

Lions use hot second-half shooting to down Lake Erie

by Mike Bello
sports editor

It took Behrend a little longer than expected, but when the time counted Wednesday night against No. 7 seed Lake Erie, the Lions showed why they finished the regular season 17-7 overall and 9-3 in the AMCC.

Behrend, down by five several times early in the second half, shot 65.2 percent from the floor in the second half to score a 65-57 win in front of 379 fans at the Junker Center. The Lions meet Frostburg tonight at 6 p.m. at Pitt-Bradford in the AMCC semifinals. No. 1 seed Bradford plays host to Pitt-Greensburg at 8 p.m.

The Lions dominated the opening minutes of the first half against Lake Erie, grabbing an early 18-6 lead, capped by Matt Keith's 3-pointer at 11:26. Behrend's offense struggled mightily the rest of the first half, though. The Lions made 2-of-14 shots and found themselves tied at 22 heading into the half. Lake Erie made 16 of the half's last 20 points.

Lake Erie (8-18) jumped out to a five-point lead in the second half, 31-26, before Behrend's offense woke up from its slump. Keith, playing in the last home game of his career, gave the Lions the lead for good when he

drained a three at the 15:30 mark.

Keith sank another 3-pointer a minute later to give Behrend a six-point lead. Both teams traded baskets for the rest of the half but the Storm could get no closer than four points.

"We feel really good about the success we've had so far this year, but we're not finished yet," said sophomore Dave Hairston. "We set a goal to win our conference tournament and give ourselves a chance to be playing in March. We've made a commitment as a team to do this."

James Curren led the way with 22 points and eight rebounds. Keith showed that senior experience can be a major factor in the playoffs. He went 5-of-7 from the floor, including four behind the arc, and scored 15 points despite playing only 19 minutes. Casey Ponsoll and Hairston added 10 and eight points, respectively.

Lake Erie shot 44.8 percent from the floor while the Lions shot 49 percent. More importantly, Behrend avoided foul trouble. The Lions committed only seven personal fouls and sent Lake Erie to the line three times, forcing the Storm to go inside, where 6-6 Curren and 6-8 Randy Conley were waiting.

"We executed well on offense and

limited the mistakes on defense," said coach Dave Niland. "That was the key of the game, not beating ourselves."

The Lions tuned up for the playoffs by playing Pitt-Greensburg Saturday at home. In front of 579 fans, the Lions rolled to a 76-62 win for a chance to secure the second seed in the AMCC in front of Frostburg State (14-11, 9-3). The teams had to flip a coin to see who would get the second and third seeds, and the Lions guessed correctly.

Ponsoll scored 19 points and Curren added 18 points to lead the way for the Lions. Curren, the team's leading scorer, grabbed a game-high 10 rebounds, as well. Steve Merrill contributed 12 points and Keith sank 10 as the Lions finished 11-2 at home this season. Saturday night was also senior night, as the Lions congratulated the team's only senior, Keith, for his long and distinguished career.

The Lions shot 49.1 percent from the floor while limiting Greensburg (9-17, 5-7) to 44.1 percent. The Lions struggled at the free throw line, making 13-of-24 shots, although they outrebounded the Bobcats 43-27.

The Lions now have to concentrate on Frostburg before thinking of Bradford, the favorite to win the

championship.

"Coach is always going to prepare us one game at a time," said Hairston. "He hasn't said a word to us about Bradford yet. When we head to Bradford for the tournament, we have to make sure we bring our A game for both games. It's going to be a tough battle to get past the second round for the chance to meet Bradford again."

The Lions will look for revenge against Frostburg tonight. The Bobcats humiliated the Lions 80-50 in Frostburg on Feb. 2, although the Lions won round one 66-57 at the Junker Center on Jan. 12.

"The loss to Frostburg was the worst loss in eight years for Behrend," said Niland. "We came out flat, but every team has days like that. We just have to make sure we come out on Friday fired up and ready to play."

The Lions know they have a legitimate shot at the AMCC title, considering they took Bradford into overtime on Jan. 30 before falling 80-69.

"As long as we continue to play hard, play together, and take it one game at a time," said Hairston, "we could make a great run into the playoffs this year."



PHOTO BY MIKE BELLO / BEHREND BEACON
Junior Steve Merrill throws a swift pass to a teammate underneath the basket Wednesday against Lake Erie. The Lions won 65-57 and will face Frostburg State tonight at Pitt-Bradford.

