

## Q & A: Who's Behind the Scenes?

### It's been one memorable year for coach Dave Cooper

by Kate Levdansky Petrikis  
assistant sports editor

Dave Cooper, Behrend's track and field coach, participated in track and field in high school and at Franklin College of Indiana. He coached 28 years at Union City High School, where his teams were highly successful, including state championships in 1996 and 1997.

**Beacon:** What brought you to Behrend?

**Cooper:** My son Greg ran cross country and track at Behrend until his graduation in 2001. While following Greg and his team, I got to know the program. I had retired from coaching at the high school level and I was interested when the position at Behrend became available.

**Beacon:** What are your likes and dislikes so far?

**Cooper:** Well, definitely the likes greatly outweigh the dislikes. After working for so many years with adolescents, it is very enjoyable coaching young, mature adults. I also enjoy the athletic staff at Behrend and the atmosphere of college athletics. My high school program at Union City was pretty well established and so I am enjoying the challenge of building a competitive program here at

Behrend. There aren't many dislikes but it is a challenge, organizing practices without a track on campus.

**Beacon:** What are some of the changes that have happened since you started coaching here?

**Cooper:** The major change has been for me to assemble an outstanding staff of assistant coaches. The previous coaches coached by themselves or with only one assistant. I have seven assistants, mostly part time, but they are experts at what they do and give individualized attention to all of the many events. There probably isn't a Division III head track coach with as good a staff as what Mr. Streeter has allowed me to have. I'd like to think the program is developing an identity along with pride. The indoor team broke most of the previous records and they should do that outdoors, as well.

**Beacon:** Have you had to change, as well?

**Cooper:** Yes, I have. I am still learning to plan ahead and be prepared to change those plans because of the weather, or a coach, or a practice facility not being available at the last minute.

**Beacon:** Where is track headed over the next few years?

**Cooper:** I think track and cross country are headed towards real respectability. Athletes are coming to

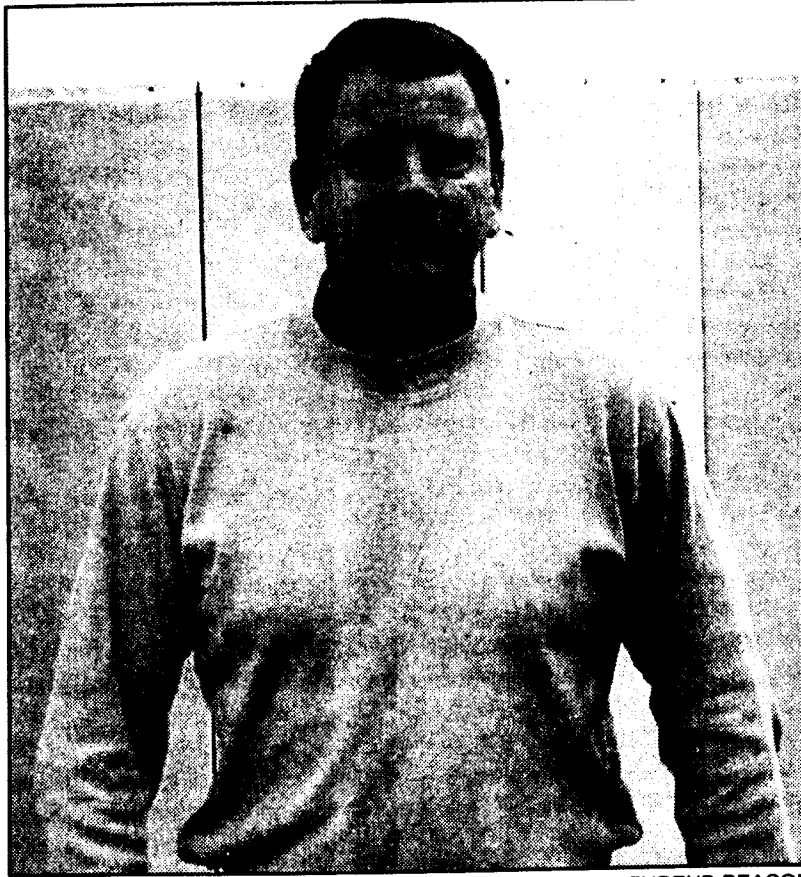


PHOTO BY JEFF HANKEY / BEHREND BEACON

Track and field/cross country coach Dave Cooper sees a bright future for the programs at Behrend thanks to some "high-quality athletes."

campus and performing better than they ever had before. We are starting to draw very high quality athletes from the area and I think that will only get better as the word gets out about

our program. We are drawing some recruits just on the basis of our assistant coaches.

