why not?

Vallor: Yes, it has been a very fun and memorable experience. I don't think anyone else from Behrend can really say they have done this during college. It is a lot of fun. I get to meet a lot of people, and I get to be myself. But, now people will know who it is...unfortunately. Up until this point, it has been kind of a secret identity, like "Who is in that damn suit." It seems like they know me, but [they] don't know who that person is in there.

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

Freshman Donnie Hackworth goes up and over the bar during pole vault practice at the Junker Center recently.

This week's senior athletic profile

David Ober: Excelling on the track field is par for the course for 'Crazy Dave'

by Kate Levdansky Petrikis
assistant sports editor

Senior David Ober came to Penn State Behrend to major in plastics engineering technology.

"I chose this major because I knew that it would be a challenge and I have always wanted to pursue an engineering degree," said Ober. After graduation, he would like to get a job working in the Pittsburgh area at a plastics facility.

However, Ober also participates in track and field. Last season Ober won the team's Most Valuable Player award, and qualified for the ECAC championship in the 400-meter dash and the 4 x 400-meter relay with teammates Greg Cooper, Garrett Arndt, and Jay Davids. Ober took 12th in the 400, and his relay team took ninth overall at the event in Springfield, Mass.

During this indoor season, Ober set school records in the 200 dash, the 400, and the relay team. The team has run three meets, and so far Ober has won every 400 race that he ran. The next meet is Feb. 23 at Mount Union.

Ober did not start track and field until his senior year at Baldwin High School, but he competed all four years at Behrend. This year he runs the 200, 400, and is the anchor leg, or last leg, on the relay team with Keith Cerroni, Billy McKinney, and Mike Barlett.

David's brother Chris Ober is also involved in track and field at Penn State Behrend.

"It is nice competing with him in college," said David Ober. "He is a long jumper and triple jumper, so I do not get to run against him at all, but we have done sports together all of our lives. We both wrestled, played soccer, played baseball, and now we are both doing track to-



PHOTO BY MIKE BELLO / BEHREND BEACON

David Ober didn't start running track until his senior year in high school. Now he anchors Behrend's team.

gether."

Ober's biggest influence is his parents, who have helped him become the player he is.

"They have supported me through everything that I have done, and have been there for me all the time," he said.

Ober said his coaches at Behrend have taught him time management skills, along with how to compete in races with the will to win. Former teammate Greg Cooper is his event coach, and Ober also does some work with assistant coach Garrett Arndt. Dave Cooper is the head coach.

"It has been difficult managing time between classes and practice, but in a way it has helped me with school,"

said Ober. "I have a set time that I know when I need to get everything done so I have time for practice and classes."

Practice is 4-6 p.m. everyday with meets usually on Saturday.

"The meets usually last all day so it is sometimes tough to get all of my work done, but I have managed so far," said Ober. In his spare time, he is usually in the computer lab working on projects, or having a good time with his buddies.

Ober said he prepares himself by warming up about 45 minutes before each race, and by having teammates pump him up.

"I feel like I run better when I am very pumped up," said Ober.

His teammates know him by a different name, though. They call him Crazy Dave.

"I am not sure how that nickname got started," said Ober, "but it [was said by] a few guys on the track team my freshman year, and it has stuck with me ever since."

Ober believes the team will have many ECAC qualifiers this season, and possibly a few national qualifiers.

"We have some very strong runners, jumpers, and throwers this year," said Ober. "Last year we took nine athletes to ECAC, and this year I think we will be able to get at least 20 athletes. So far this indoor season we have had many top three finishers in many events, and with the outdoor season still to come, many of our athletes will improve greatly."

The athletes have had to endure a painful early season, but Ober knows the team will continue to excel through it all.

"The team is running very well so far this season, even with the extent of all of the injuries," he said. "We do not have an outdoor track to run on and our indoor track is not suitable to practice on because of the size, surface, and usually only three-fourths of the track is opened to us. We practice on parking lots here on campus, which is never good for our legs."

"The training room is usually filled with the track team before and after practice, so with all of these injuries that our team has right now, we are pushing through them and still competing to the best of our ability. My teammates these last four years have been the greatest people I have met at Behrend. They are all a great group of people to train with, and to have fun with."