Q & A: Who's Behind the Scenes?

Senior Rebecca Sheaffer has all the right moves for dance team

by Kate Leviansky Petrikis
assistant sports editor

Rebecca Sheaffer is the senior leader of Penn State Behrend's dance team. Sheaffer grew up in Plum, a suburb east of Pittsburgh, where she went to Plum Senior High School. Sheaffer is majoring in management with a minor in marketing. She would like to eventually be a manager of the marketing department for a large business. For now, she is looking for any sort of job.

Beacon: When did you begin dancing?

Sheaffer: I was about 5 years old when I began dancing. My mom was friends with the owner of the studio (Rodgers School of Dance), and convinced her to register me for classes. I never really asked to start dancing, but from that point on I loved it.

Beacon: How did you become involved in the dance team at Behrend?

Sheaffer: My sophomore year, fall of 1999, my suite mates and I approached Brian Streeter with the idea for the dance team. He was thrilled with the idea and we went from there. The three of us were appointed captains and worked with Mr. Streeter and coach Decker to develop the team.

Beacon: What types of dances do you do?

Sheaffer: We do a variety of styles. We like to combine a little bit of jazz and funk, with some hip-hop and street style dancing.



PHOTO BY MIKE BELLO / BEHREND BEACON
The dance team finishes a performance during halftime of the men's basketball game.

Beacon: What is your favorite dance to do?

Sheaffer: I prefer a more street style of dance, what you would see in a pop video. As far as my favorite dance this season, I would have to go with "Pop" by 'N Sync.

Beacon: Where do you perform or compete? If both, which do you prefer?

Sheaffer: We perform at half time, during the men's and women's varsity basketball games. Although we do not compete here at Behrend, it is a possibility for the future.



PHOTO BY MIKE BELLO / BEHREND BEACON
Rebecca Sheaffer once misperformed the fish flop during a practice with some humorous results.

Competing puts a lot more pressure on the situation, and it is not as easy to have fun. But, performing you can just go out there and give it all that you have, and have a blast doing it. When you mess up you just laugh it off.

Beacon: What is your best memory of the dance team?

Sheaffer: Best memory of the dance team would have to be our original coach, Becky Decker, who passed last January from her battle with cancer. She was an inspiration and motivator to us all, and she loved to dance more than any of us. She has made a lasting impression on any dancer, or person for that matter, who she ever had contact with.

Beacon: What is the funniest memory you have?

Sheaffer: It would have to be at one of our practices when I tried to do a fish flop. (The dance starts by sitting with one's legs stretched out in front of them. They then raise both legs in the air and try to roll over their shoulder onto their stomach.) Let's just say that it did not go over all that well. Seriously, anything called a fish flop has to be funny. Plus, when it is done wrong, it is even funnier.

Beacon: Who is your favorite dance

partner?

Sheaffer: We dance as a team, and because of that I can not really say that I have a favorite partner. All the girls on the team are talented in their own ways, so to pick one over the other would not be fair or possible.

Beacon: Do you plan on continuing to be involved with dance after college?

Sheaffer: I will most likely continue to dance by taking adult classes, or something similar. I would not mind volunteering or working with children who enjoy dance. It is just a great way to get away from it all and makes you feel so good. I would hate to leave it all behind after 17 years.

Beacon: Did you find that the dance team was a good experience?

Sheaffer: It definitely was a great experience. I met a ton of beautiful, talented women here at Behrend [whom] I most likely would not have had the opportunity to meet. I gained friendships and learned a lot about myself, and others. It is something I will never regret.

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

Behrend women down Frostburg with full court press

by Mike Bello
sports editor

In the early part of the season, the women's basketball team defeated itself through foul trouble and constant turnovers. Against Frostburg on Wednesday in the opening round of the AMCC playoffs, the Lions proved the postseason can be much different than the regular season.

Behrend, playing stingy defense against one of the AMCC's better shooting teams, forced 30 turnovers and took more than twice as many foul shots in downing Frostburg State 75-63 in front of an estimated 300 people at the Junker Center. The Lions will play Pitt-Greensburg 8 p.m. on Friday in Altoona for the chance to play in the championship game for the fifth-straight year. Penn State Altoona will host Pitt-Bradford at 6 p.m.