**Beacon:** What are your plans for the future?

**Cooper:** My goal for Behrend is to develop a strong track program in all of the event areas. We have qualified athletes for the ECACs. Next I hope to be able to score points there and qualify athletes for nationals. We will become a "program" only when we do this consistently year after year. In cross country, I hope to see our men's and women's teams become perennial AMCC champions and become regular top 10 finishers at regionals.

**Beacon:** Who are the stars on the rise?

**Cooper:** I hate questions like this because a coach usually ends up leaving out people. We have a great and talented bunch of seniors this year, but to mention stars on the rise implies younger athletes. Freshman Mike Barlett will make a name for himself in the 800 meters as will Isiah Meek in the hurdles. Tom Ashcroft will be a dominant thrower while Donnie Hackworth and Steve Feder are pole vaulters with high-flying futures. On the women's side, freshmen Jessica Sarver and Amanda Van Tassel were ECAC individual qualifiers indoors. Like I said, there are some darn good athletes I'm overlooking here.

**Beacon:** Take me through a typical week in the program.

**Cooper:** I don't know if there is such a thing as a typical week. Ev-

eryone practices six days a week unless we have a meet. The athletes may meet with their event coach anywhere from one to six of those days. In the field events, it's usually twice a week. We try to use a hard day/easy day approach to keep the athletes injury free. Some of the athletes are in the training room an hour before practice getting either ice or heat depending upon their stage of treatment. Classes are a priority with some athletes missing two or three practices a week due to class schedules. We have a team meeting each day to try to keep everyone informed of upcoming events. Many of the team are friends and hang out together after practice for a while.

**Beacon:** What does it take to be a member?

**Cooper:** From my perspective, an athlete only needs to sign up, get a physical and be there everyday ready to work. From the perspective of the athlete it takes a great commitment of time, energy, and dedication. That plus a juggling act to stay up with classes, meal time, study time and sleep.

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

### FROM PAGE 1B

## Baseball team opens home season with dominating win over Hilbert

new year and a new team, and the teams in our conference better get ready for a battle when they play us. We will win the conference and go to ECACs, you can count on it."

"I think the team learned that if everyone plays up to their ability and we eliminate mistakes, that we can compete with or beat some very good teams," said Boyle. "This helps the

team realize that we should fear no one when we take the field and play our type of game. We need to be the actors, not the reactors."

On Wednesday, the Lions head to Meadville to play Allegheny. Behrend will look for revenge after the Gators defeated them 12-5 at Ainsworth Field near the end of last year, one of only three home games in 2001.

Behrend was supposed to play John Carroll last Saturday, but the game was cancelled due to inclement weather.

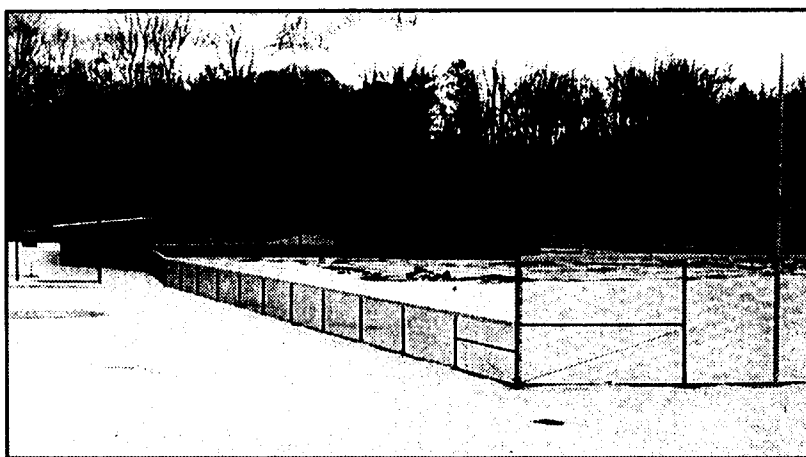
The Lions are counting on their experience when they play the other AMCC teams. Last year the Lions went 4-6 in the conference, and as coach Paul Benim stated, it's expected to be a dogfight 'til the end.

"Baseball in the AMCC has come a long way in four years, and in most sports it has," said Benim. "We were two games away from being 20-game winners and .500 last year, which would have given four of the six teams in the league 20 or more wins and above .500. And that's pretty competitive."

