

Men's basketball team ready to play

by **Zoe Rose**
sports editor

Soccer's almost done, volleyball's over, and don't forget about tennis. The leaves are bright red, orange, and yellow and the sports calendar has drifted into the men's basketball season. Penn State Behrend Lions basketball team has taken over the courts.

With Matt Keith graduating last year, the team will now be under the leadership of senior guard Steve Merrill. The 2002-2003 squad features a talented group of underclassmen dedicated to improving on last season's 18-9 record.

Stepping up in the backcourt for the lions is Merrill, who comes off an impressive season. Competing for time for this position will be returning guard Tom Lulich and Joe Lucas.

Keith was a vital player in last year's team, placing high expectations this year on Merrill.

"Steve has improved each year, he works hard as any player in the program. When you work hard, good

things happen. We will miss Matt, he was as good a shooter that we have had here. That is tough to replace."

Five freshmen have earned a spot on the young team, which has only one senior player. Skilled freshmen include guards Justin Jennings (5-10), Doug Merski (6-0), and Travis Butler (6-0). For the forwards, freshmen Adam Boettche (6-8) and Josh Sindlinger (6-7) will be up against experienced returning starters juniors Casey Ponsoll (6-3) and David Hairston (6-3).

Coming off of an amazing season last year, James Curren (6-6) will fill the center position.

Even with last year's impressive 9-3 conference record, coach Niland knows exactly what needs to be improved on in order to come away with the Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference Championship victory.

"Defensively, we were weak last season, which cost us in some big games. We also had stretches in big games that we turned it over. We need to improve a great deal in those areas. The good thing

is that players feel the same way. In practice we have looked better defending," said Niland.

The squad will start its second year playing in the Junker Center, as compared to Erie Hall. The 2002-2003 season kicks off on Nov. 23 with the Penn State Behrend Tournament at 6 and 8 p.m.

After some strong non-conference competition, the lions will get into the heart of their demanding 11-game AMCC schedule. The first road game will be hosted by Grove City on Nov. 26 followed by a two home game stretch against Washington & Jefferson and Pitt-BRADFORD, on Dec. 4th and Dec. 7th, respectively.

"We have a lot of competition for playing time so practice has been fun. The freshmen have come along well. All in all we are excited," said Niland.

The Penn State Behrend Lions basketball team is ready to rock the courts.



Steve Merrill will be looked at for leadership this season.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Q & A with head water polo coach Josh Heynes

by **Lauren Packer**
assistant sports editor



Josh Heynes coaches of both the water polo and swimming teams

Beacon: With water polo and swimming seasons overlapping, do you find it difficult to balance both teams at once?

Heynes: The seasons are balanced. The season is prepared six months in advance so we always have an idea of what

is going on. Having Jen Slack as an assistant coach really helps and makes the transition from men's water polo to swimming much easier. Also, having 90 percent of one team comprise 90 percent of the other team makes the transitions easier. Knowing the play-

ers you have to train and where they are in regards to their training also makes it easier.

Beacon: How much of a time commitment is it to be the head coach of two sports at once?

Heynes: It's 24-7-365. Recruiting at night after practice is key. The job doesn't end after practice does. It's almost like being a parent. Parents expect a surrogate role, as well as a coach, when they hand their children to you. With training during the week and tournaments on the weekend plus fundraising, it doesn't leave much free time.

Beacon: What goals do you have for your teams?

Heynes: When we first started the aquatic teams three years ago, the goal was to get better each year. Now that that goal has been accomplished, we are focusing on making a name for ourselves at the national level. We also want to start placing and doing better in Championships. We've had a lot of success with individual men in swimming, the women's swimming team won the AMCC meet and the women's water polo team missed nationals by one vote. Once you've gotten your foot in the door at major meets, the other kids see what they can do and then they want to reach their potential.

Beacon: Because the aquatics team are only three years old, how did you handle teaching the kids who joined and didn't

have any prior experience?

Heynes: Patience. A severe amount of patience. We made great strides in three years. We are the only teams playing Division I and II schools. The final scores don't always reflect what happened in the game. If the inexperienced players are willing to commit the time and effort into learning then I am willing to commit the time and effort to teach them. The ones who come and want to learn are really what keep you going as a coach.

Beacon: What are you focusing on for your next season?

Heynes: We're still looking for people to help our team. We are always looking to be bigger and better. I can recruit a lot but there is talent that can be tapped here at Behrend. You get to travel to schools you probably never otherwise would and you get away for the weekends. But people have to realize what they are in for, playing sports at the collegiate level is a tough task for any vision.



after this, the corporate ladder will be a piece of [cake].

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October Intamural Wrap-Up

Intramural Champions

Tennis

Men's Singles "A" Flight - Eric Laska

Men's Singles "B" Flight - Greg Sleese

Men's Doubles "B" Flight - Nick Plugh & Keith McMillen

Women's Doubles - Cori Lesniak & Kelly Calabrese

Coed Doubles - Keith McMillen & Lisa Jacobs

Slow Pitch Softball

Men's - Sig Tau Gamma

Coed - Tomohawks

Flag Football

Men's - XXX Men

Coed - Super Delta Five

IM POINTS SYSTEM STANDINGS

Fraternity

Sig Tau Gamma - 683 Points

Tau Kappa Epsilon - 398 Points

Kappa Delta Rho - 268 Points

Independent

Monkeys w/Guns - 535 Points

XXX Men - 390 Points

Super Delta Five - 315 Points

Residence Hall

Almy - 403 Points

Niagra - 85 Points

Women's

Theta Phi Alpha - 290 Points

Alpha Sigma Alpha - 115 Points

Coed

Almy - 290 Points

Tomohawks - 165 Points

Super Delta Five - 155 Points