"We were stretching them (Frostburg) out to full court," said coach Roz Fornari. "They have skillful enough players that we had to keep them out of their half-court offense. By playing pressure defense a full court, we were able to get them to turn the ball over. We were able to take care of the ball ourselves."

"We can't look past any team," said senior Kate Costanzo. "We have to focus on the team we are playing. We have to take it one game at a time to have another day of basketball."

The Lions did just that Wednesday, forcing Frostburg to make numerous mistakes despite being outshot by the

Bobcats 46.6 to 43.1 percent. The Lions, though, hit 21-of-31 foul shots while limiting Frostburg to 7-of-12. The Lions committed 15 turnovers on the night and had the edge in steals, 15 to four.

Costanzo, Erin Phillips, and Christine Charnock were the central focus of Behrend's offense for most of the game. Costanzo sank 18 points, while grabbing a team-high five rebounds, and Charnock added 15 points. Phillips went 9-of-12 from the foul line and scored 17 points overall.

"If you put a team in a situation they are comfortable with, they will shoot a better percentage," said Fornari. "Unfortunately, we didn't convert on some of those."

"We missed about eight layups and quite a few free throws. That's not very typical of us, but our focus was there and we played well. Some shots didn't drop for us but I liked how we attacked."

Behrend jumped out to an early 6-0 lead and increased it to 17-8 with 9 minutes, 41 seconds left. Frostburg got to within four, 18-14, before the Lions went on a 13-2 run to grab a 15-point lead. Behrend finished the half up 34-22.

By cutting down on personal mistakes, the Lions know that the AMCC title is within reach.

"Our No. 1 obstacle from winning a championship is ourselves," said Costanzo. "No team in the AMCC can beat us but ourselves. I think the most important thing at this point in time is having confidence that we can and will win."

Frostburg slowly chipped at the lead in the second half, getting to within six, 45-39, before the Lions increased it to 53-42 with 9:55 remaining. Behrend led by at least 10 points the rest of the way.

Erica Mozdy scored eight points and had seven steals, while Bambi Lewis and Carly Cochran each added seven points. Cochran, who hadn't played since Jan. 14 because of a broken thumb, will be counted on along with Lewis to provide relief off the bench now that Katie Weigold (deep bone bruise) and Crystal McGarvey (torn ACL) are out for the year. The Lions only have five non-starters on the active roster right now.

The Lions, seeded second heading into the season finale against Greensburg on Saturday at the Junker Center, came out strong against the Bobcats in the first half. Behrend shot 40.7 percent, but Greensburg stayed in the game and tied the score 27-all at the half. The Lions' defense fell apart in the second half, as the 'Cats shot 50 percent and won 65-57.

Greensburg (13-13) grabbed the second seed with the win, as both teams finished 9-3 in the AMCC. Because Greensburg defeated No. 1 seed Altoona, and the Lions didn't, Behrend (14-12) dropped to the third seed.

Phillips shot 9-of-15 from the floor and scored a game-high 21 points while grabbing 11 rebounds. Costanzo sank 15 points and Charnock added nine. Mozdy scored eight points and six steals. The Lions had 15 steals while Greensburg had four. Behrend shot 35.9 percent overall and converted on 11-of-19 foul shots. The Lions also missed all eight 3-point attempts.

The Lions face an uphill battle against Greensburg in the second round Friday. Greensburg lost at home by four, 56-52 on Jan. 23. Fornari knows that for the Lions to overcome Greensburg, they will have to shoot better than before.

"When we played against them last time (Saturday), we shot poorly and when we shot poorly our heads went down a little bit," said Fornari. "We didn't continue to play hard. It didn't affect our effort as much as it did affect us mentally. I think that's a big key."

Even though they will play at a neutral site, the Lions know that playing in front of an Altoona crowd, possibly against the Cougars in the championship game, will not make a difference as long as they play smart basketball. Altoona twice defeated the Lions during the season by 24 points.

"[When] we get to Altoona, we will be ready to win a championship on the road," said Costanzo. "A championship is a championship, whether it's in Altoona or Erie."

The Lions have hosted the tournament the last three years, losing the last two at home.



PHOTO BY MIKE BELLO / BEHREND BEACON
Senior Kate Costanzo drives to the hoop Wednesday against Frostburg. Costanzo scored 18 points in the Lions' 75-63 win.