"The top two teams a year ago

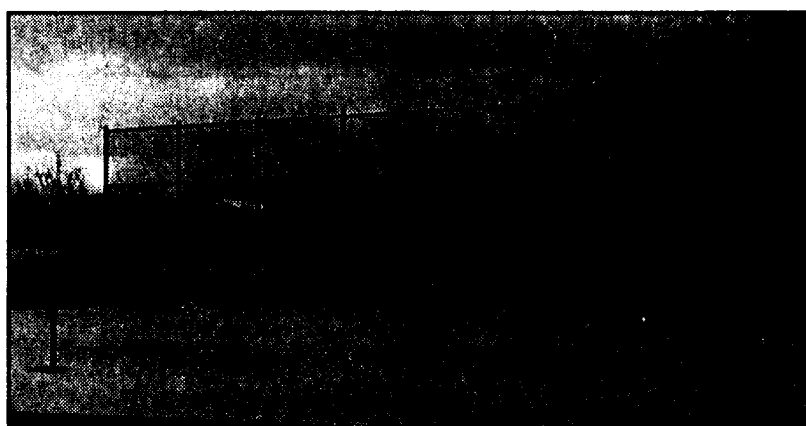
made the ECAC postseason. We would expect this year the top two teams have a very good chance of making the postseason. We have to play well, but we believe we're capable of it. We know we're capable of it. It's just a case of getting out there and performing at that level."

### FROM PAGE 1B



PHOTOS BY ERIN MCCARTY AND MIKE BELLO / BEHREND BEACON

The softball field, above, and the baseball field, below, saw their first action this week when the teams played their season openers on Saturday and Tuesday, respectively. The teams will have to wait for its next games until that white, annoying powder disappears for good.



the fields have dugouts set down into the ground, to protect the players from the elements, as well as warning tracks, concession stands with a press box, and very soon, bleachers for fans and a scoreboard.

"It has a ton of advantages with the real dugouts and storage areas," said Peterson, on the excitement of finally having a top-notch home field.

"We're very appreciative of what Brian Streeter's leadership and John Lilley and Jack Burke did to get us that field," said coach Paul Benim. "Now we will play a majority of our games on that field this year and it's the best field we'll play on all year, including Florida."

Originally planned to be constructed near Gospel Hill, setting the fields closer to campus seemed like a more logical plan. The whole project

cost \$1.2 million, although half was funded by PennDot when they purchased the land to use for the new highway. Since the highway land included the old fields, the money given to the university plus money that had been set aside was used to give Behrend their brand new fields.

Planning for the fields began in January of 1999 and official construction commenced in the start of the year 2000. There was a nine-month window to erect the two fields, and once the architectural design was established, it took six months to assemble the fields. That was followed by a one-year hiatus to let both fields sit and for the grass to get a chance to root itself in the ground. Once this process was completed, the fields were ready to be used for the 2002 softball and baseball seasons.

### Housing and Food Service Athlete of the Week



Stephanie Covert



Covert led the Behrend Lions to a 20-1 win in the conference opener Saturday against Pitt-Greensburg. In five innings, Covert pitched a two-hitter as Behrend improved to 4-9 overall and 4-0 in the AMCC. The Lions' next game is a doubleheader against Penn State Altoona on Saturday at home (1 p.m.)

Looking into the near future, Streeter pointed out that the teams will either have 140-seat bleachers on both fields or the scoreboards in April, but funding remains vital in the decision as to which item will come first. "The benefits are incredible with this new field," said softball coach Kellie Diehl. "The field drains really well. This is by far the best field I've ever been on, playing or coaching. It's a great recruiting tool. Besides recruiting, I know the team feels proud when every school comes to our field and remarks how incredible it is."

www.west.com

## Move in a New Direction

GO WEST

\$6.50

Per hour

**Qualifications:**

- Clear, distinct speaking voice
- Ability to type 15 wpm
- Good spelling skills

**Teleservices Representatives**

Provide assistance to callers wanting to place orders for a wide range of products and services offered by Fortune 500 and other large companies.

Weekend only shifts available.

**We Offer:**

- Casual dress code
- Flexible full- and part-time schedules
- Great benefits package including generous tuition reimbursement
- Promotion from within
- One week of professional training. A job offer will not be made unless the training program is successfully completed. If you're hired and begin work on the Production Floor, a Training Completion Bonus will be paid.

**APPLY TODAY!**

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

2323 West 38th Street  
Erie • 836-2400

Please dress professionally and come prepared for an interview. Bring two pieces of identification with you when applying.